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Helsinki, October 3–5, 2007

The Nordic Consumer Policy Research Conference

Helsinki, October 3–5, 2007

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Søren Askegaard, University of Southern Denmark

Dannie Kjeldgaard, University of Southern Denmark

Jacob Östberg, Stockholm University

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Conveners:

Professor Lucia A. Reisch, Copenhagen Business School (CBS), Denmark

Professor Suzanne C. Beckmann, Copenhagen Business School (CBS), Denmark

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Conveners:

Prof. Dr. Lucia A. Reisch, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

Dipl. soc. oec. Sabine Bietz, University of Calw, Germany

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Foreword

Folke Ölander
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Dear reader,

In this set of papers, you find a collection of current Nordic research on consumer issues, all with relevance for the conduct and development of consumer policy in our countries.

They will all be presented at the Nordic Consumer Policy Research Conference in Helsinki on October 3-5, 2007, and thus the set of papers also constitutes the proceedings of this conference.

The initiative for the conference was taken by The Nordic Forum for Consumer Research, a committee set down by the Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Consumer Affairs to foster consumer research of relevance to consumer policy and to broaden the interaction between consumer researchers and policy-makers in government, agencies, and organizations. The Nordic Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Trade and Industry in Finland and the National Consumer Research Centre in Finland have provided substantial financial contributions to the organization of the conference.

The organizers are very happy that it has been possible to attract so many researchers, well-established as well as young and upcoming, to contribute to the conference. Together, the papers document that consumer research with a bearing on policy is well and alive in the Nordic countries.

In addition, we are happy to include a number of papers from a select group of researchers from other parts of Europe, papers that also are going to be presented at the conference.

You will also find abstracts describing the special sessions at the conference organized around European consumer policy and European projects to deal with childhood obesity, respectively, with participants from both Nordic and European universities and policy-making bodies, including the European Commission.

We are also very glad that it has been possible to include three key addresses in the conference programme, addresses given by prominent representatives of research and practice in the field of consumer affairs: Professors Steve Woolgar, University of Oxford, Frank Trentmann, University of London, and Edda Müller, former Director of the German consumer organization vzbv. Brief summaries of their addresses are also included here.

Folke Ölander
Chairman, Conference Programme Committee

Consumer Policy in Urgent Need of Empirical Consumer Research Support

Edda Müller
German University of Administrative Sciences
Speyer, Germany

Key address

EU-consumer policy and national consumer policies move into a more pro-active role in the overall EU-policy making process. Their success and impact will depend on support by consumer research. Consumer research should provide evidence based knowledge and relevant empirical data about the impact of EU-policies and EU-market processes on consumers. The presentation will describe the proposal of the establishment of a permanent observation system and regular reporting mechanism on the state of consumer protection and consumption in the EU. It will describe **why** a regular reporting mechanism is needed, **what** should be done and **how** it could be organised.

The main objective of the proposal is to improve **agenda-setting** and to help DG Sanco to bring consumer issues onto the political agenda. Furthermore, the need to organise a monitoring system within the Member States will help national consumer policy actors and consumer organisations to provide input and have a mandate to collect data from different sources.

The consumer information and observation system shall gather information to describe the present and foreseeable state of consumer demand from different point of views, for example the quality of consumer protection, the pressure (behaviour of the market forces) on consumers and the sensitivity of competition for new economic, technological and social developments. The concrete **topics** have to be identified together with **indicators** which allow a measurement of the success or failure of consumer policies. Consumer research support is urgently needed for the identification and formulation of indicators that are valid to describe the impact of policies on market processes from a demand side perspective.

The “European Environmental Information and Observation Network – **EIONET**” will be presented as **an example of how to organise the reporting mechanism** together with institutional changes needed for the implementation.

The speaker is a **political scientist**. She worked for many years in different governmental and administrative functions in Germany and the EU and was the Executive Director of the Federation of German Consumer Organisations.

Consumers, Practices, and Politics: Putting the Current Global Era in Historical Perspective

Frank Trentmann
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Key address

The central role of “the consumer” in policy and discourse more widely is frequently seen as a new phenomenon of contemporary society, associated with globalisation and post- or late modernity. This is a mistake. In this presentation I will place current debates about consumers and consumerism in a longer perspective. A more historical and more comparative approach can provide fresh insights for policy-makers and researchers alike. The presentation will draw on insights from the recent five-year long UK research programme “Cultures of Consumption”. Sections of the talk will highlight the on-going diversity of consumer cultures and consumer behaviour; the importance civic traditions and democratic culture played in the expansion of consumer politics and identity; and the need to return to a broader view of choice. The talk will end with a provocative note: consumer power has a more troubled and ambivalent past than new social movements tend to recognise: campaigns for FairTrade had their precursors in imperialism and Free Trade. Critics and champions of consumer sovereignty alike do well to give greater recognition to the uneven moralities and practices of consumption.

Frank Trentmann is Professor of History at Birkbeck College, University of London. From 2002 to 2007 he was director of the £ 5 million research programme Cultures of Consumption, funded by the two British research councils ESRC and AHRC (more information and research can be viewed at www.consume.bbk.ac.uk . Recent publications include: *Consuming Cultures, Global Perspectives* (2006); with John Brewer); *Governance, Consumption and Citizenship* (2007, with Mark Bevir). His new book *Free Trade Nation: Commerce, Consumption and Civil Society in modern Britain* is published by Oxford University Press. He is now working on a global history of consumption for Penguin entitled *The Consuming Passion*.

Who Is the New Consumer? The Identification and Construction of Consumers in a Changing World

Steve Woolgar
Science and Technology Studies
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University of Oxford, UK

Key address

The world of consumers is changing rapidly – changes in the quality and quantity of relevant information, the different channels through which this information is made available, and the issues which matter. But the world of consumers is also changing in respect of who is identifying, defining and appropriating the figure of “the consumer”. Indeed, these latter aspects are arguably crucial: who speaks for and who defines the consumer heavily influences what counts as “relevant”, “information” and “issues which matter”. This paper explores some of the implications of changes in the figure of the consumer. It draws on theories from science and technology studies (STS), and from the sociology of the risk society; and is informed by the author’s experiences in his role as a Professor of Marketing in a Business School, and as a member of Council of one of the world’s leading consumers’ associations.

The paper begins by outlining some of the major societal changes over the last 50-60 (ie post war) years. These include changes turn on issues of affluence, choice, travel, technologies, and the emergence of the “risk society”. In what ways do these developments implicate changes in the conception of the consumer? To what extent have organisations which speak on behalf of consumers managed to respond to these changes? In order to address these questions, the paper takes from STS the notion of “configuring the user”: the practices and processes for identifying, defining, constructing, enabling and constraining users. It then considers the ways in which consumers are configured both in consumer movements and by consumer policy. Examples include: the figure of the consumer embodied in the exposure of “tricks” played by supermarkets on their customers; the image of the consumer in debates about the divide between consumer and citizen; the conception of the virtual (online) consumer.

The paper argues that such configurations draw on and reaffirm key assumptions about the consumer. These include depictions of the consumer as: 1) socially isolated, rather than a member of networks and communities; 2) a passive recipient of information; 3) lacking access to information and knowledge and 4) engaging in predominantly utilitarian consumption. The paper pays particular attention to the assumption that the consumer wants or needs certified objective knowledge as the basis for informed purchasing decisions.

The paper concludes that key social and technological changes in recent years oblige us now to revise our entrenched assumptions about the nature and identity of consumers. To do this, we need to consider the ways in which various agencies, government departments and

consumer organisations, construct and configure versions of consumers, who they are, what they want and need. This in turn requires us to develop a more interactive and discursive conception of the consumer.

Theme 1. Ageing consumers

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Papers

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Airola, Jouni: Regional strategy of Services for the Elderly People – Years 2015 and 2030 (Policymaker comment)

Peltonen, Anja: Ageing consumers and public services (Policymaker comment)

Enjoyment and Concern. The Importance of Food and Eating for Ageing Consumers

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Abstract

Sweden, as well as most Western European countries, faces an ever-growing older population. The overall aim of the project has been to contribute to an increased in-depth, knowledge and understanding of consumers' over 55 years of age, their views, preferences and expectations for food and food consumption. In three separate studies, each lasting a year and each applying qualitative, ethnographic methods, three groups of consumers +55 of special interest have been studied: city centre dwellers (n=29), new Swedes in the city suburb (n=24), and inhabitants in a rural area (n=28). The results demonstrate the importance of food and food consumption in the respondents' lives. Even so consumers +55 cannot be considered as one group but several. Different values and habits in relation to food have been shaped by a complex interrelation of experiences during earlier periods of their lives and their present situation: social, economical and physical. Healthy food – gourmet food; food as a necessity – food as pleasure; food as a mediator of change – food as a tool for holding on to traditions are only a few of the images resulting from the project.

1. Introduction

Sweden, as well as most other Western European countries, faces an ever-growing older population. In 2030 almost 23% of the Swedish population will be over 65 (SOU, 2003:91). The supposition is that these new generations will be different than old-age pensioners of former days; more youthful and healthy and with different lifestyles and demands. The baby boomers who born in the 1940's and considered wealthy, powerful and choosy, have particularly attracted attention as the largest generation in Sweden ever. No doubt will their approaching retirement pose new demands on society regarding products as well as services. The overarching challenge for society is to increase the knowledge of values and behaviours among these large groups of newly or soon-to-be retired people. This is essential in order to promote sustainable development, as well as a high-quality of living.

2. Aim

A number of statistical surveys have already been made regarding food and health-related issues on large populations in Sweden and provide broad overviews. The aim of the trans-disciplinary project described in this paper has been to contribute to an increased and more in-depth knowledge and understanding of consumers' over 55 years of age, their views, preferences and expectations for food and food consumption in relation to differences in socioeconomic status, ethnicity, gender and regionality. Special focus has been directed towards the role of food in relation to identity and relation building, demands on products and services, views on health and environmental issues and views on brands and store concepts.

3. Assumptions

The assumption has been that consumers' actions and beliefs are best understood when using a trans-disciplinary perspective, where different aspects such as the life stories and cultural background of the individuals, health issues and environmental concerns, the assortment in the grocery shops and domestic technology, are given the same amount of consideration and are seen as interlinked and cooperating. Furthermore, this kind of research requires a life course perspective, where life is seen as constant change (or 'becoming') and where ageing is regarded as a slow process with a huge variation among individuals, and without any predefined age limits; though there might be sudden gaps in relation to ill health or the death

of a partner etc. (Öberg, 2003). The household has been used as the unit for analysis. Consumers 55+ are not only individuals with their own personal life course. They are part of a household and a family, even though family members might be living at large geographical distances, and the ageing household might be single. The individuals are also part of other fellowships; of friend and interests. They have to relate to the categories of ageing where others are trying to capture them like 'older people' or 'the market segment 55-64 years of age'. Thus the food consumer +55 is an individual who is part of real and ascribed communities like household, family, interest group, market segment, and values and behaviour in relation to food consumption are a result of these identities and belongings that cross and interact with each other.

4. Method

In three separate studies, each lasting a year and each applying qualitative, ethnographic methods, three groups of consumers +55 of special interest have been studied (Table 1).

Table 1. An overview of the three studies completed in within the three years project

		Group of consumers	Number of households	Number of interviewees
Year 1	2004-2005	Well-educated, economically well-off city dwellers	24	29
Year 2	2005-2006	New Swedes in the city suburb	24	24
Year 3	2006-2007	Inhabitants of sparsely populated areas	21	28

In each study a combined trans-disciplinary method has been used, consisting of:

- personal interviews, focusing on food memories and special food events in the past life;
- food diaries in which the respondents have registered their food intake for one week and disposable cameras to document the social life revolving around food during that same week;
- follow-up interviews where the diaries and snapshots are discussed; and
- focus groups in which future life with food is discussed, and where mood boards have been produced, allowing the respondents to visualize hopes, dreams and desires for the future.

5. Wine, greenhouses and togetherness. Report from year one.

5.1. The households

The respondents of year one were active, well-off city dwellers, with academic occupations, living in attractive and expensive condominiums in Gothenburg city centre (Brembeck et al., 2005). Many of them were born in the 1940's but there was also a few respondents in their seventies and early eighties who had answered the call for "consumers 55+". Not many of them were born in Gothenburg, but had moved to the city from smaller towns to study at the university. All of them had been married (or corresponding), but now half of the households were single due to a divorce or the death of a partner. They had two or three children born in the sixties and/or seventies, and most of them had grandchildren. The women had been working or still worked in occupations such as a teacher/university professor, lawyer, or held managerial jobs at banks, in administration or healthcare. The few men taking part in the study (only 5 out of 29 individuals in total) included engineers, technicians, and one teacher.



5.2. Together: Identities and relations in regard to food

From a cultural perspective, the positions as woman/wife/mother and man/husband/father are not obvious, but constructed and changing the same way concepts like female and male are given different contents (Counihan & Kaplan, 1998; Meurling et al., 1999). It is obvious that the respondents have experienced large changes in these respects during their lives and that traditional links between gender and cooking have been questioned. Most of the women have had professional careers and cooking has not been an essential part of their identities as women. Equality has been a treasured value among the men as well as among the women and most couples have shared the responsibilities of housework and cooking with each other and with their children. However, the women have generally served as a supervisor of healthy

eating. Now approaching retirement, some of the men are skilled gourmet cooks, while some of the women are not very interested, eager or even skilled to do the everyday cooking.

The most treasured value in relation to food is togetherness: good food, good wine and good conversation with friends. Eating together is something more than an expression of identity and relation building. The meaning of food for the baby boomers (born in the 1940's) must be understood in a context of gastronomy, cookbooks, sensual pleasures, and beautiful table settings. Eating is an obvious part of an 'experience economy' (Löfgren & Willim, 2005), and as retirees they have time and money to spend. However, many of them are single or will eventually become single. A surprising fact was that almost no one wanted to have dinner or even lunch at restaurants or cafés on their own – although they lived in the very centre of the city with restaurants around every corner – because they felt awkward eating alone (also at their own homes in fact). Even more interesting was the finding that although they did not like eating alone, it was becoming less embarrassing. The respondents joked about it and about the way they used to eat in front of the TV or read a paper to get company, and some had invented their own rituals or used special furniture to be able to eat a proper meal on their own or in front of the TV. New strategies for pleasurable single dinners were invented. The single eater is finally 'coming out of the closet'.

5.3. Food, environment, and health: resource management in everyday life

Households are life support systems continuously exchanging resources with the environment for survival and wellbeing (Hook & Paulucci, 1970; Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). In doing so, households draw upon resources from the environment. For example, resources are needed for the production of consumer products and services, for use, as well as for the treatment of waste generated by the household.

The results from year one show that the management strategies used in the households have been shaped by a complex interrelation of experiences during earlier periods of the participants' lives – during their own childhood and/or when their children were small – and their present situation. They value habits that were shaped in the family of origin, often coloured by childhood experience in rural life situations and during the harsh times of crises. Food is never thrown away. Healthy food habits, in particular regular eating habits and having traditional home-cooked meals, are highly valued and believed to be fundamental to one's health and in order to age well. Even in the households that presently consist of only one person, the influence of the former family life shapes their present food habits. One wished to continue to prepare one's food even when growing older.

Fruit and vegetables and a glass of wine with one's dinner are appreciated for the sake of health and enjoyment. Care for others is often expressed by preparing food that is essential or highly appreciated by other household or family members; the spouse's health problems, the daughter's vegetarian eating habits, and the grandchildren's food allergies. Even in the households that presently consist of only one person, the influence of earlier family life clearly shapes their present food habits. Eating out is still considered a luxury and fairly uncommon (cf. above).

The households are loyal and enthusiastic waste separators and sort their waste into several fractions. The location of and distance to the recycling stations are, however, sometimes a barrier to frequent separation.

5.4. High tech, low tech, slow tech

Technology in terms of technical artefacts is very much a part of everyday life, also for storing, preparing, and consuming food. All respondents have a positive view of such technology that simplifies the storage and conservation of food. The introduction of fridges and freezers are often mentioned in the interviews as something that made a difference. However, while technology related to storage and conservation seems quite uncomplicated, the respondents' view of technology for food preparation and cooking seems much more filled with conflict.

Overall three different groups can be distinguished regarding the respondents and domestic technology. One group uses technology as a means for saving time. Cooking is not an interest per se; one prefers to pursue other activities. Pre-cooked dinners are an alternative to actually do the cooking. The type of technology that could characterize this group is the microwave oven. A second group uses technology to be able to process, e.g., vegetables in a way that conserves nutrients in the best possible way. This group chooses organic food if possible and is very interested in the health aspects of food. The type of technology that characterizes this group is the food processor. The third group is, as the previous one, very interested in food and cooking. The difference is that the individuals in this latter group do not necessarily care about the health aspect but are more interested in gourmet food. These households own the same technical artefacts as the other groups but use them more sparsely. Instead one prefers to do the work by hand. Preparing the food is as important as eating it, and cooking is allowed to take time. The type of technology that characterizes this mentality is the chef's knife and the common oven/stove. Thus, while the first two groups embrace new technology and regard it as a means to make cooking effective and nutritious, the third group is more sceptical. By working with their hands, they believe that they have more control over the results. There seems, however, also to be another reason, a norm that implies that real food should be cooked with raw materials and by hand, in the same way that one ought to eat at the table and not in front of the TV and that one ought to eat on a regular schedule.

There is an age difference of approximately 30 years between the youngest and the oldest respondent. It is difficult to draw any conclusions between the subjects based on age; the differences between respondents of similar age are as big as the differences between individuals of different ages. If there is any trend in the data, it is that older individuals seem to have a higher acceptance for technology that makes food preparation faster and easier than the (relatively) younger respondents. This is somewhat contrary to the common view of older people being averse to new technology.

In sum, technology is mainly associated with effectiveness and time-efficiency by the respondents. These concepts are, however, not entirely perceived as positive. Thus, the domestic technology shows a Janus face. For some of the respondents, saving time is positive, for others the idea of fast and effective cooking is stressful. For some types of cooking a high level of technology is accepted, for other types technology is actively excluded in favour of manual work.

5.5. To shop or not to shop – the unfaithful but sensible 'greys' striving towards the good life!

The 'greys', i.e., the consumers+55, are often overlooked. As a buying category they are considered as belonging to smaller households, mostly being in frail health, and lacking sufficient buying power for much beyond the necessities of life. Moreover, this stereotype

implies that they are set in their ways and thus not likely to switch brands or try new products. Today, marketers have begun to realize that the 55-and-over household represents a large and lucrative segment of the buying public and that these 'golden greys' will not just 'tag along'.

The study of the 55+ in the city centre reveals that these consumers appreciate an array of different stores when buying food with regard to how stores can create meaning to them. They visit smaller specialty stores as a way to revive memories from their childhood and youth. Still, they realize the need for rationalizations and how this has led to large self-service stores. Strong experiences from their past have shaped their view of what is good food of high quality and which stores that can deliver this feeling of the 'old genuine store'.

To understand these meanings, four contrasting buying groups could be observed along with their willingness to save or waste, as well as their willingness to possess or experience. Scarcity, economy, lower demands and preparing food from scratch were important aspects during the depression and, therefore, those participants born during the 1920's and 1930's think it is important to save, something which affects them in their food buying and consumption behaviour. However, the 'baby boomers' from the 1940's grew up during a time characterized by an increased economic growth, leading to a willingness among these consumers to spend their savings to fulfil their dreams as well as to do something good for the society. It is thus important to understand how experiences from the past unite or separate these groups as generation cohorts in order to understand their present food buying behaviour, choice of stores and brands.

6. Food and the new country. Report from year two.

6.1. The households

During year two, the project focused on immigrants coming to Sweden during the last 15 years (Brembeck et al., 2006). Most of the households taking part in the study were from Bosnia-Herzegovina but also a few from Serbia-Montenegro, Iraq and Afghanistan (the most common home countries for immigrants coming to Sweden the past years) (Brnic, 2004). The women (only women took part in the study) had all one thing in common: they were refugees and had left their home countries during severe hardship. Almost all of them were Muslims but most of them highly secularized after 50 years of socialism, and with a very "European" mentality and appearance. For instance only three of the Afghan women wear veils (chador). The respondents all had traumatic memories, having lost relatives in the wars, and several of them were widows. Their ages varied from 47 to 74. They had a considerable amount of health problems, e.g., obesity, even though they were on average ten years younger than the women in the former study. All of the Balkan women and a few of the others had professional occupations - ranging from teachers, office workers, and shopkeepers to factory workers – in their home countries. Most of them came from cities, where they had lived in their own houses and had had a good life prior to the war. Now, almost all of them were being supported through the help of subsidy, husbands' or children's salaries and some of them were old age pensioners. They were living in rented apartments in the same suburb in the outskirts of Gothenburg and they were all taking part in activities at a social meeting point for women (where this project got in touch with them). They had been living in Sweden for between 5 to 15 years and had been granted Swedish citizenships. Given the situation in their home countries the likelihood is high that they will spend their old age in Sweden surrounded by children and grandchildren.

6.2. A new start – food as a mediator

You have to eat to survive, the women argued. This was the main purpose of food for the women in the study who had all experienced wars and shortage of food. Cooking also represented skill and female knowledge. The women did not understand the researchers' wish to speak to the husbands as well, since cooking was their duty, pride and joy. Evidently properly cooked food looks delicious and has a nice taste and scent, but these aspects of food were self-evident and nothing much to talk about – that is just the way food is. Food, cooking and eating were not very much reflected upon (cf. Giddens, 1991), at least not until the arrival to Sweden.

As refugees in a new country food, however, took on new meanings, and most importantly it took on the meaning of keeping the family together – both in Sweden and in the home country – and of linking the family members to the Swedish society. The way food works as a mediator between old and new, habituated and unaccustomed, has been one of the most intriguing findings of this study (for an international comparison, see Al-Ali, 2002). Food is about sitting together and talking while having a tasty nourishing meal, and the preferences of children and grandchildren especially have a great impact on what is being served. Another interesting finding is the great interest the women take in Swedish food, and their readiness to mix Swedish and their national dishes with ease, as well as their eagerness to keep specialties, like the Bosnian pie, or Iraqi brijani that is very much associated with the home country and to the role as a skilled housewife and cook. Their wish is that their children (daughters) and grandchildren will learn to appreciate and prepare these symbolic foods and their fear is that they will not be able to pass these skills on because of their children's lack of time and interest. This way a vital link to the home country and to the traditional women's role and the skills involved will be lost. It could thus be argued that these families create 'frontier lifestyles' (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002) or 'third cultures' with food as an active medium and women and children as agents.

6.3. Plenty of time – short of money

The resources households use in order to satisfy their needs and create a good a life can be classified as material and immaterial. Material resources are artefacts, equipment, housing, cars, etc. Immaterial resources are knowledge and skills, attitudes, values, empathy, all found within the individual. Time as a resource does not quite fit into either of these classes or into both.

The immigrant households were found to have plenty of time at their disposal, mainly involuntarily due to unemployment or sick leave but also through retirement. Also, when it came to food preparation, knowledge and skills were high. On the other hand, except for housing conditions, they were poorer than the average Swedish household when it came to income. Their consumption, especially food habits, shows some patterns which can be interpreted as the consequences of the availability or scarcity of different types of resources. A great deal of time is spent on grocery shopping in order to keep costs down. Meals are usually prepared at home and bread is often baked. Food preparation gives meaning and structure to the everyday life of the women.

Traditions from their home countries are maintained through preparing traditional food even though Swedish food culture has been integrated into their everyday diet and is also appreciated (cf. Jonsson, 2004; Koçtürk, 1990, 1997).



The women regard good food habits as an important way of staying healthy. Compared to Swedish households, their eating habits are of an equally good nutritional standard, if not better. An exception, in some households, is the excessive use of cooking oil and in some cases also sugar. There are some concerns about food safety and great care is taken in making sure that the food is not contaminated, too old or containing excessive levels of pesticides. Generally, though, environmental issues are not a main concern. The Swedish environment is experienced as very clean and healthy and the respondents do not see any need to change their everyday habits. Separation of waste is regarded as natural and is practiced in all households.

6.4. Technical artefacts – the same and different

If any major differences were expected between the technical artefacts that the households used to use before the move to Sweden and the artefacts they use today, such differences cannot be identified. In most cases, the technical artefacts that are available for the households are the same as the ones they had access to in the old country – even though the standard may have been different (and not always poorer). The socio-economic situation in the old country may partly explain the non-differences. A complementary explanation may be that domestic technology and the technical artefacts used for storing, preparing and cooking are part of what Riesman (1964) refers to as the ‘standard package’, i.e. a set of technical artefacts that is

common to most and can be found in most households in a culturally homogeneous area, independent of economic status.

Not always explicitly verbalized but through diaries, recipes, and the photos taken, was the fact that the households' food habits and the habits in preparing the food shape the usage of the technical artefacts, habits which at least to some extent have been established 'before Sweden'. The methods used for cooking are, evidently, the common ones but as the households often eat soup and different types of casseroles they most often use the stove for cooking rather than frying and the stove rather than roasting in the oven. The oven is primarily used for baking bread, pies and cakes.

One can detect certain changes, over time, in the possession of technical artefacts. Some of the respondents have, e.g., continued preparing coffee as they previously did and prefer Turkish coffee. Other members of their families, on the other hand, prefer Swedish coffee while still others drink espresso or cafe latte. This means that one, in addition to the Turkish coffee pan, also owns a coffee percolator and/or an espresso machine. This exchange of, or addition to the existing set of artefacts, may be a consequence of adopting new habits as part of moving to a new country but it may just as well be the consequence of a general globalization trend and would have occurred with or without the move to Sweden.

In general, the respondents have a fairly neutral opinion of technology in relation to cooking. Most respondents cook using basic ingredients, and have time to prepare and to shop (cf. above), some use slightly more advanced technical artefacts while others choose not to. Time-efficiency, which is often argued as a reason for increasing the use of technical artefacts, is not important (cf. above). Instead, the respondents are proud to be able to prepare food by using 'their hands'. One particular artefact, however, split the group into two: the freezer. One group is very positive to the freezer while the other is very sceptical referring to poorer quality as a consequence of deep-freezing the food. The major reason for using the freezer is economical since the freezer allows the households to buy larger quantities of, e.g. meat, when there is a "good deal" in the shop. Thus, technology related to storing food holds some conflict while the use of technology for preparing and cooking does not.

The respondents are from different countries and of different ages. Part of the differences in attitudes towards the use of technical artefacts may be explained by age or by nationality but overall identified differences seem more related to the specific socio-economic situation of the household, now as well as earlier. Thus, individuals with a background in a rural community in one country may have less in common with a person of the same nationality but from the city than he or she has with someone from a rural community in another country.

6.5. Shopping and consumption – a bridge to a new culture

Food is necessary for all human beings in order to survive. It is also a cultural expression. The symbolic meanings of food can consequently differ leading to different consumption patterns, buying behaviour and experiences of brands. Moving to a new country is part of a cultural change process that can include learning to shop and consuming new products and brands in a foreign cultural context. When immigrants are confronted with different cultures new hybrids of cultures may develop. They may want to consume specific products and brands in order to become accepted in the new culture. Integration agents, e.g. children, friends, family, media, social and religious institutions, may serve as bridges between different cultures. However,

marketing activities in stores can also be an integration agent that can play an important role when changing a consumption pattern when immigrants are confronted with a new culture.

The study reveals that food shopping and consumption within this new market logic is rather complicated. The stores are perceived as very modern with an amazing assortment, but the food does not taste the same as it used to in the home countries. The limited language skills make communication hard for the women and they have a tough time recognizing the products and brands.

Grocery shopping is a social activity giving the women meaning in their lives and they go to the store several times per day. They are, however, at the same time stuck in a consumption paradox. They have come to a consumption society with stores full of food, but they have little resources to buy the most wanted food and brands. They cannot shop as often as they want in typical Swedish food stores and have to buy most of their items at low price stores, where they cannot find the Swedish food and brands they are looking for.

In order to understand the shopping and consumption behaviour of immigrants, the development of a 'third culture' as a hybrid between different cultures is important. Integration agents in terms of store commercials and recipes play a crucial role in the process of learning and testing Swedish food and brands. The commercial forces could actively take part in these cultural change processes in order to integrate immigrants into a new society. Brands can enhance the 'third culture' identity, making the immigrants feel that they are part of both their old and new culture. Swedish brands and stores are seen as having a strong symbolic value for the immigrants in the study. Consequently, food stores ought to draw attention to how Swedish food customs and products could be introduced to immigrants along with a mix of all the other cultural food influences.

7. Coffee, fishing and community activities. Report from year three.

7.1. The households

The third year study focused on consumers in a sparsely populated area of southern Sweden. They were living in a small community in Dalsland, (here called) Dalofors, with only 700 inhabitants, surrounded by a woody countryside. Twenty-one households took part in the study, most of them couples, and in some cases both husband and wife were interviewed, resulting in 28 respondents altogether. Nine households consisted of only one person, most commonly a divorced or widowed woman. The majority of the respondents were between 59 and 70 years old. Most had children and grandchildren, some living within commuting distance, while others were living in larger cities in southern or middle Sweden. Of the respondents, only four had lived their whole life in Dalofors, the others were newcomers or had moved back after several years away from the community. As many as 19 of the interviewed individuals were born and raised in the countryside, most of them in the region of Dalsland. The impression was that many had returned to their roots, or at least to the countryside, where they once were born. On the other hand, two of the women were born abroad, but had married men from Dalofors, and now resided there. All of the respondents were or had been working in a professional occupation. Their occupations mirror the gender-segregated labour market of the Swedish countryside, with the women working in relatively low paid caring and service occupations, and the men in occupations like tractor driver, painter and policeman. There were examples of respondents with at least a college education,

like some economists and a librarian. The general impression, however, was that both occupational level and income of the respondents were lower than compared to year one, in many cases similar to the new Swedes' of year two. Compared to national statistics, Dalofors was a "typical" small community in a sparsely populated area (Glesbygdsverket, 2004).

7.2. The slow and comfortable pace of everyday life

When choosing Dalofors as the focus for the third year's study, the expectations were to meet a common countryside population with similar ideas and interests. Instead a diverse pallet of backgrounds, values and lifestyles was found. All the different 'foodstyles' from the first two years of the project and some additional ones were represented.

The general impression is that in Dalofors, older people have a good life – also in relation to food. Routines and rituals regarding meals and cooking make life stable and safe. The gardens are filled with grown berries, fruits, root vegetables and spices. In the lakes there are plenty of fish, and in the woods game, wild berries and mushrooms. The spouse and the dog or cat are good everyday companions. Thanks to strong communal ties and rich community activities, which all the respondents are more or less involved in, not many feel lonely and isolated. The coffee drinking culture that flourishes at community meetings of various sorts is an important sphere where the values of food and eating are generated, in addition to the home (for a comparison, see Døving, 2002). Traditional countryside life of the region remains in food courses and food memories. Here, the Dalsland's cake (Dalslandskakan) holds a special place connected to women's as well as regional pride. There are no recipes and the women have learnt how to make (or "fry") it from their mothers. They are proud and content when their children and grandchildren ask for a piece of "grandma's cake". It is, however, important not to overstate the importance of traditional cooking, and to view Dalofors as a reserve for old-fashioned food culture. New food impulses come all the time, especially from holiday trips abroad, from TV, magazines and the internet, making the global sphere (Appadurai, 1998) another place where knowledge and values of the inhabitants of Dalofors in regard to food are generated.

Just as in the city, in Dalofors there are plenty of couples that share the responsibility of cooking, especially among the newcomers, and also some men who are both competent and eager cooks. There are at the same time women who have had their daily meals at the workplace all their life and now, as retired, consider the daily cooking a burden that they want to do away with as quickly as possible. Not all women in Dalofors are immersed in cake making and mushroom picking.

Thinking of life with food in the future, they want everything to stay as it is for as long as possible. They want to stay at home, cook for themselves and take their daily trip to the grocery store as long as they can. Later on, the local old people's service centre is a good place to stay. There is no need for white tablecloths, lit candles and a restaurant menu, which the inner city dwellers requested. The main issue is just getting a room or small apartment at all when the time comes. The service centre is not an unknown place. Here one meets all the local friends and acquaintances. If one, in addition to getting good and nourishing meals, continue one's engagement in community activities and feel safe that the cat or dog is taken good care of, old age is nothing to worry about.

8.3. Healthy and active living

In many ways it is a healthy life the respondents live in Dalofors. Living in a rural area offers the possibility to wander in the woods and countryside and to enjoy exercise and fresh air. Most of the respondents do so and most are not hindered by any physical handicaps. The interviews and additional data show that the respondents have developed individual strategies to provide varied and balanced diets for themselves, either by preparing meals from scratch or by buying ready-prepared meals. There is a great variety of meal patterns and food choice among the respondents. Some prefer traditional Swedish meals with meat, sauce and potatoes, while others have exceeded to some special diet such as the vegetarian diets. Generally, they are aware of health issues. When someone in the family becomes sick it is usually the women who become responsible for making sure that the doctor's instructions regarding changes in food choices are followed.

Hunting, fishing and berry picking are greatly appreciated pastimes. The resulting delicacies are prepared for special occasions or given away as gifts. Eating out is not common. They usually eat at home but also away from home in connection to social activities. Then, togetherness is experienced and life feels meaningful (cf. Svensson, 2006). At such occasions food is an important component.

The respondents reflect over environmental degradation but do not take many conscious actions to change their behaviour. One thing practiced by all households, however, is the separation of waste, a habit that seems to have been established already during their childhood. A health aspect of life in Dalofors is the participation in many social activities in connection to the associations for different activities even though this could also cause some stress. The joy of being involved, particularly in developing their community and being grateful for having the opportunity to live there, seem to outweighed this (cf. Ingelstam, 2006).

The way of life of the inhabitants of Dalofors could be characterised with the words 'resourceful' and 'humble'. This is true particularly when it comes to environmental behaviour, whether it be recycling, reuse or use of local resources. Maybe this is a result of experiences from childhood in a semi self-subsistence economy. One could predict that the ever-increasing appeal of changing lifestyles towards more subsistence would receive a strong response in the 55+ group of the population. However, the accessibility of ecological and locally produced food is not greater here than in the city. The great reliance on car transport in the countryside is not an environmentally friendly side of rural life.

8.4. New technology – becomes old – become new

The relation between food and technology, or technical artefacts, was not obvious to the participating households in Dalofors, nor has it been in the interviews with the city dwellers or the new Swedes. The many technical artefacts used for storing, preparing, and consuming food are not consciously considered and reflected upon by the respondents until provoked – with one exception, the microwave oven. Stoves, ovens, freezers and fridges are domesticated (e.g. Silverstone & Haddon, 1996) to the extent that they have become part of the background. They are technical artefacts found in the household but they are no longer referred to as 'technical things'. Microwave ovens are, on the other hand, a technical artefact that can be described as still "undergoing domestication" even though a use pattern has been established. The micro-oven is used for defrosting and heating frozen food and leftovers but in very few

cases for 'cooking from scratch'. It tries to find its physical space in the kitchens, often dating before the 1990s, in a corner of the workbenches, or on an odd shelf. Again, though, this has been true for almost all respondents participating in the project.

When specifically asked if and how technical artefacts have had any influence on the respondents' relation to food and food consumption the microwave oven is, nevertheless, not in focus. Instead it is the freezer that is mentioned during this third year of the project - as it was during the first. The reasons described by the respondents with a rural background compared to those with an urban one, however, differ somewhat. For individuals brought up in an urban environment, the freezer is associated with preserving food but also, e.g., less dependence on the shops' opening hours and less visits to the shop. Many of the respondents from year three describe how, when introduced in the 1950's and 1960's, the freezer facilitated the once hard work involved in preserving large volumes of food, not food bought in shops but rather home-grown vegetables and fruit, or meat from the autumn elk hunt and the Christmas pig slaughter. A slightly different perspective.



New technology is often associated with change. When the respondents describe the introduction of the freezer they describe a change in terms of less work and less time being required but not a change in terms of radically new routines. Rather the new technology could be argued to have helped the respondents hold on to 'old' habits, saving and preserving, by facilitating them. The reason for technology's adoption and domestication may be explained thus. Also nowadays the freezer plays an important role for preserving the rural respondents' 'own produce' as well as, e.g., fish caught by the respondents' themselves, or their children, or even their neighbours and brought as gifts (cf. above).

One artefact found in Dalofors but not in the city of Gothenburg, nor in the suburb, is the wooden kitchen stove. Even though several respondents remember the wooden stove being thrown out when the rural areas of Sweden were electrified during the 1930's and 1940's (or later), several kitchens house an electric as well as a wooden stove. In one case, even, the household had fairly recently added a wooden stove to the "old" electric one. Affective aspects play an important role. The stove contributes to a "cosy" kitchen, it provides heating, but perhaps equally important is that it seems to be a safety device in that it provides heating and cooking facilities when the electricity is gone due to, e.g., bad weather.

Overall are the similarities between the rural households and the immigrants in the city suburb or the city centre dwellers are more obvious than the differences. Stoves, ovens, fridges and freezers, as well as food processors, coffee machines, and microwave ovens along with a number of additional household appliances are all part the 'standard package' (Riesman, 1964). Whether used or not, they are part of the domestic kit.

8.5. The great varieties cease to exist – the food store changes its shape

One important factor used to describe impoverishment in the countryside is the reduced access to service and above all the closing down of stores. Many stores provide citizens with important service and therefore the lack of stores lead to negative consequences. In Sweden the number of food stores have decreased by 19 % since the beginning of the 1990's (e.g., Glesbygdsverket 2004). In all, 1,016 food stores have closed down in Sweden between 1996 and 2005 and most of them had been situated in the countryside (Konsumentverket, 2006).

In Dalofors this development is very evident. The community has had a great variety of stores and some of the respondents described a lively village with almost 20 stores and a market every week. When cars were introduced people went outside the village to buy things and gradually stores began to close down. This became a vicious circle and when the service decreased more and more people took their cars to go to other places to do their shopping. Finally, Dalofors just had one food store left and its profitability was low. The food store chain then changed the store concept and the citizens of Dalofors found themselves left with a small city store with a narrow assortment and lots of sweets, soft drinks and crisps. The city store concept was a standardized concept for small service stores and while it may work very well in cities where people do not buy their main food supply in these stores, it was a negative change for the respondents, especially for people (typically older) who did not have the possibilities of using a car to go to other places to buy their food. An evident conclusion that can be drawn is that food store chains must adapt their small service store concepts and create a 'countryside concept' instead.

The food store is a very important meeting place for the participants in the study and they often go to the store to meet friends and to hear the "latest news". One does not need an excuse to go to the store and it is not always a planned activity as are many other things that the respondents are involved in. One can clearly see the potential if these older citizens could be seen as resources in the food store and the local society. They would undoubtedly become involved in the development of the local country store if they were given a chance. For instance, as already mentioned, many of the participants cultivate their own vegetables, go fishing and hunting, bake their own bread and maybe these goods and locally produced food could be sold through their local food store making the assortment more interesting. Another possible solution to the problem with stores in the countryside could be to create a virtual store. Younger people involved in organizational activities could help older ones without

computers to order food through Internet and the rooms used for activities could then serve as the new meeting place for this virtual store.

In sum, the participants have accepted the fact that the degree of service is low and they have ended up with a store that they actually do not like. On the other hand, there is a possibility of changing the store concept with the help of the older and still very active citizens. They do not have any fancy demands – they just want to eat proper natural food and be able to feel the aroma and touch the food as they once used to do.

8. Discussion, conclusions and implications

The overall aim of the project has been to contribute to increased knowledge and understanding of consumers' +55 and their views, preferences and expectations for food and food consumption in relation to differences in socioeconomic status, ethnicity, gender and regionality. The project has revealed similarities as well as differences between the three groups of consumers that have participated; the well-educated and economically well-off city dwellers, the new Swedes in the city suburb, and the individuals living a more sparsely populated area of Sweden. These similarities and differences have implications for food producers, for food stores, as well as for consumer policy makers.

For instance, all of the respondents have one thing in common: that they want to stay at their homes for as long as possible and take care of the daily cooking themselves. A consumer policy for the ageing population should support this standpoint, not only regarding food quality and issues of health and distribution, but also regarding social issues. Nicely set tables and conversation with relatives and friends are important. This is when the meaning and values of food flourish. For the new Swedes this meaningful environment mainly consists of the family. For the inner city and countryside dwellers, family is also important, but even more so are friends (for inner city dwellers) and locals (for countryside). These are the people with whom they want to spend their old age and share their meals – although sometimes they want to enjoy them on their own and having this choice is important!

For the new Swedes, mainly Bosnian and Iraqi Muslims, cooking and sometimes also eating are gender segregated. Cooking is the women's doing and they take great pride in it. Family meals in the evenings and on holidays are very important, while lunches and snacks often are eaten together with friends of the same sex: the women have coffee or tea and cakes in their homes while the men have lunch together in small restaurants or cafés with food from their home country. Acknowledging this partly family-based, partly gender-segregated eating in old age is also important when planning for services for the elderly. Regarding the Swedish born respondents it is equally important to do away with gender-segregated thinking in terms of food. It should not be taken for granted that women are able to and/or like to cook tasty and healthy food and that men are novices at the kitchen stove. It might just as well be the other way round.

Both the city dwellers and the rural consumers +55 can imagine moving to a service flat, when they are not able to cook for themselves any longer but their respective expectations differ. In the countryside the respondents do not have any huge demands for the standard of the service flats. The local service centre is a satisfactory solution: there they have friends and neighbours of the same generation that they have known for all of their life and feel comfortable with. The inner city dwellers, on the contrary, place high demands for luxurious

and technically advanced flats, nice eating environments, restaurant menus and entertainment: all kinds of experiences, and they cannot imagine living in an old people's home of former days. Some of the inner city residents even plan for a common living before retirement, just for the joy of living and eating together with friends, some of them may not be as healthy as themselves. To be able to choose who you share flats with, when and how to eat – by yourself or together – is important. The immigrants in the city suburb do not talk about moving into a service flat or a retirement home but it is not an unlikely scenario. Considering that many of them may have limited knowledge of Swedish, it is important that, e.g., different staff are multilingual and, further, that they have knowledge of different cultures.

It is obvious that experiences during the respondents' life histories have shaped their strategies of resource management and memories of resource scarcity have developed resourceful individuals. Actually their values are close to the modern lifestyle concept of being "environmental friendly". It is likely the consumer 55+ will adhere to policy regulations and appeals of changing everyday habits towards more environmentally sound ones. However, the consequences of the individual getting older and loosing bodily functions must be taken into consideration when designing the new solutions. The distance to the recycling station must be in short reach, public transport easily accessible and available close by, and organic food available in the local shop.

Furthermore, many of the respondents are health conscious. It is of utmost importance to them that their demand for, e.g., fresh fruit and vegetables will be fulfilled in the future, particularly if and when ready prepared meals are served or delivered. At the same time there is a clear tendency to value the gastronomic aspects of food among the men who participated in the study. Overall, many of the men are in the risk zone of developing food-related diseases, having too much fat in their diets. This is also a risk among the participating immigrant women. Help with nutritional information and food preparation might also be needed. For example, in those cases where one spouse has become sick and needs a special diet it is important that this is recognised and that special support is given. This can be done by making special products available on the market as well as services in the home, commercially or supplied by the public sector.

In order for the consumers +55 to remain in their own home, a prerequisite is that they can manage both the acquisition and preparation of food. Going shopping is not any major problem for most of the participants – as yet – but to be able to get food, both ingredients for home cooking and ready-prepared delivered to the door, is a wish that many have expressed, particularly the respondents in the rural area. New and inventive systems need to be developed, at least in Sweden, to fulfil this future need for distant shopping and home deliveries. Here, information and communication technology can play an important role. However, there may be other options. Particularly in the rural community there is the potential of developing communal activities among neighbours to prepare meals for each other, complementary to public food service programs.

A common theme across the three years is how the respondents' life experiences have affected the way they want to buy and eat food. Two different paradoxes have been found: A willingness to save or waste versus a willingness to possess or experience. Scantiness and being economical and satisfied with small things in life are evident for the participants that have grown up during war times, while the ones that have experienced a period of high economic growth when growing up are more interested in realization of dreams. For the rational consumers (mostly born during the 1920's) it is important to buy food worth its price,

while the consumers that consider themselves food experts (mostly born during the 1930's) like to buy high quality food that can be quite expensive following rather rigid perceptions of what type of food to cook and eat. On the other hand, there are others enjoying life and food shopping (mostly born during the late 1930's or 1940's), seeking new food experiences and brands as well as moralists (mostly born the 1940's) that have difficulties buying food with reference to health, environmental issues etc.

Overall, stores are important arenas for consumers' perception of food. Food stores can create different symbolic meanings of food and food brands. Buying food is an important social event and a way to meet other people. The respondents buy food frequently and many visit their food store more or less every day. Especially in the countryside they often visit the local food store to meet friends and to hear the "latest news". The closing down of stores has, however, led to the lack of what is considered to be a good food store. Instead they face a store with a dull and inferior assortment adapted to a city service concept. Shopping food for the immigrant participants is, in turn, a social activity giving meaning to their lives and they may even visit the store several times per day. Their problem is, on the other hand, their lack of economic resources leading to a consumption paradox. They want to consume, but it is simply not possible.

Thus, in order to create a positive extra value for the consumers +55 through different brands and store concepts, it is necessary to understand the diversities among the older consumers and what they regard as a good life. There are no food stores or concepts targeting older consumers in Sweden, the stores are developed to attract all consumers. Consequently, there is room for improvements. Food stores could try to market products that interest older consumers. The results indicate that older consumers read store adverts and recipes that the food stores send out and tend to plan their food consumption with regard to it. Evidently, food stores can adapt this communication and have special pages in the adverts that suit the diversity of older consumers. The store adverts and recipes also appear to play a crucial role in the process of learning and testing Swedish food and brands for older immigrants. In addition, having a place in the store for older consumers to interact, sit down and rest while talking to other older consumers could be seen as one way to enhance social interaction. Another way is to have a manual service for, e.g., cheese, meat and delicacies. This creates a feeling of the past when all food was bought in stores with manual service as well as in interaction with store personnel. For immigrants it could be a way to learn and test Swedish food.

In sum, when it comes to providing food for the consumer 55+ the findings lead to some clear implications:

- There should be a variety of choices; traditional Swedish foods, foods of other ethnic origin, organic and/or vegetarian food, industrial large scale as well as locally prepared.
- The food should also be served in a variety of settings to fulfil needs. For the ones who wish and are able to prepare their food at home, there should be a facilitating delivery system of food items. For those not interested in food preparation there should be a variety of other possibilities; local restaurants and/or home delivered ready prepared meals, supplied by the public catering service or commercially.
- Food stores could adapt their stores with regard to the diversities of old consumers. However, the older consumers should not be treated as old, but as customers along with other customer groups.

- Using city store concepts in the countryside will lead to a store poorly adapted to the needs of old consumers forced to buy their food in the local store. Instead a country store concept should be added to the existing ones.
- Commercial forces could actively take part of cultural change processes for old immigrants and serve as a bridge to a new food culture. Consequently, food stores ought to draw attention to how Swedish food customs and products could be introduced to immigrants along with a mix of other cultural food influences.

What was found most impressive during the three years' project was the inventiveness regarding food and eating that the respondents showed. They had lots of ideas on how to improve their own eating situation as well as for elderly people in general, ranging from housing and transports to dishes and issues of health and sustainability, ideas well worth trying. The best proposition to policy makers is to listen to the 55+ consumers and support their local ideas. Consumers 55+ are the experts on how to create high quality eating conditions for older people.

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Pragmatic age

The meaning of age in relation to consumption of holidays among Danish and German mature travellers: horror-vision or privilege?¹

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Abstract

Growing old and being old is not associated with positive connotations in today's society. A number of stereotypes about the elderly confirm this. This might be part of the explanation why people dissociate themselves from being elderly or old, and an extensive body of literature documents that there is a clear difference between chronological and cognitive age. In this paper it is examined how Danish and German mature couples consider age, particularly with regard to consumption of holidays, and the use of young and elderly models in tourism marketing. The study is based on six focus groups and five qualitative interviews with mature couples. As a supplement to the well-known categories chronological versus cognitive age, the concept of pragmatic age is suggested to indicate that mature consumers can choose to negotiate the use of their age whenever they find it appropriate. The mature tourist can use age pragmatically – as the only one, the seller of tourism services cannot.

1. Introduction

“Great-grandmother, why do you have so many wrinkles”, a six-year-old's voice penetrates the dining room and all voices silence. The silence remains a few seconds, worried glances are exchanged among parents and grandparents. A great taboo has been touched upon, wrinkles being perhaps the most obvious signifier of old age. “It's because I'm so old, I'm almost 100 years old” the 84 year old woman answers courageously. The tension disappears, conversation continues. On the way back home in the car the 6-year old is being reprimanded: “Don't comment on people who look old, fat or strange when they are there, please”.

This little happening shows clearly enough that a taboo is tightly linked to being old and to looking old. At the same time as much research and demographic numbers document the segments of consumers who are not 18 anymore are growing and are at the same time affluent and active consumers.

Many issues are at stake related to mature consumers. An indignation can be seen related to the fact that older models are not represented in the media landscape, particularly in advertising and if they are present it is either as background figures or very well-kept young looking older people, but at the same time there is an obvious difficulty linked to showing elderly people, with all signs of age, because other studies show that people do not want to identify with being old. But how do mature consumers themselves view this? What is the

¹ The notion of 'pragmatic age' was inspired by the work of Robert Chr. Thomsen, Aarhus University, Denmark on 'pragmatic identity'.

meaning of age? And are mature consumers victims of negative and discriminating social constructions of age only or are they also experiencing or even using age as an empowering asset?

The main target groups of travellers in Denmark are German and Danish tourists. By the end of 2004, the Danish tourism board, VisitDenmark, decided to take a closer look at mature couples travelling without children, their second largest target group of visitors to Denmark among tourists after families with children. In this study mature couples were defined as couples older than 45 years.

The research objective of this article is to examine the meaning of age held by these consumers to know more about how these travellers perceive their own age and the signification of age when it comes to travelling and market communication promoting travelling. It is the assumption of the article that the one-sided perception of age being a taboo and only a horror-vision for mature consumers is too limited. This paper seeks to nuance this discussion.

2. The Meaning of Age

In the following relevant aspects of research, journalistic articles and various reports are presented regarding characteristics of mature consumers, myths of older people, and the concepts of chronological and cognitive age. By now a considerable body of literature exists written by researchers, marketers and journalists on the topic "mature consumers", a label, which most often covers consumers older than 50 years. The background of this interest is of course that the group of 50+ consumers is growing, they have got money and at the same time it is a large and varied group of people.

The grey segment (s)

Chris Evers, former director of the Danish organisation Ældresagen (The Cause of the Elderly) writes:

During the next 40 years the age pyramid will almost be turned around in significant parts of the western world, and for the first time in history the society will be in a situation where more than half of the population will be more than 50 years (Evers, 2004, p. 43).

In addition to this Evers notes that the group of people older than 50 years constitutes approximately 30% of the population in Denmark but that these people own 70% of the financial assets and have 56% of disposable income (Evers, 2004, pp. 48-49). In Britain 61% of new cars are purchased by people over 50 (Bashford, 2004). Various labels are used regarding the segment of consumers over 50. The youngest in the group the 50-65 year olds are by Chris Evers called "the large cohorts". He defines them as follows:

'The large cohorts' are characterised by a longer life span, most of them are strong and functional - both physically, psychologically and socially - they have a relatively highest standard of living, and they wish to keep it to live out their dreams. They feel young and their withdrawal from the labour market is not at all a withdrawal from life. They are used to getting things the way they want. They are well educated and have an enormous appetite for life. They seek experiences, new

challenges and knowledge. They emphasise quality and are willing to pay for it. They are looking forward to trying some of the things they have postponed while they were working or while the children were living at home. 'The large cohorts' are active, extrovert, ready to change, quality conscious and more than willing to spend their money on products, which can add to their active lifestyle and give them new experiences. 'The large cohorts' will turn perceptions of elderly people as a passive and needy group upside down (Evers, 2004, p. 45).

Obviously there is both a strong and a weak part of this group, and clearly not everyone has the energy Evers sketches. Jean-Paul Tréguer proposes that the group can be split up in four segments: The Masters (50-59 years), The Liberated (60-74 years), The Peaceful (75-84 years) and finally The Elderly (85+) (Tréguer, 2002, p. 32). Tréguer claims that age is the most important criteria of segmentation because a person is marked by the events, which take place while he or she grows up, e.g. a world war. Poul Røpke distinguishes between the baby boomers between 50 and 70 and the more than 70 year olds as the more traditional elderly people, the seniors, even though many of these are also well functioning (Røpke, 2004, p. 20). This distinction is shared by John Picket, director of the Saga Groups market and media research: *We also recognise that baby-boomers have a very different attitude from the war generation*" (quoted in Bashford, 2004). The new generation of elderly people are often not as worn-down physically speaking as earlier generations. The baby boomers are characterised by Røpke as a generation who have experienced an optimistic society in a very dynamic development in the 1950s and 1960s with wealth, education, consumption and tourism, which their parents did not know.

A number of other sources stress that the complexity of this group is so central that the focus on generation is too simplistic. E.g. Kreilkamp as well as Morgan and Levy focus on the signification of lifestyle and interests instead of age. Kreilkamp writes: "The chronological age is not appropriate for market segmentation because this target group is not homogeneous at all" (Kreilkamp, 2005).

No one is old...

When it comes to the categorisation of certain age groups one would be politically incorrect if anyone were called old. Being old has a number of negative connotations (life would soon be over, it would be going downhill, one would not be able to manage without help, you die when you are old, etc.). For that reason many other labels than old are used when mature consumers are discussed. "The grey gold" is one label, where "grey" is perhaps a negative world, whereas "gold" is of course interesting for the business world, with a clear focus on these consumers' money. "Olden Goldies" is more or less the same with a touch of ridicule. The "50+" age group is a much applied label, which is more neutral but obviously covering a huge group of consumers. Another definition is "mature consumers". Being mature originally covered the 18 year olds who become adult and get the right to vote, buy alcohol in bars and drive a car (in Denmark). This final label "mature consumers" seems to be one step away from slightly patronizing names such as the "Olden Goldies".

Bradley and Longino (2001, p. 17) write that old age cannot be seen as a unity, and age needs to be considered as part of a life-long process of development. This theory stresses that the context and the social relations into which an individual's life is spun is much more important than the chronological age as also argued above. Treas and Longino, (1997), stress the importance of gender, background, income, education, career and health as significant factors in people's self-understanding. Many different attitudes and lifestyles exist as in any other

segment. Still the very perception of being old and what one can do when one is old has been and is changing.

Myths and stereotypes about the group

A number of stereotypes exist regarding this group of 50+ consumers; for example that they are passive, conservative, stingy, submissive, fragile and helpless (Gunter, 1998). And even though mature segments have both socio-political and consumer power: “the emphasis on youthfulness in contemporary culture has meant that aged bodies have often been marginalized or subject to ridicule (Sawchuk, 1995; Thomas and Wolfe, 1995, Gunter, 1998)” Hodgetts et al, 2003, p. 418. Also it is documented by various studies that media images of elderly people constitute caricatures which do not correspond to the way elderly people live or perceive themselves (Hodgetts et al., 2003, p. 418).

Several sources (among others Evers 2004) maintain that the myths about the elderly die hard, and many do not understand why producers and marketers are not more focussed towards the group, and seem to focus on and give priority to younger segments, which is for example reflected in the use of young models in advertising. In recent literature about mature consumers most of these myths are rejected. Bashford writes: “Despite the stereotype of older generations as anti-change, they are a liberal bunch, with many wielding wallets full of cash they want to spend” (Bashford, 2004, p. 1). Bradley and Longino write that younger people have a much clearer image of how older people are, than older people have themselves (2001, p. 17). They mention an analysis of caricatures by ageing bodies carried out by Scarfe (1993). The caricaturists make deep wrinkles in the face, hanging skin under the chin, draw people bald or with grey hair, with shrunken lips, liver spots, bowed legs and stooped backs and with all kinds of accessories as walking canes, walkers or wheelchairs.

In a study from 2000 from the American National Council on the Ageing, researchers compared young and old people’s view on “old-age problems” such as health, income, loneliness and crime. It was found that more young than old worried about these problems. This indicates that the chronological age is no central indicator for the experience of ageing (Whitelaw, 2000, quoted in Bradley and Longino, 2001). Bradley and Longino write: “age is not very central in defining who older people think they are. Younger people tend to have a more defined idea about what old age is like than older people do”.

There has recently, however, been a change in the general presentation in the way elderly people are presented in media “to include the ‘active’ or ‘remarkably youthful elderly’” (Hodgetts et al., 2003, p. 419). Elderly people are slightly more present in media representations, but with a focus on the youthful and well-kept look (Carrigan and Szmigin, 2000).

Difference between chronological and perceived age

As mentioned above in the literature about the mature segment it is questioned whether age is at all a relevant criteria to work with because the chronological age does not at all seem to be central in peoples self-perception: “elderly people act much younger than their age would suggest (Lazer, 1985, quoted in Millian and Erffmeyer, 1989) of course revealing a clear idea of how elderly people ought to behave. And “Most rate their health as good to excellent and feel 10-15 years younger than they are (Hanson, 1987, quoted in Millian and Erffmeyer, 1989). In a Swedish study by Oberg and Tornstam (1999 also quoted in Bradley og Longino, 2001) 2000 Swedes between 20 and 85 years of age were asked if they think their bodies reflect who they are. It appears that more than 80 percent of all respondents and an even

bigger part of the respondents older than 65 answers positively. This indicates that most people seem to accept their bodies as reflections of themselves, and the older the better (Bradley and Longino, 2001).

Biggs (1999 quoted by Bradley and Longino) thinks that people create their identity later in life through what they have achieved in the past and according to which plans they have for the future, rather than from a set of stereotypes and most often negative characteristics of what it means to be old (Bradley and Longino, 2001, p.18). According to the authors people only feel old if they are sick or depressed and have a tendency of associating being old with people in a rest home. Bradley and Longino conclude that elderly people have not got a shared image of the meaning of getting old, and that there are huge differences within the group. The mature consumers identify themselves with several different aspects besides their age.

Market communication and models

"The day I have something to sell to this target group I will not mess up the message by letting an 18 year old assure a 60 year old that this or that product will keep her young and in shape"

(Extract from discussion group made by Chris Evers, Evers, 2004, p. 43).

Carrigan and Szmigin, 2000 offer a clear overview of studies that show that advertising do not reflect a balanced and equal view of the population in ads. Obviously, in connection to the discussion of cognitive or chronological age, it is clearly a problem when models have to be chosen for market communication. Which age should models reflect? "Body image", the perception of ones own body, is particularly difficult to handle when it comes to marketing targeted at older segments. According to Bradley and Longino in the current market communication it is claimed that elderly people worry about their changed physical appearance which is different from the "perfect bodies" which are cultivated in the consumer culture and are shown in ads (Morris, 1998 in Bradley and Longino, 2001). According to Featherstone and Hepworth (1993 quoted in Bradley and Longino, 2001), however, the physical observable appearance change with age, the core identity does not. There has not been a tradition for showing other than young people in ads. Older people have almost not appeared in ads, and if they have it has often been in caricatured roles (Gunter, 1998). As mentioned by Carrigan and Szmigin, 2000, more room has recently been accommodated for older models, but only the youthful and well-kept models.

The general perception of being old and elderly is negative. People do not identify with being old and probably why people tend to perceive themselves as 10-15 years younger than they really are. But at the same time they do not want to be perceived as pretending to be too young either. An example is Doug Garner, a consultant for the market research company OlderButWiser, who is 50+ himself. He explains that he has seen a new car, which he really fancies, but "I wouldn't be seen dead in a car like that - it's so obviously designed for a young person" (Bashford, 2004). Not perceiving one-self as old and not pretending to be too young either reveal a complex web of meanings related to age and consumption.

Summing up it is clear that mature consumers cannot be stigmatized as one group and not at all as "old". These consumers are heterogeneous just as other consumer age groups. Stereotypes about mature people (that they are passive, vulnerable, conservative, stingy, etc.) die hard but are out of tune with reality and these peoples' self-perception. The experience this group holds, the society in which they grew up, the resources they are in charge of and

the influence they are used to having, makes this group very different (active, anti-authoritarian, self-centered, fit, etc.) from mature people in earlier days. According to the literature these people do not identify with their chronological age, but they build their identity on what they have obtained in life till now and the plans they have for the future and rather identify with a cognitive age. Few older models than young models are used in the media landscape, recently more elderly models are being used, but only youthful and well-kept models. This indicates that chronological old age and being old are absolute taboos which no one identifies with at any point and that elderly and old people are mere invisible victims in the advertising and consumption game. The following empirical study on mature consumers show that this does not always hold true, but that age is also used as a means of bargaining and negotiation by empowered mature consumers.

3. Methodology

This paper is based on an empirical comparative study among Danish and German mature consumers, as these are a main target group in Danish tourism. As a first step, 5 qualitative interviews with couples were carried out in Aalborg, Denmark. Hereafter 6 roundtable discussions were carried out in Aalborg, Düsseldorf and Hamburg, with one group younger than 60 named “the empty nester group” and one group older than 60, named “the senior group” in each city. The informants were between 45 and 75 years of age, and a criterion of selection was that they were active travellers. The interviews were carried out in people’s homes, and the roundtable discussions in a market research institute in Aalborg. The participants were recruited by the market research institute and carried out by the author and assistants.

To generate talk about holiday and the meaning of age a number of relevant themes were brought up and participants were asked to make a collage by picking out 5-6 pictures from 47 promotional pictures featuring various holiday activities, accommodation and nature with both young and elderly models. Also the participants were asked to comment on 3 posters with various product offerings also featuring elderly to old models. Only at the end of the interview age was introduced directly by the moderators.

The analysis is built up thematically and the literature review functions as a conceptual framework with a special emphasis on how the participants talk about age, how this relates to the myths about being elderly, how shifts related to age influence on holiday consumption and finally how age from time to time can be used actively with a specific aim in mind. The data has been analyzed with an openness towards patterns and tendencies, which offers knowledge about the participant’s perception of age related to holiday consumption.

The target group, which is in focus in this project, is mature people who live in couples. Singles are thus not represented even though this without any doubt could have been interesting. Still the data material represents testimonies from a very broad group in Germany and Denmark from couples with teenage children, who have just left home, but still are very present in the home to couples who have grandchildren who are already grown-up. The study is obviously not directly generalizable due to the limited size of the sample, but the qualitative nature of the study allows for detailed and indepth understanding of the perception of age of the participants, and findings are considered in the light of other studies. Therefore it is plausible that the findings are valid not just in this specific context.

The participants in this study are people who travel several times a year. The findings and the view on ageing would possibly have been slightly different if couples who travel less or not at all had been chosen.

Travelling is considered a particularly interesting case study because this is a high involvement activity which people clearly use in their construction of self, and at the same time this is an area, which is a bit more strenuous than everyday life.

4. The Meaning of Age in a travelling Context

The travel preferences and forms do not seem to change much with age for the participants in focus groups and interviews. The participants are getting slightly more comfortable with age in certain areas, but many of them stress that they are actually more active now, that they used to be, when they were on holiday. Age is not mentioned much among the empty nesters, a bit more among the senior participants, who are often in the midst of a number of changes in their lives. A few empty nesters do however refer to age as a part of an argumentation “In our age...” but this is very few. Several participants in both kinds of groups seem to fit better into the other kind of group (empty nesters appearing much older, or seniors appearing much younger than the other members of their respective groups). In other words the appearance and preferences often seem to be much more a question about attitude and life style than age.

Myths about the mature consumers revisited

As found in the literature review a number of myths about mature consumers – particularly among the oldest – exist in society and in the media landscape, despite the fact that much research claim that these myths are out of tune with mature consumers self-perception and actual lifestyle. One such myth is that older consumers are stingy, conservative and passive.

Among the participants in the study there are a few ascetics. The oldest couple in the sample appeared to be very stingy were very concerned about costs. A few dollars of difference in the price of electricity can make them choose one campsite instead of another:

I think we are an age group who have been taught to think a little of.... [Being close-fisted] the ones who are there now, the young people...we can see that on our grandchildren. They are not really bothered...’Never mind, we’ll earn some more money tomorrow, right?’ We probably think a bit more about it because we have tried narrow circumstances (interview with senior couple 1 Aalborg).

A part from this couple, the participants give the impression that money is used and enjoyed – also on being spoilt. The ascetic couple also tells, in big contrast to the other participants that “We do not make big demands”, “We have not got big needs”, and this indicates that this couple represents as the only ones in the study “the war generation”.

Another myth is that mature couples should be conservative and less inclined to try out new products and activities is one of the myths which among others Carrigan and Smzigin, 2001, raise doubt about. On the questions regarding which activities that the participants in the groups wish to try in their holidays, Hans (senior group Hamburg) answers “Something new. To try it out”, which in this case indicates a certain open-mindedness towards new activities. This is also found by Lone (interview with empty nester couple 2, Aalborg): “I like to see something new, to experience something new”. When it comes to holiday destinations some

participants have certain places they return to every year, whereas others enjoy trying something new.

A third myth often mentioned is that older consumers should be passive. Several participants argue that they have become more active, and that they for example do not care to lie on the beach anymore, now when this is not demanded by their children: "We have found out that we are not as interested as we used to be in lying eight hours on the beach anymore. Those days are over. Today we want to be more active on our holiday. To go for a ride on a bike, or to play tennis. Or to go to towns and go shopping. Simply to do something" (Reinholt, empty nestergruppen Düsseldorf). For some participants age starts to burden a little, but several are very active, and some are even preoccupied by even very physical activity. Even though most participants in the senior groups have left the labour market, participants in these groups still express that they want to leave home to get away from their everyday lives filled with appointments and obligations.

The empirical data is thus in line with research that argue that the stereotyped image of older consumers do not represent an adequate image of the self perception of these consumers.

Shifts

For several participants there have been shifts compared to earlier. Particularly in the senior groups but also in some empty nester groups many have left the labour market. But there are also other shifts. Ole (senior group Aalborg) has just sold his boat, Lone and Kaj (empty nester couple Aalborg) have sold their holiday residence and their house and have moved into an apartment. Hans (senior group Düsseldorf) tells that he has started going skiing with his grandchild, because his wife cannot go skiing any longer. Carlo (senior group Aalborg) does not go skiing anymore because he was frightened by a crash last time he went skiing. For some the grandchildren take up a lot of time and energy and some bring their grandchildren on holidays. Others are longing to become grandparents and imagine what the holiday will be like when the grandchildren will be visiting. Deaths among old travel companions can also mean a shift. Many participants therefore have to redefine and reconstruct their holiday habits to some extent.

The participants are asked if and how their holiday has changed from earlier. Several participants emphasise that they are now travelling on their own terms. Hanne from the senior group in Aalborg thinks that the holiday now is more luxurious and more egoistic: "Now we don't have to take the needs of the children into account any longer". And Asta (also the senior group Aalborg) continues: "It was their [the children's] terms".

The new freedom (from work, from the kids) is considered a privilege: "This [new freedom] is our advantage now: we can do as we please, and then you should do it" (Ole, the senior group Aalborg).

Or: "If the weather is nice then we can just go. And when we are just the two of us, well then you can just say if you feel like staying somewhere then you can rent a room in a hotel. [...] Well, we like that, we are free now". (empty nester interview 2, Aalborg, who have just sold house and holiday residence and bought large apartment). Whether this is just talk or if the participants really live out this new freedom to the extent that they claim is not central here, they construct themselves as free and lucky in this context.

The participants travel a lot, and several of them seem to have (gotten) plenty of money. Alex tells about eating out: "30 years ago we couldn't afford it [eating out]. Today where we are alone, or without children that is, we treat ourselves to this luxury" (Axel, empty nester group Hamburg).

When the participants are asked if they think that their holiday habits will change in 5-10-15 years several they answer "No" spontaneously. When Susan from empty nester interview 1 is asked if the fact that she has become more comfortable has to do with age, she says, "I don't think it has to do with age". A few considerations are mentioned regarding whether their age will eventually limit them in their travelling – but not yet. Ole does not think that he will do horse riding in 10 years but then again: "In ten years, I don't think so, well, I don't know. There is someone I have been doing some evening rides with. He is 82. I won't be that in ten years. So maybe one should never say never".

Hanne (the senior group Aalborg) imagines that age might play a role for her legs: "Maybe you can't take all those walks you can now. If you are in Copenhagen for instance, or in another big city you have to see. Maybe you will have to take a cab or a tram or a bus at a certain point in time". It is interesting to notice that she does not intend to stop travelling, but to make use of e.g. transport facilities instead of walking, which witnesses of a continued and strong appetite on travelling.

Health

Particularly in the senior groups possible health problems are mentioned – both as a reality for some but also something, which from day to day can change one's life situation. As Ole from the senior group in Aalborg says: "This is perhaps exactly why we are so busy travelling right now while we can." A significant share of the Danish participants often travel outside Denmark and consider Denmark a safe but perhaps also slightly boring alternative, with places one can always see, when one gets too weak or unstable to go abroad, because the Danish health care system is perceived as the best in the world (another myth but that is another story).

Several interviewees in the German groups consider going on or do already go on health vacations, where the visitors can get medical check-ups, which by some participants is evaluated positively. There is a long German tradition for doing this, till recently sponsored by the German health insurance.

By some age has started to burden a little – and to play a role for the holiday: "You learn to live with what you can do, right? That is how it has to be. You don't jump and dance any longer" (Villy, senior interview 1 Aalborg). In this couple the wife is using a walker after having broken her thighbone. The couple experience that it makes great limits to where they can get, particularly it limits them from coming right down to the water at the beach at many places.

Participants do not consider themselves old or elderly, as reported in the literature study, but in the group discussion it turns out that age has a meaning. Above all an underlying anxiety and uncertainty about how long one will stay fit reign:

"The older you get, the more you will travel around at home [in Denmark]" and "You are inclined to say that as long as we can travel, we'll do it" (Elin, the senior group Aalborg).

I think it is a very big truth that this is why [because the health is good now] we travel so much. It is because we in good health as we sit here. And then I think it is important that we get to see all those things we did not see when we had the kids and went to work more or less stressed. Now we have the time, and we have the money, most people in Denmark. And we can go as pensioners, more or less. [...] We definitely have to do it now, it is not damned sure we can do it in 10-15 years (Ole, the senior group Aalborg).

“It is not damn sure” they can go in 10-15 years Ole argues. He does not just say “we can’t go in 10-15 years”, they probably will do it in the future, but to be sure they should not wait.

Some have had to change their ways already: [Carlo does not ski any longer]: “I’m too bloody old for that now” (the senior group Aalborg).

Travelling means a lot for the participants. At the thought of not being able to travel as much in the future, Hanne says: “Oh, it will be horrible”. In the senior group in Aalborg participants discuss that in the future they will again have to go places, where they were when their children were young. These are places, which are perceived as safe and accessible, such as Denmark, places in Germany like Hartzen and the Rhine, Austria, Norway and Sweden. The long flights start to become tiring. This reveals an anticipated image of themselves as in need of care and extra security as children are perceived to need. Particularly for the seniors it is getting a more and more pressing factor that they cannot count on that their health will still be fine in 10 or 20 years. On the other hand the seniors enjoy the biggest freedom, and several of them express that they feel privileged: “Last year I went on early retirement, then we got plenty of time” Carina (senior group, Aalborg). And: “We have time, we have money. We can drink our coffee more slowly” Hannelore, (senior group, Düsseldorf). We can drink our coffee more slowly, than we used to be able to, more slowly than the people who are working, this is clearly perceived as a new and privileged situation.

Becoming senior is not something, which just happens. Eva from the senior group in Aalborg has tried a “senior offer” in an inn and she says:

It is also kind of strange, this about being senior...because we were there at Vissenbjerg Kro, and we were actually some of the youngest ones. Not that it matters, but we just were. It is new that my husband stopped working and that I have. But that was just nice, peaceful and quiet. (Eva, Senior group, Aalborg).

This quote shows that Eva is not at ease yet with her life as a senior “this about being senior”. Statements as “we were actually some of the youngest”, “Not that it matters”, indicates that it does matter, and that one does not just slide over and become senior automatically. The empty nesters do not to the same extent mention considerations about age and health. The seniors feel this more closely on their own bodies and in their surroundings. The cognitive age is however not in tune with the chronological age as described in the literature.

Pragmatic age

Age leaves its marks. Even if the majority of the informants in this study are very well kept, fit and well-dressed, hearing aid, glasses, walkers, walking canes, and crutches are not a rare thing. They still do not consider themselves old. But age is an argument, which can be used in certain contexts. As mentioned in the literature review most people only feel old when they

are ill or depressed. The participants in this study do not perceive themselves as being old but in certain situations they designate themselves as old (even though they are neither ill nor depressed).

Iris from the senior group in Hamburg misses offers in holiday resorts as Yoga or Chi Gong. She says, "If this was offered I'm sure this would be very interesting. Especially for our age group". By using the argument that it is especially for our age group, without further argumentation, Iris plays up against the existing stereotypes of elderly people who have special needs, and peaceful activities are appropriate.

Carlo from the senior group in Aalborg tells about a recent trip to Malaysia, where they were two couples who had to go by night-train from Kuala Lumpur to Penang. He tells that the man at the booking office at the railway station said: "You look a bit grey in the top", and Carlo continued "But that's because we are old". Then they got the tickets at a very low price, which they were very happy about. This shows that when it comes to negotiating price age can be used as a powerful argument, where the informant aligns himself with the stereotypes of being a poor elderly in need of special reductions, even though that throughout the focus group he has staged himself as an active, empowered, independent traveller. Most of all maybe the small story above is a story of how he got himself a good and unexpected reduction in price and age was a trump he played.

Regarding not having one's own bathroom, almost all participants say: "This is something you don't want". Hanne from the senior group says: "No, not when you are past a certain age". Or Tove from the senior group in Aalborg: "I think we have grown away from that". These comments also appear in the empty nester groups. This is also an example of how, to obtain a privilege, age is used as an argument, again playing onto the traditional stereotypes of needs of special care and profiting from certain rights.

Hanne's husband does not want to go to cafés. Hanne does. She tells: "One of the things we discuss the most is...I love going to cafés and so on. Particularly in Paris or in Copenhagen. Then my husband says 'Arhh, that's only for young people and so'. Then I say: 'That doesn't matter, I would like to try that'. This is an example of how age is used as an argument between spouses to argue against an activity. Going to the café is by the husband presented as being inappropriate for not young persons, and for the sake of the argument he here accepts categorizing the couple as not young.

The data material thus indicates that the interviewees themselves can talk about being old when it suits them. In certain situations they can themselves use this label, to avoid doing something (not having one's own bathroom, not going to cafés, not sleeping in a tent) or to get something (attractive prices, special courses). Others – on the contrary – have to be very careful to indicate that they are old, as for example the findings below regarding market communication indicate.

Market communication and models

As found in the literature study the use of models in advertisements when targeting mature consumers is ambiguous. Age is cognitive and everything indicates that the participants do not identify with being mature consumers, unless they need it to legitimize certain rights or avoid doing something. To generate talk about models in market communication the participants were shown a number of posters with various offers where mature models had been used and the participants themselves were asked to make their own collage and pick 5-6

pictures from 47 promotional pictures, which had been selected to assure that there were mature models in a number of these. As a last question in the focus groups participants were asked directly about the age of models in promotional material for holidays. This was not necessarily something the participants had been thinking about before. Clearly mixed feelings occurred. On the one hand asked directly if they are bothered by the fact that the age of models in most promotional material is 18-25 years typically, the participants answer that yes this is actually wrong, but on the other hand a number of them mention that it does not bother them that the models are young.

Some argue that young models are beautiful and wonderful to look at, and other participants say that they do not notice the models at all; they concentrate on the pictures of the tourism destination instead. In this discussion several come to think of a poster with a product offering featuring quite old people in a holiday park: "The people in those pictures we just saw were too old for me personally" Uwe (empty nester group Hamburg) and another participant continues: "I thought so too actually" Beatrice (empty nester group Hamburg). The participants in the groups discuss how the use of models should be ideally. Most participants conclude that a good mix of ages would be preferable:

A good mix would be good. Even though you maybe already are older than the persons in the photo, you think 'that is old folks, I am not even going to look at that'. You still feel more attracted to the younger models than to the seniors (Axel, empty nester group Hamburg)

Asta claims "They could put some models [in the catalogue] with a bit of wrinkles here and there" (senior group Aalborg).

The strong feelings related to the issue of age is revealed in the following: "We have also seen some photos from the USA, where there are real pensioner towns. There they make promotional material with matching old people. That is a little bit my horror-vision" (Kai, empty nester group Hamburg). "Horror-vision" is a very strong word (shudder, shiver, scary) and indicates – even though he softens it a bit by saying "a little bit" that this is very deeply felt, that he dissociates himself from identifying with being old and living in towns with only other elderly people.

Another participant talks about a senior catalogue for travelling he has come across: "And that catalogue [senior catalogues] I am not even going to look at those. Not yet. In normal catalogues there should be a healthy mix [of models]" Axel (empty nester group Hamburg). In "normal" catalogues Axel says (so senior catalogues are not "normal") there ought to be a "healthy" mix. But "I am not even going to look at those" yet", he then says, and the question is if he will ever be ready to see himself as old.

Regarding the use of models some enjoy the aesthetic of the young beautiful models that are slim and suntanned. Hanne says: "I think many of them are so beautiful, so I think it is a delight to the eye to look at" (senior group Aalborg).

Asta tells: "If he [her husband] sees a large travel catalogue, with a big swimming pool with such a babe, then he says "Do you get her as well?" (Asta, senior group Aalborg). Peter in the empty nester group in Aalborg says the same, as a – slightly sexist - joke to the female

moderators of the discussion group and to the (male) person sitting next to him, about a young lady in a picture of a spa.

A promotional picture of a young man in front of a holiday cottage generates some talk. Christine (empty nester group Hamburg) creates a lot of amusement while the participant are choosing pictures for their collages by exclaiming "Isn't he just cute?" stressing that models matter.

Some participants think that promotional pictures have to be with young models: "It does not bother me if it is young people in the pictures. They are more photogeneous than us" (Rosemarie, senior group Düsseldorf). And: "But it is probably that [young models] which sells the best. We probably have to acknowledge that [...] such oldish ones like us with little hair, we sell nothing in comparison to those fancy ones, who pose with bodybuilders and cool ladies. That's perfectly clear. Perfectly clear" (Torkild, senior couple 2 Aalborg).

4. Conclusions

The concepts of chronological and cognitive age are certainly relevant to understand the life worlds of the German and Danish participants in this study. The participants in the discussion groups in Denmark and Germany do not consider themselves seniors or old folks. They are to a high extent living an active life and have a great appetite on travelling. Many tell that they have become more comfortable with age but at the same time that they have become more active. Instead of lying on the beach for hours they want to walk, bike and go sightseeing.

Getting away from stress is still an important argument for going on vacation. This indicates that life is not any less hectic, even though the children have grown up and that there is not necessarily a labour market job to care about. Even if a number of the participants have withdrawn from the labour market the majority of them are involved in many activities also in their everyday lives. Several talk with obviousness about exercising in their everyday life. The empty nesters in the study speak slightly more about the importance of having time on the vacation than do the seniors. This indicates that the seniors after all do have more time at this point in their lives. As Hannelore (senior group Düsseldorf) says "we can drink our coffee more slowly". Freedom, more time and for these people also more money come along with age, which is perceived as a privilege.

The health starts to be ailing for a few participants, primarily from the senior groups, and e.g. deaths in the circle of friends means that the thought that travel activities (and everything else) will not last forever becomes more present. There is a clear perception of that "we have to travel while we can", but it is also a clear perception that the travel activities can still go on for really long. The empty nester groups are not in the same way burdened by the thought about how long the health will last.

The concept of pragmatic age is added to the theoretical discussion on age to clarify how being old it not just a taboo and something which is not to be identified with as it is most often described in existing literature. Being of a high age can also be used as a means of negotiation to gain or avoid something, and to legitimize certain decisions or demands. This is a completely different and open way to talk about age unlike the chronological age studded with taboos. The cognitive age is to be considered and to consider one-self as younger (10-15 years is often mentioned) more dynamic and fitter (than one should think of a 70 year old for

instance) where as the pragmatic age is used to identify with the stereotypes of being old, poor, helpless, passive as a means of negotiation to obtain goods and special services or get one's will.

Models used in market communication clearly matter. Old models are not particularly popular, and particularly the participants in the empty nester groups dissociate themselves totally from senior catalogues – even classified as “not normal” or “horror-visions”.

At the same time several participants are annoyed with market promotion only using very young models. The old models in the test material do, however, give rise to significantly stronger negative reactions than the young models. The meaning of age in general and in relation to consumption of holidays is a complex zone with multiple negotiable borders, which can be crossed by some people in some situations. The mature consumers in this study appear to be empowered consumers using age, which is both a privilege and a horror-vision, in various ways as tools in their construction of selves as consumers of holidays.

The informants in this study are no doubt wealthier and travelling more and further away than other mature consumers. It could obviously be relevant to replicate this study with less affluent groups of consumers in the same age group. It is however interesting to see that even the affluent and active group use age as a means of negotiation.

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The everyday life of the elderly in the cross-current of services and self-service

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the everyday life of the elderly and their consumption of services. Little is known about how consumption is related to ageing people's conceptions of a good quality of everyday life or how electronic services and increasing self-service promote a good everyday life among the elderly. Consequently, the paper focuses on the characteristics and "statistical picture" of ageing consumers. Additionally, ageing theories and their applications that provide a picture of elderly people's consumption will be examined, such as activity theories, cognitive age and gerotranscendence. The use of household services, electronic services, self-service and self-provisioning will be further discussed as based on the latest studies by the National Consumer Research Centre. Finally, the article points out that the growing numbers of elderly people will increase their future influence in the service market.

1 Introduction

Public discussion on ageing has been dominated by elderly people's need for care and the provision of care. Less attention has been paid to ageing people in their consumer roles. No unified conception exists, either, on who can be classed as ageing. The definition of ageing is problematic because all who were born also grow old. Ageing is usually defined from the phase of life where the majority of each cohort leaves working life. It currently concerns those between 50-70 years of age (Simpura 2005, 9), meaning a whole array of consumers with a wide variety of economic, social and health resources (Myrskylä 2005, 17-33).

Ageing is characterized by an increasing need for services. The demand for services is growing in Finland under circumstances where the public provision of services is being challenged by economic problems and a shortage of labour. Service need is greatly affected by changes in the functional capacity and health status of the elderly. Additionally, the availability of family care and the willingness and possibilities of, for instance, a spouse or children to help their close ones affects the need for

services. However, market-based services become a necessary supply for public service production and the care services provided by families themselves. Care services and services that contribute to ageing people's independent living are especially needed.

The technologization of services has been considered an essential solution to the growing need for services. Human labour is increasingly being replaced by technology. According to technological optimism, elderly people's independent initiatives can be promoted by technological solutions, especially in housing (Elderathome 2003). Correspondingly, ageing people are being socialized to become members of the information society by teaching them computer skills and computer literacy. However, whether increasing technological development will promote equality among the elderly is another issue (Tuorila and Kytö 2005).

Expectations concerning the wealth, activity and especially the improving health of future cohorts make elderly people an important target for research and policy. The positive national trends in functional ability indicate that elderly people will be able to enjoy greater independence and a better quality of life in the future. The need for services will be postponed to a more advanced age (Sulander et al. 2006).

It is good to remember that the connection between old age and people's life course has been under consideration for a long time. Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC) asked in his splendid book about old age, friendship and duties "why collect more money for a trip which is getting shorter and shorter?" Our paper puts the following questions to the fore and attempts to find answers: Is there enough understanding of the consumer behaviour of ageing people and their consumer characteristics? How is consumption related to ageing people's conceptions of a good quality of everyday life? How do electronic services and increasing self-service promote a good everyday life among the elderly? The following chapters will address the above questions based on the latest studies conducted at the National Consumer Research Centre.

2 Consumption and consumer characteristics of ageing consumers

People's well-being is materialized to a great extent through consumption. Instead of goods and other material commodities, elderly people purchase more services. The statistical picture of ageing people's consumption is not surprising. Available income decreases in the course of ageing and necessities represent an increasing share of consumption. Expenditure on food (21% of consumption expenditure), housing (23%) and health (13%) dominate in the consumption budget of the elderly. Health care accounts for more than 10% of total expenditure of the oldest age groups, despite the availability of public health care, while the respective figure among the youngest age groups is a couple of percent. However, expenditure on transport (6.5%), beverages and cigarettes (1.5%) and restaurants (1.7%) decreases. Package tours and cruises form an exception: ageing consumers purchase them more frequently than younger age groups (Lindqvist 2006, 109-110).

Ageing theories and their applications enable a statistical picture of consumption among the elderly to be formed. Activity theory represents a strengthening interpretation of ageing and elderly

people in their role as consumers. Gerontological research has broken earlier stereotypes by emphasizing ageing as a normal phase of life that includes learning skills and other age-related developmental activities (Koskinen 1994, 24-25; Antikainen 2000). When examining consumption, chronological age is increasingly being replaced by cognitive ages such as feel-age, look-age, do-age and interest-age, which are considered more important than calendar age (Gunter 1988). Cognitive age is related to the experience of life-satisfaction: the more satisfied people feel the younger they feel themselves to be. Elderly people have been found to feel 10-15 years younger than their chronological age. Additionally, differences in consumption styles between age groups have been reduced and ageing consumers also differentiate in their consumption within the same segment.

Elderly people's locus of meanings differs from that of the younger, active population (Kangas 2003). Geriatric researchers (e.g. Thornstam 2003) talk about gerotranscendence, referring to value changes when material values are increasingly replaced by mental and spiritual values. The change is also characterized by increasing tolerance and generosity. Ageing people get rid of unnecessary social stress, unpleasant social ties or conventional rules. They do not have the same "duties" to invest in new information technology as other age groups. They are not afraid of new technology but they are more sceptical and think over the need for new devices more than younger consumers. The values of today's technology culture, especially the speed, effectiveness and the continuous replacement of devices and programs by new ones do not match the value systems of the elderly. Ageing people have, in the course of ageing, seen several trends come and go. Consequently, they can adopt a more tranquil attitude towards new technology than younger people. Instead of age per se, the point is the inconvenience of new technology to all age groups.

Ageing also brings changes to the means of searching for and processing information. Among others, elderly people's earlier experiences of goods and services, the familiarity of commodities and their ability to process information are decisive. As compared to younger people, the elderly search for less information in the purchase of large durables (Cole and Balasubramanian 1993, 157). Choices are based on previous life experience. However, one has to ask whether the experiences gathered in the "modern world" are good enough in the post-modern market of goods and services characterized by a rapidly changing information flood and the increasing technologization of the functional environment. Due to their weakened working memory and ability to process information, elderly people may have difficulties in the management of new situations, new commodities and related information.

Finally, it is more than important to recognize the diversity of ageing people as consumers and their diverse mental and physical capabilities. Ageing people represent a remarkable potential source of know-how, life-experience and tacit knowledge – capabilities whose importance has not been realized in today's societies. Accordingly, Koistinen (2003) considers elderly people the only growing natural resource in the sphere of care. Despite their mutual diversity and individual features, health and functional ability are unifying characteristics among the elderly from the perspective of a good everyday life and consumption behaviour.

3 A good everyday life and the use of services

A good everyday life can be defined by the concepts of a good life. The two are similar, but everyday life is more concrete and exists “here and now.” A good life includes, most comprehensively, cognitive development, participation in societal life, reasonable housekeeping, friendship, good human relationships, support of the arts, emotional development and sensual pleasure. Health is missing because, for example, Aristotle considered that living a good life promotes health, and health follows directly from a good life. The dimensions have often been reduced to the “four-leaved-clover” of good life: 1) material and mental safety or the feeling of safety; 2) autonomy, in other words the possibility to make one’s own decisions; 3) self-esteem due to the feeling of being accepted and appreciated; and 4) reasonability, the ability to understand one’s own life and the world (Palo 1992).

How do ageing people talk about a good everyday life and its elements? The dimensions of the “clover” are to be found in a joint study by the NCRC and SITRA (Varjonen et al. 2005). The study focused on the obstacles and preconditions in the outsourcing of domestic tasks based on qualitative focus group discussions. The informants came from the Consumer Panel of NCRC. Discussions with ageing panelists, retired or close to retirement, focused on meal, cleaning and laundry services, on elderly care and on the need for and provision of care services.

The discussions provided a clear definition of a good everyday life from the perspective of the elderly. One of the most essential factors was living in one’s own home or at least having one’s own room and furniture. Doing one’s own housework as long as possible was also considered important. As based on the life-cycle model of service use, the need for household services, cleaning, cooking, laundry and errands decreases from the “service intensive” child family phase to the so-called empty nest phase after children have left home. Those who have retired have the time and interest to do housework because they can choose the timing, which also increases the pleasure of doing housework. Additionally, freedom of choice is expressed by *the right not to clean in a month without a bad conscience*.

A good everyday life also includes access to household services, physiotherapy, a bath, health care and so on when needed. An active lifestyle, good neighbours, friends and hobbies are essential elements in a good everyday life. The ability to be prepared for one’s own ageing and the will to defend and fight for one’s rights strengthen people’s self-esteem. Autonomy in the organization of everyday life is one of its cornerstones (Leskinen 2006).

Ageing people in the empty nest phase are not heavy users of household services. However, they do have opinions on high-quality services and service workers. Multi-skilled workers are needed especially to provide cleaning, cooking and care services. Caretakers are given as an example of multi-skilled service providers. Increasing specialization raises considerable suspicion, especially in municipal home care, and the refusal of some workers to complete tasks. Ageing consumers strongly agree that it is the duty of the public sector to provide elderly care services because *they have paid taxes all their lives*. Additionally, many people unconsciously provide family care services to their close relatives. Family care is considered an appropriate duty and it has *meaning in the continuation of the life-cycle*. Family care is, however, *obligatory and without alternatives as expressed by the view that what else can one do if a close one needs help*. If the favourable development in men’s health continues, couples will be able to provide care for each other in the future. It bothers people to think about how a good everyday life is realized among ageing people, who are increasingly being polarized into well- and weakly-resourced service users. Consumers

believe that the *public sector will concentrate on those who would not otherwise survive*. However, a minority of about one percent of those with a high income are able to purchase private care services (Varjonen et al. 2005).

What about the technologization of services and care? Consumers have diverse conceptions of technological development. Some ageing people consider technology as a resource, especially safety technology such as meal robots, safety wrists and alarm systems. The Internet is considered a good solution to loneliness. Consumers are worried about decreasing human interaction and elderly people's increasing loneliness according to prevailing ageistic attitudes. Consumers want to have "human-sized" care solutions based on the Danish model. From the perspective of a good everyday life, human interaction, social interaction and godparent activities are becoming increasingly important on the side of traditional household services (Leskinen 2006).

A nationwide survey (Varjonen et al. 2007) followed by a qualitative study indicated that the majority (81%) of those in Finland aged 75 years or older use household services. Additionally, the number of couples aged 75 years or older who bought services (14%) was twice as great as among those between 65-74 years of age (6%). The increasing demand for services is partly explained physical or other restrictions that make it more difficult for elderly people to do housework.

4 Electronic services in the promotion of well-being

Electronic services have become an essential part of Finnish society. Most transactions, or at least some of them, take place via the Internet. The increasing provision of electronic services may cause problems for ageing people who have not adopted them to be a part of their everyday life as compared to adolescents and families with children (Tuorila 2001). Several attitudinal and know-how obstacles prevent elderly people from using the Internet. However, in the future the largest user groups will be ageing people, because the majority of younger people already use the Internet. Attitudes towards the Internet have become more positive during the last couple of years. For example, the use of Internet has doubled among those aged 60-64 years (Tuorila and Kytö 2005).

Intensive use of the Internet and long trips related to errands increase people's positive attitudes toward the Internet. Savings in time and monetary costs are quite clear, as observed in a study focusing on virtual services in the promotion of elderly consumers' well-being (Tuorila and Kytö 2005), in which cost savings amounted to about 50%. One has to remember, however, that use of the Internet often requires significant investments in information technology. Overall, electronic services may be more expensive than traditional services. The Internet may also cause regional inequality: only people who can afford to purchase computers and use the Internet may inhabit remote areas, while non-users may have to move to population centres.

The development of information technology has created new demands and challenges for the elderly. Not everyone wants to use services provided via the Internet due to privacy and safety issues. However, there will always be people who do not want to use or lack the resources to use electronic services. Ageing people can be truly divided into those who are well-resourced and "young" ageing and those with limited resources. Consequently, the provision of services cannot only be based on electronic service distribution (Tuorila and Kytö 2005).

Tuorila and Kytö (2005) further determined that those who used computers and the Internet felt better than non-users. However, the majority of the elderly consider that the use of the Internet reduces the time spent on walking and other physical activities, which are emphasized in traditional errand. This may lead to a weakened physical condition and reduced everyday activity.

Technology cannot replace other people, and due to access to the Internet people might become separated from others and alienated. Policy makers must fight against the emergence of a new, alienated group that is unable to utilize new technology. National policy concerning the elderly is characterized by normality, respect for the elderly, safety, social integration, autonomy, freedom of choice, equality and justice. These principles must be considered and the alienation of the elderly in the information society actively prevented.

All in all, one has to ask the ageing consumers themselves what well-being means to them and how they see electronic services in their well-being. Is there any connection or does well-being mean the possibility to grow old in peace and quiet without any demands to acquire sufficient computer skills and computer literacy? (Tuorila and Kytö 2005).

5 Elderly people's good life in the self-service society

Alongside electronic services, self-service is increasing and spreading into new service fields, replacing personal services. Doing things by oneself has a strong cultural background (Tuorila 2002). Self-service is spreading especially in health services due to rapid technological development, and the measurement of blood pressure at home is just a beginning. As treatment methods develop, consumers are expected to take more and more care of their own treatment. Due to the increasing amount of day surgery and shorter times spent in care, patients must take more responsibility before and after treatment (Tuorila 2006b).

Increasing ageing will not slow down the advancement of self-service, because ageing people have adopted self-service throughout their life and behave accordingly. Personal services are required only when self-service no longer works. (See also Varjonen et al. 2005).

The ability and know-how of consumers when using self-service varies. Only those consumers who have enough know-how and sufficient appliance are likely to obtain benefit from self-service. Increasing self-service therefore challenges the development of equality among consumers. Due to the demands of cost-effectiveness and efficiency, some people's access to services may be threatened.

Present development favours the emergence of a "customer-servant" role among consumers. The new role brings new duties to consumers: they have to recognize possible mistakes and also correct them. In truth, service providers are unable to provide self-service that would not endanger clients' access to expert services.

Personal services include a strong social function. The use of services is not only related to errands but is also an important social happening and leisure activity. In self-service, on the contrary, the social aspect loses its traditional meaning and becomes strange to the elderly. The social aspect is important, especially to those who live by themselves, because it allows mutual interaction. As the number of one-person households is increasing, the demand for personal services will not diminish. According to Manssila and Koistinen (2006), personal services promote the growth of social capital, which promotes human health and functionality.

Increasing self-service makes one wonder how its development is affecting younger cohorts (Tuorila 2006a). However, it is clear that the elderly will be “consumer kings” in the future. The modes and habits of the elderly will have a strong influence on the development of self-service. Accordingly, it is important to recognize that elderly people’s present choices can be influenced by today’s activities: how people are taught to patronize and what kind of experiences self-service and personal services provide.

6 Closing words

Ageing consumers are in the role of conformists in the transmission of today’s service culture. They have been obliged to adapt themselves to the intensive developments in technology and the information society without any chance to affect the direction or the rapidity of change. Those who are in working life have the advantage of being obliged to learn basic computer skills to manage their professional duties. In addition, ageing people have adapted themselves to the contradictory development of the service society: public services have been replaced to an increasing degree by private services, service has become self-service and new markets have been created to replace, for instance, traditional housework. However, ageing people have more choices in the provision of a good everyday life. Choices between public or private services and between self provisioning or purchased services increase the feeling of freedom and autonomy.

Despite the daily routines and the repetitive nature of everyday life, people live their personal lives according to their available resources, values, goals, dreams and the possibilities provided by the living environment. In the future, ageing people will not be adaptors, but knowledgeable and demanding consumers “produced” by the development of the self-service society. While the growing numbers of elderly people will increase their influence in the future, they must be increasingly recognized in the service market. Even though their demand for health services and household services is greater, ageing people want to have services according to their own desires. The providers of electronic services should make efforts to provide services in a user-friendly way. The provision of services should not cause stress and problems to service users.

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”One recognizes ageing, but not becoming old” – On age categorizations in marketing.

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Abstract:

Through analyses of interviews with people working in advertising and with popular magazines aimed at women of 40+, this paper focuses on how age and ageing are ascribed meaning.

At times the relevance of age is downplayed, included in target analyses because it has become a routine. At other times age is used as a unique selling point, an argument to reach desired consumer groups.

Hitherto young people have been the wished-for consumers. But as the baby boomers, the cohort born approximately 1945-1954, are growing older, they are becoming increasingly interesting for producers and advertisers, thus entailing a change in what age is attributed. One recognizes ageing, one brand expert formulates it, but not becoming old. Being “older” is described as being wiser, more experienced, having higher self esteem. This refers to people in their fifties, sixties and seventies. Real old age is said to commence once you re in your eighties, ill and dependent. Thus today fear of old age and ageing is postponed and transferred from entering the age of retirement to entering what some researchers call “deep old age” or the fourth age.

Another cultural conception concerns the changing impact of the life course. Ageing is regarded not as chronology or biology but as a question of attitude or mindset. Youth is still hailed – independent of chronological age.

”One recognizes ageing, but not becoming old”

Today the desperation to stay young at all costs is no longer as great as it was ten fifteen years ago. Or, well, fifteen twenty years ago. Instead one recognizes ageing, but not becoming old. And it’s two different things. To affirm ageing but not becoming old – it means you keep the youthful lifestyle and youthful attitude and so on.

Karin: “So what then does one affirm in ageing?”

You affirm the fact that you gain more experience, more certainty, more self confidence. You sort of know more who you are; you have been through more things. You can take some things more calmly, be more cool – and that self confidence creates an attraction in younger people. In the end there is nothing as attractive as self

confidence. /.../ So it's rather paradoxical, the phenomena that meet and are united in this question on ageing but not becoming old." (Interview with managing partner, advertising agency)

"One recognizes ageing but not becoming old". How can we understand this seemingly paradoxical statement? On the one hand ageing is not feared but affirmed. But becoming old is still an aberration. Experience, confidence and money combined with a youthful attitude and lifestyle make ageing no longer dreaded or despised. But whose ageing is it and what kind of ageing is this referring to? In this paper I will focus on different aspects of what age and ageing are said to mean as regards advertising. My starting point is interviews with people working in advertising or with magazines where the ads are published and material from web sites on advertising and marketing. This is a part of the empirical material I use for my PhD work.

My dissertation focuses on *cultural conceptions of age and ageing*. I study this departing from adverts in magazines aimed at women of 40 and upwards. My research design is based on three vantage points. One is the interviews with people working in advertising or with the magazines. I have tried to cover different parts of a chain of productions – that is from for example representatives of producers of cosmetics, through advertising agencies combining copy and visual image, on to media brokers advising on what channel or medium to use for a campaign, to advertising departments at the magazines and editors and journalists working there. Approximately twenty people have been interviewed, some twice. I have also downloaded material from web sites the interviewees have referred to. My second vantage point is the magazines, and specifically the ads, which consequently include the visual material. And the third consists of interviews with women on magazine reading, what they think of the ads; of consumption and on being in this part of life; on age and ageing.¹

The model is not meant to include any thoughts on flow of message from a producer to a receiver; it is a construction to limit and frame my empirical material. I don't think adverts *create* cultural conceptions – nor do I simply think they *mirror* values. Cultural notions are intertwined with other notions. The notions and values are fluctuating between producers/ texts / consumers. They are furthermore continually changing which means I am trying to

¹ I have interviewed seven women, and have letters from an additional few women, who have written me on these issues, departing from a letter with an invitation and some questions from me.

capture a process with parts slow and sluggish to change and others more rapidly evolving. The purpose of my PhD-work is to focus on cultural meanings ascribed to age and ageing in our society.

Through out my empirical material is distinguished by paradoxes and ambivalences. Sometimes my interview persons who are working with advertising take different stances on the same issue in the same interview, thus casting advertising as a powerful, manipulative force reminiscent of propaganda, having a profound influence on peoples values and habits, or – paradoxically, later on in the same interview – as weak, powerless, money thrown in the lake.² The same goes for what the interviewed women say about advertising. They themselves are critical, taking a distancing stance to the ads, talking of photo shopping and retouching of pictures, using words such as ridiculous and silly when describing the ads, but saying that *others* may be influenced by the ads and the values conveyed in them.

I have structured this paper around a couple of central quotations from the empirical material I am analyzing for my PhD work; primarily for this paper the interviews with people working in the chain of production around advertising and from web sites on marketing and advertising. My reasoning is based on what the interviewees have brought up during the loosely structured interviews and this is the ground for my conclusions. The quotes have been chosen because they exemplify certain themes or aspects. Firstly I touch upon how age is positioned as either an uninteresting category, merely included as a statistical factor, or as a point of departure in assessing and constructing target groups for products and thus advertisements. There are several overlapping – and at times even contradictory – age based categorizations in circulation. Next the focus is on what constitutes the desired group of consumer. A possible change from advertising addressing mainly young people to also displaying an interest in older groups of consumers is discussed. How can this be interpreted in terms of how ageing culturally is construed? Will whether or not people aged over 50 are noticed by the market have an impact on how age and ageing is ascribed meaning? I then return to the quote this paper commenced with: on ageing but not becoming old.

² I write more on these methodological issues in my thesis. See for instance Holstein, James & Jaber Gubrium (1995) on how interview persons can take different stances or roles in an interview; speaking for example as a parent, a consumer, a professional – and in dialogue with different public opinions on, in this case, advertising.

Age categorizations

At times the relevance of age is downplayed, and considered to be just an etcetera category, included in target analyses because it has become a routine. We have to include age, one media broker explains to me, in order to get statistics for comparison of the impact of different advertising campaigns. Age is known to have importance as regards television viewing habits and is therefore always part of standard reporting also when it comes to printed media. But, she says, age really implies little of consequence as regards target groups.

Age is a rough generalisation, a blunt tool. A 50 year old, without children, living in Stockholm and a 50 year old with children and grandchildren living in Skåne [the south of Sweden] might not have much in common. It's more about who you are as a person, where you move about, what you do. Whether or not someone plays golf or travels abroad on holidays discloses more. (Interview with media broker.)

Regardless of these objections, age is included in analyses to define target groups for different products and advertising campaigns. Age is thus attributed relevance simply by inclusion thereby contributing to age being a factor or category of weight. In other interviews age is talked of as a factor of importance when defining how to reach a relevant group of consumers or how to launch a product. Members of different age groups are even positioned as belonging to separate tribes.³

TWENTYSOMETHING™ Inc. is a prestigious, world-renowned marketing/strategy consultancy that uniquely bridges corporate goals with the realities of today's young adults. Generation Y. Generation X. 20-Somethings. Millenials. Echo Boomers. Teens. No matter what the label, today's global 14-35 year olds are evolving at warp speed. Each audience has its distinct lifestyle needs, language, mindset, and culture. Our firm focuses exclusively on this unique collage, advising forward-thinking organizations on how to fully realize their goals, visions, and overall potential. No smoke. No mirrors. No hype™. Only brilliant, executable advice backed by rock solid market data to drive results.” <http://www.twentysomething.com/> [070427].⁴

³ Otherwise certain consumer habits are used as evidence of tribal membership: Apple-use, ipod-use, owning Harley Davidson motorbikes are example of consumption habits where an object comes to define and include its owner in a tribal community of interests.

⁴ *Generation x* is a generational term, roughly used for persons born from 1961-1981. The term got popularized by Douglas Couplands novel *Generation X. Tales for an accelerated culture* (1991). *Generation Y* is a term used for the following generation, also called *Millenias*, or *Internet generation*. *Echo boomers* is a term coined for the children of the baby boom generation, said to be a demographic echo of their parents. Twenty somethings refers to the phrase “thirty something” originally used for boomers when they were in their thirties, and popularised

This quote is from a website for a research company giving advice to advertisers on how to capture the young audience. It testifies to an abundance of age categorizations – add to these all the terms for *baby boomers, baby busters, mappies, dinkies, +ers, golden agers, silver foxes, the grey capital* et cetera.

When I have analyzed all the categorizations used by marketers and advertisers I have sometimes felt almost as if reading about astrology.⁵ A few distinguishing characteristics, allusions to popular culture or a significant world political event are said to define a generation.⁶ The political events are thought to impact on a specific age cohort more than on others living in the same era. Age is used to assert a spirit of community amongst people growing up at the same historic time, regardless of other similarities or differences (for instance class, living in an urban or rural setting, gender, ethnicity or life style). The terms appeal to a desire to decipher riddles; to feel included and to be up to date on contemporary expressions like *generation Jones, and Y, Opals and mappies*.

In the quote above there is also reference to the “warp speed” with which the world is transformed. Childhood or youth today is different than an adult’s experience of it. One could frame growing up or being an adolescent as an experience that you carry with you as you grow older but by positioning the world as rapidly changing it is also implied that these experiences are of little relevance to understand or communicate with youth today. An age or generation gap is implied.⁷

The quote also alludes to scientific studies in the term of trustworthy market data, to be able to draw valid conclusions about the elusive consumers of today and tomorrow. The company

through a television program, called “Thirty something”. (www.wikipedia.org, www.cbsnews.com, <http://www.worldwidewords.org/turnsofphrase>.) *Teens* for teenagers has been supplemented with *tweens*, as in between child and adolescent to home in on yet another potential group of consumers – often positioned as the ones in real charge of household consumption decisions, either through nagging power or merely by being the ones most up to date on market novelties. (see Johansson 2005, Hillén 2006).

⁵ The definition of a generation is not made in ways that can be evaluated. The foundations for different categorizations cannot be compared. The confirming evidence for a certain conclusion is many times scant. Instead different features are used as characteristics in differing contexts.

⁶ The student revolts in 1968, Watergate, the fall of the wall in Berlin or the 11th of September 2001 are examples of world political events referred to. As regards popular culture the references can be to a novel like *Generation x*, or to a TV-show like *Thirty something*.

⁷ It is as if time is more rapid today – the speed has increased and is constantly increasing. These time dimensions are intertwined with age and ageing as time measurements.

uses different age categorizations – all of which can be said to be distinguished by a certain amount of hype – and at the same times disclaim the use of coining new terms or phrases as a way to gain credibility and build ones own trade mark. This is done in a rhetorical way by using and disassociating themselves from the concepts and notions.

Another thing I want to point out in the quote above is how young people are defined as an unknown and foreign people that need to be interpreted to be understood, and I would like to add – colonized. This is an example of a rendering of children or young people as exotic others. The aim is presented not to sell goods, increase profit or market shares, but for companies to “realize their goals, visions and overall potential.”⁸ An abundance of age related categorizations and terms have been referred to above. What follows is based on an analysis of these, and others that are referred to in my empirical material.

Generational terms

The age categorizations can be divided into different categories. The first is a categorization in generational terms. Here generation is not referring to biographical generation in the sense of grandparent, parent and children, different generations succeeding one another (Gerholm 1993). Instead generation here refers to cohorts born at different times in history, and that time being characterized by differing circumstances that impact upon living conditions in a formative way. Often in American contexts the terms “baby boomers” for the cohort born in the after Second World War era, or “baby busters” for their children (the first following cohort of similar size and magnitude). In between them is positioned the so called generation Jones, an anonymous and small cohort. These concepts are defined in differing ways – sometimes the boomers are said to include everyone born from the 1940’s into the 1960’s, at other times more divisions are used. In Swedish the terms “fyrtiotalist”, “femtiotalist”, “sextiotalist” et cetera, are widespread and commonly used. Literally this means people born in the 1940’s, 1950’s, 1960’s and so on and so forth with each ten year decade forming the ground for a new and different generation.⁹ These are used despite the fact that the notions

⁸ In my dissertation I discuss the reoccurring rhetoric in the empirical material where the message is: understand the consumer (not increase your profits or your sales.)

⁹ The term “fyrtiotalist” is said to have been coined by a Swedish journalist, Ludvig Rasmusson, in his book *Fyrtiotalisterna* 1985, followed by the book *Åldersupproret : om ungdomskult, fyrtiotalisterna och Sveriges framtid*. In the second one he himself claims copyright for the term. He notes that many have pointed out that “fyrtiotalist” hitherto mainly had been used as an established literary term for a generation of authors who had a

actually obscure as much as they clarify or identify members of the categories. Living conditions, number of members born approximately at the same time, commenced school at roughly the same period and later entered the labour market at the same phase differ significantly for those born in for example the early 1950's or the late 1950's, or say the early 1990's and the late 1990's. If the state of the market, the economic situation in the form of prosperity or depression, situation in the welfare state, world political events or significant regional political events are thought to form a generation and a generational awareness in the terms of Karl Mannheim– then these conditions vary significantly within the decades which should prevent forming a ten year cyclic generation (Mannheim 1952. Blehr 1993). Still these terms have had significant impact in the Swedish context, and have not been questioned or replaced by others in spite of some efforts to introduce for example “rekordgenerationen” – The Record Generation.¹⁰ It seems that the commencement of division in generational or cohort terms started with people born in the after Second World War era. Generational terms for people born in the 1930's or 1920's are circulated more rarely. Perhaps this has to do both with a modern way of thinking about and defining oneself, and a correlation with the historic situation. The people born in 1945 and onwards grew up as the first generation to be teenagers, in a consumer society. Divisions in smaller age related categories have a connection with the growth of consumption and a surplus in production resulting in a need to construct new target groups (Brembeck 2002. See also Lee 2001 on consumption and the change in cultural meaning of childhood and adulthood). It must be emphasized that it is not only marketers who use these categorizations. They occur in media, in research, and they are used in everyday language – many times in a vernacular way of placing oneself in historic time.

+’ers.

Another commonly used age related categorization is “+’ers” where a plus sign is added to an age. 45+, 50+ or 55+ for example. This division is less common as regards 65+, this having to do with the fact that this is the official retiring age and from this time of life, regardless of actual pension or not, people are in many ways included in the category of “pensioner”, which

breakthrough in the 1940's. I think the book *Hårda bud. Handbok för 60-talister* (Floyd & Lindqvist 1987) had significance for the spread of the “talist”-term in Sweden.

¹⁰ The term Rekordgenerationen was introduced by the research company Kairos Future and got a large media impact, not least when two books based on studies of values amongst this generation was published (Jaeger 2001, *Rekordgenerationen* 2005). They have also coined terms for other cohorts like the we/me generation (www.kairosfuture.com).

many times is taken as a synonym to “older”. The rhetoric impression of 45+ or 55+ is inclusive – after an approximate age, and onwards one is included in this category. Here there is no upper age limit. All members are thus conveyed to have common interests, once entering the +-age; some can be merely 45, 46, others 75, 76 or for that matter be in their 90’s.

Regardless of chronological age differences this age categorization includes all after the entrance date as if after a certain age differences were equalised and people more alike. This thus implies a thought of common interest after a certain age, or at a, fairly large, phase of life, that can in fact include parents of small children, with great great grandparents, people in active work force or people having lived as pensioners for many years, people born before the second world war with people born in the 1960’s. Thus after a certain age one is assumed to have common interests and years of growth, or youth, considered to be the founding stones of the previous age categorization in generational terms, is here regarded as unimportant. Instead people in the +-group are assumed to be more alike than previously.

Witty abbreviations and inventive acronyms

Hippie was followed by *yuppie* (young urban professional), by *dinkie* (double income, no kids), and in Sweden at the launching of a new magazine, aimed at the generation commonly denominated “fyrtiotialister” the term *mappie* was introduced. This term was said to have been adapted to Swedish from the American abbreviation “mature affluent pioneer”. In Sweden affluent was transformed to attractive – which I interpret as latching on to a cultural constraint against talking of money and affluence. But when searching on the Internet there is no evidence of the term *mappie* being used in an Anglo-Saxon context.¹¹ There are suggestions that the real coiner of the phrase is Amelia Adamo, chief editor of the *Magazine M*. Instead of launching it as a witty acronym invented by herself or her team, she claims it is a translation and import from the US, thus giving it legitimacy, credibility and a certain hip factor.

Opal (older people active life style) is another acronym also cleverly alluding to precious stones, just as “the grey capital” or “grey market” implies both affluence and high age, “silver foxes” suggests both silvery hair and cunning, wisdom or experience, “golden agers” hint at old age being the best years. The latter two again with reference to valuable materials. One Swedish magazine aimed at this segment of the market renamed itself “*Det ljuva livet*”,

¹¹ Whereas it is used for the new electronic road maps/navigators that can be used in cars. It has also been used as an abbreviation for “male-bashing angry professional women”.

(www.vassaeggen.se/2006/03/vassa_eggen_avsloelar_loegnen.html, www.scholar.lib.vt.edu/VA-news/VA-Pilot/issues/1995. http://tim.resume.se/pub/nyhet.asp?art_id=51147)

roughly “La dolce vita”, “The sweet years” from previously being called *Senior Sverige* (“Senior Sweden”). Many of these epithets are flattering, connoting wealth and a desire to enjoy it. Words like retired, pensioner, older, or even the fairly neutral senior are avoided. No one wants to be associated with pensioners or old age, as one of my informants told me. Paraphrasing is the rhetorical device to solve this. On a website aimed at potential advertisers a magazine refers to the terms “prime time women”, trade marked by a researcher/marketer. She has coined the phrase for women in midlife, said to be at the prime of their life, with a prime opportunity for consumption (homo consumans is a woman), and of course hinting at the term “prime time television” for the part of the TV schedule when most people watch TV and thus are susceptible for advertising (<http://www.kvinnopanelen.se>). On the same site the phrase “Tomorrows Mrs Wallet” is used which in a very upfront way explains what is at issue here: spending power, consumption decisions ([www. http://www.kvinnopanelen.se](http://www.kvinnopanelen.se)). I will come back to the rhetoric of the wallet. This is the way naming is handled when addressing the market.¹²

The acronyms or compounds of words are, as mentioned, often witty, and they gain quite an impact in the media, this not least by alluding to popular culture or by capturing the zeitgeist. “Adultescent”, for example, as a new expression captures a change in the normative life course – combining adult with adolescent to imply people refusing to grow up, take responsibility and become stable citizens.¹³

The terms are besides being many times witty and funny, attempts to grasp contemporary changes and to, in a sense, control or understand them by naming them. There is also for marketers the added bonus of yourself being put on the map or adding to your brand value by being the one who spots, names, conquers and puts the flag on, a newly discovered time territory.¹⁴ Just as with the generational terms the acronyms or abbreviations to a varying

¹² Talked of, not to, there are also derogatory epithets in use: raisin for someone with wrinkles, or “menopausal witch” about women in their fifties/sixties for example.

¹³ For this there are a number of terms like “peter pan generation”, “grups”, etc (www.nationalencyclopedia.se, www.gradvall.se. (column originally published in Dagens Industri 20060505). Gradvall writes about an article published in New York Magazine by journalist Adam Sternbergh April 3, 2006. <http://nymag.com/news/features/16529/>.

¹⁴ Actually this can be compared to the importance of coining concepts in academic circles – others will reference your work.

degree also get media impact, and are used in everyday talk. The terms many times can thus be said to have captured the spirit of the time, the contemporary.

Young regardless of age

There are also a range of age categorizations that are without chronological reference indicating other factors as the interesting common denominator. For example young in mind, young of heart, or young of all ages that imply a state of mind, or an attitude as the relevant and interesting aspect of the category, regardless of actual age. In these expressions having a young mindset is not condoned in the manner that it is in the expression “mutton dressed as lamb”. In the latter an age appropriate behaviour is referred to, together with an implication of the violation of age norms that is performed if one strives to appear to be younger than ones chronological number of years. Young in mind on the contrary hails staying young with all that it implies of remaining alert, curious and open to change.

The categorizations have an impact, not least in a mediated form. They are used in everyday use, but are more common in mediated contexts, and used by advertisers and marketers. They are many times attempts to capture changes in values and to capture the contemporary. Often allusions to popular culture are used, together with an abundance of inventiveness. Many are attempts to capture market segments following a logic of the market. In this age is often in fact a circumlocution for spending power when in fact trying to target and address mainly those with a certain income or fortune.

The continuing, perhaps even increasing, number of age related categorisations should be interpreted in relation to the category of “young regardless of age”. Here one can talk of a dissolving of age boundaries and a lifting of norms on time schedules and life course appropriate timing. On the other hand there is a counter movement with as said, an increasing number of overlapping age related divisions.¹⁵ Perhaps the insecurities of adulthood today make it even more important to interpret and divide life in age terms? The childhood researcher Nick Lee describes the ambiguities of adulthood today, when becoming an adult is no longer equivalent to having reached a final secure destination and completion, but instead is characterized by a forced flexibility (Lee 2001).

¹⁵ This is one of the themes I am pursuing in my thesis.

Age is used in differing ways vis-à-vis the market. Producers, marketing managers and advertisers construe age segments that differentiate between target groups on the grounds of age. Each segment or category is presented as different and as having different needs to be understood and addressed. Brembeck 2002 (referring to the anthropologist Astroff) discusses marketer's technique of "constructing, producing and maintaining similarity and difference. They simply construe different cultures which they assign specific consumption patterns and preferences that are separate from other consumption patterns and preferences in other presumed cultures". Differentiated products are aimed at different age groups with for example skin cream aimed at consumers in their teens, twenties, thirties, forties, fifties, or sixties and upwards. In a sense this can be understood as skin care addressing certain age related factors, increasing dryness with the years for instance. But the whole abundance of skin creams could also be interpreted in terms of finding an outlet for an ever increasing production of cosmetics and hygienic products. This in turn of course also impacts on consumers. The products in themselves communicate the importance of skin care and as an example, wrinkle avoidance at all costs.

New historic situation

Hitherto young people have been the wished-for consumers. But as the baby boomers, the cohort born approximately 1945-1954, are growing older, they are becoming increasingly interesting for producers and advertisers, thus entailing a change in what age is attributed.¹⁶ The baby boomers are described as the first generation of teenagers. They then experienced a short period of freedom from responsibilities. Today they are talked of as entering a second phase of freedom. The cohort born in the after war era is now retired or nearing retiring age, it is free from years of child rearing, and is said to have more money than any other generation so far. They are represented as a hedonistic, consuming generation, ready to enjoy their third age. It has been said that this is a new form of ageing. "We will never again see old people the way we used to", as one of my informants told me. The boomers, the first teenage generation, born and raised in a consumer society will not become old in the way earlier generations have. They are described as having money – and being willing to spend it.

Money should be spent to enjoy life

50+ own incredible 80% of all fortune in this country. Most have no debts and own their homes. They have 70% of the spending power, own 75% of all market

¹⁶ I am – as previously – basing this on my empirical material.

portfolios and two thirds assert that “instead of saving the rest of our lives, money should be used to enjoy life” (<http://www.senioragency.se>)

Over and over again the mantra is repeated: the boomers have 80% of the fortunes and 70% of the spending power. Therefore they must be seen and addressed. The argument is used by market and members of the age category alike. The right to be heard and taken into account is claimed with the wallet as an argument, not only by marketers, but by representatives for the category themselves.

In spite of the fact that you 50+ readers have 70% of the collected spending power and 80% of the fortune in society SEB wants to prioritize the young.

In the US this attitude has been given a name: C.Y.S. (Chronic Youth Syndrome – to be one-sidedly fixated on youth.)

We at the Magazine M will attract attention to companies like SEB who so obviously mark their lack of interest in their largest and most lucrative group.

M magazine knows that we 50+’rs are exiting, profitable and attractive. We want you as reader to feel this (M Magazine 2, 2006)¹⁷

SEB is one of Swedens largests banks. Their managing director at the last minute sent excuse to an interview with the Magazine M:s chief editor, Amelia Adamo. The reason they gave was that they were focused on younger age groups. Magazine M is one of the magazines using age as a selling point. They address readers of 50 and upwards. The rhetoric here is see us, hear us, not because we have rights as citizens, or human beings, but because we are potential customers, consumers and spenders. Another example of this can be seen in a quote from the website for an health oriented association for women over 45 years of age.

There is an exceptionally conservative perspective in media where 70% of the represented women are under 30 years of age. As regards Television the decision-makers are young men. TV schedules are aimed at women between 15 and 39 years of age, except on Fridays when they can stretch as far as 49 years. It is considered negative to have viewers older than 60 years.

It is us women who must challenge this attitude. Here is a tremendous consumer power, we can make choices and refrain from what we don’t like. We mustn’t just be kind and patient. The market will not change until we have stated our opinion and thereby forced advertisers to reconsider. (www.1,6miljonerklubben.com/omklubben. 2003-10-15)

¹⁷ The translation has been made by me.

Again the argument is not one of citizenship or human rights and values, but one claiming right to be heard due to monetary resources. The road to influence is through consumer choices not for instance by political lobbying.

To address young people vs. older people with ads

So far young people have been the ones represented in the advertisements, and the ones the market has concentrated its communication with.

They influence. They set trends. If you want to change something you can in those groups because they are curious about new things. /.../ It is more difficult to get older age groups to just run out and buy something. /.../ It is in the young years that many of the values that you keep for life are created. If you miss that time it is hard to come back later.¹⁸ (Interview with advertising and public relations bureau specialised on youth.)

Young consumers are positioned as the desired ones because they are out and about and meet more people whom they can influence. New forms of advertising, more effective than the traditional form like say print or TV commercials are launched: wom (word of mouth), ambassadors (advocates for a product or brand), guerilla marketing (marketing often without an apparent sender), events, blogs... the new channels are many. And, say the interviewed marketers, young people are critical of advertising, they can see through the messages. Therefore it is not a problem (for anyone but conservative baby boomers) that many of the new forms of advertising has no apparent sender.¹⁹

Today there appears to be a struggle over who influences whom. Young people have large contact nets, they meet new people and therefore messages to them reach many other potential consumers. One advertising agency specialised in addressing the older consumers expressed a counter rhetoric which I have found echoed also on other sites aiming at this target group. There they claim that a woman in her 50's is the most important person to reach since she can

¹⁸ A focal point in my thesis regards cultural notions on when and how one forms ones identity. This connects with notions on children as blank papers, as “becomings” to use the phrase childhood researchers have launched. (Lee 2001, Johansson 2005). Thus identities are formed during youth. Grown ups, middle aged or older people are positioned as dead but still standing, as one informant drastically expressed it; having “coagulated” in the words of an other informant. The underlying model of development is a central cultural notion on ageing. I pursue these issues in my dissertation.

¹⁹ The opinion that boomers are more conservative and hostile to advertising is conveyed in the interviews. Younger people were positioned as media competent, able to see through advertising. I write more on this in my dissertation.

influence several generations: her children, grandchildren, siblings and friends, and her parents.

It doesn't matter what you sell. You can not afford not to talk to Anna [the most common name among this generation of women]. She is very friendly, bright, loyal and above all wise. Very, very wise. (<http://www.senioragency.se/2007-07-26>. see also <http://www.kvinnopanelen.se/>)

The reason to turn to the comparatively older consumer is thus discussed in terms mainly of their affluence and spending power, but also in terms of their influence on significant others. This is also the case when the argument is to address young consumers: they influence more people, they consume more and spend more money on themselves.

In other interviews with people working in advertising a more harsh opinion is expressed. The market wants to reach the young crowd because that is more hip and gives more credentials to the copywriters or art directors themselves. In order to be seen and talked about in the right circles the issue is not how to reach the actual consumers. It doesn't matter who really buys the products as long as buzz is attained in the line of trade of advertising itself.²⁰

Another point can be made on this as regards consumption habits. For example commercial television has different pricelists for commercials with prices going up at prime time – considered to be the best spots in the television tableau with most potential viewers. Television viewing is measured – who watches what when – and statistics on whether or not it is a young person in their early twenties or someone in their eighties is accounted for. The price for the commercials is set accordingly. If a television program, and more precisely its commercials, can reach a younger audience – though not children – the prices are higher. Older viewers have up until today been depreciatingly referred to as “waste” as regards mainly commercial television viewing. The same goes for print media. An interviewed media broker explained that the tools to assess what magazine to advise a client to run their adverts in is based on consumption and media patterns for a population between 15 and 79. Older media users are disregarded. Further, the older of the included consumer groups are not rated as interesting when choosing a venue for an ad. Advertisers get them “for free” – they are not

²⁰ Stureplan, a location in central Stockholm is used as a sign of the hub or epicentre of advertising in Sweden. Here the young, well to do, hip crowd gathers. In this area people working in advertising are said to have their own watering holes. To attract attention here is according to some interviewees more valued than to really make a campaign that impacts on consumption.

the target group for which they pay. At the same time we know that older viewers watch more television than younger people, just as many magazines have older readers. Younger people have other consumption patterns as regards also other media: the use of the internet, chatting, downloading films or music for example. There is a link between consumption patterns of older consumers and traditional advertising: print ads or TV-commercials for example. There is also a changing link between consumption products and habits and different consumer groups as regards age. Middle aged and older consumers buy comparatively more CD-s and DVD-films than younger consumers, who have a different consumption pattern, and more frequently download these (at times without paying, illegal, but widely spread.) This indicates that older consumers can be more interesting for producers and advertisers since they are more easily reached by traditional, established advertising channels. And that their consumption pattern is more in line with for example the established production of the music industries. These factors, together with who has more money to spend on consumption all favours addressing the older consumers.

Struggle for the relevant consumer

In summary it can be said that there is an ongoing struggle over who is the most relevant consumer to reach; the young or the older – with the proviso: only relatively older. Let's emphasize that it is ageing in a certain part of life that counts. With more people living longer the meaning of ageing is changing. But there is still a taboo on what the sociologist Andrew Blaikie (1999) calls deep old age. Positive ageing becomes conditional on sufficient income, cultural capital, mental and physical health. Blaikie points out that a phase of active adulthood expands to embrace more seniors, but stronger taboos form around those in poverty, those without the right cultural capital, or those suffering from disability or diseases. Today fear of old age and ageing can be said to be postponed and transferred from entering the age of retirement to entering the so called fourth age, or as Blaikie expressively calls it, "deep old age".

Becoming "older" is described as being wiser, more experienced, having higher self esteem – and even, in some interviews, as attractive, not least because one supposedly has reached a pinnacle career wise and has money.²¹ This refers to people in their fifties, sixties and seventies. Real old age is said to commence once you are in your eighties, ill and dependent.

²¹ The interviewed women also talk of disadvantages of ageing. I will pursue this in my dissertation.

(see *Rekordgenerationen* 2005, this is a recurring line of argument when discussing values among the boomers.)

Many signs indicate an increasing interest in the – thus relatively – older consumer. Will this interest for the so called greying market entail a change in what cultural meaning age is ascribed? Will representations show more people over fifty, compared to ten, twenty or thirty years ago and will this have an impact on how we understand ageing? Will ageing no longer be feared and avoided but instead recognized, or even affirmed?

Representation in adverts

There are signs of a change in representation. One of my interview persons, a freelancing journalist, pointed out that Isabella Rossellini got fired as spokeswoman for Lancôme in the early 90's – then considered to be too old to represent the company's image. Today she is back modelling for as an example the Swedish clothes company Lindex. And there are several models aged 40, 50 and even 60.

The cosmetic company Dove has in 2007 launched a new range of products with the logo “Pro age”, together with an advertising campaign in TV-commercials, in print, outdoors, and on the internet. The women depicted are, it says on the website, in their 50's and 60's. The slogan is: Beauty has no age limit. The advertising campaign and the launch of the new products got attention in the media, not least through the concurrent introduction of a report on beauty ideals and ageing. In September 2006 “*Beauty comes of Age*” *Finding of the 2006 Dove global study on aging, beauty and well being* was published. It is based on a survey in ten different countries, with women aged 50-64.²² The reports all have prestigious, well renowned researchers behind them: For *Beauty comes of Age* it is dr Robert Butler (professor of geriatrics), dr Nancy Etcoff (Harvard Medical School and Dr Susie Orbach, (London

²² In 2004 Dove published a first report: “*The real truth about beauty: a global report*”. *Findings of the global study on women, beauty and well being*” based on a survey of women aged between 18 and 64, from ten different countries. This was published together with an advertising campaign and a website where users could participate by voting or discussing different beauty ideals. In 2006 “*Beyond Stereotypes: Rebuilding the Foundation of Beauty Beliefs*” *Findings of the 2005 Dove Global Study* was published focusing on beauty ideals and self esteem amongst especially young girls. The third report is the one on ageing and beauty mentioned above.

School of Economics, and well known not least through *Fat is a Feminist Issue* 1978).²³ This gives the company academic credibility. The reports have got attention in newspaper articles and editorials. When reading many of them it is impossible to know that the reports are not based on independent research but on research paid for and commissioned by a commercial company. In my interviews many advertisers assert that the best publicity is the one you get either with so called word of mouth – when people spread the message amongst themselves, or in newspaper articles, when journalists reports from press conferences; report on research initiated by a company or by getting an editorial accepted. This gets more attention than paid for advertising and thus has a higher value for the company.

The Dove report was launched with the mentioned advertising campaign – in both print, TV commercials, and on a website – and with the new range of products with the logo Pro age. On the site (<http://www.doveproage.com/>)²⁴ you can read more about the campaign, see all the ads, order free samples of the products and read about how to improve your life – by reading about “your spirit”, “your body”, and “your outlook”. The latter resemble the way popular magazines address these issues. Dove has got other attention on the internet as well: some of the commercials have been downloaded and published through for example Youtube.com or other comparable video sites. The ad campaign is said to have been made for television but got banned in some US states because the women “showed too much skin”; they were photographed in the nude.²⁵ The depicted women, posing in a sculptural way are superimposed with the words: “too old to be in an anti-aging ad”. The impression is that the campaign got stopped because the women were too old. The commercial ends with claiming that the products are not anti age but pro age and that beauty has no age limit. On bloggs and discussion forums on the net there is a debate over whether or not it was a deliberate measure to portray women in the nude and getting the commercials banned. In other words, saving money on paid for commercials but getting the so much more valued word of mouth as users click on the website and watch the film through Youtube.com and later talk about it.

²³ The report also cites Heidie D’Agostino from “StrategyOne” as author, but she is not presented in the report itself. StrategyOne is “a market research and strategic communications agency” (http://www.edelman.com/expertise/specialty_firms/research/070823)

²⁴ Also see www.campaignforrealbeauty.com

²⁵ “Does beauty have an age limit? See the commercial you can’t see on TV.” is the text on the company’s website www.proage.com

Dove claims they have taken a new approach to issues on ageing and beauty. The products and the adverts are not anti ageing, like all other products on anti wrinkle and anti age, but pro age. How can this be interpreted? The copy for the products talks of women in their best years, of beautiful skin having no age limit. The discourse here is one of hailing ageing and confirming older women's right to be seen. But the copy also speaks of ageing leading to age spots and wrinkles, thinner less abundant hair, without natural bounce and body. Skin needing work to be revived and renewed. Body work is required. Ageing diminishes beauty and appearance is of vital importance. This is in many respects the same message previously launched in ads portraying young models claiming they manage to look young due to the skin cream they are using (Lövgren 2005, 2007). Thus: same message on what is important for women, but a different package.

But the company goes against one of the cornerstones of advertising, judging from my interviews where it is claimed that women identify with others younger than themselves and look upon themselves as younger than their chronological age. In the interviews this is stated as beyond dispute – as a fact. “Research has shown this” was a recurring phrase in the interviews with people in advertising.²⁶ It is stressed in the interviews that women identify with women ten years younger than themselves. According to the interviewed marketers this explains why ads so often feature women younger than the target audience.²⁷ With their campaign of 2007 Dove ventured forward with depictions of women of approximately the same age category as the target group.²⁸ This indicates a change in representations of ageing in advertisements.

²⁶ One interview person sent me the research he based his opinion of this on; articles by gerontological researchers on chronological age, looked age and felt age, or ascribed age and age one identifies oneself with. (Öberg & Tornstam 2001, 2003)

²⁷ Some of the interviewees also gave examples of the disgust adverts portraying older people had evoked – evidenced also in discussions in a branch magazine for the advertising industry. The public want to disassociate itself from older people; they don't want to see them depicted it is claimed in the interviews. This could also explain why the portraits in the ads are of women looking younger than the target audience.

²⁸ On the web site www.dove.com the models for the campaign is presented together with their ages and quotes on how they think of their appearance and of ageing. The ages of the models are in the age range of the target groups whereas usually the models in ads in general are younger. It must be pointed out that practically all of the the models are adhering to beauty ideals of the western society: thin, taut skin, posing in almost classical poses reminiscent of statues or paintings. I analyze this further in my dissertation.

There is a balance walk to be performed in adverts. On the one hand the adverts promise change, transformation, hope of what can be done with a consumer product, exaggerated in the ads illustration of dream and fantasy. On the other hand the ads must have an element of realism, credibility and reliability necessary to convince the consumer of the efficacy of the product to convey the message that it is worthwhile to spend money on this product. The elements of fantasy and hope have to be counterbalanced by presumptive consumers' possibility to identify with the product and the promise made.

Women disregard their chronological age it is inferred in an article in *The Journal of Consumer Marketing* (Barak & Stern 1985). Marketing should therefore combine youthful images with mature models to reach the mature women who consider themselves as young in mind is the deduction made in the article. "It is a demographic fact of life that the most fashionable age to be is the age of the dominant population group (Barak & Stern 1985:42) thereby consequently pointing out that with a change in demographics, a change in representation might follow.²⁹

Young of all ages

Let me return to the ambivalences that characterize my empirical material. This also characterizes the cultural meanings of age and ageing. One interviewee formulates an opinion on this that I think touches upon core issues:

/.../ Partly I think it depends on how the baby boomers relate to themselves if you ponder why it is so important to concentrate on the young. Because if it works with young people the baby boomers think it is more attractive. /.../ Because youth is so important to them they don't want to think of themselves as pensioners. They compare themselves rather to a 25 year old who is travelling out in to the world, to see the world. It is rather that image they want to have of themselves.

So if you have two ways to present the same product in, if you have to choose one of them, don't say this is a product for pensioners but say that it's for those who are going out to conquer the world.

²⁹ O'Barr (1994) using ads from different historical periods has shown how the visual representation of black people has changed in the US. An equivalent of sorts could I am sure be shown regarding ads for skin creams. As the whole supply of creams has increased so tremendously in the last ten or twenty years – and still is increasing, it will together with the change in demographics at present, change the representations even more.

Perhaps this is a contributing reason for the concentration on youth. If it works on young people, it works as well on older. You, so to speak, kill two birds with one stone. (Interview with a market researcher specialising on trend and values.)

Young of all ages are praised. Everyone – regardless of age wants to appear young. It is important to emphasize that it is not young people that are being hailed, but “young”, and youthful mind. These are cultural values, linked with a period of time: adolescence or youth, but not equivalent to it. Remaining curious, still out conquering the world, beautiful after fifty – as long as you work hard at it and stay in shape –, are cultural notions on ageing at a phase of life. Ageing is recognized and affirmed, as long as one doesn't become old.

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An ageing wonderland of self-service?

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Abstract

The practice of self-service is increasing and expanding to totally new services at the expense of personal service. The growth of self-service is not being slowed by the ageing of the population, as the future elderly have already adopted self-service and will continue its use when aged. Self-service is growing on the terms of the younger age groups. Insecurity about their own future in an ageing Finland is encouraging young generations to take information society development into their own hands and shape it in their own likeness. In expanding self-service, special attention needs to be paid to the reliability of the service, since the user has to take on responsibility for many issues that used to be handled by customer service personnel. Doing it oneself must neither jeopardise the customer's health or financial safety nor his/her access to expert services.

1. Introduction

The debate about self-service is active, and the expansion of self-service at the expense of personal service often comes up especially in the media. The active debate has a solid foundation on daily life. For example, Finnair's various check-in services make it possible for passengers to check in in advance and speed up the departure procedures at the airport. Check-in can easily be completed on the Internet, by text message or at the self-service kiosks at Helsinki-Vantaa and Stockholm-Arlanda airports. (Finnair 2007.) As a second example, self-service is increasing in health services. Patients are expected to take responsibility for their own care as methods of treatment develop.

The practice of self-service is increasing and expanding to totally new services at the expense of personal service. No services are safe from self-service. Beauty bars are a good example of this. People usually go to beauty parlours to relax and enjoy themselves and to allow someone else to pamper them. The most trendy beauty parlours have started to offer self-service to their customers. A beauty bar is the answer to the skin care and beauty care needs of today's busy people. There is an interactive room where a customer can do her own facial or make-up under the guidance of a beautician.

It is worrying that alongside the above-mentioned examples it is almost natural to return dishes at cafes or shopping trolleys at supermarkets. Step by step, self-service is becoming part of our everyday life.

There are increasingly fewer opportunities to obtain personal service. This development has made exponents of personal service raise their voices. The Union of Insurance Employees in Finland has started a campaign for personal service. The employees working in the insurance business are concerned that large insurance companies are offering more and more electronic services. They are concerned not only for their jobs, but also for their customers' interests. A damaging event is often not only unique but also financially significant to the customer. Customers should always be able to have personal service when applying for compensation. The result of self-service must not be that customers are left without compensation only because they have not filled in the forms correctly.

The strong increase in self-service demonstrates that technically almost anything is possible. Only imagination sets the limits to new innovations. Engineers have not understood or do not want to believe that people's physiology sets limits to reasonable self-service and technical development. A human being cannot develop as fast as information technology, but eyesight, hearing, physical condition and mental capacity limit the wildest technical innovations. On the other hand, the production of physical products cannot be transferred to self-service without problems.

Self-service is not automatically a step towards better service. The e-ticket of VR (Finnish Railways) is a good example. In order to obtain a ticket you no longer have to queue at a station booking office but the ticket can easily be purchased in VR's Online Shop and you may then print the ticket yourself, have it sent by post or else call VR Telephone Service and pick up the ticket, for example, at an R-kiosk. It seems that in this case self-service really works, but in practice the development of the new e-ticket is incomplete. At least for the railway guards the e-ticket is more troublesome than an ordinary ticket. There is no point in such self-service that increases the workload of customer service personnel.

The goal of this paper is to examine the factors that increase or potentially decrease the use of self-service from the viewpoint of the users of services. It is important to take into account both possibilities, although it is very unlikely that self-service will decrease in the future. On the other hand, this paper aims to inspire readers to consider their own service behaviour. The original and more profound source of this text is a discussion paper published by the National Consumer Research Centre (Tuorila 2006).

The increase or decrease in self-service is examined through foresight and mind mapping. According to Skumanich and Silbernagel (1997) foresighting is the effort to assess future conditions based on current conditions and trends. Implicit

in the term foresighting is the notion that the future is uncertain and not directly predictable, so the focus is more on general conditions rather than specific events.

Foresighting is generally considered to be distinct from two related concepts: forecasting and strategic vision-setting. While both foresighting and forecasting involve trying to assess future conditions based on the present, the latter term also includes the connotation of predictability: as the forecasting method becomes more and more developed, it is expected to become more and more accurate in predicting future states. By contrast, a strong theme in foresighting is that large aspects of the future cannot be predicted, and so "accuracy" becomes a less meaningful concept in relation to foresighting. Foresight implies an active approach to the future. It invites us to consider the future as something that we can create shape, rather than as something already decided. (Skumanich and Silbernagel, 1997.)

There are literally dozens of methods for performing foresighting, ranging from "back of the envelope" approaches to highly structured methods. Experts often group foresighting methods into different categories according to various attributes. According to Skumanich and Silbernagel (1997) these methods can be grouped into six main categories. The first two categories – expert opinion and scenario building – emphasize human participation in the foresighting process. The second two categories – modeling and morphological analysis – emphasize the use of computer models or other analytic tools to provide analysis of future states. The third two categories – scanning/monitoring and trend extrapolation – emphasize the degree to which conditions of the future are based on conditions of the present.

Mindmapping is a very potential but seldom used foresight method. Joyce Wycoff (2004) describes mindmapping as a non-linear way of organizing information and a technique that allows you to capture the natural flow of ideas. In a Mind Map, the central theme is often illustrated with a graphical image. The ideas related to the main theme radiate in a clockwise direction from that central image as "branches". Topics and ideas of lesser importance are represented as "sub-branches" of their relevant branch. A mind map is similar to a semantic network or cognitive map but there are no formal restrictions on the kinds of links used. Mindmaps can be drawn by hand, either as 'rough notes', for example, during a lecture or meeting, or can be more sophisticated in quality. (Alueellisen ennakoinnin käytännön opas - Suomi 2002.)

2. The ageing of the population will not slow down the growth of self-service

The ageing of the population will not slow down the growth of self-service, as the future elderly have already adopted self-service and will continue its use when aged. The demand for personal service will not emerge until users are no longer capable of managing their affairs through self-service. By adding user-friendly technology this need for personal service can be postponed.

Changing consumer habits, rather than the ageing of the population, will affect the quantitative and qualitative development of self-service in the future. Citizens' consumer habits are not a static phenomenon but they change in the course of time as living conditions change. In the future, all age groups will use information technology. The difference between generations is based on the ability to adopt new evolving solutions provided by information technology. The adoption of lifelong learning will be the real future challenge so that the gap between older and younger generations does not grow too large.

An interesting feature of the changing consumer habits of Finns is whether self-service will be favoured in consumption or whether citizens will particularly consume personal service. The trends in consumer behaviour indicate that behavioural models of consumers will become increasingly diverse, as also will peoples lifestyles and the whole social development. Consumers want to have unique products and services, preferably made just for them. Standardized mass products are not suited to these needs. (Bentley – Wilsdon 2003.)

The growing emphasis on individualism in consumption habits hinders the acceleration of self-service because self-service users are treated as a group. However, the same emphasis on individualism forces suppliers to improve the quality of self-service. Self-service is not as flexible as personal service and it does not allow for customers' special desires.

The functional strength of self-service is the technology that enables huge numbers of people to do things for themselves. In self-service, customers are seen as customer groups with different self-service functions designed for their needs. An individual customer has no influence in self-service. In predicting the developmental trends in self-service it is inevitable that the increasing need of consumers for individuality might change the way individual customers are regarded in self-service processes. Self-service suppliers should be aware that the desire for services in accordance with individual wishes and needs also extends to self-service. The tailoring of services is not merely limited to personal service.

Customers' special needs are not taken into account in the technological solutions of today's self-service. Self-service functions must be tailored to customers in order to improve the quality of self-service. Technically, this should not even be difficult to realise because there are many mobile functions that can be customised. The changing of attitudes is more difficult because it requires new kinds of personality with an accepting attitude towards self-service. Self-service must develop alongside other consumer cultures. Tomorrow's customers need and want more helpful self-service.

3. Self-service requires new skills

Self-service requires completely new skills compared to direct personal contact because customers themselves become customer servants. The better knowledge citizens have of information society, the better they adopt new forms of self-

service. In practice, the increase in self-service is being slowed down by the fact that not all people have equal opportunities to learn to use electronic services. Not everybody learns to use computers at school or at work. Such people must learn these new skills, for example at adult education centres. No organisation or person makes sure that citizens acquire the necessary skills. On the other hand, citizens have the freedom to be sublimely ignorant.

Self-service methods only benefit those who have the necessary skills and equipment. Moreover, the increase in self-service may lead to a reduction of personal service so that some citizens are left outside the services. For these people with poor service skills it would be best if the increase in self-service was also paralleled by an increase in personal service, although this is unlikely to happen. The most important consideration to service suppliers is to improve productivity at the risk of endangering some people's possibilities to use services. Humanity and service supply are often unfamiliar to each other in today's Finland.

The self-service – personal service combination creates inequality among citizens. In personal service the customer is helped by customer service personnel, whereas in self-service customers are left to cope on their own. In practice, the adoption of self-service by citizens is restricted by their insufficient information society skills.

Previously, the wealthy paid extra for special services. In today's Finland, people who have fallen behind in the development of the information society or are set against it must pay a higher price for their services, whether they are rich or poor. Could this combination return to its original form in the future? Self-service would be for the poor and personal service for the wealthy. The answer in all probability is "no". The role of consumers' financial resources in their choice between different service options will diminish in the future. Instead, their information society skills will become the primary differentiating factor in their choice of service. An indigent person skilled in the use of web services is in a better position than an affluent consumer with a poor knowledge of computers.

4. The confidence capital of self-service

In increasing self-service, special attention needs to be paid to the reliability of the service, since the user has to take on responsibility for many issues that used to be handled by customer service personnel. Doing it oneself must neither jeopardise the customer's health or financial safety nor his/her access to expert services.

The suppliers of services have loaded enormous expectations on self-service. Expectations are especially high in lines of businesses where self-service is seen as a solution to cut the costs of service supply. In order for self-service to fulfil expectations it has to be reliable. The reliability of services is important to everybody, no matter how old service users are or what kind of service expectations they have. Besides technical simplification and user orientation, it is essential for self-service to earn the trust of service users.

The confidence capital concept was originally proposed by Harisalo and Miettinen (1995). The concept is based on interaction between people. In the present case, confidence capital signifies the trust that service users place in self-service functions. Self-service suppliers cannot buy trust, but it has to be earned by offering positive self-service experiences. Compared to the original definition of confidence capital, the confidence capital of self-service is not based on interaction between people because there is no such interaction in self-service. Instead, trust is based on the functionality of technology and ease of buying services.

Even if the technology functioned flawlessly, trust in self-service could easily falter. Unsuccessful self-service experiences favour personal service. Increasing self-service does not always produce successful experiences. The experiment some years ago of Finland's postal service, where customers had to pick out their packages themselves, did not encourage the adoption of self-service. Customers did not always find their packages without the help of clerks. In fact, the frustrating and unsuccessful search for packages irritated customers even more. Nowadays, post office clerks hand over packages to customers as they used to do.

The customer's role is important in ensuring the reliability of self-service because they have to take on responsibility for many issues that used to be handled by customer service personnel. Customers have new responsibilities such as recognizing their mistakes and knowing how to correct them. This is not always possible. If you enter a wrong account number when paying bills, getting money back is not simple.

Customers do not always have enough expertise in order to definitely be part of skilled service production. Consequently, the customer's right and access to competent services in self-service is endangered. For example, increased self-service in insurance services must not cause customers to lose indemnities just because they have not given the right information in the correct way.

Self-service should be foolproof. In the real world, service suppliers are not always able to supply self-service that would not endanger the access of customers to competent services. Misunderstandings and unclarities are unfortunately part of human intercourse.

5. Will self-service grow on the terms of the younger age groups?

Globalisation is enabling consumers to improve their position in relation to service suppliers. The world is becoming a smaller place to live in. Thanks to the media and Internet, the world has also become more transparent than before. Citizens have more and more information about things that happen around the world. New values and likes transfer faster than before over borders. Consequently, international consumer trends contribute to the essence of Finnish consumers. By providing information on the actions of consumers elsewhere in

the world, electronic media also make Finnish consumers more demanding as consumers. Could it be possible that thanks to globalisation Finnish consumers will finally become demanding consumers? A demanding consumer does not mean a difficult consumer who complains about trivia, but a consumer who is aware of his/her rights and knows how to take advantage of them.

The hope of increasing the activity of Finnish consumers is alive. In summer 1999, customers loudly criticized long queues at the branches of banks. The criticism was successful because the popular movement and public pressure made banks hire more customer servants. Unfortunately, there have been less successful attempts, such as in spring 2004 when elderly people tried to rebel against high bank charges. The movement ended before it had properly started. The problem among Finnish consumers is their adoption of a passive mode of action.

The development of functional self-service processes requires the identification of people's needs and development and the realization of new needs-based processes. On the other hand, a prerequisite for successful self-service is active and spontaneous action that is integrated into the development of systems.

Self-service is growing on the terms of the younger age groups. Insecurity about their own future in an ageing Finland is encouraging young generations to take information society development into their own hands and shape it in their own likeness. However, the most influential era of ageing consumers still lies ahead. The ways in which the future elderly take care of shopping, banking and other activities will have a major impact on the development of self-service. It is important to realise that the choices of tomorrow's ageing consumers can be affected by today's actions: by how they are taught and accustomed to managing their shopping and other affairs, and by the kinds of experiences that self-service and personal service have to offer.

The immediate possibilities of ageing consumers to contribute to the development of services are insignificant. At most, their voice is heard through different customer feedback systems. And even though their voice is heard, they are not really paid attention to. It clearly seems that self-service is increasing and developing first and foremost on the terms of the younger age groups.

It often appears in the development of products and services that there is not enough information about the special needs of ageing consumers. However, this is not true, because there have been several studies on the special needs of ageing consumers concerning the use of computers and the Internet (e.g. Mäensivu 2002; Petäkoski-Hult et al. 2001; Tuorila 2004; Tuorila – Kytö 2005). On the other hand, youth has long been the ideal in marketing and young adults have been the main target group in marketing. Ageing consumers have been seen as sparing old men and women sitting in rocking chairs whose consumer behaviour is conservative and boring.

One possible explanation why the voice of ageing consumers is not heard in the development of products and services is the "battle" between generations.

Insecurity over their own future in an ageing Finland may further mean that young generations take information society development into their own hands. The service sector is becoming a generational battleground, because information technology is best adopted by younger generations. The majority of those responsible for the development of products and services are young or middle-aged.

There has been a lot of discussion about the growing influence of ageing consumers as their numbers increase year by year. The number of ageing consumers will peak in 2020-2040 when the age pyramid will be very upper-oriented (Wallenius – Hjelt 2004). After that the age pyramid will start to resemble an “age pillar”. The most influential era of the ageing consumers is very much ahead.

6. Conclusions

The future is shaped by decisions we make today. No-one can predict the future. What we can do is to look ahead and think about what might happen so that we can begin to prepare for it today. (Taipale 2005.)

Is Finland an ageing wonderland of self-service? The developmental trends of customer service sometimes suggest that self-service has become a living creature that duplicates itself and that there is no end to this on the horizon. However, the information society that is linked with self-service is a society of people not computers. The ultimate goal is not to manufacture technology or generate economic growth but to increase information, wisdom and understanding. Technology and money are only tools, not the end. (Hietanen 2005.)

Instead of seeing technology as the core of human life, the meaning of human interaction should be the focus in the formation of technology. It is important to include the interactional dimension in the definition of technology, because technology may only come to play an essential role as a dynamic of human life and economics through use and usability. The way consumers adopt technology as part of their lives is especially important. (Elinkeinoelämän keskusliitto 2005.)

From this we can conclude that there is no self-service without people, so we are the reason for the increase in self-service. Technical development should take note that people set the pace. Robots do not yet control this world, as is occasionally portrayed in movies and science fiction literature. Instead of investing in new technical inventions, the quality and functionality of self-service should be the main concern.

The suppliers of services seem all too easily to have forgotten the quality of self-service, especially the human features. Instead of quality, the centre of attraction is the application of self-service to wholly new services at the expense of personal service. Customers’ real service needs fall behind new technological inventions because it is easier for the suppliers of services to offer self-service on

technological terms than on the customers' terms. Self-service could be made more human by bringing it closer to the individual life of customers. The usability of self-service could be improved by listening to customers' needs, and on the grounds of their real user experiences the insecurity of self-service could be reduced. The suppliers of self-service still have a lot to learn.

Human action is not always rational. Although people complain about self-service, it is widely used. The simple explanation for this kind of conflict between thinking and action is that self-service is often the only real choice. Consumers are also directed to self-service because its good qualities are discussed much more than the bad ones. Good qualities are emphasized all the time, whereas negative features are highlighted from time to time. In the future, self-service will give us many reasons to be surprised because it will certainly diffuse into functions that we could not currently think of doing ourselves.

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Regional strategy of Services for the Elderly People - Years 2015 and 2030

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Project of the Services for the Elderly People in the
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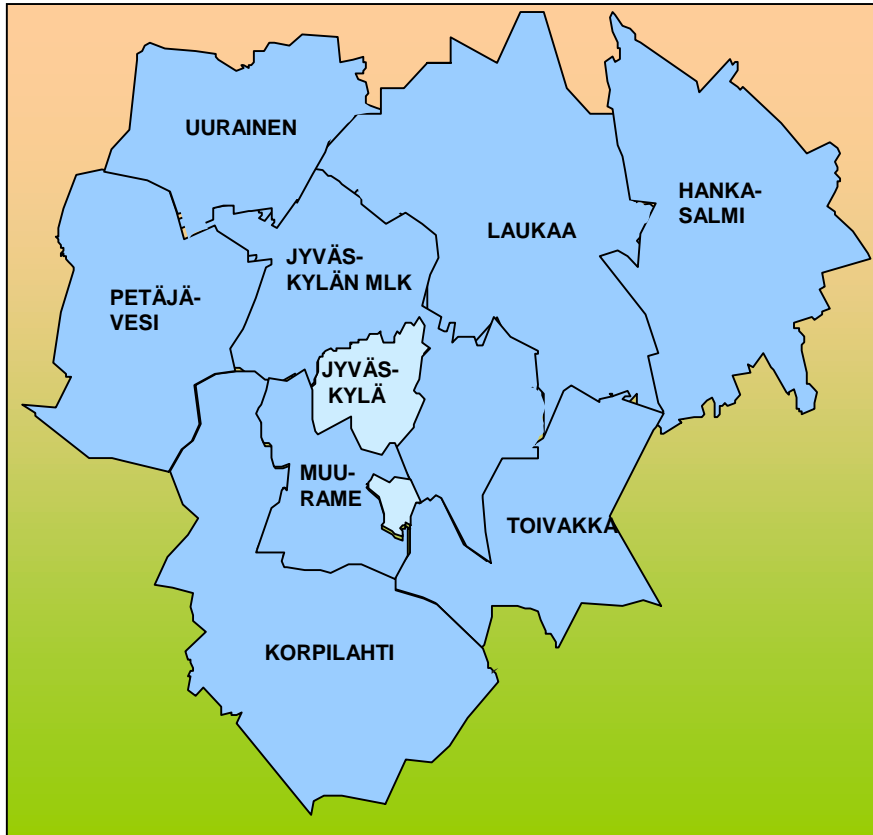
E-mail: jouni.airola@jkl.fi

The Network City of Jyväskylä Region

Community

Inhabitants

31.12.2005



Hankasalmi	5 588
City of Jyväskylä	84 434
Rural Mun. Of Jyväskylä	34 774
Korpilahti	4 997
Laukaa	17 193
Muurame	8 672
Petäjävesi	3 703
Toivakka	2 353
Uurainen	3 137



In all

164 851

50 km

ORGANISING THE OPERATIONS

Organisational options

Content examples

Municipality/Group

Night call: Central Finland Health Care District
Housing and plan supply
Adult education: Jyväskylä Centre of Adult Education

Public utility company

Real estate services
Fire and rescue operations
Occupational healthcare

Foundation

Substance abuse treatment
Special care for the mentally handicapped
Employment services

Limited company

Industrial policy: Jykes Ltd
Tourism marketing: Jyväskylään! Ltd
Waste management: Mustankorkea Ltd
Waste water: Regional Waste Water Treatment Company Ltd



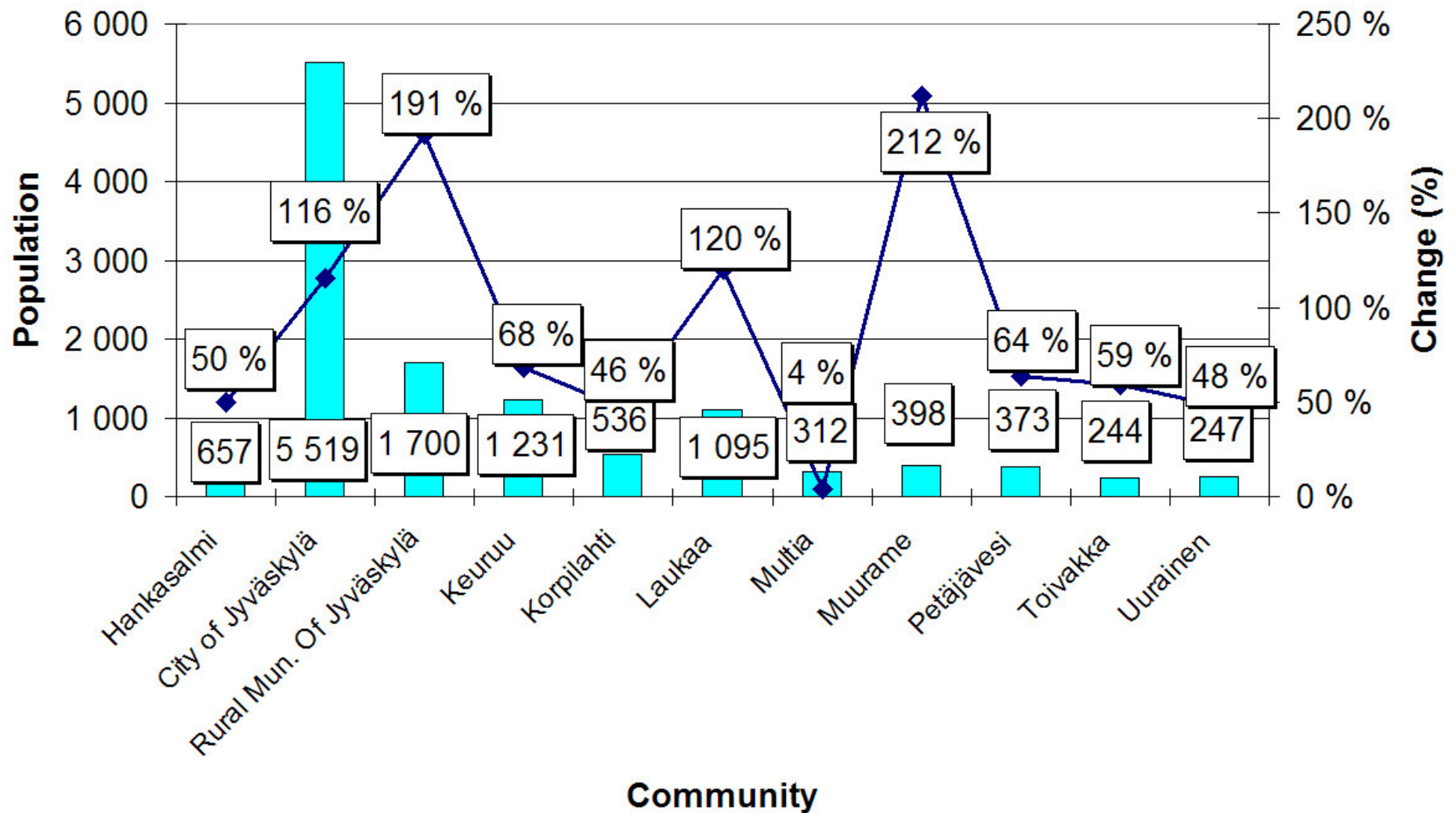
Participants of the project

- Communities: Hankasalmi, City of Jyväskylä, Rural Municipality of Jyväskylä, Korpilahti, Laukaa, Muurame, Petäjävesi, Toivakka, Uurainen, Keuruu, Multia
- Regional Health Centers: Keuruu-Multia, Korpilahti-Muurame and Palokka
- Central Finland Health Care District
- University of Jyväskylä
- Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences
- The Center of Excellence on Social Welfare in Central Finland
- Foundation for Research and Development GeroCenter

Financing of the project

- Years 2005-2007
- The State Provincial Office of Western Finland and
- National Programme to Reform Health Care via
- The State Provincial Office of Western Finland (75 %)
- Communities (25 %)

Over 75 year old persons share of population / Year 2004

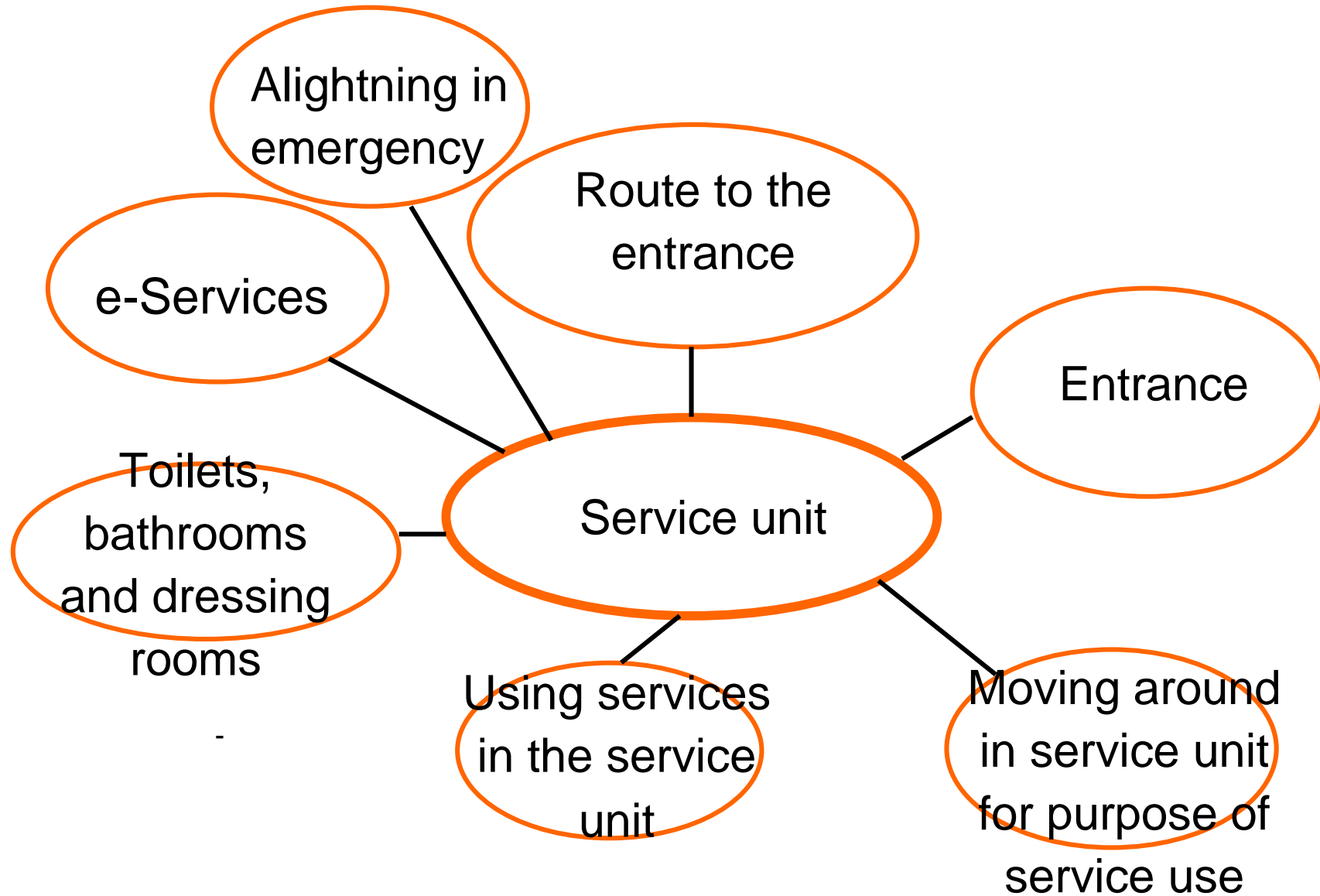


■ Over 75 years persons / Year 2006
◆ Change (%) over 75 years persons / Years 2006-2030

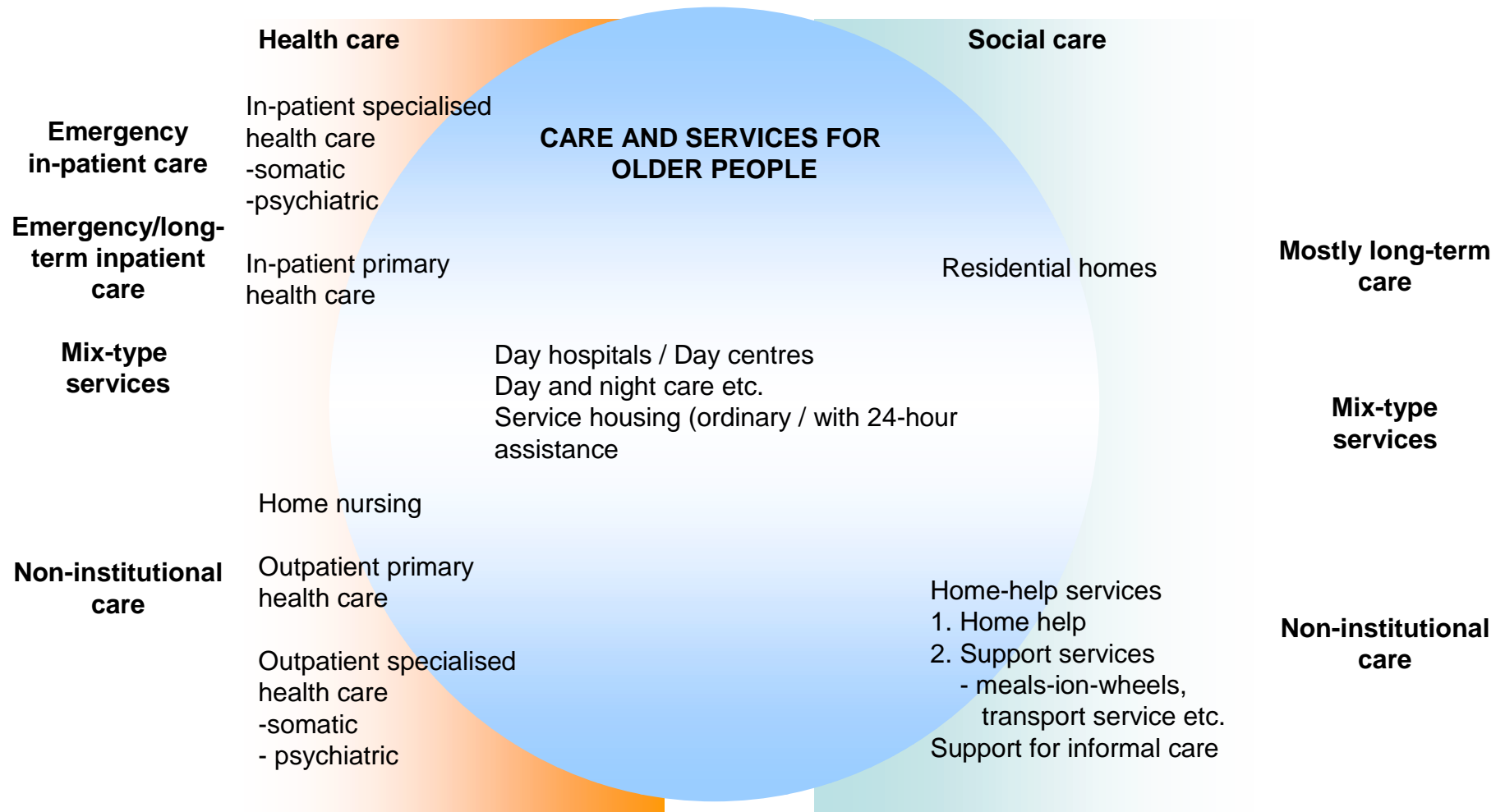
Regional strategy of Services for the Elderly People (2015, 2030)

- Summary
- Background of strategy
- Aim of strategy
- Values
- Co-operation
- Accessibility
- Health, functional capacity and welfare
- Relative care
- Standard of activity
- Personnel
- Communication and information
- Financing
- Following-up and evaluation
- List of sources
- Appendices

Accessibility Classification for Social and Welfare Services



Care and services for older people in Finnish municipalities



(Source: Kauppinen et al. 2003)

Nordic Consumer Policy Research Conference 2007

Finnish Consumer Agency ,
Deputy Consumer Ombudsman Anja Peltonen:

AGEING CONSUMERS AND PUBLIC SERVICES

Public services are defined here as services that are produced by local authorities or the state and financed mainly with taxes.

The principles arising from the Consumer Protection Act are applied when consumers acquire consumer goods or services in the markets. In market conditions, consumers have a choice between the goods being offered, but competition must be efficient for it to be in the interest of the consumer.

Transparency is therefore required of markets, in other words it must be easy for the consumer to perceive the price, quality and other factors of the alternatives offered. The division of responsibilities between the consumer and the business offering the service must also be reasonable. If the service is not what was agreed or what the consumer could reasonably expect, the consumer is entitled to compensation in accordance with the “access to justice” principle. The sanction system of consumer law aims to ensure on one the hand that the operations of businesses will in future comply with the law (so-called collective regulation), and on the other hand that consumers will receive compensation for any loss caused to them.

In the Finnish Consumer Protection Act, a business is defined as a natural person or a private or public legal person that deals on a professional basis in order to obtain income or other economic interest. The scope of the definition of a business also includes organizations, associations and foundations that aim to obtain economic interest through their operations. However, voluntary work and non-profit activities that do not entail entrepreneurial risk, for instance, remain outside the scope of the Consumer Protection Act. In this document, organizations and other bodies are not considered separately. According to the scope of its applicability set out above, the Consumer Protection Act applies to some of the organizations, but some remain outside the scope of the act.

Values behind consumer legislation regulations

Behind legislation concerning consumer rights lie the following principles and values, among others, from which individual provisions are derived and which guide decision making.

Availability of services and sufficient alternatives

In services of general interest such as electricity and water supply, availability of the services is a matter that will not be ensured by competition, so special attention has been paid to legislation governing them.

Transparency

The alternatives offered must make it easy for a consumer to perceive their content, price, delivery and other terms. The alternatives must be such that they can be compared and a consumer can foresee how the service might change in the future and how it can be discontinued. The service provider must in its marketing and in all steps of concluding a contract inform the customer of all essential information clearly. Withholding essential information and marketing misleadingly may create a liability to compensation.

Fairness of contract terms

In trading with consumers, the service provider is assumed to be more professional and therefore a stronger party than the consumer. The service provider in most cases drafts standard terms, the content of which the consumer cannot affect. The requirement of fairness of contract terms means among other things that, in principle, the service provider cannot unilaterally change a contract term. If contract terms are changed, the consumer must be notified of the changes in good time, and agreement by default cannot be used to get approval from a consumer, there must be expressed approval.

Good practice and taking the target group into account

Marketing must not be improper, for instance contrary to the general values of society. It must not, for instance, exploit the inexperience or distress of the target group, such as children or the sick. In debt collection, good debt collection practice must be followed.

Right to compensation

If a service is not what was agreed or the customer could reasonably expect, he or she is entitled to compensation, and there must be no cost to the customer for remedying the fault.

“Access to justice” and one-stop shop principle

It has been considered important in consumer legislation to ensure for citizens not only the rights enacted in an act, but also real opportunities to exercise their rights. Legislation alone is inadequate, “access to justice” systems are also required, such as local consumer advisory services, a consumer complaints board and a consumer ombudsman. Another important matter affecting the practical position of the consumer is the principle that a consumer can always present all his or her requirements to the party with which he or she has a contractual relationship, and that party must deal with them. A seller cannot oblige a customer to contact the manufacturer, importer or service subcontractor, even if a fault is due to their operations. A seller can of course negotiate its own compensation with its own contractual partners, but a customer cannot be sent around from one place to another.

Current situation

The legal position of users of social welfare and health services has traditionally been defined through the provisions of administrative laws, and primary and secondary complaint procedures relating to them. Rather new provisions are the social welfare customer act and health care patient act, which provide an opportunity for users of services to make a complaint. The requirements in providing a service professionally, in other words the quality standard requirements, have not been clearly set from the user's point of view. Users' rights following faults and delays have not been regulated.

Private-sector social welfare and health services come under the scope of the Consumer Protection Act, and its provisions cover among other things quality of services, marketing and contract terms. However, these provisions do not apply when the orderer of the service is a local authority.

Special features in regulation of services

Public services are regulated by aims and principles based on constitutional rights that cannot be required in private-sector markets, and there is no justification for abandoning or compromising on them in future public services even if the services are provided by a subcontractor. In that case too, the requirements of the Administrative Procedure Act concerning public sector services must be taken into consideration.

Orderer-provider model and service vouchers

The local authority is responsible for the availability of statutory social welfare and health services. The orderer-provider model is one way of providing the local authority's services. In this model, arranging the service and providing it are separated within the local authority. The service provider is an organization either within the local authority or outside it, such as a private-sector business or third-sector organization, association or foundation. Contracts govern operations between the provider and the orderer. The service voucher model increases choice for consumers because businesses and service providers can compete for customers provided they comply with the minimum standard of service that should be agreed with the local authority. It must also be emphasized that, in general, competition is not necessarily an effective solution for all customer groups.

Special attention to vulnerable consumers

Users of social welfare and health services may often be so-called vulnerable users, whose ability to secure their rights is weaker than the average consumer's owing to old age or illness. Vulnerable consumers cannot act as active consumers in competitive markets, and would need help and guidance when considering alternatives. It is therefore justified that under current regulations on service vouchers, a customer may refuse to accept a service voucher.

This imposes special requirements on the methods used in the orderer-provider model, for **acceptable performance and continually monitoring its quality**, for instance. It is important to ensure among other things that feedback on deficiencies received from residents in homes with services for the elderly is passed on to the right responsible party. Vulnerable groups of consumers do not necessarily know how to utilize existing procedures for primary and secondary complaint procedures.

As regards services in sheltered housing, old people's homes and other long-term services, **continuity of the contract** is a key issue for users. In tendering to be a service provider and when contracts for outsourced services are made, the contract periods should be long enough that the users need not change service provider unnecessarily often. The party seeking tenders for the service must naturally ensure that the service providers selected are financially sound and will be able to fulfil their commitments throughout the contract period. In any case, a **contingency alternative must be considered in case the service provider suddenly has to discontinue its operations**.

In sheltered housing, a customer may conclude with the service provider **contracts for other services too**, in addition to being a customer of outsourced services. As regards a contract of this type that also includes a rental agreement for living in the sheltered housing, it is important that the service provider does not unilaterally amend the contract in a way that fundamentally affects the service user's position. The starting point in consumer law is that the basis for the right to make amendments must be specified in the contract and the contract must not be fundamentally amended without both parties contributing to the amendment. As regards long-term contracts, frequent re-tendering facilitates fundamental changes to the content whenever a new contract period starts. From the consumer-customer's point of view, this is not necessarily useful; but then, active consumers cannot either in reality always affect the contents of a contract.

Theme 2. Children and teenagers as consumers

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The Enculturation of Young Consumers -Young peoples' dealings with the logic of brands and branding-

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Abstract

This paper deals with how young consumers learn the logic and workings of brands and branding by analyzing textual accounts of conversations between young people between 13-20 years old collected on an online forum situated on a Swedish website. The findings indicate that people learn about these consumer cultural phenomena through an enculturation process involving conformity to norms of brand and consumer authenticity formed in peer interaction, and the reflexive evasion of punishments for breaking those norms. The enculturation process also involves brand story telling that affects the very meaning of brands, giving the consumers authorship over brand meaning, which is why consumers therefore could be regarded as a type of brand managers.

Introduction

Brands as a phenomenon in society has developed from merely being a mark on animals used by proprietors to mark their cattle and life stock (Aaker, 1991), or used by middle age craftsmen to signify and distinguish their created goods from other craftsmen (de Chernatony & McDonald, 1992), from industrialization and onwards functioning as symbols that both enable consumers to separate or identify one producer of goods from another, and to be able trace a particular good back to the producer holding it responsible for manufacturing goods with inferior quality (Koehn, 2001) to reach a high-esteemed position in contemporary society ascribed with almost divined characteristics serving as magic strategic business tools essential for firms if they are to compete successfully on a more globalized market, gaining market shares, increasing profits, and creating value for the corporation and its shareholders.

A lot of brand management research, generating fruitful concepts such as brand equity (Aaker, 1991), brand leadership (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000), brand identity (Kapferer, 2004), brand image (Gardner & Levi, 1955), and corporate reputation (Gray & Balmer, 1998), has thus been conducted to understand and explain how successful brands are to be built, managed and developed by corporations and their brand managers in a way that would give firms a competitive edge over their adversaries. Brand strategies, tactics, and other brand building activities for building not just a strong brand but a right type of brand then needs to be developed and put into action if it is to add value to the firm. All the brand management strategies, techniques and concepts though rests on a certain logic of brands, a set of axiomatic assumptions and principles that lies behind how firms ought to and seeks to build, manage and handle their brands, which all together comprise what Holt (2002) refers to as a branding paradigm. As an outcome of the movement of managers between various firms, the normative and mimetic effects generated by peer interactions, and the communications and

information flow mediated or conveyed by consultants and educators, big firms are inclined to share a joint set of branding knowledge, conventions or principles serving as a groundwork from which certain brand strategies and techniques then are developed.

Consequently consumers are continuously subjected to several branding activities such as conventional advertising (Vakratsats & Ambler, 1999; Alden *et al*, 1999) product/brand placement in movies (Gould, *et al*, 2000; Balasubramanian, 1999), in TV-series (Russel, 2002; Avery & Ferraro, 2000; d'Astous & Seguin, 1999), the employment of celebrity endorsers (McCracken, 1989), the placement of brands in disinteresting life situations far removed from commercial sponsorship, and the placement of brands in cultural epicentres involving arts and fashion communities conveying particular authentic associations, all of them stressing that life needs to be channeled through brands to have value and meaning. However as brand managers aggressively press the branding techniques to their extreme consumers become more knowledgeable and reflexive concerning the earlier established mechanics and principles of branding, and the regular branding activities devised by the marketers (Holt, 2002), developing an improved brand literacy (Bengtsson & Firat, 2006) thus eventually learning about the logic of brands and how branding works, ultimately challenging the very accepted and taken-for-granted status of marketer's actions.

This paper deals specifically with how this learning process works – how consumers learn about the logic and workings of brands, and how they form knowledge, and norms about brands and branding, and what this consumer brand knowledge contain. I bring in the theoretical construct of enculturation to complement the consumer socialization construct for the purpose of improving the understanding of how consumers learn the logic of brands and branding. The empirical object of the study is young consumers in their teens primarily because teenagers, being neither children nor adults intensively are searching and forming identities often with the help of brands and consumer goods. Spending billions on consumer goods every year they are a very attractive group of consumers for firms and are therefore continuously subjected to heavy marketing and branding activities. A qualitative method involving interpretive analysis of textual accounts collected from online conversations taking place between young people (13 -20 years old) on a Swedish internet forum is used. The findings show that consumers learn about the workings of brands and branding through an enculturation process involving conformity to norms of brand and consumer authenticity formed in peer interaction, and the reflexive evasion of punishments for breaking those norms. The enculturation process also involves brand story telling that affects the very meaning of brands, giving the consumers authorship over brand meaning. Consumers may then also be regarded as a type of brand managers.

Youth culture and consumption

Youth as a socially constructed category, generally referring to what is considered young and new and therefore strongly connected to the future, being culturally determined in the discursive interplay with visual, musical, and verbal symbols and signs Fornäs (1995), is often considered as a product of the development of the Western modern society (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006). The concept of the teenager emerged in the Post World War 2 era of the 1950s and 1960s as a result of that time's economic growth where the rise of the middle-class young consumer generated a new, expanding, affluent and lucrative consumer group in its own right for corporations to attend (Willis, 1990). Since these teenage middle-class consumers were relieved from wage-earner responsibilities their identity as a social category

became inextricably connected to free time, fun, and hedonic consumption, thereby representing the emerging mass popular culture. Companies immediately seized the opportunity to capitalize on this new and quickly growing consumer segment. Marketers developed and employed marketing actions for products and brands sensitive to the particular characteristics of this particular group of consumers. Their increased independence from parents granting them with a greater autonomy concerning the purchase and consumption of consumer goods and brands, a greater influence on their discretionary income, and a bigger influence on the household purchasing decisions, has made teens and tweens a multi-billion-dollar market on which companies continuously struggle for market shares (Siegel, *et al* 2001). During 1998 teenagers between 12-19 years old allegedly spent an estimated \$94 billion of their own money on consumption items (Zollo, 1999). Teenagers are thus regarded both as a lucrative current market but are also viewed as the crucial future market since adolescence is the life stage when individuals tend to develop their identity they will draw on as adults, forming preferences and tastes that possibly will last throughout life. Consequently they are targeted as an important and profit generating market segment by companies and are heavily affected by commercialization and consumerism (Millner 2004).

However, despite being targeted heavily by marketers and their elaborate branding activities teenagers are not dupes entirely manipulated by media and marketing. Brands, products and styles marketed to teenagers repeatedly fail because “the kids” do not think they are “cool” Millner (2004). They are not only the ones that quickly adopt new brand and media images, but also reflexively create new styles of their own. Consumer goods, being not merely products, but instead the catalysts of cultural affairs are therefore not purchased and consumed uncritically or passively by young people; instead young people relentlessly transform the meaning of goods, re-contextualizing and appropriating mass-marketed offerings and styles. Young people thus bring their own particular and differentiated grounded aesthetics to bear on consumption, picking their own colors and matches and individualizing their purchases, most of them combining and re-arranging elements of clothing to create new meanings. Willis (1990) refers to this process as young peoples’ symbolic creativity or symbolic work, which pertains to the symbolic work that teenagers perform within the realm of the common culture and encompass the ways in which young people use, humanize, decorate, and invest with meanings their common and immediate life spaces and social practices. Cultural commodities and consumer goods are however also important tools for other realms of symbolic work in addition for their overall behavior. Millner (2004) means that although possessing little actual monetary or political power to affect their situation teenagers have absolute power to control the evaluation of each other, which means that the actual power they have is the ability to create their own status systems based on specific evaluation criteria. Status and foremost status differences is therefore a very important issue for teenagers, which is why teenage behavior then largely may be understood through the status systems, hierarchies and through the peer relationships forming in teenage peer interactions. Fitting in with peers, conforming to certain social norms simultaneously as one expresses individuality, is of importance for teenagers where clothing symbols such as brands may be used to symbolize the relation between the actual person and the social group he or she wants to affiliate with and be accepted, where refraining from certain symbols used and recognized by the majority actually may become a way to show individuality (Piacentini & Mailer, 2004). Younger people thus also make consumer choices based on the elimination of what is not acceptable (Auty & Elliot, 1998), which paradoxically mean young individuals then may conform to a certain subgroup, by being a non-conformant of the mainstream. (Piacentini & Mailer, 2004)

Method

I use a qualitative method where I collect and analyze textual excerpts from teenagers' discussions or verbal interactions taking place on an online forum situated on a Swedish website called "Hamster paj." On this forum it is possible to observe how teenagers' in naturally occurring discussions and conversations concerning brands and branding generate an understanding of how brands and branding works. The textual conversations are "natural occurring talk" since I as a researcher have not participated in the discussions and conversations prompting textual reactions from other users on the forum. I have thus affected neither the initiation, nor the outcome of certain conversations and discussions. From an ethnographic perspective, I have been there invisibly observing, but not interfering with the teenagers continuous brand conversations. The method is ethnographically informed and has common features with another method employed within consumer research called "Netnography" (Kozinets, 1997).

A netnography is an interpretive and qualitative method constructed for the specific purpose of investigating the consumer behavior of cultures and communities existing on the internet. It could be defined as a written account or story coming from fieldwork investigating the communities and cultures emerging from on-line, computer mediated, or internet-based communications, where both the textual description or story, and the fieldwork are methodologically informed by the techniques and traditions of cultural anthropology, which means full participation in the culture being studied, with the researcher as a recognized cultural member Kozinets (1998). The type of method I use however is more of a netnographic light version, referred to as electronic eavesdropping, where the researcher only listen and observes the talk/posted messages between the members of the online community on the online website, without interfering, posting messages and asking questions to the members of the community or culture.

The nature of the website

On the online website "Hamsterpaj" young people between the age of 13 and 20, meet, interact, chat, and discuss most things in today's society including consumption and brands. There are rooms about entertainment where you can download online computer games, cartoons, and film clips. You can find "fun spaces" containing funny stories, funny pictures, other "stupidities," and sex tests. There are sections where you can get links, and tips of where to find good computer programs to down load, and guides for how to do it. There are also places where people can meet new people, look up old acquaintances, look at a photo gallery including pictures of other users uploaded by themselves, and even listen to web radio run by the website.

The most important section on the website for my study is however the forum. The forum is a place where individuals discuss various on beforehand decided and categorized themes, such as e.g. the Cafe section that has subsequent topics such as e.g. music, food, humor, movies, and television. Every sub-topic (If one chooses to click into the topic of music a sub-topic or thread might be The Beatles) consists of a number of "threads" posted (introduced, issued) by any of the over 300 000 members of the website. People then post messages about the particular topic, and get replies from other users, the discussion thus starts and can continue for a longer time period, with a high intensity involving eloquent formulations, but also hard language, and the usage of smiley's to indicate underlying emotions, intentions, or sometimes

irony behind their posted messages. There are moderators on the forum that see to it that the posted messages from the user are not too “of topic” and they have the authority to erase messages that are inappropriate in some way or to close down the thread if it develops in a non-preferable direction leading to meaningless discussions.

Data collection and tools of analysis

This study is a part of a larger one in which I started my data collection in March 2006, frequently, and continuously visiting the website reading the discussions about brands and consumption taking place between the teenagers. The empirical material that is subjected to analysis in this study was collected between March 2006 and January 2007. The general procedure is that I first read through the conversations happening on the various discussion threads to, with a broad mind, make a first scan or selection of what I consider interesting and relevant. The selected threads are then downloaded to my computer, categorized, and printed out. I then read the discussions to find particularly interesting comments and accounts from the teenagers’ interactions. The analysis is informed by one of the key premises of discourse analysis, that our way of perceiving and understanding the world is created and maintained in social processes and that knowledge is constructed in social interaction, where we both form common truths and contest what is true and false (Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999) as a philosophical base when interpreting the text looking for underlying themes, similar to what Bryman & Bell (2003) refers to as content analysis.

Consumer learning

Within consumer research consumer learning or the process of how people become consumers, which also encompasses the processes of how consumers deal with and learn about branding, has been tightly connected to and understood through the theoretical construct of consumer socialization (Ward, 1974; Moschis, 1978; Moschis 1987). It is considered to be a process that starts early in life where people in young years not only start developing knowledge about marketplace concepts such as advertising, product categories and brands (John, 1999), but also about the meaning of materialism (Lipscomb, 1988), and the social significance and meaning of certain consumption products, the symbolism in consumption, how to communicate this to others, and the ability and skill to make inferences about others grounded in their consumer object choices (Belk *et al*, 1982). The majority of previous consumer socialization research has been based on the theoretical tenets of cognitive psychology, where the cognitive development of children during certain age spans in their lifecycle (Moschis, 1985), their knowledge acquisition capabilities (Peracchio, 1992), and the reinforcement from, the modeling of, and the social interaction with the socialization agents parents/family, media, school, and peers has served as explanation factors for how children learn to become consumers. The age or lifecycle position and social structural variables such as sex, social class, and family size are antecedents to the actual socialization process, which involves the agent-learner relationships of modeling, reinforcement and social interaction, leading to the out-coming consumer learning properties (Moschis, 1978).

Although peers as socialization agent and peer interactions have been acknowledged to have an important role in the socialization process the socialization agents that have received the most attention are parents/family, most likely because the previous consumer socialization research has almost exclusively focused on children, while peer interactions that according to

Ward (1974) increase in importance as people enter into adolescence and teenage years, has received little attention. Although some attention has been awarded peer influence concerning children's learning of consumer patterns and product preferences (Hawkins & Coney, 1974), the buying processes and consumption elements such as materialistic values and social motivation (Moschis & Churchill, 1978), it still has been studied in relation to peoples' life cycle and age spans. More research on peer influence and peer interaction especially in relation to the development of consumer symbolism and materialism would therefore be welcome (John, 1999). What is however perhaps a more extensive shortfall of prior consumer socialization research is that it is not sensitive to the cultural context where the socialization processes occurs.

Learning to become a consumer is however not only a matter of learning how to buy, consume, and dispose of products, and of perceiving, recognizing and distinguishing between various products and brands, or to become a member of smaller specified consumption communities such as brand communities (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; McAlexander *et al.*, 2002), neo tribes (Maffesoli, 1996) or subcultures of consumption (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995), but it means learning an entire community of brands, even an entire consumer culture, involving more wide/far reaching complex cultural processes and the knowledge and sensitivity to a large number of commercial symbols. To better capture these processes I therefore bring in the anthropological construct of enculturation.

Enculturation refers to the process by which individuals learn their own culture (Herskovits, 1972). Herskovits means that it is an all-pervasive process of which people for the most part are unconscious about. It is propelled by and perpetuates through the internalization of cultural symbols such as language. The internalization of these cultural symbols does not merely assure appropriate reactions to certain cues of behavior, it also organizes the enculturated restrictions concerning conscience, super-ego and guilt feelings. If culture then is to be regarded as what orders peoples' behavior in society, enculturation is the mechanism that organizes and decides for every of the culture's members the form and extent of accepted ways of conduct and aspirations, in addition to delineating the boundaries within which variation in individual behavior and conduct is sanctioned. The enculturation process enable according to Herskovits individuals to becoming fully functioning members into the society in which they have been born, simultaneously allowing them to grow into their culture as it is presented. The new members absorb the values, views, and norms of what is right or wrong, normal and abnormal, beautiful or plain by observing the behavior of the group, thus learning the counter-norms, the "Thou-shalt-nots" being the governor-bearings to conduct and the integral parts of the systems of moral values and ethical precepts of the culture. The enculturation process then provides new members with the knowledge of their society so that they may form a living, it socializes them through patterned punishments and rewards in order for them to function within the group they belong to, it equips them with a belief system which enable them to meet and handle the power of the natural and supernatural world with minor psychological anxiety, and guide their creative desires in dance, poetry, music and art.

Herskovits (1948) claims that the enculturation of individuals mostly takes place during the early years of life and that the powerful process of learning the culture is an unconscious conditioning containing characteristics such as automatic conformity to the cultural patterns and unconscious adjustment to social living. Enculturation is therefore by Herskovits considered to be an unconscious process of cultural learning largely taking place before the individual reaches maturity, and that it is the mechanism for the stabilization of culture. Enculturation is then to a large degree void later in life except when cultural innovations

exerts impact on him and her when meeting new situations they have never encountered before. Herskovits mean that, contrary to the unconscious childhood enculturation process, the adult enculturation process is symbolized by conscious reflection and active choice among alternatives. Enculturation in adult life thus opens up for change, enabling people to examine alternative possibilities, and therefore allowing for recondition to new ways of thinking and conduct. Hence enculturation on the mature level involves reorientation and recondition, rather than unconscious enculturation operating in preadult years containing purely automatic conditioning and the internalization of cultural patterns separated from reflexive and creative attitudes and behavior.

The discrimination Herskovits (1948) makes between preadult unconscious enculturation and adult conscious enculturation has been contested and questioned by other authors, especially the enculturation process on the preadult level. Goodman (1967) claim that a child when learning the culture of his or her society not only conforms in response to pressures of a forceful and insistent force, but also evades, resists, selects, and experiments, and becomes a member of the society rather through the process of “creative becoming” than of conformity to cultural patterns. The learning process is twofold involving both the creative modifying of culture in a microcosmic sense, and the creative adapting to it in a macrocosmic sense. It is therefore, hazardous to suppose that there needs to be a crack or distinction between preadult and later stages of enculturation since children in early years are able to think, select alternatives, and develop the habit of critical and reflective behavior within the cultural framework (Bramfeld, 1957). The Childhood enculturation process is thus not limited to unconscious automatic conditioning and cultural internalizing. It includes the creation of reflective attitudes that not only help to modify traditional patterns of attitudes, behavior and traditions, but also to set off cultural novelty (Shimahara, 1970).

The enculturation process is reflexive in that people is “other-directed” which means that the source of direction of character is externalized. People seek their directions and orientations in external sources such as mass media and peer groups, or “contemporaries,” rather than from traditional socialization agents and other reservoirs for idea systems (Riesman, 1961). In their enculturation process young people are therefore reflexively and consciously evaluating their relations with “contemporaries,” partaking in new cultural axiological value sets Shimahara (1970). Despite that the young ones automatically imitate, identify with and conform to their own cultural group as a crucial source of the standards for the values, expectations, and judgments, Piaget (1962) means that they simultaneously construct these standards and alter them if the group agrees. It is then possible to argue that children and adults, simultaneously as they internalize the traditional culture and conform to the underlying cultural patterns of values, attitudes, and behavior, they also re-create and reform it (encompassing the underlying cultural patterns of values, attitudes, and behavior) by initiating novelties that become accepted by the peer groups or contemporaries.

Enculturation during childhood then also contain reflexive and conscious processes where there is a continuity of creative becoming and conscious responses during both preadult hood and adulthood Shimahara (1970). This means that the enculturation process involves both unconscious acquiring of the inherent culture and reflexive/conscious responses to it, where the unconscious cultural conditioning and reflexive responses to the cultural environment are in a dynamic interplay. Enculturation of both adults and children cannot only then be regarded as cultural acquiring but also as the creative process of inquiry involving both the unconscious process of acquiring the traditional inherited culture, while simultaneously reflexively, deliberately, and creatively both forming it and learning it.

Analysis

The textual analysis of the conversations taking place on the Swedish online forum revealed interesting parts of the consumer enculturation process involved when consumers learn how brands and branding work in contemporary (Swedish) consumer culture. The data revealed two major themes, the learning of various forms of authenticity and how consumers learn the authorship over the construction of brand meaning.

Authenticity

An important part of the young peoples' learning process concerning the workings of brands in society involves establishing and learning perhaps not how the concept of "brand" are defined in a more exact academic and consultative manner, but instead what it actually implies and what the concept of brand encompass. These young people mostly discuss brands that are marketed to consumers, and fashion brands in particular since these are the brands that young people perhaps, due to their function as resources for identity construction (Elliot & Wattansuwaran, 1998), first come in contact with and may relate to in their every day lives. Discussing what kind of brands that is to be considered as a name brand within clothing then seems important if a person is to become a full member of the consumer culture. Defining and then learning what a real name brand means is though a quite problematic venture, which the following online conversation illustrates.

Willy:

Well, it is doubtful if JL¹ and WE² can be included in the category of name brand clothes...

Cactus:

Actually all clothes that are manufactured with anything else than a No-name, is in fact name brand clothes, since they are labelled with a brand :)

Rainbow replying the previous comment made Willy:

I just felt that I had to point this out. JL, WE and Bikbok are name brand clothes, however not in the same way as Lacoste. If you buy a JL sweater then I'm pretty sure you do it because everybody else does it, for god sake! A 1000 "kronor"-sweater: /.

Summer:

Why doesn't Bikbok count as name brand clothes?

Things that are printed or attached to sweaters do count as brands, don't they? (Well, not the note with the washing instructions though)

Sweet:

Yes of course that is a brand, but that types of clothes are not "name brand clothes," as in being expensive, are they? But hey I might be wrong.

Be well!

Jerry:

All clothes are not name brand clothes, are they?

¹ JL is (or was) an upscale fashionable Swedish name brand where the letters JL stand for J.Lindeberg a well-known clothing designer within the Swedish fashion industry. He made his brand known to the public by sponsoring his Swedish golf star friend Jesper Parnevik with his designed and conspicuous clothing.

² WE is a Swedish name brand with "street-cool" associations that was made aware to the public by giving its products for free to certain celebrities to wear so that the brand would gain a certain image. WE and JL have later together teamed up and co-branded different types of street wear.

But if you mean little more expensive clothes with a more recognized brand, I have one garment like that. It's a pair of Tiger-jeans, and when I tried them on they were far too small, but I love them now.

Rainbow's reply on the earlier comment made by sweet:

What I meant was that I regard Bikbok as name brand clothes since people purchase them because others wear them, and you can't really say that they are for free either, even though they are cheaper than many other name brands.

The previous discussion shows that there is a great amount of ambiguity and uncertainty involved when trying to reach a common understanding of what is to be considered as a real or authentic brand. This is important since brands need to be authentic if they are to be used by consumers as cultural resources adding value to their lives (Holt, 2002), such as serving as tools for individuals identity construction (Elliot & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Elliot & Percy, 2007). In addition if people meaningfully are going to discuss and understand consumption and brands they need a fairly shared understanding of what particular terms or phenomenon, such as name brands, means or refers to, they need a common sense knowledge or cultural knowledge to be able to communicate, understand, navigate, and even manipulate the consumer culture of which they are members.

Holly:

...We and JL är not expensive clothes, not Lacoste either for that matter, those are name brands clothes with a lower price if you ask me, neither are Peak Performance. If anybody thinks so I just say no, no, no, they are not! Expensive name brand clothes are Gucci, Burberry, DKNY, D&G and I think almost everybody owns something from those brands. Not long ago my dad gave me a Burberry dress that probably cost a couple of thousand "kronor" and it is fun to spoil your self with expensive clothes

Chaos replying Holly:

Do you know how much I hate people with that kind of attitude!?" "I'm so rich that I don't regard Lacoste, WE or JL as name brand clothes," they **all** are name brands, they are just more or less expensive. Moreover, I don't think ANYBODY cares that your father gave you a really expensive dress.

Lara:

Well, there are brands, and then there are brands. Those with ok prices for us ordinary people, and those design clothes such as Gucci, Versace, and Prada. I could never walk around in them myself; it would feel wrong in some way, very snobbish. I mean, people walking around in that type of brands, could they really give a sober impression. You probably have to work hard to show that you are not something more than a regular human being.

This conversation is particularly interesting since it reveals that name brands cannot be equated with luxury brands such as Gucci and Dolce Gabbana. It points to the fact that it is often easier to define what is not liked or not allowed than what is. Holly's deviating comment and the other users' reaction to it uncovers the implicit, and underlying norm of how you should think and reason concerning authentic and inauthentic brands. An authentic or real name brand may be defined in various ways, involving uncertainty and ambiguity of what it really means, but it is quite clear that it is not equated with luxury brands. One is thus not allowed to have the opinion that authentic brands are only the most expensive luxury brands, of which few can afford to buy, especially young people in their teens. Holly thus reveals what Herskovits (1972) refers to the counter norm by not conforming to what is considered to be right (although in this case with the authenticity of brands and what is right or proper is open for a fairly wide interpretation) or what is allowed within the culture. Holly is verbally abused after expressing her counter norm opinion of what is to be considered as authentic

brands, which may be understood as a form of punishment for improper thinking or behaviour, where this punishment serves to learn the individual what is right and wrong and to steer the individual back to proper thinking, and the conformity to the norms provided by the culture. The norm and counter norm of brand authenticity is thus something that needs to be and are learned by young consumers through a fairly elaborate enculturation process involving punishment, the formation of, and the conformity to norms of brand authenticity.

Learning about authenticity does however not only involve brands and name brands. It also includes learning how and what it means to be an authentic consumer and how that relates to the consumption of various clothing brands. It is recognized by the young people on the online chat forum that the clothes you are wearing tells a lot of you as a person, and that name brands are perhaps not a necessity but that it is as Pie puts it, "fucking important." It is really the clothes that make you and "that's that." There is a strong view that the reason for people buying name brands has to do with that it provides an individual with a certain status. Status then, and the need to fit in, to be accepted (buying name brands to emulate others), to show belonging, in addition to the giving an unsure person a confidence boost is considered among these young people to be the main explanation factors for why people are so anxious of buying those kinds of name brands. But buying and wearing expensive brands for these reasons are not always regarded in a positive light. People buying name brands to get a good confidence are considered just superficial and weak and it is just sad that people buy brands just because they are brands. Name brands are really unnecessary in that there are a lot of clothes or goods (often no-names) that have the same or at least almost the same quality as name brands. You should thus buy brands on basis on your own personal and free choice, not because you want to emulate others or to fit into a certain group of people by conforming to their brand preferences. There seem thus to be an established norm, as proposed by Herskovits (1948;1972), that name brands are really not essential, even unnecessary and that you should not buy name brands to conform to the groups' brand preferences and to the peer pressure because of the fear of being banned from it.

Rainbow

If you would buy a JL shirt then I'm pretty certain you do it because everybody else does it. For god sake, a shirt for 1000 "kronor"! Moreover I believe that the purchase of name brand clothes has to do with that it provides a certain status, depending on what circle of people one belongs to. To the people who acquires a good confidence thanks to branded clothes:

-Sure thing, be that superficial!

It's expensive, stupid, and unnecessary. I have never noticed any bigger difference quality wise between name brands and other clothes. Sure name brands might be 100% cotton and others might have 5% polyester, but can you tell a clear difference?

-No.

It should be pointed out that it's your own choice, but remember, if you purchase a Lacoste shirt, advertising has won a battle. Status symbols back and forth, buy at ICA !

Superman:

I will put forward my theory concerning the purchase of name brand clothes, and I mean it could be explained by on one thing only, and I now that I will get a "No" from the ones that wear name brand clothes but that is only because they know I speak the truth . The purchase of name brand clothes could be explained by one thing – Status. Hence, that you have spotted someone else wearing it, or you want to emulate the ones that already wear it. You can't say that it's nice. They have at least as nice clothes at Ullared, but to a 500 "kronor" lower price.

Rainbow replies the comment made by Superman:

That is exactly my opinion too. Often this have probably something to do with that you are unsure of who you are (roughly) and what you stand for, it becomes a lot easier to just "go

with the flow” instead of risking being banned from “the group.” This is expensive and stupid in the long run, so people please! Try to make your own choices.

Superman:

People are insecure about their personality and buy branded clothes to be accepted and to show belonging

A real or authentic brand consumer would then, preferably not buy name brands at all since they really are unnecessary, but if so they should adhere to the norm of not buying name brands for the sake of gaining status and confidence, fitting in, conforming to the social groups’ brand preferences or the fear of being shut out. Buying brands because its symbolic meaning may supply an individual with confidence, status, group belonging, and the feeling of fitting in is thus not accepted here by other contemporaries as a credible and acceptable justifications or accounts for an individual’s brand purchase actions. There are however other motives or even justifications for buying and wearing name brands that are credible enough to signal an individual as an authentic brand consumer. Claiming that one buys and wears name brands because they have a better fit and shape, higher quality and that they fit you the best, are credible justifications for buying expensive name brands, which really are unnecessary in the first place. Interestingly these credible justifications all have a functional nature that serves to stress the name brands’ functional superiority over other no-name or less known brands. Buying name brands because of their symbolic features and value providing the individual with status and a sense of fitting in are though considered as non credible justifications for name brand consumption. It thus becomes hard, or even impossible to state that you buy certain expensive name brands only for the symbolic properties and the symbolic values it provides you, such as status, increased confidence and the good feeling of fitting in.

Hornet comments:

Well, brands are pretty geeky if you think about how much you spend on them..but if you fell better doing so...then it’s not more wrong spending money on clothes than on any other interests that you have?? Then if you do it because of status or to fit in, it’s just sad for your own sake that you don’t have a better confidence than that...

I always buy name brand jeans myself, since they usually (with some exceptions) are more durable, and have a better fit. I often buy branded shoes too, but that is because I’m addictive to shoes so that does barely count .Sweaters is however unnecessary I think, I mean if you find a nice garment you shouldn’t hold yourself back just because it’s not a particular brand, and to my knowledge there is no bigger difference of quality when it comes to sweaters.

Trumpet:

It is usually like this: branded clothes have more often a nicer shape and fit but then you maybe pay 50% of the price just for the brand. When it comes to less known or smaller brands you on the other hand usually do not pay for the brand, you pay what it costs to make the garment.

Painkiller:

Principally branded clothes have much better quality than No-name clothes. No question about it. I have, actually, 100% experience of that branded clothes are a lot better and are much more durable than No-name clothes.

Trumpet again:

I believe that one should buy the clothes that fit your body the best and not based on what kind of brand it is. Nevertheless it’s a fact that name brand clothes have a better fit or shape.

The functional features of consumer products are thus used to rationalize the purchase of highly symbolic goods such as name brands, which seems a bit paradoxical. People are then free to buy name brands as long as they can provide the right type of motives for doing so. You would consequently need a vocabulary of motives Mills (1940) that is accepted by your

contemporaries that allows you to buy and wear name brands and still be able to convey yourself as an authentic consumer. Vocabularies of motive are stated words that accounts for past, present and anticipated future actions in various social situations, often when behaviour is questioned or criticized. An action or anticipated action or behavior may then appear justified or rational if the right type of motive is supplied by the actant. So what is really then an authentic consumer? Judging from the previous empirical excerpts and textual analysis of the justifications of name brand consumption an authentic consumer is a person that according to Holt (2002) buys consumer goods based on their own individual and sovereign choices, instead of being swayed by the marketing dictate, rendering them as consumer cultural dupes following the preferences of the masses. The counter norm - being mainstream, which in this case means buying name brands to emulate others, to fit in, and be accepted, then also becomes the sign of an inauthentic consumer, a wannabe that only follows the brand fashion and the brand preferences of the group.

Speedy:

One should wear shoes that are not in fashion :p

It's like a drag to walk around in the same shoes as everyone else.

Like this year for instance, white shoes are evidently considered popular and nice, so I bought black ones

Charlatan:

I love everything in high heels. Is there any reason for dressing comfortable when you can dress nicely? I feel much better if I know that I look nice. But for the moment Converse is in, thus there is no choice but to adapt.

Ronnie:

Why adapt?

Have the guts to go your own way...that is my opinion.

Almeyda:

Be your self!!

Aphrodite:

To put it clearly, everybody wears Converse now, which is boring according to me. Like, everybody in my class wears them except for me. I just think it's a drag when everybody wears the same thing.

Blender replying the comment made by Aphrodite:

I think so too.

Manny:

Converse used to be something special and different but now it is just mainstream, that all wannabe rebel kids wear

You should thus choose the brands that you really like and not because they are popular. Brands become deemed as mainstream as soon as they become too popular since they then no longer may be used that effectively by consumers as symbols of differentiation. This is in concert with the argument of Piacentini & Mailer (2004) that refraining from certain symbols recognized and used by the majority, instead of buying and using them is a way to show both individuality and affiliation, which paradoxically implies that young consumers may conform to a certain subgroup, by being a non-conformant of the mainstream. Younger consumers thus also make consumer choices rather on the basis of what is not acceptable (Auti & Elliot, 1998). Comments that conform to the authenticity norm are rewarded while comments stressing that one should follow the brand fashion by e.g. buying Gucci and Prada are punished with verbal abuse. These norms of authenticity, and the justifications and

vocabularies of motives that may be employed to evade punishment from other peers when breaking these norms, are part of a continuous, reflexive, and creative enculturation process, such as the one outlined by Shimahara, (1970), where the “contemporaries” rather than the parents according to Riesman (1961) serve as the socialization agents defining what is right or wrong, and good or bad in the culture, are thus both explicitly and explicitly played out, discussed and learned by young people at this Swedish online chat forum.

Branding reflexivity and brand meaning authorship

Prevalent in the young peoples’ online conversations, in addition to the norms of brand and consumer authenticity, was their interactive formation and display of elaborate knowledge and reflexivity both concerning the workings of the fashion process of brands and how branding works, and the branding activities employed by companies. Various branding activities, such as putting overly clear, obvious or oversized brand logos on the firm’s products, issuing limited editions of attractive products, and using celebrities to market and thereby spike or improve the brand image was dissected in the young consumers conversations. Using oversized brand logos will according to the discussions make the brand appear too obvious for everybody to wear, thereby running a greater risk of becoming too commercial and too popular, thus developing into a mainstream brand, losing its differentiating function for consumers and may therefore no longer be used as an authentic marker of individuality. Or as Lizzy states when discussing the brand Tiger of Sweden: “I think it’s a pretty elegant brand as long as they don’t put their Tiger head or name somewhere else than on the size patch.” If using big brand logos Tiger would be just like other brands, such as WE and JL that has become in vogue, they are “in” just because everybody else wears them, rendering them inauthentic. Issuing a limited edition of some brand model would only “cause every human being to walk around in a counterfeit.” The much used branding technique of celebrity endorsers (McCracken, 1989) that aims at transferring the attractive and sometimes glamorous cultural meaning of a certain celebrity to a product or a brand by persuading the celebrity to endorse it is discussed in the following conversation.

Punk:

God I hate those “Foppa³” shoes, I think it’s snobbish to pay 800 “kronor” for a pair of UGLY rubber shoes. But that’s just my opinion

Chrystal replying Punk:

If they hadn’t been named “Foppa” shoes, hardly nobody would have bought them. Everybody beliefs that he is the one that designed them, and hatched the idea. Personally I have always hated the “Foppa” shoe and I find it very uncomfortable, which most people don’t. They are plain and simple terribly ugly.

Punk replying Chrystal:

That is exactly what I think too!

By the way, do you know why they are named “Foppa” shoes? I mean, what has he REALLY got to do with the shoes. I haven’t figured that out yet. Is it just advertising?

Jerry:

What do they look like? Could anybody show a picture?

Chrystal replying Jerry:

³ “Foppa” is the nickname of a very popular Swedish hockey player Peter Forsberg who is considered to be one of the best contemporary hockey players in the world

This is what they look like. You can find them in other colors too. But this was the first picture I could find

Lizzy replying Chrystal:

They look like children's shoes?

Chrystal replying Lizzy:

Yes exactly. Still there are a lot of grown ups running around in them. I can actually understand them if they think that they are comfortable. But it's a pretty ugly shoe and the comfort is not enough to counterweight the ugliness. But 799 "kronor" for a plastic shoe is unreasonable. Considering the only reason for it to being expensive is that "Foppa" designed it. Bah! He hasn't done crap. He's only advertising

The dissection of the celebrity endorsed "Foppa" shoe shows that this is a branding technique, which has been well penetrated by young people and revealed as a marketing and advertising stunt employed by companies to sell more products. The reasoning that the high price of 799 "kronor" is a rip off being only a plastic shoe that is so incredibly ugly (exceeding the its remarkable comfort) and that the company only are allowed to charge that kind of price since it is connected to the celebrity, in this case a big ice hockey star, Peter Forsberg, show that these young people are very familiar with how this branding technique works. They are well aware that the celebrity generally doesn't do "crap" and that in this case the hockey star, although allegedly designed the shoe himself, is "only advertising. If it hadn't been for the celebrity nobody would have purchased it. This is though knowledge and insights which, simultaneously as it is displayed by some people it is collected and learned by others. Jerry did not first know about the shoe and what it looked like, but fellow actors participating in the discussion sorted him out by uploading a picture of it. Jerry was thus educated by contemporaries of another consumer good and its symbolic meaning that recently had been made available to him in the consumer culture. Punk did not first understand what the sport star "really" had to do with the shoes, asking if it just was an advertising trick. The other actors then educated her by stating that "he hasn't done crap" and that he is noting but advertising. Consumers thus do not only learn about branding, and branding activities through the dialectic interplay between the consumer culture and the branding paradigm, as proposed by Holt, (2002), or by the persuasion episodes continuously taking place in the interaction between the persuasion agent/marketer and the persuasion target/consumer (Friestad & Wright, 1994), but also through an thoughtful, conscious and creative enculturation process (Shimhara, 1970), where peers or young contemporaries in their conversations reflectively discuss and learn (from each other) the workings of brands and branding in the consumer culture.

It is however not only various branding activities that are reflexively dissected in these conversations. The meaning of brands is also discussed with intensity and commitment. One possible reason why this indeed is relevant for these young consumers is that if brands successfully are to be used as means to differentiate and to individuate oneself, simultaneously as they become means to establish affiliation with others (Pavitt, 2000), being combined together as a brand bricolage (Thompson, 1997), serving as resources for identity construction (Elliot & Wattanasuwan, 1998), people need to know what kind of meaning the various brands have and convey to their peers and contemporaries.

Nina:

Tiger⁴ sucks monkey-as, they have ruined the brand to the degree that all their clothes are nothing but embarrassing

Rock:

Motivate your opinion. In what way has Tiger as a brand been ruined? By becoming too fashion oriented instead of being oriented towards older-men-confections?

Nina:

I mean that they sold themselves out.

And I strongly oppose that they have become more fashion oriented.

Tiger is for me incredibly much more white trash than fashion.

Rock replying Nina:

White trash? Oh really? If you check out the model pictures on their homepage many outfits are more "preppy" than white trash. I would probably rather describe it as a blend of "preppy" and "street."

Chip:

I don't know but I have gotten the vibe that Tiger is pretty.. "ghetto"?

Hmm, how should I explain? Oh well, I'm not that fond of Tiger, it doesn't feel right.

Nina replying the previous comment made by Rock:

Yeah surely that's the way it is, but they haven't been very smart, or alternatively, they have been very smart. The college sweaters, the t-shirts, and the belts ruined the brand image

When you wear a brand you make a statement, regardless of what it is.

Is it H&M you make one statement, if is Armani you make a different statement.

Personally I get rashes and I get pissed of only by seeing a garment and realizing that it is Tiger, I get irritated and immediately connect it to those hideous sweaters and belts. It's not so much the clothes themselves, but rather what the clothes/brand stands, or has stood for. And that's what I mean when I say that Tiger is white trash, and to me it has even ruined the entire Tiger brand as such. And I can assure you that I'm not the only one having that opinion.

Number 1:

This thing with statements, I would be happy if you could explain a little further what you mean by that.

Nina replying Number 1:

Well in principle yeah since it makes me associate to all the sins the brand has committed.

Hence, with all the garments you buy you signal something, if you then make those choices consciously or unconsciously is another matter. But if you buy a sweater at H&M it says a number of different things about you as a person. Everything from "it was at the end of the month and I was a bit low on cash" to "I don't care where I buy my clothes." It's usually relatively simple to understand what the deal is since it's explained by the person's other clothes. It's a bit tricky but what I mean is, is that you say something with all the garments you are wearing. It's supposed to give people an image and a first impression.

I make that connection, and I think that they have ruined their brand. Exactly in the same way as J.Lindeberg and to a certain extent Canada Goose.

⁴ Tiger, or Tiger of Sweden, having a tiger head as a logo is (or was) a more classic and elegant upscale Swedish brand that from the beginning marketed expensive suits, jackets and shirts but has lately moved in more to street wear.

The previous discussion really illustrates empirically how brand meaning is negotiated between consumers. It is what Elliot & Percy (2007) refers to as the discursive elaboration of the meaning of and advertising text, where a brand's symbolic meanings are not fully concretized until the mediated meanings and the lived experiences of the brand has been discursively elaborated. The discursive elaboration in this case refers to the social consumption of the brand as it is discussed, described, argued and laughed at. It is according to Ligas & Cotte, (1997) through the marketing environment induced brand meanings, interpreted by consumers in their individual context, and finally communicated to other consumers in their social environment, that the brand meaning is negotiated. They mean though that it is foremost in the social environment were different brand stories told by various authors are gathered and juxtaposed from which the brand meaning is constructed, and if there is no unambiguous brand meaning denominator negotiated it is not possible for and individual to express a social identity. The previous argument about an unambiguous brand meaning denominator put forward by Ligas & Cotte is based on a theoretical model with little or no empirical support. The empirical accounts provided here shows how this actually is played out in naturally occurring "talk" and it reveals that it seems very hard to reach an unambiguous negotiated brand meaning denominator. Rather the brand meaning seems to be dynamic and in constant flux, continuously re-negotiated in consumers' interactions. The brand Tiger was considered to be boring, white trash, a blend of "preppy" and street, and even "ghetto." Although one could argue that a brand meaning negotiation process took place, a common meaning denominator is hard to identify

The data also support the argument put forward by Holt (2003) that a brand should be looked upon as a culture of its own that is formed through the stories authored by four different actors, the firm itself, the popular culture, influencers, and the consumers. The young people here, in their online conversations, together author stories about the brand, thus affecting what it means. They consequently gain authorship of the brand meaning, providing them with consumer agency (Muniz & Guinn, 2001) of the ownership of the brand and what it stands for. It is not then, as proposed by Fournier (1998) only the actual brand behavior of the consumer that affects the brand meaning negotiated with the branding company, but also how people, talk, converse, and tell stories of a brand that affects its fluctuating meaning. What is also both obvious and intriguing is the content of the critique that the individuals deliver concerning the actual branding work performed by the firm in question. One can sense a kind of bitterness, frustration, even cynicism coming from the discussants being "pissed off" over the fact that the company has "ruined" the brand that before was authentic or even elegant to the degree that it has become "nothing but embarrassing." The over exposure of the brand coming from issuing collections including other types of garments than suites, shoes and jackets, such as college sweaters, t-shirts and belts/belt buckles with large logos has made it available for the majority of the masses, diluting the brand, or even downgrading it to a white trash image. There is still also enculturation and peer education involved in these discussions in that Nina, who is particularly negative to the Tiger brand, are when first stating her negative opinions urged by others to describe and motivate here reasons for having those opinions. When she then elaborates on her knowledge and thoughts of the brand, and also implicitly how branding works, the others are free to absorb this knowledge about branding and her opinion of the brand by simply what Herskovits (1972) claim, observing what others do in the culture.

Although not having the same business agenda as brand managers that consciously tries to build brands that adds value to the firm by developing various brand strategies and performing certain branding activities, consumers themselves by conversing and telling

stories about brands to keep up with what happens in the consumer culture actually perform branding work that affects the very meaning of the brand. When hijacking brands (Wipperfurth, 2005) and consuming them in other contexts intended by firms, perhaps with the purpose of showing group affiliation, a certain style or create and convey a social identity to others thereby affecting the meaning of the brand, they also become brand managers.

Conclusions

It was quite obvious that the young people engaged in conversations on the online forum are well “educated” consumers and skilled members of the Swedish contemporary consumer culture involving elaborate cultural knowledge of how brands work in society and the branding activities performed by various firms. Their knowledge seems almost elaborate and extensive enough for passing a brand management course on undergraduate level. Young consumers learn about the logic of brands and branding through an enculturation process taking place in online verbal interactions where the peers or contemporaries serve as the enculturation agents instead of parents or family as proposed by previous consumer socialization research. The enculturation process involves the establishment of, and the conformity to both implicit and explicit norms of brand authenticity and consumer authenticity, where accounts and acceptable motives may be employed by the individuals to justify and thereby evade verbal punishment for thoughts or brand behavior that would actually break the consumer cultural norm. The enculturation process through which young people learn the logic of brands and branding thus involves both features where this part of the consumer culture is unconsciously acquired through the conformity to various norms of proper behavior (Herskovits; 1948; Herskovits, 1972) and a conscious/reflexive inquiry involving features of creative becoming (Shimahara, 1970).

Simultaneously in the enculturation process, when conversing and discussing about brands, fashion and branding, consequently educating each other by expressing, sharing and acquiring various forms of brand and branding knowledge and telling various brand stories, brand meaning negotiation processes are at work. However the brand meaning negotiation does not seem, as proposed by Ligas & Cotte’s (1997) theoretical argument, to reach an unambiguous brand meaning denominator, but implies instead that the meaning is continuously in flux. The concept of negotiation, which in itself implies some sort of end between the negotiation parts, might then not be a fully adequate concept for explaining how brand meaning is constructed. The concept of brand meaning conversation may then be a more fruitful concept to account brand meaning construction since it connotes that the brand meaning formation process has no real or final end. Moreover, in the enculturation process, when the young consumers interact, converse and discuss brands and branding on the forum they tell stories about brands that thus affect the meaning of those brands. This provides the consumers with authorship over brand meaning, actually leading to the consumers doing branding work, thereby becoming brand managers themselves.

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When action speaks louder than words: The effect of parenting on young consumers' pro-environmental behaviour

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Abstract

The present study examines intergenerational transfers of pro-environmental behaviours between parents and children. In a survey study involving 600 Danish families, we examine whether children's pro-environmental behaviours can be determined by their parents' attitudes and behaviours with respect to three "green" consumption activities: buying organic/environmentally friendly products, handling waste responsibly, and energy saving activities. In addition, we examine the effect of parenting on adolescents' pro-environmental behaviours by including a particular aspect of parenting style: parental autonomy support. Results show that the adolescents are influenced by their parents' behaviour, and especially how they perceive parents' behaviour, which seems to depend on how visible these behaviours are to them. Furthermore, parenting style influences the adolescents' behaviour in various ways.

1. Introduction

Today young consumers are ascribed with responsibility for solving environmental problems through their role as consumers/citizens – just as is the older generation. Thus, young people are targets for environmental education activities, for instance through the school system (Nordisk Ministerråd, 2000; Rickinson, 2001) and more generally through public consumer education. Young consumers are assumed to be receptive to social influence, which is likely to include

informational and social influence related to environmental impacts of consumption patterns. Yet surprisingly little is known about the level of young consumers' environmental awareness relative to the older generation, how pro-environmentally responsible behavioural patterns are established, how young consumers' may be influenced to commit to pro-environmental practices, and who may be able to influence them. Previous studies indicate that the younger generation generally displays a lower degree of environmental awareness and commitment than does the parent generation (Grønhøj and Thøgersen, 2007; Grøn Information, 1995; Lavik and Enger, 1995). In addition, recent studies show that teenagers are heavy users of electricity and water at home: the average teenager uses 20% more electricity and 10% more water than the average adult energy consumer (Gram-Hanssen, 2005).

To encourage the development of societally beneficial consumption practices, such as responsible waste handling or careful use of non-renewable energy sources, we need to know more about how such behaviours are established. It seems highly likely that parenting plays a key role for teaching and passing on "desirable" consumer practices to the next generation of consumers. Still, there is a lack of research documenting the probable influence of parents on their children's pro-environmental practices. Further, the specific role of parenting style in transmitting pro-environmental behaviours to children (i.e., do certain parenting styles inhibit or foster children's environmental awareness and involvement in pro-environmental practices?) has hardly been researched at all. Besides helping us to understand why young people may be more reluctant to commit to pro-environmental practices than their parents, a deeper understanding of these questions may inform policy makers about steps needed to inform/educate young consumers about how to perform environmentally benign activities. A very basic question in this connection is whether such information should be targeted directly at the young people themselves, or they should be reached more indirectly through their parents. Further, research such as this is important for parents who want to raise their children to be "responsible" consumers.

3. Background

Consumer researchers find that parents are instrumental in transmitting consumer related orientations such as attitudes, values and beliefs about the marketplace (e.g., Moore-Shay and Lutz, 1988; Obermiller and Spangenberg, 2000) and behaviours such as product and brand choice (e.g., Olsen, 1993) to the next generation of consumers in what has been denoted a process of *intergenerational transmission*. Likewise, in the environmental domain intergenerational transmission of attitudes, values and behaviours are likely to occur (Grønhøj and Thøgersen, 2007). Thus, a number of studies document the transmission of consumption related behaviours at various levels of abstraction between generations. However, the formation of intergenerational effects are not very well studied in general (Moore, Wilkie and Alder, 2001), and in relation to the environmental domain, evidence of IG consumption related processes is rather scarce. In short, parents are likely to influence their children to act in more (or less) pro-environmental ways (Grønhøj and Thøgersen, 2007), but how this influence is exerted is not very clear. Moreover, establishing plausible causes of intergenerational transfers is challenging due to the difficulties of interpreting socialization outcomes. Thus, surveys generally assume that parent-child similarities indicate IG transfer. However, a lack of intergenerational similarity with respect to, e.g., consumption values may be caused by parents' failure to communicate their values *or* by the child's rejection of the same values (Viswanathan, Childers and Moore, 2000).

Consumer learning in the realm of family life is generally thought to occur through children's observation and modelling, through family members' "social interaction," that is, their direct and indirect communication, as well as by shopping and product use/consumption experiences (John, 1999; Moore-Shay and Lutz, 1988; Moschis, 1987). In order to achieve a broad picture of IG influences Moore and colleagues (Moore et al., 2001; Moore, Wilkie and Lutz, 2002) used qualitative, in-depth interviewing in a study, which revealed a number of forces that foster IG transfers in the household and facilitate the endurance of such influences into adulthood. Besides, the three major childhood learning processes: learning by observation, communication, and experience were all found to affect IG transfers.

Consumer socialization survey studies have particularly assessed the impact of family communication on IG transfers. Results of these studies suggest that communication effectiveness (Mandrik, Fern and Bao, 2005), communication environment, for instance the absence of conflicts in parent-child communication about money matters (Moore-Shay and Berchmans, 1996), and general communication patterns and frequency of consumption (Carlson, Walsh, Laczniak and Grossbart, 1994) affect the extent to which a consensus between parents and their children is formed with respect to a range of socialization outcomes. In consumer socialization studies, typologies of general *parenting styles*, that is, differences in parental rearing practices are sometimes used to predict socialization outcomes in children (e.g., Carlson and Grossbart, 1988; Moschis, 1985). An application of these typologies divides parents into different groups according to the parental values prioritized in rearing practices; for instance (Carlson and Grossbart, 1988) divided parenting styles along a permissive-restrictive and warmth-hostility dimension and found five distinct styles: authoritarian, rigid controlling, neglecting, authoritative, and permissive parenting. Another parenting typology which has been widely used in consumer socialization research categorizes rearing styles as laissez-faire, protective, pluralistic, and consensual (Moschis, 1985). Certain rearing practices are thought to foster independence and consumer related skills in children, for instance authoritative parenting practices that emphasize and encourage independent thinking and autonomous decision making.

The present study is aimed at extending our knowledge of IG transfers of pro-environmental behaviours in the environmental domain. For this purpose, we first examine the extent to which children's pro-environmental behaviours can be determined by their parents' attitudes and behaviours with respect to environmental issues, that is, whether parents' pro-environmental (or the opposite) attitudes and behaviours are transmitted from parents to children. Examining the relative importance of attitudes, respectively, behaviours in relation to the same consumption activity gives an indication of the nature of the socialization processes at work; the influence of parental attitudes on adolescents' behaviour would suggest that parents influence their children in communicative ways, while influence stemming from parents' behaviour would suggest that observation/modelling influences are (perhaps more) important for the IG transmission.

While consumer socialization implies learning the skills, knowledge, and attitudes relevant for functioning as consumers in the marketplace (Ward, 1974), effective socialization, including intergenerational transfer of socially and culturally acceptable behaviours, probably involves more than this. As noted by Grolnick, Deci and Ryan (1997) socialization agents may be able to force children to carry out behaviors, but "the real goal is for children to carry them out volitionally" (p.135). Therefore, in this study we included a particular aspect of parenting style, parental autonomy support (Deci and Ryan, 1985) to be able to examine the (direct or

moderating) effects of autonomy support with respect to adolescents' acquisition of a pro-environmental orientation.

4. The study

A total of 601 Danish families were interviewed in the spring of 2006 by means of internet-based questionnaires. Two representatives of each family, a parent and a teenager (living at home, between the age of 16 and 18) each individually completed a questionnaire related to three pro-environmental consumption practices: buying organic/environmentally friendly products, curtailing electricity use and handling waste responsibly. The final sample of parent-child pairs (n=1202) of questionnaires resulted in a response rate of 28%. The composition of the sample was 293(48.8%)/308 boys/girls and 243(40.4%)/358 father/mothers. The sample mirrored the Danish population in terms of relevant socio-economic characteristics, but was skewed towards a relatively higher participation by mothers than by fathers.

Measurements. Questions included attitudes and behaviours with regard to each of three behaviours (i.e., buying organic/environmentally friendly products, handling waste "responsibly," and curtailing electricity use). In addition, in case of the young respondent, questions included perceptions of his or her parent's attitudes and behaviours with respect to the same activities. *Attitudes* were measured on three 7-point semantic differential scales with the extremes 1=good/beneficial/wise and 7=bad/detrimental/unwise (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). Cronbach's alphas for the scales ranged from .89-.93. The adolescents' perceptions of their parent's attitude (with respect to the parent, who also participated in the study) were measured by one summary item, asking the adolescent to assess his or her parent's attitude towards each of the three behaviours on a 7-point scale including the extremes 1=positive and 7= negative. When measuring *behaviour* the aim was to include activities, in which both parents and adolescents were involved. The items included were: "When you do shopping for the family, how often are the goods that you buy organic or environmentally friendly," "How often do you make an effort to save on electricity consumption at home," and "How often do you save the waste correctly." Responses were measured on a 5-point frequency scale: 1=always to 5=never. Since one third of the youngsters claimed never to do any shopping for the family, this part of the sample had to be excluded for this part of the analysis. Furthermore, the adolescents were asked to assess their parent's involvement of the behaviour in question.

Based on Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985), the teenagers were questioned about their perception of parenting styles (POPS-college-student version for late adolescents or older (Robbins, 1994)) relating to their parent's autonomy support. Eight items were included to measure adolescents' perceptions of autonomy support; e.g., one item was: "My mother (father) helps me to choose my own direction." Cronbach's alpha for the autonomy support scale was .84.

5. Results

The results are split into sections according to the consumer issues involved: Purchasing organic/environmentally friendly products, managing waste "responsibly," and curtailing electricity use. Hierarchical regression analysis is used to determine the effect on each behaviour of adolescents' own attitudes, their parents' attitudes and behaviour, adolescents' perception of

parents' attitudes and behaviours as mediating variables, and autonomy support as a direct and moderating variable.

Purchasing organic/ environmentally friendly products

According to the first calculation in Table 1, adolescents' own attitudes and parent's behaviour are of almost equal importance and together they account for 38% of the variation in adolescents' purchase of organic products. Parents' attitudes are positively correlated with the dependent variable (

Appendix

Table 4, appendix), but the former are fully mediated through parents’ (visible) behaviour and thus do not add any explanatory power to the equation.

Table 1 Determinants of adolescents’ purchase of organic/environmentally friendly products (n=828)

	Y- Attitude	P- Behav- -iour	P- Atti- -tude	Y- Percep- -tion of Parent Be- -haviour	Y- Percep- -tion of Parent Attitude	Y- Parental Autono- -my Support	Y- Perception of Parent Behaviour* Parental Autonomy Support	Y-Attitude *Parental Autonomy Support	Adj. R ²	Sig. F- Change
Beta	.4	.34	.00						0.38	
t	8.83	7.10	.03							
Sig.	.00	.00	.98							
Beta	.21	.03	-.03	.61	.00				0.56	.000
t	5.2	.58	-.76	11.64	.04					
Sig.	.00	.56	.45	.00	.97					
Beta	.20	.04	-.03	.61	-.00	.12	-.09	.07	0.57	.002
t	4.77	.82	-.73	11.67	-.08	3.22	-2.27	1.94		
Sig.	.00	.42	.47	.00	.94	.00	.02	.05		

Next, adolescents’ perceptions of parents’ attitude and behaviour are added, which increase the explanatory power to 56%, which is a significant change (p<.000). Adolescents’ own attitudes remain important, but the largest amount of influence on adolescents’ behaviour is their perception of parents’ behaviour. Parents’ perceived attitudes are strongly correlated to both adolescents’ behaviour and attitudes (Table 4, appendix), but these seem to be mediated through adolescents’ perception of parents’ behaviour.

Finally, adding parental autonomy support, the interaction of autonomy support with (1) the adolescents’ perception of parents’ behaviour, and (2) adolescents’ own attitudes leads to a small, but significant (p<.05) improvement of the model, which now accounts for 57% percent of variation in the behaviour of interest.

Thus, behavioural modelling processes would appear to be very important in case of buying organic/environmentally friendly products. That is, adolescents’ perception of parents’ behaviour – whether they buy or do not buy such products – is the primary explanatory variable. However, parental influence seems also to be executed through parenting style: an autonomy supporting style makes the young consumers more prone to engage in this behaviour. Moreover, with autonomy support, adolescents’ are more likely to act upon their own attitudes and less receptive to the perceived parental behavioural influence. It is important to note, however, that with respect

to parental influence on youngsters, an autonomy supporting parenting style seems only to be of minor importance compared to the much stronger modelling influence.

Waste management

A somewhat similar picture as the one above is shown with respect to waste management: adolescents' own attitudes and parents' behaviour each explain an equal amount of variation, which is 23% in the first calculation.

Table 2 Determinants of adolescents' waste management (n=1202)

	Y- Attitude	P- Behav- iour	P- Attitude	Y- Percep- tion of Parent Be- haviour	Y- Percep- tion of Parent Attitude	Y- Parenta l Autono my Support	Y- Perception of Parent Behaviour* Parental Autonomy Support	Y-Attitude *Parental Autonomy Support	Adj. R ²	Sig. F- Change
Beta	.27	.33	-.02						.23	
t	7.07	8.12	-.50							
Sig.	.00	.00	.62							
Beta	.09	-.00	-.02	.79	.00				.66	.000
t	3.05	-.07	-.91	23.57	.02					
Sig.	.00	.95	.37	.00	.99					
Beta	.09	-.00	-.03	.78	.00	.05	-.05	.01	.66	.090
t	3.01	-.08	-1.06	23.39	.02	1.87	-1.89	.29		
Sig.	.00	.94	.29	.00	.99	.06	.06	.77		

Next, the adolescents' perception are added, which improves the model significantly ($p < .000$) to 66%. Again, perceptions' of parents' *behaviour* is the all important variable, which appears to be a much more important determinant of the behaviour than the adolescents' own attitudes towards the behaviour.

Adding parental autonomy support to the equation does not improve the model's explanatory power. Parental autonomy support is only marginally important ($p < 0.1$) as a direct influence and as a moderator of parents' behaviour, while it is not at all important as a moderator of the youngsters' own attitudes.

Curtailling electricity use

The model aimed at determining antecedents in relation to adolescents' energy saving efforts represents the relatively weakest explanation of the three models included. Thus, the final model for energy saving only explains 15% of the variation in the behavioral criterion (Table 3). Nevertheless, the data reveal almost the same pattern as in the previous two cases.

Adolescents' perceptions of parents' behaviour is the most important predictor of adolescents' energy saving efforts, but the young people's own behaviour contributes to explaining their behaviour. Autonomy support is also related to the adolescents' behaviour. However, in this case autonomy support makes the adolescents less inclined to engage in energy saving effort.

Table 1 Determinants of adolescents' electricity saving efforts (n=1202)

	Y- Attit- ude	P- Attitude	P-Be- ha- viour	Y- Percep- tion of Parent Be- haviour	Y- Percep- tion of Parent Attitude	Y- Parenta l Autono my Support	Y-Attitude *Parental Autonomy Support	Y- Perception of Parent Behaviour* Parental Autonomy Support	Adj. R ²	Sig. F- Change
Beta	.24	-.04	.13						.07	
T	6.17	-.92	3.31							
Sig.	.00	.36	.00							
Beta	.21	-.03	.04	.33	-.07				.15	.000
T	5.55	-.88	1.05	7.45	-1.69					
Sig.	.000	.38	.30	.00	.09					
Beta	.214	-.04	.05	.32	-.08	-.08	.03	.00	.15	.182
T	5.37	-.97	1.12	7.35	-1.87	-2.09	.69	.01		
Sig.	.00	.34	.27	.00	.06	.04	.49	.99		

To sum up: Although there are differences, a common pattern emerges across the three behavioural areas. First, adolescents' performance of pro-environmental behaviours can to a substantial extent be explained by their own attitudes. However, their parents' behaviour, as reported by parents, explains nearly as much behavioural variance as the adolescents' own attitudes. Secondly, the behavioural impact of parents' behaviour is mediated through the young person's *perception* of the parent's behaviour, and this perception is much more influential than the parent's self-reported behaviour. Moreover, adolescents' perceptions of their parents' behaviour are much more important as predictor of their environmentally responsible behaviour than their *own* attitudes. The strongest effect is found for waste handling, the lowest effect is found with respect to curtailing electricity use, and buying a green product is somewhere in between the two. In short, young people are very much influenced by their parents' actions and in

particular how they perceive their parents' behaviour, which probably depends on how visible behaviours are to them.

The analyses further reveal that adolescents' environmentally responsible behaviour depends on their parents' parenting style. Parenting styles affect young people's environmental behaviour in at least two ways. First, it seems that adolescents are more likely to commit to pro-environmental action when they experience autonomy support in their family surroundings. This result appears as a significant, direct effect with respect to buying green products, and a marginally significant effect with respect to waste handling. However, in the third case, electricity conservation, there is a marginally significant effect in the opposite direction. Secondly, parental autonomy support seems to moderate the influence of parents' behaviour as perceived by the adolescents. This was found with regard to two of the three behaviours: buying green products and handling waste. With increasing autonomy support, the adolescents become somewhat less likely to copy their parents' behaviour. Additionally, in one of the three cases, buying green products, children who experience a more autonomy supportive home environment are more likely to act upon their *own* attitudes. Still, the influence of parental style is only a caveat. Irrespective of parental style, parents' behaviour as perceived by their adolescents' remains the most important predictor of adolescents' environmentally responsible behaviour across all three cases.

There is also a significant and positive correlation between parents' attitudes and adolescents' environmentally responsible behaviour for organic buying and waste management (Table 4 and Table 5, appendix). However, the behavioural influence of parents' attitudes disappears when controlling for parents' behaviour, which suggests that the influence of the former is mediated through this/these latter construct. Hence, the old adage that actions speak louder than words is true also in this case!

6. Conclusion

Based on this study, we can conclude that parental influence on their children's propensity to act in favour of the environment is substantial, and that parents' influence as role models is important for the transmission of pro-environmental practices to the next generation. This effect is strong irrespective of parenting style, but there is some indication that an autonomy supporting parenting style strengthens environmentally responsible behaviour in children overall and in addition makes children's behaviour less dependent on the example set by their parents (for better and for worse!).

Because of the cross-sectional nature of the data analysis, the direction of causality cannot be settled by this study. That is, in principle, the results may – partly or wholly – reflect adolescents' influence on their parents' behaviour in a reverse socialization process. Arguments that support the notion that at least a part of the transfer goes from parents to adolescents is the influence of parental style on adolescents' behaviour and not least the moderating influence of parental style. In addition, the fact that adolescents have been found to be *less* committed to pro-environmental practices (Grønhøj and Thøgersen, 2007) suggests that family influences within this behavioural domain primarily runs from parent to child.

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Appendix

Table 4 Correlations: Buying organic/ environmentally friendly products (n=828)

	Y-Behaviour	Y-attitude	P-Attitude	P-Behaviour	Y-Perception of Parent Behaviour	Y-Perception of Parent Attitude	Y-Parental Autonomy Support	Y-Perception of Parent Behaviour * Parental Autonomy Support	Y-Attitude *Parental Autonomy Support
Y-Behaviour	1.000	.530*	.391*	.498*	.729*	.567*	.192*	-.073	-.002
Y-attitude	-	1.000	.480*	.389*	.521*	.572*	.100*	-.065	.012
P-Attitude	-	-	1.000	.581*	.495*	.533*	.101*	.004	-.061
P-Behaviour	-	-	-	1.000	.659*	.597*	.076	-.016	-.097*
Y-Perception of Parent Behaviour	-	-	-	-	1.000	.722*	.120*	-.034	-.061
Y-Perception of Parent Attitude	-	-	-	-	-	1.000	.154*	.015	-.036
Y-Parental Autonomy Support	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.000	-.099*	-.037
Y-Perception of Parent Behaviour* Parental Autonomy Support	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.000	-.507*
Y-Attitude *Parental Autonomy Support	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.000

*Correlations are significant at $p \leq .05$

Table 5 Correlations: Waste management (n=1202)

	Y-Behaviour	Y-Attitude	P-Behaviour	P-Attitude	Y-Perception of Parent Behaviour	Y-Perception of Parent Attitude	Y-Parental Autonomy Support	Y-Perception of Parent Behaviour* Parental Autonomy Support	Y-Attitude *Parental Autonomy Support
Y-Behaviour	1.000	.371*	.409*	.188*	.811*	.556*	.130*	-.025	.024
Y-Attitude	-	1.000	.318*	.251*	.371*	.512*	.094*	.032	.062
P-Behaviour	-	-	1.000	.423*	.501*	.443*	.001	-.095*	-.104*
P-Attitude	-	-	-	1.000	.243*	.264*	.038	-.083*	-.060
Y-Perception of Parent Behaviour	-	-	-	-	1.000	.660*	.106*	.013	.033
Y-Perception of Parent Attitude	-	-	-	-	-	1.000	.058	-.014	.049
Y-Parental Autonomy Support	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.000	-.107*	-.007
Y-Perception of Parent Behaviour* Parental Autonomy Support	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.000	-.336*
Y-Attitude *Parental Autonomy Support	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.000

*Correlations are significant at $p \leq .05$

Table 6 Correlations: Energy saving (n=1202)

	Y-Be- haviour	Y- Attitude	P- Attitude	P-Be- haviour	Y- Percep- tion of Parent Be- haviour	Y- Percep- tion of Parent Attitude	Y- Parental Auto- nomy Support	Y- Attitude *Paren- tal Auto- nomy Support	Y- Perception of Parent Behaviour* Parental Autonomy Support
Y-Behaviour	1.000	.242*	.010	.128*	.333*	.119*	.121*	.020	.011
Y-Attitude	-	1.000	.080*	.011	.137*	.192*	.114*	.238*	-.004
P-Attitude	-	-	1.000	.207*	.093*	.164*	.084*	.079*	.024
P-Behaviour	-	-	-	1.000	.326*	.219*	-.001	-.048	.013
Y- Perception of Parent Behaviour	-	-	-	-	1.000	.449*	.094*	-.003	.051
Y- Perception of Parent Attitude	-	-	-	-	-	1.000	.124*	-.012	.070*
Y-Parental Autonomy Support	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.000	-.023	-.071*
Y-Attitude *Parental Autonomy Support	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.000	-.132*
Y- Perception of Parent Behaviour* Parental Autonomy Support	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.000

*Correlations are significant at $p \leq .05$

Healthy Snacks for Adolescents – a Case for Consumer-Driven Product Development

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Abstract

Today's product development has to be consumer driven in order to increase the chances of ensuring product innovations are successful on the modern food market. The development of a healthy but palatable cereal based snack "bar" for adolescents was used as a scenario to put different methods of consumer-driven product development into practice. Several methods were applied, e.g. a quantitative questionnaire addressing issues such as attitudes to food and food and lifestyle habits; acceptance tests with nine-point hedonic scales of appearance, odour, taste, texture and overall liking of new products; questions regarding suitability of new products; a conjoint analysis of factors that influence choice. The overall conclusion is that the methods applied for determining consumer-driven product development have tremendous potential to improve the product development process and marketing strategies and should be combined to be even more effective.

1. Introduction

Adolescence is one of the most crucial periods in life during which many changes that affect both our nutritional needs and our eating habits occur. Poor food habits and a sedentary lifestyle are generally seen as the major contributors to the increasing number of overweight

and obese children and adolescents (Sjöberg, Hallberg, Höglund, et al. 2003, Rolland-Cachera, Bellise, Deheeger 2000, Serra-Majem, 2001). The limited availability of nutritious, healthy food products poses a challenge to the food industry spurring it on to develop, manufacture and market new healthy options. To be successful, products should not only have positive health effects, they should also have sensory characteristics that appeal to the target groups and be adapted to suit their habits, attitudes and patterns of behaviour.

The development and marketing of new food products is an important although risky strategy for a modern food company. A major contributor to the success of new food products is extensive knowledge of the consumer group being targeted. There has been an increasing focus on so-called consumer-driven product development and one often hears about the need to listen to the voice of the consumers. This can be done in different stages of the development process by applying appropriate methods geared to elicit the answers required. The product development process can be divided into three main stages as illustrated in Figure 1: (1) Opportunity identification (2) Development (3) Optimization. After the optimization stage, the product is ready to be launched. In this study attention was focused on the third stage.

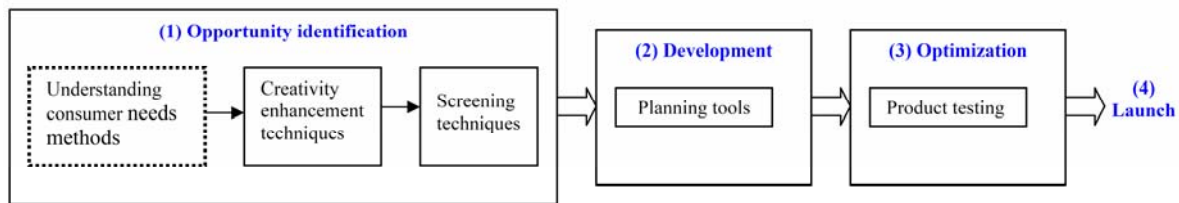


Figure 1: Overview of stages of new product development (Kleef, Trijp, Luning, 2005, p. 182)

In modern product development different tools have to be used in a more flexible way (Moskowitz, Reisner, Itty et al., 2006). In line with this postulation, it was the objective of this study to evaluate different methods that can be applied in consumer-driven product development by putting them into practice in the development of a healthy attractive snack for adolescents. The project was conducted in close cooperation with Cederroth International AB, parallel to the EU-funded project HELENA (Healthy Lifestyle in Europe by Nutrition in Adolescence).

2. Material and Methods

The product was a new type of cereal-based “bar” with clearly defined health benefits and varied sensory features. Three different flavour versions: apple-vanilla, blueberry-lemon and chocolate-coconut, each in two textures (smooth, crispy) were created. Each bar had a portion size of 40g. The apple-vanilla and the blueberry-lemon bars were coated with white yoghurt and the chocolate-coconut bars with brown chocolate (Figure 2).

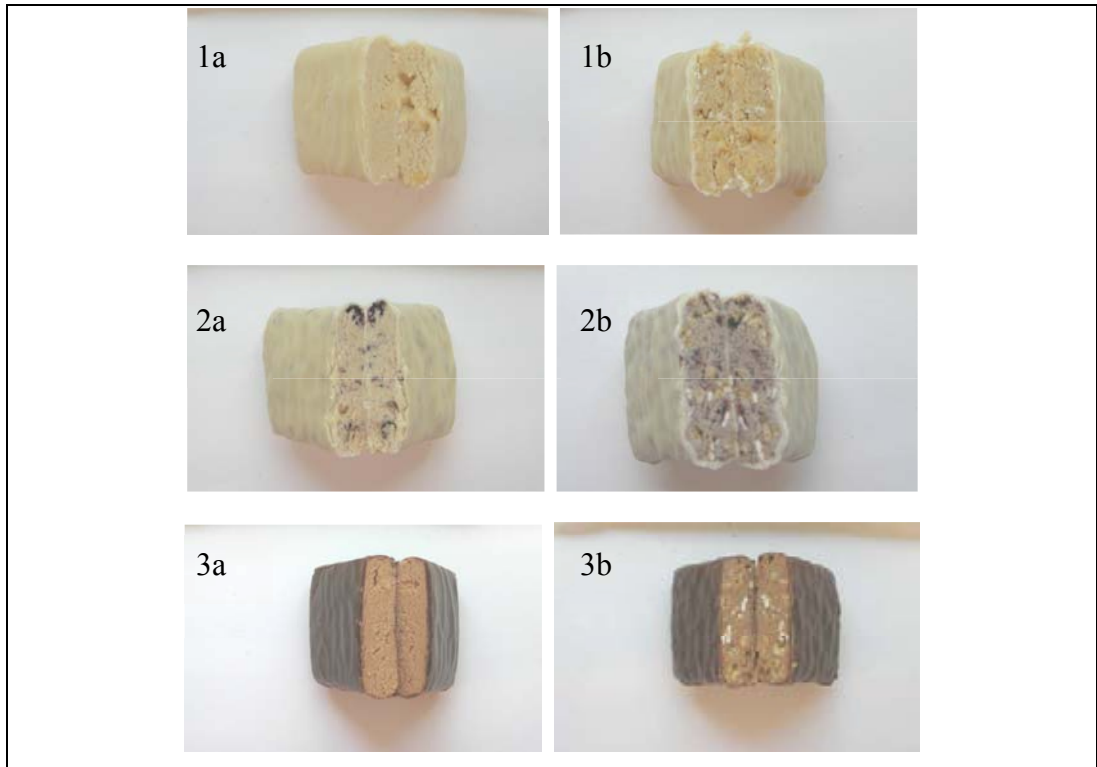


Figure 2: Six versions of the cereal bars 1a: Apple-vanilla smooth, 1b: Apple-vanilla crispy, 2a Blueberry-lemon smooth, 2b: Blueberry-lemon crispy, 3a: Chocolate-coconut smooth, 3b: Chocolate-coconut crispy

The products were developed to meet the need for a low energy, fibre and micronutrient rich snack bar. The nutrient and energy contents are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Nutrient and energy contents of the smooth and the crispy versions of the cereal bars.

Nutrient and energy contents	Textures			
	Smooth		Crispy	
	In 40g	In 100g	In 40g	In 100g
Energy (kJ)	579.6	1453.2	592.2	1482.6
Energy (kcal)	138	346	141	353
Protein (g)	9,2	23	11	27
Carbohydrates (g)	17	42	16	40
Fat (g)	3.5	8.8	3.8	9.4
Fibre (g)	3.6	9.0	3.3	8.2

The subjects were adolescents aged 13 to 17 years; one group in ordinary home environments and one in classroom environments. The adolescents taking part in the tests at home were recruited from a data base of volunteers residing in two Swedish cities, Umeå and Stockholm, while the adolescents who took part in the tests at school were recruited from two schools outside Gothenburg: Furulund School in Partille and Aby School in Mölndal. The demographic data of the participating adolescents are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Demographics. Numbers of subjects in different groups

Hometown	Age in years					Gender		Total
	13	14	15	16	17	Male	Female	
Umeå and Stockholm	33	26	17	7	10	52	41	93
Partille (Furulund)	1	46	1	0	0	23	25	48
Mölnadal (Åby)	0	32	1	0	0	14	17	33

A number of traditional and non-traditional research methods used in consumer-driven product development were selected and evaluated for the optimization of various perceived characteristics of a healthy snack intended for adolescents. The different test methods used in the study are summarized in Table 3, together with the numbers of subjects who took part in the tests.

Table 3: Methods and test locations

Research Methods	Test at home		Test in school	
	Umeå/Stockholm N = 93	Furulund N = 48	Åby N = 33	
Health awareness questionnaire [1]		++	++	
General questionnaire [2]	++			
Hedonic sensory testing (6 products) [3]	++			
Hedonic sensory testing (1 product, without information) [4]		++		
Hedonic sensory testing (1 product, with information) [5]		++		
Sensory projective (6 photos) [6]	+			
Emotional statements [7]	+			
Product features [8]	+			
Motivation / occasion statements [9]	+			
Choice based conjoint [10]		++		++
Choice experiment [11]		++		

+ = accomplished
++ = accomplished and presented here

3. Results

The importance of the results will be discussed in relation to how data collected by different methods can aid both the product development itself and the formulation of marketing strategies for new healthy products for adolescents. This means that listening to the consumer does not end after the product development process. Consumer response strategies are also powerful tools in marketing (Verbeke, Van Oeckel, Warnants et al., 1999).

Food and health-related habits, attitudes and behaviours

Information about food and health-related attitudes and behaviours of the adolescents was compiled through questionnaires (see Table 3, research methods [1] and [2]). Questionnaires are the most common data collection tools in quantitative research. Questions posed in a questionnaire have to be selected carefully in order to elicit the information needed. Not just the question itself but also the way it is posed has an impact on the answer (Barrios, Costell, 2004).

In those tests conducted at the schools, the HELENA health awareness questionnaire was used. This questionnaire, which comprises an extensive set of questions that can be summarized under the categories “adolescents, food and health”, “eating behaviour in adolescence” and, “snacking habits in adolescence”, has recently been developed in the ongoing EU-Project HELENA. In those tests conducted in the home environment, a questionnaire developed together with Cederroth was used, focusing on the adolescents’ physical activities, together with their breakfast and snacking habits. The following presents a compilation of the results.

Table 4: Adolescents’ agreement with statements about eating habits and attitudes – data collected at school. Numbers of subjects

Statements about eating habits and attitudes	Degree of agreement							N	Mean
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
The taste of a food is very important to me	1	0	0	5	10	24	40	80	6.2
I like the food my parents prepare at home	2	0	1	2	11	20	45	81	6.2
I like the food I eat when I am out with my friends	3	0	0	6	14	27	30	80	5.9
I choose my own snacks	3	0	1	7	14	26	30	81	5.8
I enjoy eating fruit and vegetables	4	0	5	6	14	18	34	81	5.7
Food I eat at home is healthy	2	1	3	10	22	20	22	80	5.5
What I eat now will have a big impact on my future health	11	1	0	7	11	22	29	81	5.3
I think that my diet is healthy	2	0	3	15	32	16	13	81	5.2
Snacking is a necessary part of a healthy diet	4	4	3	17	19	17	14	78	4.9
I feel well informed about what are healthy foods	10	3	4	9	16	18	19	79	4.9
If there is the option to choose a low-fat version of a food, I will choose it	8	5	3	17	18	17	13	81	4.7
The taste of food is more important to me than if it is healthy	12	2	3	20	16	12	16	81	4.6
I have little choice over what I eat at home	10	5	5	18	15	13	15	81	4.5
If there is the option to choose a wholegrain version of a food, I will choose it	9	5	11	17	13	12	13	80	4.4
A high-fat food tastes better than the low-fat version	12	2	9	28	9	10	9	79	4.1
Most snacks I eat are healthy	7	4	15	22	20	7	6	81	4.1
Information regarding healthy eating is difficult to put into practice	8	5	8	35	10	10	3	79	4
Food I eat at school (in the canteen) is healthy	18	4	9	16	13	9	10	79	3.9
Most healthy foods do not taste very nice	13	11	8	23	8	6	12	81	3.8
Sugar-reduced products taste better than the 'regular' version	18	3	8	29	13	4	6	81	3.6
Food I eat when I am out with my friends is healthy	14	7	15	20	14	5	5	80	3.6
Healthy foods do not satisfy me	18	13	9	18	11	3	7	79	3.4
I tend to eat whatever my friends are eating	20	10	15	15	6	10	4	80	3.3
I often try foods that I see advertised in the media (TV, magazines etc.)	22	11	9	18	12	7	2	81	3.2
I often skip breakfast	32	12	4	7	8	6	13	82	3.2
I worry about what I eat because I do not want to gain weight	21	11	5	12	10	7	0	66	3
I like the food prepared in the school canteen	34	14	10	10	6	5	2	81	2.5

1=Strongly disagree, 2= Moderately disagree, 3=Slightly disagree, 4=Neither agree nor disagree, 5=Slightly agree
6= Moderately agree, 7= Strongly agree

As indicated in Table 4, adolescents’ agreements with statements referring to eating habits and attitudes show that the taste of a food product is very important and that adolescents are aware of the importance of healthy eating. However, they are not particularly involved in choosing healthy foods and they are not sure whether snacking is an important factor in

healthy eating. These adolescents claim that they take responsibility for their own eating habits and that their choice of foods is not influenced by friends or advertisements. They choose the foods they like. Neither the fat, the wholegrain nor the sugar content is of any particular interest to these adolescents when determining their choice of snacks. They like to eat fruit and vegetables and they consider their diet to be healthy. The food they eat at home is considered to be palatable and healthy. These adolescents like the food they eat together with friends. They stated that they eat snacks and that they have regular breakfast. In general they claim not to worry about gaining weight and clearly dislike the food served in the school canteen.

Table 5 shows that adolescents consider fresh fruit, vegetables and porridge to be healthy foods. They perceive nuts, dried fruits, milk products, pasta dishes, a bowl of cereal, cereal bars and pasta snacks as “neither healthy nor unhealthy”. Fast foods, popcorn, meat-based snacks, crackers, crisps, sweets and cake are perceived as unhealthy foods.

Table 5: Adolescents’ perception of health value of various foods – data collected at school. Numbers of subjects

Food items	Perceived health value					N	Mean
	1	2	3	4	5		
Fresh fruit	4	0	1	16	56	77	4.6
Vegetables (e.g. celery, carrots, tomatoes etc.)	4	0	3	8	62	77	4.6
Oatmeal / porridge	5	1	4	37	30	77	4.1
Nuts, peanuts, seeds (e.g. sunflower, pumpkin)	5	5	12	29	26	77	3.9
Dried fruits (eg. raisins)	8	0	12	40	17	77	3.8
Pasta dishes	4	5	14	34	20	77	3.8
Yoghurt / yoghurt products	7	5	21	26	18	77	3.6
Bowl of cereal	4	4	25	34	10	77	3.5
Cereal bars	4	8	20	32	11	75	3.5
Pasta snack foods e.g. pot noodles	10	4	32	19	11	76	3.2
Cheese products (e.g. cheddar, brie, cheese strings)	12	14	15	24	12	77	3.1
Bread / toast	6	15	31	18	7	77	3.1
Sandwiches / toasties / pannini	12	21	28	11	5	77	2.7
Popcorn	21	24	23	3	6	77	2.3
Meat-based snacks (e.g. meat sticks)	20	22	27	5	3	77	2.3
Crackers / rice cakes / salty sticks	25	22	20	6	4	77	2.2
Hot dogs / sausage rolls	22	30	16	4	5	77	2.2
Biscuits / cookies	30	31	11	3	2	77	1.9
Pizza	33	30	6	2	6	77	1.9
Hamburgers	32	27	10	1	5	75	1.9
Cakes / muffins / pastries	34	31	6	2	4	77	1.8
French fries	41	23	5	2	6	77	1.8
Chocolate / chocolate bars / turó rudi	43	22	6	3	3	77	1.7
Crisps / tortilla chips	41	25	6	2	3	77	1.7
Sweets / candy	49	18	4	1	5	77	1.6

1=Very unhealthy 2=Slightly unhealthy 3=Neither healthy nor unhealthy
4=Slightly healthy 5=Very healthy

Table 6 shows the factors that influence adolescents’ choice of snacks. The results indicate only small differences in the mean values, but there is a tendency for adolescents to choose snacks primarily based on the taste of the food. Health reasons and the degree of hunger influence the choice of snack more than parents, convenience (availability, preparation),

habits, friends or the school environment. The price of the food or another reason (e.g. medical reason) is of less importance in this case.

Table 6: Factors influencing choice of snacks – data collected at school. Numbers of subjects

Factors influencing choice	Degree of influence					N	Mean
	1	2	3	4	5		
The taste of the food	7	7	21	27	11	73	3.4
Concern for your health	10	11	28	12	11	72	3
How hungry you are	14	8	22	22	8	74	3
Your parents or guardian	14	12	25	11	12	74	2.9
The food is readily available	11	12	28	20	3	74	2.9
The food is easy to prepare	11	12	31	17	3	74	2.9
Your habits or daily routines	12	12	34	10	6	74	2.8
Your friends	18	9	29	14	3	73	2.7
School environment	17	9	37	7	4	74	2.6
Price of the food	21	8	31	9	4	73	2.5
Other, e.g. medical reasons	28	2	30	5	5	70	2.4

1=No influence 3=Moderate influence 5=Very strong influence

2=Slight influence 4=Strong influence

The quantitative questionnaires showed that adolescents in general are health conscious. They are also aware that they do not always follow recommendations regarding choice of foods and lifestyle behaviour. Taste is more important than health when they choose what to eat, and they want to have the freedom to make their own choices.

Relevance and applicability to product development and marketing

The product developer can utilise this type of data to improve the product development process. The high importance given to taste shows there is a need for information about adolescents’ sensory acceptance and preference of new products. Considerable effort needs to be invested in the product development in order to collect substantial data about the consumers’ sensory perception of the characteristics of any new products. This information can then be used for the optimization of the product concept (Table 10; research method [1] und [2]). However, the health awareness of adolescents and their knowledge about healthy foods lead to the conclusion that adolescents probably prefer a healthy product that tastes reasonably good to a more palatable but less healthy product. Efforts that increase the nutritional value of a product will only enhance the products value in the eyes of the adolescent consumer if the product is palatable, as well. This information can be used for supporting the product positioning (Table 10; research method [1] und [2]).

The data about food and health related habits, attitudes and behaviours also provide guidelines for marketing. In marketing, the taste of a product and its appropriateness for a self-determined lifestyle have to be communicated to adolescent consumers. The nutritional aspects are an additional value but not the main feature on which to focus attention.

Sensory acceptance and preferences

When conducting sensory analysis different test methods are available. If a detailed description of the sensory features is needed a descriptive sensory analysis (analytic) can be a suitable method of evaluation (Moskowitz, Beckley, Resurreccion, 2006). In a case where information about consumers’ acceptance is required, an affective (hedonic) test should be chosen. Affective tests are used to get beyond a customer’s personal response. Consumer

tests are highly effective product development tools for determining preferences and the acceptance of a new food product (Meilgaard, Civille, Carr, 1991).

Sensory acceptance and preference of cereal bars were evaluated in both test environments, at home and at school (see Table 3, research methods [3], [4] und [5]). All six versions of the cereal bars were evaluated for their preferences in the home environment. These adolescents were asked to judge the appearance, smell, taste, consistency and total impression of six coded samples on a nine-point hedonic scale (dislike extremely, dislike very much, dislike moderately, dislike slightly, neither like nor dislike, like slightly, like moderately, like very much, like extremely). To avoid order effects the six cereal bars were evaluated in a random order by the different adolescents.

Figure 3 shows the adolescents' total impression of the six flavoured cereal bars. The chocolate-coconut cereal bars were the ones most liked, both the smooth and the crispy version. The mean values of liking were higher than for the other cereal bars and the percentage of adolescents who "liked moderately" or liked very much was higher for these products than for the other cereal bars. The apple-vanilla cereal bar with the crispy texture was "liked slightly" on average but the percentage of adolescents who "liked moderately" or liked very much was lower than for the chocolate-coconut bars. The apple-vanilla cereal bar with the smooth texture and the blueberry-lemon cereal bars in both textures were on average "disliked slightly". The percentage of adolescents who "liked moderately" or liked very much was lower here than for the other cereal bars and the percentage of adolescents who "disliked moderately" or disliked very much was higher.

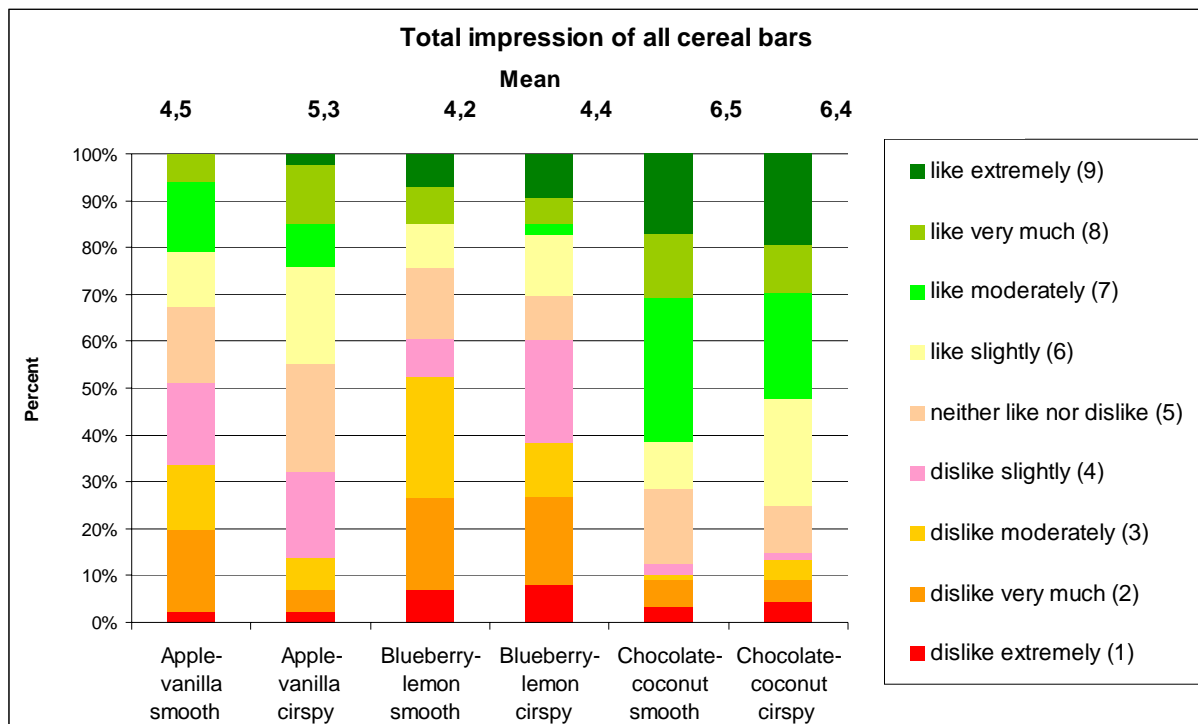


Figure 3: Sensory preferences of six flavoured cereal bars in total impression

Taking the apple-vanilla cereal bar with the smooth texture as an example, Figure 4 shows that its sensory characteristics were on average "liked slightly" or "neither liked nor disliked". However, it can be seen that there were some adolescents who really liked this sample while others really "disliked it" or disliked it more. On average the characteristics of

the chocolate-coconut cereal bar with the smooth texture were most highly appreciated by all subjects.

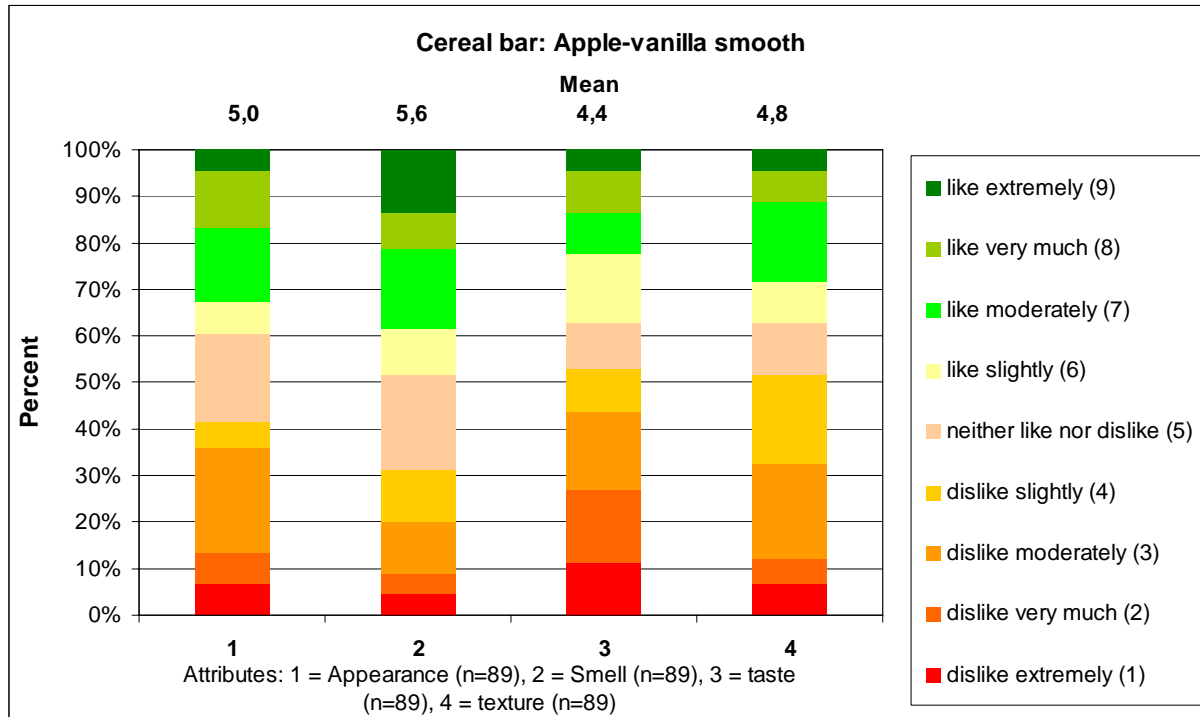


Figure 4: Hedonic sensory testing - Apple-vanilla smooth

These findings clearly demonstrate that there might be preference segments among the adolescents. A cluster analysis based on the acceptance data showed that there were five sensory driven clusters. The cluster analysis was done on the mean values for total impression of the six cereal bars by k-means clustering with Euclidian distances. Table 7 summarizes the mean values of the five segments in comparison with the overall mean values of all respondents.

Table 7: Sensory preferences overview of total impression and segmented in clusters

Type of bar	Total impression (Mean score)					All respondents
	Cluster 1 <i>Chocolate-coconut consumer</i>	Cluster 2 <i>Positive consumer</i>	Cluster 3 <i>Average consumer</i>	Cluster 4 <i>Not-keen-on blueberry-lemon consumer</i>	Cluster 5 <i>Negative consumer</i>	
Apple-vanilla smooth	3.0	6.2	4.9	6.4	2.0	4.4
Apple-vanilla crispy	4.9	7.6	4.5	5.9	2.4	5.3
Blueberry-lemon smooth	3.9	6.4	2.9	2.7	1.8	4.2
Blueberry-lemon crispy	4.6	7.0	2.5	2.8	2.0	4.4
Chocolate-coconut smooth	6.7	7.7	6.1	8.1	1.8	6.5
Chocolate-coconut crispy	6.8	7.9	5.4	7.7	1.7	6.3

The five sensory-driven clusters can be explained by the mean score differences in total impression:

- “The chocolate-coconut consumer” in **cluster 1**, the biggest cluster comprising 30% of the adolescents (n=28), were those who liked the chocolate-coconut cereal bars and disliked the other bars. This group of adolescents liked the crispy version of all cereal bars slightly more than average and also the smooth chocolate-coconut cereal bar. The smooth apple-vanilla cereal bar and the smooth blueberry-lemon bar were rated slightly below average.
- “The positive consumer” in **cluster 2**, comprising 24% of the adolescents (n=22), were those who liked all samples. This group of adolescents showed higher mean values of the total impression even for the blueberry-lemon cereal bars.
- “The average consumer” in **cluster 3**, comprising 23% of the adolescents (n=21), were those who neither liked nor disliked most of the cereal bars. This group of adolescents only “liked slightly” the chocolate-coconut cereal bar with smooth consistency, “neither liked not disliked” the crispy chocolate-coconut cereal bar, “disliked moderately” the apple-vanilla products in both consistencies and they “disliked very much” the blueberry-lemon cereal bars in both consistencies.
- “The not-keen-on blueberry-lemon consumer” in **cluster 4**, comprising 13% of the adolescents (n=12), were those who disliked the blueberry bars but liked the others. This group of adolescents was extremely negative about the blueberry-lemon cereal bar in both consistencies and extremely positive about the chocolate-coconut flavoured cereal bar. They showed higher mean values in total impression for the apple-vanilla flavoured cereal bars and for the chocolate-coconut flavoured products in comparison with the overall mean values.
- “The negative consumer” in **cluster 5**, comprising 10% of the adolescents (n=9), were those who disliked all samples. This group of adolescents showed lower mean values in total impression even for the chocolate-coconut cereal bar.

In the tests conducted at school only one of the cereal bars was evaluated for its preference. The chocolate-coconut cereal bar with the smooth texture was chosen for these tests, based on the results from the hedonic test with all six cereal bars in the home environment. To evaluate the influence of product information on the adolescents preferences for the chocolate-coconut cereal bar, the tests at school were first conducted without any product information and then with, First, without receiving any product information, the adolescents were asked to judge the appearance, smell, taste, consistency and total impression of the sample on the nine-point hedonic scale. These results were compared to the preference data collected in the home environment. As illustrated in Figure 5 the preference for the cereal bar was higher when tested in the home environment together with other samples. The appearance was “liked slightly” both at school and at home. Smell, taste, consistency and total impression were rated lower in the tests at school than those at home.

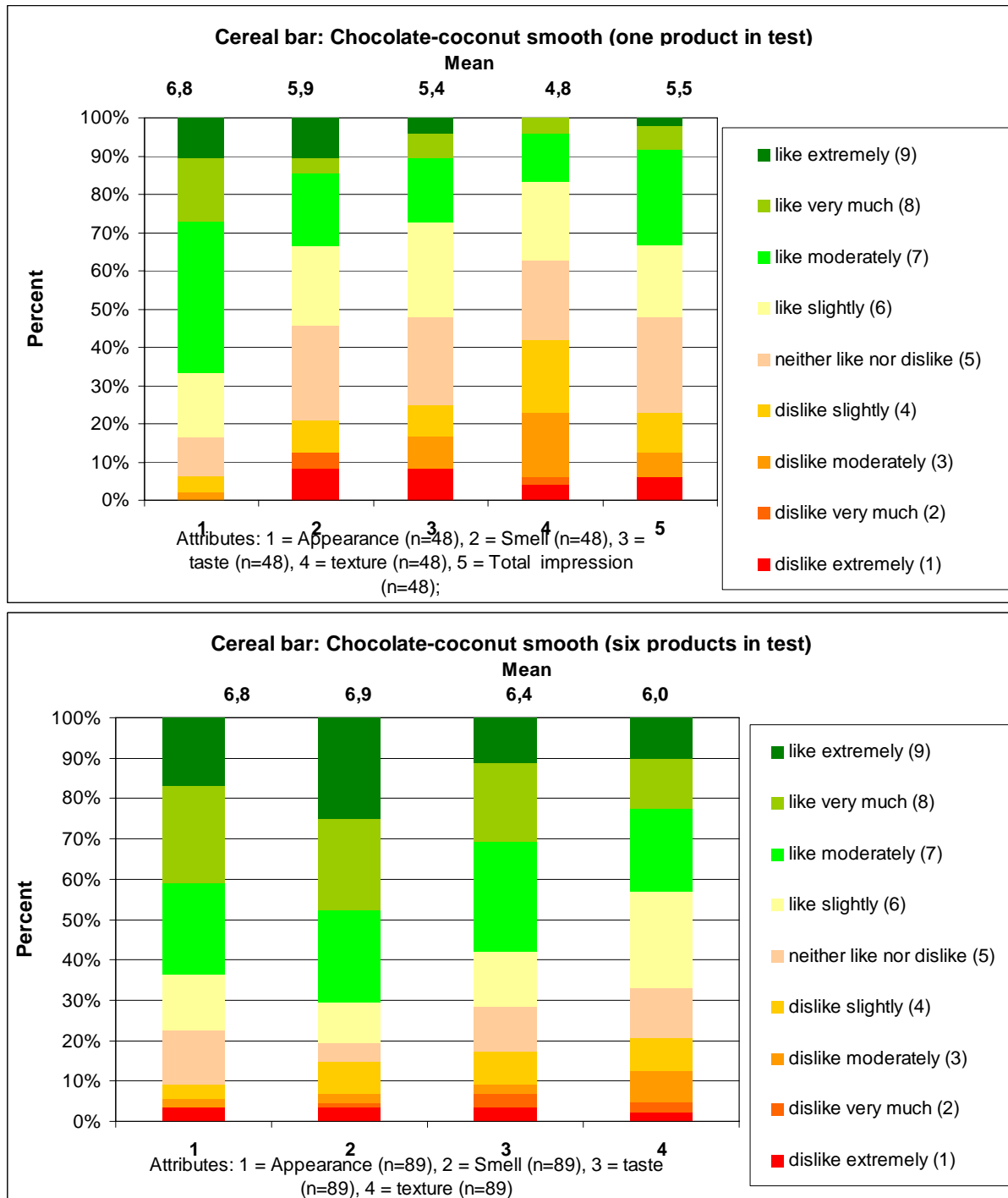


Figure 5: Hedonic sensory test with one product and with six products in test

The second hedonic sensory testing at Furulund School, Partille was done after the subjects had received some additional information ('cues'). The tests were carried out after two different claims had been presented: the sample was said to be either "extra tasty" or "extra healthy". Both cues were illustrated with pictures. The "tasty" sample was coded with "X" and the "healthy" sample with "Y". Half of the respondents evaluated the samples in the order "XY" and half of them in the order "YX", by using the nine-point hedonic scale described above. The results showed that none of the cues provided had any effect on the preference for the chocolate-coconut cereal bar.

To summarise, the sensory acceptance and preference tests showed that the cereal bar most liked on average was the chocolate-coconut flavoured bar, but that there were subgroups of adolescents showing different preferences. The cluster analysis showed that there were five sensory driven clusters or segments of adolescents. One cluster (24%) liked, and another cluster (10%) disliked all the cereal bars. The other three clusters had preferences related to specific sensory characteristics of the cereal bars. The biggest cluster (30%) was those who liked the chocolate-coconut bars. The context in which the sensory acceptance and preference data are collected is known to influence the results (Frewer, Risvik, Schifferstein, 2001), which was also observed in this study. Higher liking scores were observed for samples tested in the home environment than for those at school. Information about food products is also reported to influence the expectation and the perception of the products (Deliza, MacFie, 1995). This could not be verified in our study, but it should be noted that the sample size in our experiment was quite small.

Relevance and applicability to product development and marketing

Product development can use these types of results to design products especially for the preferences of different target groups. Characteristics that are not liked can be changed and flavours as well as other product features can be designed to suit certain subgroups. In case of the cereal snack bar, it was the version with the chocolate-coconut flavour that was liked by most of the subjects. The texture was not so important to them. The data collected here can be used to optimize the sensory features of the product (Table 10; research method [3] and [4]). Marketing can utilise these data to create a product image suitable for the target group, with slogans and information that fit the product. Based on the data compiled from the sensory testing of the bars it appears that the chocolate taste is a sensory feature that should be highlighted. The information obtained here can be used for product communication (Table 10; research method [3] and [4]).

The environment and testing conditions definitely had an impact on the liking of the products, which means that for product development, and marketing, data about the respondents' acceptance and preferences always have to be interpreted in the context. The comparison of results obtained in different test environments is difficult. The more the test environment resembles a real life situation, the more realistic the results.

The results from this study indicated that none of the product cues had any effect on the perception of the chocolate-coconut cereal bar, which implies that this kind of product information did not have an impact on food perception. This result is useful for product development because it confirms the importance of the products' sensory features. The taste of the product has a great influence on the degree of liking and different types of information cannot be considered reliable tools to influence the respondents' perception. The knowledge gained here can be used to optimize the sensory features of the product (Table 10; research method [5]). The information is even more interesting for marketing because it emphasizes that product data may not be effective tools for influencing consumers. The knowledge can also be used for product communication (Table 10; research method [5]).

Product choice studies

Experimental analyses of choice range from simple choice models with real choice objects to more complex choice experiments. For market research in particular conjoint analysis is used as a tool for getting behind the consumers' food choice behaviour. This more complex choice analysis provides information about preferred alternatives (Bastell, Louviere 1991). Choice-

based conjoint analysis is a tool for investigating consumers' responses to different stimuli by presenting them different profiles with different attribute levels (Moskowitz, Silcher, 2006). Consumers' preferences are revealed by allowing test panels to choose from among these sets. Choice-based conjoint analyses can be used either in full profile or in partial profile. Full profile experiments display a level of every attribute in every profile, whereas partial profile experiments display only a subset of attributes to the respondent. Choice-based conjoint analyses can be designed manually, computerized or randomized. Manual designs are carried out in shifted or in "mix and match" design (Chazan, Orme, 2000). The results of a conjoint analysis are quantitative data. The count of different attribute levels chosen leads to relative attribute importance and to path-worth utilities (Orme, 2006).

In this study two different types of food choice experiments were carried out: a choice-based conjoint analysis and an experiment about the actual selection of food products. Both experiments were conducted at the schools, in Partille as well as Mölndal (see Table 3; Research methods [10] and [11]).

Concerning conjoint measurements, there was one main difference in the experiments carried out at the two schools. The adolescents at Furulund School, Partille had previous experience of the products since they had first carried out the sensory acceptance tests. In contrast, the adolescents at Åby School, Mölndal had no previous experience of the products. Different sets of combinations of three different product features (taste, health and price), each at three levels, were presented on one page together with a picture of a cereal bar. The three taste levels were "extra chocolate", "extra coconut" and, "extra smooth". The health levels were "calcium enriched", "iron enriched" and "with fibre". The price levels were 10.50, 11.50 and 12.50 SEK. The sets on the cards were presented in a 3³ shifted design with 3 sets per card and 3 cards per person.

Table 8 shows the relative attribute importance with and without prior experience of the products. Without any previous experience of the product the "taste" was the most important product attribute and "price" more important to the adolescents than "health". With sensory product experience, the "price" was the most important attribute and "health" as important as "taste".

Table 8: Attribute importance choice-based conjoint analysis

Attribute	Attribute importance	
	Without product experience	With product experience
Taste	50.0%	25.0%
Health	12.5%	25.0%
Price	37.5%	50.0%

Table 9 shows the relative importance of the different attribute levels. Without any prior product experience, "extra chocolate" was the most important taste level with "extra coconut" and "extra smooth" being less important. Among the health attributes, "iron enriched" was more important than both "calcium enriched" and "with fibre". Without having previously tasted the product, the highest price of 12.50 SEK was the most important price level. The price of 10.50 SEK was less important and the middle price of 11.50 SEK least important. With product experience, the most important taste level was "extra coconut" while "extra chocolate" and "extra smooth" were equally important. The most important health level was "iron enriched", with "calcium enriched" being as important as "with fibre". In this case the two lower price levels of 10.50 SEK and 11.50 SEK were more important than the highest price of 12.50 SEK.

Table 9: Counts and part-worth utilities choice-based conjoint analysis

Attribute	Level	Part-Worth Utilities					
		Count		Count/102*	Count/126**	Percentage (%)	
		Without experience	With experience	Without experience	With experience	Without experience	With experience
Taste	Extra chocolate	57	43	0.6	0.3	60	30
	Extra coconut	21	44	0.2	0.4	20	40
	Extra smooth	24	39	0.2	0.3	20	30
Health	Calcium enriched	31	34	0.3	0.3	30	30
	Iron enriched	40	49	0.4	0.4	40	40
	with fibre	31	43	0.3	0.3	30	30
Price	10.50 kr	31	46	0.3	0.4	30	40
	11.50 kr	25	47	0.2	0.4	20	40
	12.50 kr	46	33	0.5	0.2	50	20

*Count/102 3 sets per card and 3 cards per person and 34 adolescents at Åby School - Number of times an attribute level was available for choice: (34*3) = 102

**Count/126 3 sets per card and 3 cards per person and 42 adolescents in Furulund School (6 respondents did not answer in an appropriate way) - Number of times an attribute level was available for choice: (42*3) = 126

In addition to the choice-based conjoint analysis, an experiment to determine the products preferred was carried out at Furulund School, Partille. After having tasted and evaluated the chocolate-coconut flavoured bar, first without and then with two types of product information (cues), the adolescents were invited to choose five cereal bars as a reward. They had free choice between the “tasty” version and the “healthy” version. The numbers of the “tasty” and “healthy” samples chosen by each respondent were recorded. Most of the respondents chose to take five “tasty” cereal bars (31%), with 19% choosing three “tasty” and two “healthy” bars, and 21% choosing three “healthy” and two “tasty” bars.

It may be difficult to draw too many conclusions from the conjoint analysis due to the limited size of the samples and different groups of respondents. However, certain effects of previous product experience and product information on food choices can be seen. The results indicate that product experience may have an impact on the attribute importance and part-worth utilities in choice-based conjoint analyses. Regarding the importance of the taste, health and price attributes of the chocolate-coconut cereal bar in this test, product experience seemed to lower the importance of the taste, to have no effect on the importance of health and to increase the importance of the price. Part-worth utilities seem also to be influenced by product experience. The main taste component “extra chocolate” also seemed to lose its utility after product experience. In contrast, the taste component “extra coconut” increased in significance.

Relevance and applicability to product development and marketing

For product development, these results show that a product may be judged differently depending on its features and consequently each product feature has to fit the product concept. In this case the product developer has to pay more attention to the sensory features and has to find the right nutritional value of the product. The knowledge gained here can be utilised to improve general product features (Table 9; research method [10]). For marketing, the importance of good communication of the product’s taste features and the potential of

additional health information is emphasized. Pricing is a complex issue, dependent on different variables. Indications are given here that the product experience will influence an efficient pricing concept. The knowledge can also be utilised to optimize product positioning and communication (Table 10; research method [10]).

The experiment with actual product choice indicates that the adolescents preferred the product which was said to be “extra tasty” and not the product said to be “extra healthy”. This confirms that the sensory features are considered more important than the nutritional value of the product and provides invaluable information to be considered in both product development and marketing. The information obtained here can be utilised to optimize general product features, product positioning and communication (Table 10; research method [11]).

Table 10 summarizes the application areas for the research methods evaluated in this study. Product development and product optimization can utilise them to develop or improve product concepts, the sensory features and general product features. Marketing can utilise this information for product positioning and communication.

Table 10: Application of research methods in product development and marketing

Research method	Application	
	Product development – Product optimization	Marketing
Health awareness questionnaire [1]	product concept	positioning
General questionnaire [2]	product concept	positioning
Hedonic sensory testing (6 products) [3]	sensory features	communication
Hedonic sensory testing (1 product, without information) [4]	sensory features	communication
Hedonic sensory testing (1 product, with information) [5]	sensory features	communication
Sensory projective (6photos) [6]	product concept	Communication
Emotional statements [7]	product concept	Communication
Product features [8]	general product features	positioning and communication
Motivations / occasions statements [9]	general product features	positioning and communication
Choice-based conjoint [10]	general product features	positioning and communication
Choice experiment [11]	general product features	positioning and communication

4. Conclusions

The results show that every method tested can be utilised to compile useful data for different aspects of the product development process. From the findings in this study it can be concluded that questionnaires may be good tools for collecting data on general behaviours, knowledge and attitudes. Background information of the target group is important to be able to create a product that fulfils the needs and wants as well as fits into the lifestyle of the intended consumers.

The importance of hedonic sensory testing for collecting data about consumer acceptance and preference is evident. The sensory features of the product are one of the most important factors in developing and marketing food products. In the case of the cereal snack bar, one product was definitely preferred. However, in every hedonic sensory test the circumstances and the testing context in which the data are collected can influence the test results and consequently, the test environment should resemble as closely as possible the real consumption situation. When hedonic sensory data are being interpreted one has to consider

the context of the test. Choice experiments are powerful tools for acquiring information about the respondents' real opinions and behaviours.

The overall conclusion is that the methods of consumer-driven product development have tremendous potential to improve the product development process and communication strategies.

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Marketing of unhealthy food directed to children

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Abstract

This paper reports on a Swedish research project *Marketing of unhealthy food directed to children*, the aim of which was to survey the nature, amount and placement of advertisements that encourage children to buy food in different media. We found that a lot of the marketing of foodstuff concerned unhealthy food. The Internet is a particularly seductive channel and the limits between advertisements, editorials and non-profit information is vague and difficult to define. Children are encouraged to devote themselves to consumption through the offered on-line activities, games, kids-clubs and competitions on the net: “Eat as many sweets as possible”, “Fry as many hamburgers as you can and you will win the game”. Internet is a commercial arena with huge marketing potential and no regulations. Undeniably it needs further attention and close observation, and we can’t expect our children to be the watch dogs.

1 Introduction

There are few things today that set off public debate as easily as issues about food, children, and advertising. Research in this field is controversial no matter what stand is taken. This paper presents a recent Swedish research project: *Marketing of unhealthy food to children*. This is the first extensive survey on child-targeted advertising in Sweden and the project gained a lot of attention in the Swedish media in 2006.

The project has framed within two research discourses. The first discourse deals with the rising rate of obesity in children and is concerned with public health, while the second discourse is about children as consumers, advertising and an increased commercialised childhood. The two perspectives are briefly outlined below.

2 Obesity and food advertising

The rising rate of obesity in children is now a well-known fact in western countries. In Sweden, the numbers are as worrisome as in many other countries. Obesity in ten year-old children has increased by six fold in Sweden during the last twenty years. Studies show that between 15 and 25 % of Swedish children (8–10 years old) suffer from being overweight, and approximately 5 % of children are obese (Jansson & Danielsson, 2003; Livsmedelsverket, 2005a). From a European perspective, Sweden is still however not among the top countries (we are number eleven), that has the highest numbers of overweight children. Mediterranean countries top the list for obese children, according to a survey by the International and

European Association for the Study of Obesity (EAOS) (Lobstein, Rigby et al., 2005). Politicians and health professionals are worried about this ‘epidemic’, but the citizens themselves seem little worried about the issue. They neither worry about their personal health nor their children’s health. Surprisingly, a recurrent European consumer survey shows that European mothers neither rank ‘being overweight’ nor ‘obesity’ as particular concerns when it comes to their children’s health status (GfK, 2006), although they may take this into consideration with children other than their own.

The mass media may have one of their strongest effects in society by putting an issue on the agenda. The Theory of Agenda Setting can help us explain the public’s risk awareness. The theory postulates that people’s awareness and fear of a certain social problem depends on the media coverage of that particular topic, the amount of space the issue gets and the frequency of reporting (Rogers, Dearing et al., 1991). A Swedish study (Sandberg, H, 2004) shows that the issue of obesity was scarcely reported in the Swedish press until 2001 despite it’s growing proportions. Moreover, obesity was framed as an aesthetic rather than a health problem. This might explain why the Swedes themselves didn’t take excess weight and obesity as a serious health issue.

In November 2003, as a result of the increase in prevalence of obesity in Sweden, the Swedish National Institute of Public Health (SNIPH) and the National Food Administration were commissioned by the Swedish government to produce a plan of action for healthy eating habits and increased physical activity in the Swedish population. The plan was presented in February 2005 and proposed more than seventy measures to be taken (Livsmedelsverket, 2005b). A few of them concerned food promotion directed to children. It was recommended, for instance, that Sweden should initiate work at the EU level to ensure that TV food advertising targeted at children be banned throughout the EU. The prerequisites for restricting food marketing activities targeted at children need to be examined and trends in marketing must be continually monitored. No systematic analysis by independent parties of Swedish food marketing¹ had been carried out until November 2005.

3 Children and advertising

Ever since children in the early 1900s were recognized as a distinct group of consumers, marketers have been interested in developing strategies to influence children’s demands (Brembeck, Berggren Torell et al., 2001). The significance of marketing, advertising and public relations has steadily increased on a global scale and higher values are attached to these activities. Communication has been defined as the most important product, or raw material, in our society (Schultz, 2007) and in Sweden alone approximately 70 billion Swedish crowns (SEK)² are annually invested in marketing and communication efforts (IRM, 2007). Marketing and advertising have become more sophisticated with new marketing strategies (e.g. product placement in movies, SMS-marketing, use of tween trendsetters, false Web sites³) and it is even referred to in war-like terms such as “guerrilla” marketing (Linn, 2005).

¹ In Sweden, 3 billion SEK (ca. 3 250 000€) are invested in food advertising each year and a third of the sum is spent on marketing of unhealthy food stuff, compared to the Swedish Food Agency’s budget for food and health promotion which is about 15–20 million SEK a year (ca. 2 millions €) (Ekström & Sandberg, 2007).

² About 7 000 000 000 €

³ Some companies create ‘false’ web sites so it looks as if a kid has created it. It is an ad but it looks as if it is a child being personally about life, friends, hobbies and so on. Brands are mentioned in passing with links to commercial sites and young people are in this way misled by clever marketers (Lindstrom & Seybold B, 2003).

Since the distinction between items has diminished, it is increasingly difficult today to persuade the consumer about the excellence of a particular product. In many cases, the only variation is to be found in the brand name or in the colour of the packaging. Diversity is instead a construction, and the vision of the good life is being drilled into the audience by colourful and exciting advertisements and TV-commercials. Consumerism is the religion of late modernity, some say, and its most devout followers are the children (Unnikrishnan & Bajpai, 1996).

With the last decades of heavy commercialisation of childhood comes a strong shift, then, from children's objective needs (an adult understanding of what a child needs) to children's subjective preferences and desires (Olesen, 2004). Children persistently nag their parents to buy new things and as a result, mothers say they spend 30% more than they intended when they go shopping with their children (Wilson & Wood, 2004). This kind of influence or harassment is referred to in the consumer literature as children's pester power (Johansson, 2005). An American survey suggests that even when parents say no to their children's demands, 60 % of the kids keep asking for things they want on an average of nine times more. This strong influence of children on household purchases is estimated to a direct value of US\$188 billion, and a further US\$300 billion coming from indirect influence when parents takes a child's needs vs desires in account when buying things such as home computers, cable television etc (Lindstrom & Seybold B, 2003). Children are today well aware of brands and products and the social status attached to them. They know what is trendy and cool and which brands are not socially acceptable to buy. The peer group is deemed to be a more important source of influence when it comes to brand consciousness and brand sensitivity than media and parents, at least among teenagers in the US, but the latter two are also related to consumption attitudes and consumer socialisation (Nelson & McLeod, 2005).

Research into children as consumers is today an extremely vast area (Gunter & Furnham, 1998; Sonesson, 1999; Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001; Hansen, Rasmussen et al., 2002; Jacobson, 2004; Johansson, 2005). Paralleled with the increased interest in children as consumers is the increased concern about the implications of advertising upon children (Fox, 1996; Unnikrishnan & Bajpai, 1996; Furnham, 2000; Linn, 2005).

The current body of advertising research is immense and complex. Three main dimensions are usually involved but even so, if only advertising effects in the last few decades, there are nevertheless a considerable number of different studies that vary greatly with respect to paradigms, perspectives and methodology. Valkenburg (2000) divides studies on the impact of advertising into three groups:

1. cognitive
2. affective
3. behavioural effects.

Cognitive effect studies concentrate on a child's ability to differentiate commercials from other media content and his or her capacity to understand the purpose of advertisements. Affective studies focus on the appeal of commercials and the trust they generate in children, while studies on behavioural effect examine the extent to which the child is persuaded (Valkenburg, 2000).

Tufte (2006) splits research on the effects of advertising into two camps: one financed by industry and one by public means (Tufte, 2006). The former usually states that children are

critical readers of advertising and learn at an early age to define, understand and see through the commercial purpose of advertisements and hence they claim that the effects upon children are small. Spokesmen for the latter argue for a more cautious attitude. They claim that children are sensitive to the influence of advertisements and only gradually learn to recognize commercials, still lacking a critical perspective on ads in preschool and primary school. By the age of 10 most children have developed an ability to differentiate editorial material from advertising and can distinguish TV-commercials from TV-programs, yet they still might not be able to explain the purpose. There is no international consensus about the way in which advertising influences children and youth. There is however, a consensus among Nordic researchers in the field that not until the age of 12 do children fully understand and are able to critically scrutinise advertisements and promotional material (Jørgensen, 1992; Jørgensen Schultz, 1993; Bjurström, 1994; Tufte, 1999; Furnham, 2000; Jarlbro, 2001). This opinion is shared among the participants in the Swedish research project as well. This is not to say that children are seen as naïve, but they are often innocent to the workings of the world of persuasion.

There is no doubt that advertising plays a crucial role in introducing new products, brands and demands among children. There is also empirical evidence that children's exposure to advertising may lead to undesired effects such as purchase requests (harassment), materialistic attitudes, unhappiness and family conflict. These unwanted effects can nevertheless be reduced by parental mediation of advertising: explaining how advertising works, commenting on commercials, and explaining consumer matters (e.g. purchase decisions) (Buijzen, Moniek & Valkenburg, 2003a; Buijzen, M & Valkenburg, 2003b; Buijzen, Moniek & Valkenburg, 2005)

4 The competent child

The Childhood literature is also vast (Postman, 1982; Brembeck, Johansson et al., 2004) and steadily growing. There has been an increased societal and political interest in children as a social category, since the mid 1980's, and the notion "competent child" is today a widely used term by researchers. It is used in popular language and also by advertisers when it comes to children's interaction with advertising and promotion of consumer goods. The competent child is presented in the literature as a container concept (Ellegaard, 2004), in opposition to earlier representations of the child as a vulnerable and mouldable person in need of guidance.

The competent child is characterised as an actor taking part in the construction of her social reality, not only an object of adult socialisation. Moreover, the competent child is perceived as almost equal to grown-ups with their own economic lives. The competent child is defined as a 'social being' (Solberg, 1994; Levinson, 2000; Zelizer, 2002) in comparison to a 'social becoming' (Buckingham, 2000; Cross, 2002; Cook, 2005). Children have, in early ages, developed many adult skills, and are not in need of special protection from the adult world, which has been claimed earlier. The description of the competent child binds up with the position of the Association of Swedish Advertisers, the organisation that promotes and maintains the advertisers' interests on the Swedish advertising market. The organisation make claims about marketers' law full right, according to the freedom of speech, to address children with "information" about products in the form of advertising campaigns or other promotional activity. They also maintain, not surprisingly, that there is no need of further regulations of advertising, since children are clever, and not at all easy to lead astray. They regard children to be competent and independent consumers.

The idea of the competent child is present in the media research literature as well (Livingstone, 2002; Strasburger & Wilson, 2002), and binds up with the current view on the media audience. The paradigm among media researchers has shifted over the years from transmission and effects (a passive view on the audience which actually reduces it to a container) to reception and interpretation (an active critical audience) (Carey, 1989; McQuail, 1997) as to culture and the use of media in everyday life (Lull, 1980; Morley, 1992; Gauntlet & Hill, 1999; Nightingale & Ross, 2003). The audience interaction with and use of media differs, as does the interpretation of the media content. Any person who confronts a media message (be it news, fiction or commercials) must make sense of and interpret the message, which is far from simple and unproblematic. Livingstone says (p. 4) that: "...both interpersonal and mediated communication have been increasingly recognised as a complex, rule-governed, constructive set of processes" (Livingstone, 1998). The interpretation is different across the life span and dependent on the individual background, lifestyle, and context, and so on. Children probably construct various meanings from a certain media content, than do teenagers and grown ups. The view of the passive receiver as a black box or 'tabula rasa', ready to be filled with ideas and beliefs, is obsolete and replaced by an active and critical reader – a competent audience. This idea does not however contradict our attitude stated above. Advertiser's purpose is far from evident and crystal-clear to a child since children are not on the same cognitive level as teenagers and adults. Children, below the age of twelve, are not as skilled as an adult to see through the ads and keep the flirting images at a distance.

5 The Study

The project *Marketing of unhealthy food directed to children* was initiated by the Swedish Consumer Association in 2005. The project received funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers as well as the Swedish Consumer Agency. Researchers at the Department of Media and Communication Studies, at Lund University, were then hired to do the survey. The aim of the project was manifold:

1. to survey food advertising directed to children
2. to construct a survey tool for comparative purposes in other Nordic countries and
3. to procure information for political decisions and actions.

Since there is a ban, in Sweden, on TV-commercials directed to children below the age of 12, the target group was limited to children below this age. The Swedish legislation against TV advertising is considered to be the strictest in the world (Furnham, 2000). It has, not surprisingly, been criticised a lot by The Association of Swedish Advertisers. A common argument against the ban is that most TV-channels avoid the ban simply by overseas broadcasting, where a more liberal view on child-targeted advertising for long has prevailed. The Swedish law might be ineffective nevertheless it has a considerable symbolic value, since it gives evidence of what is socially accepted and what is not, when it comes to advertising and children. There is however a change to be expected, in view of the fact that Ofcom⁴ has put forward a strengthening of the regulation of food and drink advertising on TV, recently. The new restrictions have the effect of removing all advertisements for products that are high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) from all programmes, broadcast at any time, which hold

⁴ Ofcom is the independent regulator and competition authority for the UK communications industries, with responsibilities across television, radio, telecommunications and wireless communications services.

particular appeal for children up to the age of 16 (OfCom, 2006). This will have impact on several actors among others the Swedish TV-channels TV3 and Channel 5, which are broadcasted from London.

Limitations and sample

Several media were included in the study:

- Direct advertising (8 households spread all over Sweden)
- TV-commercials (TV3, TV4, Channel 5, Cartoon Network)
- Comic papers for children (about 60)
- Internet Web sites.

The different sub-studies have been reported in several publications (Sandberg, H., 2006a; Sandberg, H, 2006b; Ekström & Sandberg, 2007). This paper will discuss some of the results from the Internet study. The Internet survey focused on describing the amount, nature and placement of advertising on several Web sites. Data collection took place during a week in November 2005. The procedure was tricky since Internet is perpetually transforming and never the same. Almost 100 Web sites were visited, and 277 screenshots were saved for the analysis. The sample included two different kinds of Web sites. 60% of the sample consisted of (I) food related Web sites (e.g. the food industry, restaurants, grocery stores, particular food brands) and 40% of the sample was made up of (II) Web sites visited by children for sure⁵, but with no relation to food (e.g. communities, chat-rooms, entertainment sites with on-line games).

6 Results

The *Unhealthy food index* (UHF) will be introduced before the results are presented and discussed. In the survey all food advertisements were categorised into one of 12 different food categories (see list below).

- Soda-drinks*
- Pastry and cookies*
- Desserts and snacks*
- Candy, crisps and chocolate*
- Prefabricated dishes
- Cereals
- Other beverages
- Animal products
- Fruits & vegetables
- Dairy
- Bread
- Other provisions

The Unhealthy food index, which is an additive index, was then constructed and used consistently in the project no matter which media studied. The index measures the proportion of advertisements for unhealthy food, here defined as food which shouldn't be over

⁵ This part of the sample procedure was done by the consultancy firm Nielsen Netrating. The food related Web sites were selected by the assigner, the Swedish Consumer Association.

consumed, and which are high in fat and or sugar. The food categories marked with an asterisk (*) in the list, were included in the index.

The Unhealthy food index (UHF)

= % soda-drinks + % pastry and cookies + % desserts and snacks + % candy, crips and choclote

Given that the research was done by media researchers, not nutritionists or food experts, the exact nutritive value of each product was not known and couldn't be measured. Since there are prefabricated dishes of good nutritional value, and others that are considered unhealthy and of very poor value, prefabricated dishes as well as fast food were excluded from the index. The UHF-index is therefore a rough measurement and gives us an indication of the minimum proportion of unhealthy food advertisement in different media. If the prefabricated dishes and for instance some of the very sweet or fat dairy products, in addition to cereals high in sugar, would be included, the index would for sure raise.

It turned out that the Internet had the highest UHF-score of all the media studied (Sandberg, H, 2006b). This means that we found the largest proportion of marketing of unhealthy food on the Internet compared to the other media (see below).

Direct advertising	UHF =18
TV	UHF =20
Internet	UHF =52

The proportion of ads for unhealthy foods was the same no matter which kind of Web site visited. We found proportionally as much unhealthy food marketing for children in the chat-rooms and on the free game sites, as we found on the sites of the food industry themselves (see table 1).

Table 1. Food advertisement on the Internet (%)

	Food related site	Not food related site
Candy, crips, chocolate	25	23
Desserts & snacks	15	0
Soda-drinks	9	15
Pastry & cookies	3	15
Animal products	2	0
Prefabricated & fast food	11	0
Fruits & vegetables	0	0
Cereals	6	8
Dairy	7	0
UHF-index	52	53

One way of getting children's attention in marketing is to use children as models in the ads. In TV-commercials as well as in the direct mail advertisements we found several examples of this. On the Web sites however, children were rarely pictured. This doesn't mean that they were not present on the Web sites. If there weren't any pictures of kids there were instead

traces of them (e.g. toys, clothes, drawings, cartoons, hand or footprints of a child), which of course also appeals and attracts attention from a child who visit the site.

In many cases we found that the food marketed on the Internet didn't get as much space as the food exposed in other advertising media. The food sale impetus was not as pushy then as it was in the mail advertisements and the TV-commercials. In fact in many cases the advertisement or the marketing of food was hard to discover and tell apart from other kind of media content such as information on the web. And in some instances the marketing was concealed and transformed into pure entertainment.

We found particular brand incentives related to a food item for sale in 70 % of all cases. It could be a food mascot, comics strips, membership in children's club, e-cards, birthday-party tip, pottering to keep a child busy, and plenty of material for free download. A few examples are presented below.



Picture 1. A Web site for unhealthy food directed to children

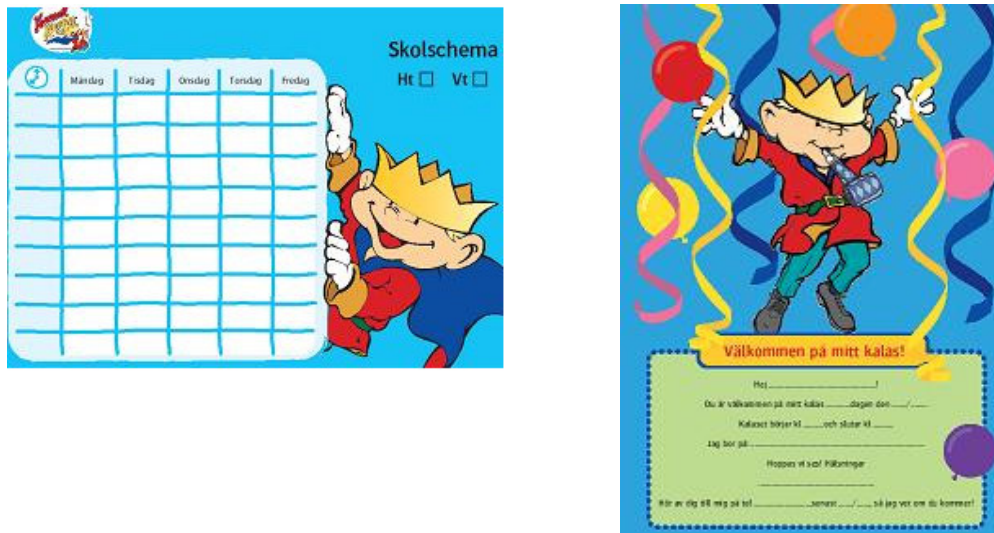
Picture 1 is a Web site and advertisement for unhealthy food (candy & chocolate) directed to children below the age of 12. The child can interact on the Web site with the "Candy Family" seen in the picture above, and get to know the family members, all of which are named cleverly after different pieces of chocolate bars and sweets: mother *Marianne*, father *Karl F(azer)*, the daughter *Polly* and finally the son *Plopp*. They are on top of that dressed in the product's brand colours and resemble thereby the wrapping of the candy.

On the linked Web site the child is addressed friendly and cheerfully – "Hello buddy" ("Hej kompis!") –and then invited to click on the various persons to get to know them better (their background, hobbies, job and aspirations or lifestyle). The visitor can play "Candy Memory" and make her or his own cut-out candy car, a bright red "Dumle-car" (Dumle is also a well known brand for sweets) which is the same as the one the Candy Family drives. (See picture 2).



Picture 2. A cut-out car from Cloetta Fazer a manufacturer of sweets

Many of the Web sites studied offer pottering for kids, and subsequently make them interact with the brands in a non-intrusive way, on-line as well as off-line. The Candy King (“Karamellkungen”) offers the visitor plenty of activities, games and birthday invitation cards as well as school schedules for download (see picture 3). The Candy King also had a nursery tale (ghost-story) published on the Web site. The story included several well-known brands of sweets. The brands were intertwined in the story in a, at the first glance, natural way. The story wasn’t a common fairy tale for kids however, but an extensive and well covert advertisement.



Picture 3. Examples of pottering from the Candy King.

Children were offered membership in clubs, in several places on the Web. The Tiger club (see picture 4), for instance, is a club for children between 5 and 12 years. The Tiger himself is the mascot of a dairy in the northern part of Sweden. The dairy’s Web sites are in many ways worthy of imitation and offer plenty of useful health information to children, parents, and teachers; nevertheless, they have a clear goal to drill into the child’s head a particular brand. The Tiger club offered for instance plenty of items to buy, e.g. Tiger towels, Tiger bags, Tiger pins, Tiger caps and so on, through the club site.

The food mascots, such as Tiger, are usually small, cute and innocent in their presentation and character. Soon they become children’s personal friends on the Internet. They give life to and personify the brand or the product. In this way marketers build long lasting relationships between the brand and the child from an early age and on. They create at the same time a positive attitude towards consumption. Children are urged by the food mascots to “taste this”,

“ask your parents to buy this”, “feel the taste of this yummy bar”, while seeing the mascots gorging, munching, sipping and licking their mouths, and at the same time listening to the sound of crisps breaking or cereals popping in milk. In the on-line games the mascots also guide the child through the game and maybe not surprisingly the kids who fry the most hamburgers will win, and the kid who eats or collects as many sweeties as possible gets the highest score. It is worrisome, considering the increased number of children suffering from overweight and obesity, that the marketers in this way urge children repeatedly into over consumption, and also that they do it in a way which is far from obvious for the child.



Picture 4. The Tiger club, a club on the Web for kids 5–12 years old.

It is troublesome that so many of the examples of advertising of unhealthy food to children on the Internet are difficult to discover (even for an adult), and to keep apart from other material on the sites. Children are not stupid. They are sensible and critical in many ways, but marketers don't have to make it more difficult for them than necessary to maintain their role as competent consumers.

It could be argued that it is a democratic right to know when you are exposed to trade influence. On TV there is at least a warning or announcement before and after a commercial break. Children's lack of experience, kindly reception and approving attitude towards advertisement (which many consider to be entertaining even if they report it being annoying too) should not be exploited the way it is in many of the Web sites studied.

Finally we found many examples of how the food industry make use of kids and turn them into unpaid “junior marketers”, probably without their awareness, at least without deeper consideration doing the industry's errands. Children are persistently requested to send advertisements, campaign offerings, games (see an example in picture 5) et cetera on to their friends, as if they did them a favour (“why don't you give this tip to a friend” or “invite a friend to this” or “challenge your pal in the game”), and thereby the marketers get access to the kid's peer groups, extended networks of friends, and relatives for further influence. And no doubt many kids want to do their friends a favour and be a good pal.



Picture 5. On this Web site the child is asked to tip-off/send the Basketbots game from 7up to a friend by typing her or his e-mail in the square.

Discussion and conclusion

Material aspirations are reaching unrealistic heights. “While consumerism is spreading like wildfire, access to the basics of life remains a serious problem for many” (Unnikrishnan & Bajpai, 1996:20). Increased commercialism may hold negative consequences for society as a whole. There are critics warning that commercial and materialistic values can lead to decreased civic responsibility. Soon (if not already) young people find shopping more fun than helping others and engage in political activity. In the Swedish press this summer we read about kids’ luxury consumption and parent’s indebtedness. 12 year-old children wear D&G-sweaters, Gucci sunglasses and Armani jeans.

An average consumer in the US is exposed to 30000 brands a day (Nelson & McLeod, 2005). The average 12-year-old child spends about 48 hours per week exposed to commercial messages, but not more than 1,5h in a significant conversation with a parent, Nelson and McLeod also report. These figures may not give us the whole truth about the power of marketers and the advertising industry, and they may not be valid for the Nordic countries. Yet, they say something about the commercial pressure the industry puts on us, and our kids, to consume – not only food any kind of stuff. Still the advertising association maintains that children would pester their parents for products even if there were no advertising at all. Peer pressure is to be held responsible, not the advertisements or the advertisers (Preston, 2004).

TV has for long been considered to be the most important media influencer, and has in Sweden been surrounded by severe regulation. But what if it no longer is the main influencer? Young people have varied and changing patterns of media consumption and they spend more and more time with their computers, on online media use. In Sweden kids that have access to and use the Internet spend about 73 minutes a day, and some off course spend even more in front of the screen (Nordicom-Sverige, 2006). Internet is also the media that children use

alone, not in the company of others. More than a third of Swedish children between 9 and 11 years old report having access to a computer in their own bed room, and as many as 40% of the children are chatting with persons they know on the net or meet them in different cyber communities (Medierådet, 2005). Off course they still watch a lot of TV as well, and almost all children watch TV on a daily basis. On an average children watch about 90 minutes a day in Sweden (Nordicom-Sverige, 2006). But we can see that the amount of online media consumption is getting closer and closer to the amount of TV consumption. Then it is legitimate to start discussing regulations and ethics of ads and marketers even on the Web.

The Swedish TV-ban on commercials in the early 1990s was deemed to be a necessity because of the strong impact TV had on the audience caused by its colourful visual effects and sound effects (Jarlbro, 2001). The Internet is everything that a TV is, and much more. On the Internet there are virtual effects, designed visual effects, moving pictures, music et cetera. The Web offers immediate and direct interaction across time and space. The user can choose between unlimited numbers of options, activities, commodities served in an alluring and fun context. TV commercials seem harmless compared to the marketing potentials of Internet, and yet we trust the advertisers to know the limits and expect them to voluntarily clean up what is regarded unethical, unmoral, and misleading advertisements to children on the Web sites.

Some media might offer a higher proportion of marketing of unhealthy food than others. The results from the Swedish study point out that Internet was the advertising media with the highest score on UHF-index, among several media. The proportion of advertising of unhealthy food directed to children was 52% on the studied Web sites, compared to 20% on TV and 18% in the mail advertisements (Ekström & Sandberg, 2007).

An important conclusion from the Internet study is that marketing efforts and advertisements on the Web are often hidden and transformed to something else. It takes the shape of a party invitation card, a mobile signal for free download, games and competitions. The Web advertisements are more sophisticated than the direct advertising that comes in your mailbox or in the press. The Web advertisements are not telling you to run off and immediately buy 3 tins of mashed tomatoes for a song, and save some money. Instead the Web marketing works in the long run. Steadily marketers build positive attitudes around particular brands, and when it is time for the child to actually buy something he or she knows exactly which brands are simply the best. It is more difficult to keep the critical eye open and act as a competent child/consumer, since the brand interaction on the Internet also is voluntary. The child decides by herself where to click and which pictures and links looks the most interesting to explore further, and thereby stays illusively in control. Obviously it gets even harder when the advertiser name things differently from what they are. An example of this is when the ice cream-company asks the child on the Web site if he/she would like to get "fun mail" from the Ice cream producer in his e-mail, instead of just asking if he/she wants advertisements or sales offerings each month. In the study we found several cases where the marketers exploit children and where they mislead children and unnecessarily promotes over consumption of unhealthy food.

There are no particular restrictions on the marketing of unhealthy food to children, but the food industry has to shoulder their part of the responsibility and take actions to solve the problem of obesity, just as several other actors and social institutions (politicians, schools, parents, health care institutions, and the media). Their contribution to this huge health problem could for instance be to stop marketing of unhealthy food directed to children, and to stop spurring over consumption of unhealthy food. We don't want the gloomy prophecy

which tells us that our children might be the first generation to live shorter and healthier lives than their parents, to come true.

The Internet study evidence the need to closely follow the development of marketing of unhealthy food directed to children. The marketing potential is huge and there are still very few signs of self-regulation. There is one good example though, among the Web sites analysed, which could serve as a model for the rest of the food industry, and that is Kraft Foods Inc. This company has decided to keep their Web sites free from advertisements and enticements for kids and has developed a policy not to unnecessarily stimulate consumption of unhealthy food on the Web. We hope that there are more to follow. The Internet survey was focused on describing the amount, nature and placement of advertising on the Web sites. Next step will be to study children's perceptions, understanding and use of food advertisements in relation to their food intake and lifestyle.

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Visual marketing of breakfast cereals to children – containers, gadgets and gender

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Abstract

A growing research field concerning children and consumption concern food. In Sweden many different interest groups engage against food marketing to children. On a political level the engagement concern children's health. Centrally situated in these discussions are breakfast cereals and the visual design of cereal containers. The present paper presents the public debate concerning visual marketing of cereal containers to children. The main contribution of the paper does however concern children's own approaches to visual layouts of cereal containers targeted specifically at them. Focus group interviews with children discussing cereal containers (present at the interview situation) have been carried out. The paper illustrates how the visual child address is gendered. It also implies that children's meaning construction of consumption never is isolated. It is dependent on social relations and parental values.

1. Introduction

Since the Second World War a major market strategy for targeting children as consumers has been to use cartoons on, for example, breakfast cereal boxes (Hill and Tilley, 2002; Nelson & Steinberg, 1997). Another strategy is to include extra sometimes secret gifts, gadgets, collector cards or CD-games as treats (Nelson & Steinberg, 1997). A third strategy is to offer pottering for children on the back of the cereal containers. As there is no large divide between advertising and product design today food products are more often designed to address young people directly. One reason is that young people in Western countries have an increased influence on family economy. That does not necessarily mean that children possess more money, rather they have more influence on family decision-making and in that way on consumption (Buckingham, 2000).

A growing research field concerning children and consumption is about food (cf. the 2nd international conference *Child and Teen Consumption* 2006), above all bad food. In Sweden there are also many different interest groups who engage against food marketing to children, for example *The Swedish Consumer Coalition*, *Minister of Consumer Affairs*, *Stockholm's Co-operative Consumer Society*, *Children's Ombudsman*, *National Board for Consumer Policies* and finally the Swedish advertising law prohibiting TV-advertising to children under the age of 12. On a political level the engagement for food marketing to children concern children's health. Centrally situated in these discussions have since 2004 been breakfast cereals and the design of the cereal containers. One critique towards the cereal containers is the way in which the child consumer/user is addressed visually. *The Swedish Consumer Coalition* wants to put the visual layout of the boxes on an equally footing to advertisements (*Sveriges konsumenter i samverkan*, 2004). Their argument is that the visual layout of the

cereal containers as well as the gadgets is contributing to child stoutness since toys and images lure children into too an extensive sugar consumption.

A member of *The Swedish Consumer Coalition* and an engaged national actor in food marketing to children is *Stockholm's Co-operative Consumer Society* (Sw: Konsumentföreningen Stockholm). Since 2004 they have made four different reports concerning marketing and health aspects of among other things breakfast cereals for children. As a result of their engagement certain brands today display less sugar and more grains on the containers. Some producers have in agreement to the critique put forward by *Stockholm's Co-operative Consumer Society* (Konsumentföreningen Stockholm, 2005a) also excluded the gadgets in the packages. An addition to the reports is the questionnaires done through the aligned *Parents Jury* (Konsumentföreningen Stockholm, 2005b). To participate in the Parents Jury is voluntary as long as you are a member of the Consumer Co-operation. The questionnaires carried out by Parents Jury concern parents' attitudes towards marketing of for example breakfast cereals with toys and gadgets to children. The result from these questionnaires will be discussed further in a forthcoming article. But what the debate imply and what is of importance for the discussion in the present paper are how the arguments made by the Consumer Coalition and Co-operation as well as the Parents Jury can be understood from the point of view of children.

The debate initiated by the consumer associations' stress visual marketing as not only very powerful but also as a constitutive force in society. As a result their argumentation entails the visual layout of the breakfast cereals direct or even govern people to act in specific ways. The potency the involved parties put on the visual is probably never reflected upon. Neither has the actors reflected upon the notions and values of children and childhood constructed by their debate.¹ The debate also lacks insight into how children themselves approach the market strategies designed for them.

Within consumer research both children, childhood (Cook, 2006) and visuality (Schroeder, 2002) for a long time has been neglected. The present paper will analyse children's own approaches to breakfast cereal boxes marketed at them. The aim of the paper is to understand the visuality of consumer culture and the symbolic values (Cook, 2004) interlinked to visuality from the point of view of the child (James & Prout, 1990; Halldén, 2007).

2. Theoretical perspective

Children and consumption is a growing area of knowledge. Literature based on research with children is written both by marketers and within traditional academia. Often with both common and different purposes. Both fields want to understand children. The difference however is that research done within the frames of business marketing (Lindstrom, 2004) has a purpose to help marketers reach groups of children with their brands. While academia on the other hand wants to study children as consumers to develop theoretical insights to understand consumption beyond the market (Martens, 2005).

Research about children and consumption has for a long time been characterized by a developmental viewpoint (Cook, 2006). During the last xxx years has interest both among researchers within the field New Sociology of childhood and within consumption started to show interest in the combination children and consumption (Cook 2005; Martens, Southerton & Scott, 2004). However, while childhood sociologist take the perspective of the child

researching settings for children's consumption or children as consumers. The consumption researchers do the opposite; they start with consumption theories and then approach children. The two research fields rarely refer to one another but keep to their own specific research fields (Cook, 2005). Unfortunately, according to Daniel Thomas Cook (2005), since the two research fields implacably are connected. Valérie Inès de la Ville (2006) has one foot in consumption research and the other in childhood sociology and she argues the importance of not researching children's consumption as an isolated element. She shows how consumption for children in the majority of cases is a collective act since the process of consumption takes place together with friends, parents, in institutional consumption arenas and within socio technical design systems. The meaning of consumption in this way is a joint meaning construction. Focus on meaning and meaning construction in consumer research is also put forward by other researchers.

Like de la Ville Vivian Zelizer (2002) argues, based on reviews of research, in favour of focusing children's acquisition of goods and services rather than their actual final disposition. She stresses the importance to comprehend how children understand the economy constructed by adults for children from the point of view of the child. In turn this means to consider children as active economic agents (Zelizer, 2002). Zelizer describes three different regular economic relations children engage with; (1) members of their household, (2) children outside the household and (3) agents outside households such as schools, stores, firms, churches and voluntary associations. This division also highlights how economic activities vary depending on social relations. It also points at how people's meaning construction becomes central to understand consumption.

Also Lydia Martens, Dale Southerton and Sue Scott (2004) argue that a lot of earlier research has focused on the relationship between children and the market and neglected other relevant social relationships. They stress the reason to this is the lack of interest in the symbolic meanings people create around consumer goods and services. That is the consumers' own meaning systems. They quote J. Best (1998) who stress that studying material culture means studying people – not objects. Finally they emphasize, just like Zelizer (2002), the shortage and lack of research investigating children's own participation in commercial space. That is the lack of knowledge about children's engagement in practices of consumption. More focus should be put on the significance consumption has in children's everyday life and how they are part of broader issues of social organization. When focusing on children's own practices it becomes obvious how objects and processes defined as commercial interlink with other aspects of children's lives (Sparrman, 2002; Sparrman & Aronsson, 2003; Sparrman, 2007).

In this article focus is on what is called ordinary consumption and the practice of consumption as in contrast to research focusing production (Martens et. als., 2004). According to Martens et. als. consumption of practice focuses on rules and competent conduct in processes of consuming, belonging or fitting in to social groups, production of routines, power and dynamics that define the relational social values of consumption practices. That is how consumption mediates social relations, represent structural inequalities and how it connects to and sustain cultural ideologies. Another aspect highlighted is also how children's consumption always is intimately connected to parents' consumption. All together de la Ville (2006), Zelizer (2002) and Martens et. als. (2004) encourage researchers to put focus on the everyday life of children's consumption. Their theories and methods argue in favour to understand the complexity of consumption. They stress the importance to study consumption as consisting of a conglomerate of meaning making dependent on social relations as well as social and cultural capitals.

3. Methods and empirical material

Focus group interviews with children talking about breakfast cereal containers (present at the interview situation) have been carried out.

Eighteen cereal boxes have been collected from three different Swedish food stores, ICA Maxi, Coop and Willys (see appendix 1). The ownership of the three stores differs. ICA is a privately owned franchise store, Coop is owned by the Cooperation and Willy is a Swedish owned cheap food market chain. The selection of cereal containers has been made based on earlier research about using cartoons as marketing strategies to address children (Hill & Tilley, 2002).

Four focus group interviews have been carried out (Morgan, 1998). Two video cameras were used to be able to see what visual aspects of the containers the children pointed at. Every interview session consisted of four children age 8-9 years old. Out of thirty-eight children sixteen choose to participate. All children were approached thru the after-school centre they visited every afternoon. Consent to participate in the research project was given in writing by parents on the behalf of the child. Each interview lasted between 45-55 minutes. The interviews were carried out in a classroom after school hours. The groups were composed due to days and hours spent on at the centre. Group 1 consisted of four boys, group 2 held three boys and one girl, group 3 fours girls and finally group 4 three girls and one boy. The after-school centre was situated in a school in a middle sized Swedish town. Out of 62 after-school centres in the city 35 received extra community money above the basic amount assigned each child. The concerned after-school centre was ranked in the tenth position out of the thirty five centres receiving money. The amount of extra money is based on the sum of immigrant children, their parents' educational level and background. The money is supposed to cover extra costs for interpreters, extra staff, personal assistants and damages.

In total the children were introduced to 18 different cereal containers (see appendix 1). The children were first asked to organize the cereals from the best to the least preferred box design. The aim was to let the children get accustomed to the boxes and find a relaxed approach to them. It was also used as a strategy to establish a dialogue between the children themselves. To bring the packages into the interview situation is inspired by photo elicitation techniques (Harper, 2002; Heisley & Sidney, 1991; Epstein, Stevens, McKeever & Baruchel, 2006). But instead of using photos of cereal containers to talk about I decided to bring the real objects. It turned out to be a good decision. To see the way the children handled the containers also give knowledge about their approach to them. One item which turned out to be important was that the containers actually contained cereals. The children commented on this and it seemed to make the situation more real to them.

Before starting the focus group discussions a set of rules were presented. Four themes of open questions were prepared concerning children's own consumption of cereals, the images on the cereal boxes, the toys/gadgets in the cereal boxes and finally questions related to children and advertising.

After finishing all interviews all children, even the ones who had not participated in the study, were invited to a snack with cereals and milk. The after-school centre provided milk and I served the cereal. The children could try more than one brand of cereals if they wanted. The

get together was a result of some children asking me if they could taste the cereals during the interviews. It was also a way to thank all parties for participating in the research project.

All interviews have been analyzed and at the moment five comprehensive themes have been identified, i.e. toys and gadgets, consumption patterns, sugar and nutrition and finally the visual layout of the containers. Across these themes is the notion of gender explored. In the empirical presentation below gender issues related to the containers and the toys will be investigated. In this present text gender is only dealt with when the children explicitly talk about it. There is a possibility to make gender analysis of the interview groups as well as the discursive space. That will, however, not be done in this paper.

4. Empirical analysis

Most food products produced for children are commonly known to be gender neutral (Childs & Maher, 2003). To address girls and boys as different market groups within other market areas have on the other hand a long tradition (Brembeck et. als., 2001, Cooks, 2004). When making an analysis of all eighteen containers it was found that the majority (12) of the containers address boys. Either boys are exposed playing street-hockey (see image 2). Or the cereal producers offer toys inside the containers marketed towards boys, like Bionicles by Lego (see image 3-4). Finally some of the cartoon characters are personalized with names like Tony the Tiger on Frosties by Kellogg's. Only one girl is illustrated, that is Lisa. Lisa is dressed in a red dress showing parts of her underpants (see image 9). Lisa is a helper around the Kalaspuffar container by Quaker. On the front of the container is a speech balloon with Lisa saying: "Check out the crossword and fun ingeniousis on the container" (see image 9). Accordingly Lisa has a commission, still her activity is to help others. While the street hockey picture illustrates and emphasize how boys are active for their own sake playing street hockey. Two containers can be said to be gender neutral Honey Bees with bees on it (see image 8) and Spooks with ghosts on it (see image 6). Both produced by Coop. Due to the fact that a gender imbalance prevails between the visual layouts of the containers one of the interview questions was made to concern gender.

When the children were asked if the eighteen breakfast cereals could be divided into girls and boy's cereals the following containers were mentioned:

Boy's cereals: (numbers after the image number relates to the interview groups and their choices)



Image 1: 1, 2, 3, 4



Image 2: 1, 4



Image 3: 3, 4



Image 4: 3



Image 5: 3



Image 6: 2



Image 7: 2

Girl's cereals:



Image 8: 1, 2, 3, 4



Image 9: 1



Image 10: 1, 3

Mixed:



Image 11: 3



Image 12: 3

The argument about what is 'boyish' and 'girlish' goes along sport, action, thrills and coolness for boys. While girlishness rather is defined as nice, cute, happy, sweet, pink, flowers, bees, glitters and pottering. To define what is boyish and girlish is however delicate and contested. Below some interview excerpts are presented illustrating the direction and potential of analysing the interview discussions with the children. They consider how the children reason and how the completed analysis will be carried out. That is they are not yet finalized.

When pointing out a cereal for girls the boys in group one chose Honey Bees by Coop (image 8). As a matter of fact Honey Bees is appointed by all groups as girlish or for girls. When Rickard, Bjarne, William and Samuel answer the question why they picked Honey Bees they stress that it is girlish:²

EXAMPLE 1: *Girl's cereals*

Interview 1: Participants Rickard (year 2), Bjarne (year 3), William (year 3), Samuel (year 3) and ANNA

- ANNA: Wait you have to explain to me 'cause I don't really know (point towards the Honey Bees) what girlish is?
- Rickard: It's like sweet and that
- Samuel: Yea and then sweet
- Bjarne: Sweet and then they're happy
- ANNA: Aha cute
- Bjarne: Cute and that
- ANNA: Aha
- Bjarne: Children why like scary things, x
- Rickard: Lads and that, thrilling
- Bjarne: Yea thrilling and that
- William: Action
- ANNA: But don't girls do that?
- Bjarne: Noe
- William: We know one girl who we played with before (A: ehm) she, she liked like so star wars
- Bjarne: Who?
- ANNA: Okay
- William: Erika

Bjarne: Noe
William: Well yes
Bjarne: Noe
William: Sh, she why does she play with star wars then?
Bjarne: (smiles)
William: There things fell

Rickard, Bjarne and Samuel agree that sweetness “and that” as well as smiles explains what girlish is. To strengthen the argument Bjarne contradicts girlish with what children in general likes. Or does he mean boys? Rickard interprets children as lads. Lads are fond of thrills and scary things and William ads action. According to Bjarne this does not go for girls. His voice is not uncontested though. Due to own experiences William mentions a mutual friend, a girl, who they used to play with and who liked Star Wars. Her engagement in Star Wars throws Benjamin’s argument overboard. Girls can obviously like scary and exciting things.

More than once girlish is defined by its contradiction, i.e. what is boyish. This strategy is used by both boys and girls. In this way boyish can be said to become a norm. One boy (group 4) thinks the Honey Bees are girlish because it looks silly and corny. The girls in the same group do not think any of the cereals are for girls. They agree that Honey Bees are cute and can be for girls but for baby girls. Group three, consisting of four girls, follow this line of argument and assert Honey Bees as babyish. When settling what is girlish with Rice Krispies by Kellogg’s (image 10) the girls in a very indifferent way more or less try to come up with aspects that makes it girlish; flowers (the grains), glittery stars at the corners of the letters and a horseshoe at the bottom. At the same time they easily settle which cereals are for boys (image 1, 3, 4). Accordingly it seems as if both boys and girls are insecure when defining criteria’s for girlishness. One explanation is that the boy theme is displayed straight forward on the containers. Boys are visualized participating in sports. The girl-theme supplied by the children is relatively well embedded in the illustrations. It never becomes obvious and clear cut what is silly, sweet or cute.

When asked if any cereals can be established to be boy’s cereals all groups pick the Fifa container (image 1) produced by Nestlé. Once again girls are used to strengthen what is boyish.

EXAMPLE 2: *Boy’s cereals*

Interview 1: Participants Rickard (year 2), Bjarne (year 3), William (year 3), Samuel (year 3) and ANNA (interviewer)

ANNA: (looks at B&W), grabs B to get attention then turns to S) And this one why is it boyish?
Samuel: Well yes it’s more sport like lads like
Bjarne: And then it’s ice-hockey
William: Yea lads have it surely
Samuel: Noop it’s street hockey
Bjarne: It’s mostly boys (leans head and looks at A) who do ice-hockey
ANNA: Yea but there are girls who do ice-hockey
William: Yes I’ve seen that on TV
ANNA: Yes
William: Yes there are loads of girls that
ANNA: Yes and soccer right (raises the Fifa container)
Bjarne: Aha
William: Aha
Bjarne: Aha (grabs the container) but it’s mostly for lads
ANNA: Is it mostly for lads?
Bjarne: (Grabs the package and embraces it)

Sport is recognized as being liked by boys and in this case ice-hockey, street hockey as well as soccer are considered. When argued by the interviewer that girl's also play hockey William is the one who picks up on an a-stereotypical gender approach. He says he has seen loads of girls on television playing hockey. Bjarne uses a more traditional line of arguments. It is as if he knows the interviewer/I will add another argument when he leans his head over and looks at her/me and stress that ice-hockey is mostly something boys do. He also stresses soccer as more of a boy's activity. At the end of the discussion he also embraces the Fifa container to strengthen his argument. By embracing the container he lets himself and the container reinforce the male discourse and down seize the female streak. He and the object are positioned closer to one another than he and girls. This creates a continuance with the argument that consumption is not simply about objects but about people and people's use of objects (Best in Martens et. als., 2004). The Fifa container confirms Bjarne's opinion as well as his position as a "man".

In another sequence (group 2) it is argued that the Fifa container is boyish due to its coolness. This is questioned by the only girl in the group who asks if girls are not "coolish". The four girls in group three start right off by singling out three containers for boys the; Fifa (see image 1), Cheerios (see image 3) and Nesquik (see image 4), all by Nestlé. As an addition to the sport argument they add the Bionicle gift toys by Lego included in Cheerios and Nesquik to illustrate what are boy cereals. They argue that Bionicles are boy toys. When I ask them if girls never play with Bionicles a unison no is delivered. Kajsa imply that it might happen but that they are mainly produced for boys. Both boys and girls are in this way arguing along the same line. Boys do boy things and use boy objects and girls do not do boy things or use boy toys. When girls do sports and use boy toys it is more or less described as an exception. None of the interviews offer any clear cut characterization of girl's doings and toys. This once again illustrates how boy's activities are put forward as a norm. All discussions about whether the cereal containers can be considered to be boy or girl cereals tend to end up in a dichotomisation between what boys and girls can and cannot accomplish.

The gender aspects of the toys are emphasized also in group four.

EXAMPLE 3: *Gendered toys*

Interview 4: Participants Chris (year 2), Ava (year 2), Erika (year 3), Annika (year 2), ANNA

Ava: If you should get a toy I think it should be bigger ia if you get a toy
ANNA: It should be bigger? x
Ava: Yea at least a little bit
Chris: I I welll
Ava: And more usable
ANNA: More usable usable in what way? Can you tell?
Ava: As ehh as you might like the cereals but it might is as girls not like bajonkoj (bionicles)then it could be both for girls and and boys
Erika: Yea we like we like we might like these cereals but then we get one of those bionicle and what if you are only girls in the family
Chris: Yea but you said you had a younger brother, two younger brother and then
Erika: Yea but that doesn't have to mean that I think bionicle is fun? And what if there are only girls in one and they think those cereals are very tasty
Chris: Well but you could throw them away
Ava: Yea but that's kind of un-necessary
Chris: Give it your neighbours you could throw them out your window

Ava: You could make it it becomes usable for both girls and boys
ANNA: Ccan
Chris: Can you take yet another bionicle out?

This discussion starts out with a discussion about the size of the toys in the cereal containers and the usability of them. Usability relates to the possibility to be used by both girls and boys. Ava and Erika argue that it is a waste to put gender specific toys in the containers. One argument is that girls do not necessarily like boy toys, as Bionicles by Lego. For a family with only girls boy toys is a real waste since it is not used and to throw them away would be a real squander. To Ava there is obviously not an option to see this as a “gender bending” situation and play with boy toys. It is rather an equality issue where respect should be taken to different kinds of family constellations and different genders. Instead of squander it is better to become gender neutral. The toy should be able to be used by both boys and girls. From the point of view of the girls the argumentation becomes a question of equal rights and no un-necessary waste of goods. Accordingly it implies that the girls have an awareness of the gender imbalance demonstrated by the layout of the breakfast cereal containers. An imbalance that emphasizes reactions. When asked further on in the interview both the girls and Chris can come up with non-gendered toys that could be used instead; small books, stickers and computer games.

When group three is asked if they choose cereals based on gender the following discussion took place.

EXAMPLE 4: *How do children themselves do?*

Interview 3: Participants Katrin (year 3), Gunilla (year 3), Anne (year 2), Layal (year 2), ANNA

ANNA: But when you are going to buy cereals or if you can choose cereals do you think like this then that you should have do you think like this for example eh I am not going to have that one 'cause that's like boyi=
Layal: Yea bb
Gunilla: Noo
Katrin: Noo I think you see
Gunilla: I think of the taste
Katrin: Yes I think of of the taste and the company=
Gunilla: Me too
Katrin: = a little
ANNA: The company?
Katrin: Ehm
ANNA: Which company is this? (holds the Nesquik container up)
Katrin: Nestlé
ANNA: Nestlé did the rest of you know that?
Layal och
Gunilla: Yea
Katrin: But I don't like Nestlé
ANNA: Oh well you don't? Why don't you do that?
Katrin: You see I can like you see on the taste but I don't like the company as such
ANNA: No what's wrong with the company?
Katrin: It makes advertising in ehh Africa about gruel and then the mums buy even though they have for free in the breasts
ANNA: Okay did you know that girls?
?: Noo
Katrin: Mum told me about it
ANNA: Aaa so it's not such a good company (puts the container baack) /.../

Accordingly these children do not chose breakfast cereals based on notions of gender. The choice is, argued by Katrin, based on the taste of the cereals and which company that produces them. Katrin's dislike for Nestlé relies on the fact that Nestlé advertise for gruel in Africa. The gruel is bought by the mothers who have the same product for free in their breasts. This fact is not known by the other girls and Katrin says her mother told her about it. Katrin draws on a commonly known discourse about Nestlé. This stresses the importance parents play for children's values and morals. Katrin acts in relation to this knowledge on the market. If possible she would probably not chose Nestlé as an option. Her market awareness is in this case not established through school but by a parent. In other parts of the interview material can parents importance for children's market awareness and values also be seen.

5. Conclusion

When placing the children's discussions alongside the theories presented in this paper it is possible to see the continuance in the arguments of the authors. It is obvious that the children make both individual and collective meanings of the cereal containers. The process of meaning construction is accomplished in relation to available gender discourses as well as parents, friends and visual layouts. The younger the child the more influence from the market goes through the parents. At the same time parents ideological standpoints are highlighted as important for children's values and actions on the market.

The discussions consider tensions and power relations on the market. In this case gender is concerned from a child perspective. One issue dealt with is fitting or not fitting into social groups of being a girls or a boy and to consider where the boarders between the two actually runs. When talking about gender issues in relation to the visual layout and the toys gender differences rather than likeness are established. When likeness is approached it is as gender neutral toys. In these discussions the children stand out as highly competent agents being able to discuss and come forward with their own thoughts. Still it is of importance to see that parallel to this they are constructed by, for example the markets rhetoric and use of gender. Discourses they have problems to contest. One assumption that can be made from the children's arguments is that consumption of breakfast cereals mediate structural inequalities. They also sustain gender discourses positioning boys as active and girls as passive.

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Appendix 1

Name of cereals	Brand	Cartoon-figures	Back	Gadgets	Price
Frosted Flakes	Coop	Space man frosting(sugar) the cereals. The entire package is cartooned.	Game.	Draw a line between numbers to fins out who is hiding behind the numbers.	19.90
Honey Bees	Coop	Bees flying around collecting honey. The entire package is cartooned.	Game.	Which bee finds its way to the beehive?	19.90
Choko Spooks	Coop	Goast and bats on a background of a deserted room/house. The entire package is cartooned.	Game.	Cut out pictures of scary motifs and play memory.	21.90
Coco Pops	Kellogg's	Croco-figure. Animated letters.	Cartoon about how to help Croco.	Refer to www.kellogg.sby.nu for further instructions.	25.90
Coco Pops Rocks	Kellogg's	Croco-figure. Animated letters.	Cartoon narrating how this new cereal came about. A cocomet.		25.90
Rice Krispies	Kellogg's	Snap, Crackle & Pop.	Cartoon farm.	Find five things that are wrong. (There are three different farms to get to know).	22.90
Rice Krispies Multi Grain	Kellogg's	Snap, Crackle & Pop.	Cartoon farm.	Find five pairs that belong together. (There are three different farms to get to know).	25.90
Frosties	Kellogg's	Tony the Tiger.	Street-hockey, rules and images of boys playing.		22.90
Fosties 1/3 less sugar	Kellogg's	Tecknade Tigern Tony.	Street-hockey, rules and images of boys playing.		23.90
Corn Flakes	Kellogg's	The rooster Cornelius.	The rooster Cornelius is doing gymnastics.		18.90
Nesquick 25 % wholemeal	Nestlé	Rabbit.	Different Bionicle figures are introduced.	Bionicles are introduced as well as a game board (Lego). On	24.90

				the side: cut out images of different Bionicle figures.	
Cheerio 75% wholemeal	Nestlé	No figure	Different Bionicle figures are introduced.	Bionicles are introduced as well as a game board (Lego). On the side: cut out images of different bionicle figures.	24.90
Fifa	Nestlé	Fotball player, goalie.	Football WC 2006 (Fifa) Exposé over the looks of World Championship footballs from the 1970ies up until today. A goalkeeper saves a ball and throws it into a bowl of milk where the cereal ball turns into the looks of a football when it hits the milk.		24.50
Corn Flakes	Nestlé	No figure.	Side: Images of other cereal packages with cartoon front pages.		13.90
Kalaspuffar	Quaker	Rayman – hairy doll.	Crossword puzzle. Cartoon girl Lisa.	Side: Tricky questions and labyrinth led by Lisa.	23.50
Kalaspuffar, unsweetened	Quaker	Rayman – hairy doll.	Crossword puzzle. Cartoon girl Lisa.	Side: Tricky questions and labyrinths led by Lisa.	16.90
Weetos 31 % wholemeal (fullkornsvete)	Weetabix	Professor Weetos.	Information about famous scientists such as Nobel, Newton etc.	Side: Cut out collector cards of the scientists. Collector cards inside the package. Cut out and send in a talon to get the collector cards of the scientists that are not inside the package.	26.90
Choko Flakes	Eldorado	No figure.	Same as the front. A bowl of cereals.		11.50

¹ The analysis of the debate will be discussed in another article in process.

² All names have been anonymized.

Food provisioning, anxiety and control

The process of feeding from the perspective of the mothers

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Abstract

Food and feeding is an important part in bringing up children. It is one way in which children become socialized; it gives rise to both pleasure and anxiety. In this article Marjorie DeVault's understanding of food management is combined with the concept of responsabilisation. Building on in-depth interviews with mothers from different socio-economic backgrounds and focusing on their different experiences, we see the work of food managing as processual and interactional. There is a tension between trying to put norms into practice and at the same time dealing with specific, often uncertain, situations. In such a circumstance feelings of anxiety and the exertion of control manifest themselves in direct as well as indirect ways.

1. Introduction

1.1 Food consumption as a social practice

Consumption and feeding a family constitute a social phenomenon, extending beyond the practical aspects of food purchasing and preparation. The providers also have to deal with their feelings and responsibilities towards the family. It is a practice that calls upon emotional as well as physical resources. Food therefore not only fills a physiological need but is also an important part of doing family (DeVault, 1991), doing the 'proper' family (Charles & Kerr, 1988) and caring for the family. Consequently what is considered good or 'proper' parenting and a 'good' mother comes to be a highly relevant issue which can be studied in both consumption and feeding practices (Bugge & Almås, 2006; DeVault, 1991; Charles & Kerr, 1986). But it is not only in the family itself that the image of the proper meal is (re)produced; socialization agents from the world of commerce are also busily at work. For instance, food advertisers, women's magazines, and cookbooks broadcast a message that providing a

‘proper’ meal is a key to family well-being and is a central goal for women aspiring to achieve a successful home life (Charles & Kerr, 1988; Warde 1997).

When it comes to consumption, researchers have pointed to the significance of looking at the activity of food consumption as an act including more than one actor (Ellegård, 2002; Engstrom & Larsen, 1987). As Evan and Chandler have shown, managing consumer culture is a highly important aspect of parenting, not only in a discussion of the intrafamilial dynamics of children’s consumer culture (2006) but rather with regard to the consumer culture in the family as a whole. The meal can be seen as a discursive act built up from social and cultural conventions and norms. There are certain products you are and are not supposed to serve your children, which constitutes a meal discourse (Bugge & Almås, 2006, p. 210). In creating the meal, therefore, one has to consider various norms and ideals surrounding it, implicit though they may be, in addition to the tastes of the family. Consequently a great deal of adaptation comes into play. Food management can be seen as the process of buying from a generalized marketplace and incorporating the groceries into the turbulence of family life (see Miller, 1987, 2003; Cheal, 1987). Moreover, the act of consuming food in families includes an intrinsic social dynamic which needs to be analysed in relation to structural aspects of gender, class and race/ethnicity (Charles & Kerr, 1988; DeVault, 1991; Warde, 1997),¹ which this article does.

This article takes as its point of departure the consumption of food and meal practices in families with children in the age range of 3-8 years old and 13-19 years old², respectively, focusing on the experiences of the parents. Not surprisingly it shows that, in relation to food provisioning, the parenting most often represented the mother’s point of view³. This result is supported by Ekström and Fürst’s (2001) research. They find that for the most part cooking in the household is done by women. Today men in Sweden do take a greater responsibility in terms of food and feeding⁴, but in most cases women still have the greater responsibility for feeding the children (Thorsted & Sellerberg, 2006) which also has been remarked upon by others (Fürst, 1993; Dean, 1991).

Although in many families the work of cooking is taken for granted as woman’s work, it is not just a simple set of chores but a kind of job that gives rise to feelings of guilt and issues of control (Murcott, 1983, p. 85). It is in this area of inner experience that we want to focus this

¹ When discussing class and ethnicity in this paper we draw from the discussion in which ethnicity has come to be seen as a social category and not a signifier for common cultural characteristics and traditions within a certain group of people (de los Reyes & Molina 2003). We see class as a discursive, historically specific construction (Skeggs, 1999). Without entering into a deeper discussion we want to emphasize the material and cultural consequences of class position and how the middle class in turn both creates and reflects the norm. The exact definition of what middle class means is however harder to identify and like Skeggs (1999) we consider it easier, and as relevant, to identify people through what they are not.

² The criteria of selection was that at least one child in each family should be in one of the age groups, some of the families had children in both groups and children younger, older or in between the groups of focus.

³ In our research, where we made clear that we wanted to talk to the person responsible for the meal (not specifically asking for the woman), 55 out of 62 interviews ended up being with women.

⁴ Of the men who reported living together with another adult, 41% reported that they had done the cooking the day before, while 73% of the women reported that they had. Probably there is a tendency toward over-reporting by both genders.

article: on an invisible job that has been undertaken mostly by women throughout the ages, but also on the feelings this invisible job evokes, and how this experience can be understood in relation to the position of women from different backgrounds. In this article we build on a framework of sociological analysis of routine food practices to show what the actors themselves think about their anxiety and control issues and how food practices also are a part of what is considered responsible parenting. The further aim is to see what social norms are consequently being (re)produced and how the interviewees respond to them. In the following section we describe our methodological approach and our material.

2. The research method

This paper is based on an interview study of Swedish families⁵ with young children (between 3-8 years old) and families with teenage children (13-19 years old). During the period of September 2006 to May 2007 we conducted qualitative interviews with the person(s) in the family who considered themselves as most responsible for the food practice. As might be expected, we mostly ended up interviewing women. We carried out 40 in-depth interviews and held three focus groups, altogether 62 individuals are included in the study. The interviews were done with families in the south and southwest area of Sweden, in and around the city of Malmö (the inner city as well as the suburbs) and in the countryside on the southwest coast of Sweden. Altogether the interviews have given us a broad range of different stories from people with different ethnic as well as socio-economic backgrounds. By listening to narratives from people with different backgrounds we aimed to more fully examine different types of problems and ways of handling everyday life. Interviewees were contacted through daycare centres, schools and immigrant associations. We also asked interviewees to put us in contact with their friends. The snowballing method came to be very useful and a productive way of contacting people. The two groups most represented in the material are middle-class women from a Swedish background and immigrant women from non-European countries, the latter often having more children than the former.

Our purpose with the interviews was to take as our point of departure the experiences of the families and their daily life, with our focus being on food, feeding and food shopping. Using day-to-day experience as our keystone means that we do not want to make any claims for presenting 'the truth' but rather strive to look into how individual actions reflect and shape social practices and *vice versa* (Smith, 1987, 1990; DeVault, 1991, 1996). We consequently want to align ourselves with a feminist perspective on research which dictates that experience is a primary focus of research. As Acker, Barry and Esseveld write:

Although we view people as active agents in their own lives and as such constructors of the social worlds, we do not see that activity as isolated and subjective. Rather, we locate individual experience in society and history, embedded within a set of social relations which produce both the possibilities and limitations of that experience. (Acker et al., 1983, p. 425)

⁵ When speaking about *the family* we take as our point of departure the concept of 'doing family'. That is, we do not consider *the family* as something static and synonymous with the heterosexual nuclear family; rather we see the family as a practice constantly being (re)produced (DeVault, 1991, Morgan, 1996).

Thus we consider the people interviewed as experts, experts on their own families, and we follow the tradition of Dorothy Smith who argues that: '[...] to start inquiry from women's experience is a way of pointing the feminist researcher to material sites where people live their lives' which implies that anyone's experience can be seen as a starting point for inquiry (DeVault, 1996, p. 40). Focusing on experiences meant that we approached the interviews with an unstructured interview guide. Although based around a number of themes, the guide left considerable room for the conversation to take different turns depending on what the people interviewed were most interested in talking about. Questions asked during the interviews ranged from how our subjects' daily food practice was conducted to what led to their experiencing pressure in relation to food and feeding. Our strategy in interviewing was to let the interviewees talk about the presented themes and continue the conversation from there. This form of interviewing meant that it had more the character of a conversation rather than of a formal interview.

At times we interviewed as a team of two and at times separately. We regard our different experiences and ways of identifying with—and distancing ourselves from—the person interviewed as useful tools, the utility of which depended on the situation under discussion and on the interaction at a particular moment. The interviewee's experiences in many cases turned out to reflect our own and in other cases, as the conversation revealed, were at variance with ours. Relating our own experiences (in our case, experiences from a middle-class background, one of us being a mother and one not) was one way to connect with the interviewees, through our common identity as mothers or coming from the same background. But not sharing experiences was also be a way to connect: our not having children or having only one child, our not living with teenagers, our working full-time outside the home, turned the interviewees into the experts. Whatever the dynamics of the interviews, we do want to clarify that as researchers we recognize that in the end we stand as the interpreters of the interviewees' everyday life.⁶

3. Theory – interactional and processual food management

3.1 Food managing an act of creating a collective event

Management of food is a gender issue, as mothers usually manage the planning, buying and preparation of food eaten at home. The relationships within the family, however, are what determine the outcome of this process, since family members and their expectations and preferences most likely affect the home manager's purchase and preparation of food. Food choice in the family derives not only from the preferences of an individual, but also from the collective (Pettersson et al., 2004, p. 317). As DeVault (1991, p. 90) says, management of food reconciles the diverse schedules and activities of individuals so as to produce points of intersection when they come together for group events (ibid). The ongoing task is to prepare food regarded as 'proper' and at the same time to prepare something that the household

⁶ For a further discussion about this methodological issue, see for example Smith, 1987, 1990; DeVault, 1991; Skeggs, 1999.

members will eat. Food management is influenced by perceptions of how the food *should* be and a constant need to be flexible toward the likes and dislikes of household members. This takes continual adjustment since children's orientations toward food are especially mercurial and short-term. Their tastes change and activities outside the home and away from the eating table affect a child's willingness to sit down at the table.

Food management is an activity of care and it is the work associated with this kind of activity that DeVault investigates. Activities of care, she says, rely on a generous concept of work (Smith, 1987, pp. 165-166). The expanded concept extends beyond paid labour in order to incorporate more easily than standard definitions the variety of women's often 'invisible' work activities (Daniels, 1987). DeVault traces this expanded concept of work to the feminist attention to previously neglected activity. Studies insisting on the analysis of housework as work often add an interactionist perspective. They examine a variety of activities not usually recognized as work including, for example, 'emotion work' in service jobs and in personal life (Hochschild, 1983), 'kin work' (Di Leonardo, 1987), volunteer work (Daniels, 1988), and the 'interaction work' that women do in conversation (Fishman, 1982) (DeVault, 1991, p. 19). The studies all refer quite broadly to social interaction rather than primarily to economic transactions (ibid). All these investigations examining female work point towards a new, more sociological definition of work (Wadel, 1979) and DeVault denominates the epistemological backgrounds of these investigations as an effort to see the processual, constructed character of work.

From this framework it follows that we regard food praxis and food management as an interactional process. We are applying this view to the theme of food and the parent-child relation. Two views can be distinguished when one focuses on how the relation is structured. The first one can be called family consumption as a battlefield. Grieshaber (1997) and Miller (1997) represent this view. In her article *Mealtime Rituals: Power and Resistance in the Construction of Mealtime Rules*, Grieshaber investigated power and opposition in parent-child relations in mealtime rituals. She demonstrates how children actively challenge and resist parental authority as part of their daily domesticity while engaged in the social practice of consuming food (ibid, p. 650). In Miller's article (1997), *How Infants Grow Mothers in North London*, the identification of confrontation in consumption arenas is one important result. In another view on the consumption practice of food, socialization is emphasized: what are the children's points of view and how are children socialized to parental perceptions and norms. Socialization of consumption and how food culture is reflected in children's views and behaviour has been studied (Wesslén et al., 2002; Fieldhouse, 1995; Thorsted & Sellerberg, 2006). In our view both aspects are important and there is a need to combine them to fully understand the character of food consumption and the task of food management. The social interaction is reflected in food management and it also forms children's attitudes towards food.

3.2 Food managing as responsabilisation

DeVault (1991, p. 2) explains how women, through caring work, have participated in the activities that structure their subordinated position. They have participated not only because of

social coercion, but also because of deeply held beliefs about connection and people's responsibilities to one another, as well as commitments to fostering growth and relationship. The activities of care, in short, spring from more than a single source and have potential effects that both enrich and limit the course of group life (ibid). The work women do in feeding is an expression of an external process of division of labour, but also an internal process. The internal process corresponds to the female experience and relates to feelings about doing food management. Subscribing to this view we will apply a concept of responsabilisation. Dean (1991) applied the concept to gender socialization in relation to the division of labour. He sees responsabilisation as the social process that imposes responsibility on categories of social agents. Dean develops this concept in his account of how the nineteenth-century notion of the male breadwinner made fathers responsible for the economic well-being of their children while mothers were deemed responsible for their nutrition and moral well-being. For our purposes it is useful to expand the concept: Responsibilisation is a concept that regards women and men, respectively, as having particular kinds of work imposed on them, but also recognizes particular kinds of emotions called forth by the work. Responsibilisation is about certain types of actions in which people engage with the division of work but also about feelings and experiences that are engendered as a result of their specific position within that division.

We are interested in investigating the concept of responsabilisation in relation to food management and the whole process of planning, buying, preparing and serving food in families. In our material we saw two rather distinct expressions of feeling arising out of the process of food management: anxiety and control. These dimensions were expressed frequently and were variously associated with feelings of satisfaction or emotional distress by the interviewees. We investigate the process of responsabilisation in the practical and mental work of food management. We examine the dimensions of anxiety and control in food management from the perspective of women. What is controlled and what do they worry about? How is this related to norms in different socioeconomic groups? First we will describe the concepts of anxiety and control.

3.3 Consumption, anxiety and control

Modernisation theories have a rather loose concept of anxiety (Warde, 1994, 1997 p. 69). We find that there is a need to focus on the meaning of anxiety as well as to look at how anxiety is socially distributed. That people actually *feel* anxious when choosing and eating a meal is a moot point. What interests us is the normative distribution of food values and how it is handled in everyday life. Norm systems can be defined as the preservation of a certain mode of behaviour that is in turn evaluated by a reference group. In our view, this is the context, in which anxiety and control should primarily be understood.

To create and serve your family a 'proper' meal is thus an act that can be filled with anxiety. Warde writes that the anxiety may be greater for the person providing and preparing a meal than for its other final consumers (Warde, 1997, p. 178). Food provisioning roles create anxiety. Warde gives examples related to different types of provisioning: women cannot be satisfied with maximizing either care or convenience, since both generate anxiety and guilt.

(ibid p. 176), shopping for food is another example of a practice filled with feelings of anxiety. Anxiety and control are both part of responsabilisation. They are related to each other in much the way that experiences, feelings and actions bear upon one another. In the feeding process this is evident. A continual task in provisioning is to apply control in feeding management and to handle the accompanying anxiety. McKendrick et al (2000) finds that the parents, especially the mothers, have the role as controllers of the preparation of meals and of what is purchased. And as Anne Murcott (1983) finds, mothers frequently complain about the eccentric food tastes of their children and their own inability to provide a balanced diet. Parents are gatekeepers and it is in this role that they negotiate with their children (Zelizer, 2002; Morrow, 1994). Limitations on the ability of a parent to feed a child, such as the preferences and the dislikes of the child, appropriately are a source of anxiety and emotional distress (Morgan, 1996, p. 163). According to the concept of responsabilisation, food management involves both anxiety as well as a striving to control: anxiety about not being able to provide 'proper food' and a striving to control what the family eats. Our empirical task in this paper is to understand what parents are trying to control and to identify their anxieties in connection with food management. In the following section we apply our theoretical framework to our empirical material.

4. Analysis

It's just that we're so unbelievably conscious about it [Talking about healthy food, children and their bodies, our remark] Everything we do is so extremely thought out More often than not we try to prevent it from happening, but it happens anyway, more than it really should. Because food is for eating and people exercise. We practically never have sweets at home. Marie Cookies are the sweetest thing we have.
(Kristina, mother of a daughter aged 3)

The quote above is significant in that it suggests both the anxiety surrounding the meal and how one as a parent is constantly aware of, and wanting to control, what the children eat. Kristina wants food to be something 'natural' in their home but focusing on that means that it will not be so natural, she concludes. Reflecting on her own actions Kristina makes explicit the complexness of anxiety and how food is something to be controlled. Considering the meal as an interaction process between parents (here focusing on the mothers) and children implies that feelings of various kinds are involved. Despite our focus on the parents, we want to stress that even though children are not present in the analysis, their responses are in fact prime determinants of the parents' actions in the food arena.

We will discuss feelings and expressions of anxiety and control as different aspects of responsabilisation (Dean, 1991). The analysis concentrates on the two main groups of interviewees: non-European women and women originally from Sweden who come from a middle-class background. Our intention is not to point out differences as such but rather to construct a more complex narrative that looks at differing experiences both from the individual's point of view, such as expectations of what the meal is supposed to be like, and from a point of view that factors in the relation between particular events, structural conditions and the expectations that surround food management. Our paper takes as its point of departure how the interviewees talk about food and feeding, thus we make no attempts to

say what the meal and the interaction during the meal is like in 'reality'. In our focus on class we discuss the (re)production of norms but not the material conditions as such, that is, whether or not money is an issue for eating healthily or not eating healthily. What is interesting to us are people's experiences, what an individual is anxious about, what an individual is controlling, how an individual's actions can be seen in relation to structural settings, and the implications of that relationship.

4.1 Feeding and feelings of anxiety

Emotional expressions of anxiety appear throughout our material, though it is more common that anxiety is described in more moderate tones, indirectly, and often in relation to a tentative or intended solution. The respondents describe a way of being observant and efforts to handle upcoming problems. They describe problems regarding children's unwillingness to eat certain things and their efforts to deal with the resistance. Meanwhile they don't always judge their efforts as being good enough. We are interested in exploring different attitudes and ways of being worried, and we also want to discuss this in relation to various aspects of the situation of the interviewee.

4.1.1 Parenting and 'proper' food

Being a parent is a task surrounded by many demands and expectations, and for a mother living up to what it means to be a 'good' and a 'respectable' mother can be an even tougher task (DeVault, 1991; Skeggs, 1999). But what does it mean to be a good parent? There is of course no single right answer, but still the ideal of the good parent is constantly present in the minds of the interviewees. Feelings of anxiety and questioning of whether or not one is a good enough parent are recurring themes in the interviews. This insecurity surfaced often when discussing how and what to feed the children.

When discussing her daughter's eating habits Louise, a child minder at a nursery and mother of Sara aged six, keeps coming back to the feeling of the pressure and anxiety that surround being a 'good' mother:

Sara is a little picky or whatever you want to call it. Maybe we're the ones who made her that way. For the most part I make something...how can I describe it...something simple on weekdays. Something that's fast to make. [...] Like it is with her not wanting to eat vegetables. That can really get to me, because I often think to myself we've got to be sure she gets a few vegetables into herself. But she doesn't like the carrots maybe and maybe she doesn't like the corn. All she likes is, say, the cucumber and tomatoes, and you think that's as good as nothing. I keep thinking about the vegetables I wanted her to eat more of. That can make me feel a little...uneasy.
(Louise, mother of a daughter aged 6)

Picky children often result in preparing food that one, as a parent, knows the children will eat. At the same time it does not solve the problem of having a feeling that one should be able to do more, which becomes clear in Louise's statement. Consequently her anxiety about being able to give her children what is demanded of her as a mother concerns issues such as bringing up a child in the 'right' way and teaching the child to eat the 'right' food. Feeling anxious about being a good enough parent is also an issue for Nadia, a 40-year-old woman with three children, all boys, 17, 13 and 5 years old. Nadia is originally from Iraq and when

the interview took place she was unemployed but was going to school where she studied Swedish. She tells the interviewer about visiting her ex-husband's relatives in Iraq and their response to her children not liking Arabic food:

But my husband's family say I'm the one who taught them to eat that kind of food, but I have to force them to eat (our kind of food). But I tell them that, no, they're in Sweden, they go to school (where) they cook that kind of food for them, and so they don't want to. But they (nag) bla bla bla, 'you're not a good mom, you have...'. They just don't think.

(Mother of three children aged 17, 13 and 5 years old)

Thus Nadia expresses feelings of not being a good enough mother when visiting in Iraq. Comparing Louise and Nadia (as examples from the two major groups), they share the feeling of outside pressure about how a mother is supposed to feed her children. Still, they are not always anxious about the same things and they express their anxiety in different ways. Nadia is very explicit when talking about her worries while Louise reflects more upon what is expected from her. While Louise refers to what can be said to be the discursive Swedish knowledge about what is expected from a parent in terms of food and health, Nadia does not consider the health issue as much. What is especially interesting is rather how the cultural context from which one speaks can say something about what is expected from a mother. In this article we are not able to explore this issue in depth but want to at least raise the issue. The responsibility that parents have becomes obvious when Lisa, who is a mother of two boys, four and fifteen years old, talks about the difference between her two boys, her own part in their upbringing, and her oldest son's not eating, in her point of view, a 'proper' breakfast:

I think it's since I separated from his father, when I was alone with him for a few years and it was awfully stressful in the mornings. It's still that way now. [Explains about the children's dads, our remark.] I was studying in Copenhagen when he was little. I had to leave him off at daycare and get to the boat on time. He had a sandwich in his hand when we were bicycling to the daycare centre, and I guess it's my fault he learned to eat this way.

(Mother of two sons aged 4 and 15)

To sum up, Lisa tries to understand her own role in her son's behaviour, and she reaches the conclusion that she is the one raising the children and that in the end whatever is going to happen is up to her. She considers the fathers of the children, but still sees herself as being the mother, having the biggest responsibility (DeVault, 1991; Charles & Kerr, 1988). In this section the aim has been to shed light on how food is closely related to feelings of what 'good' parenting/mothering is. Getting one's children to eat what one believes they are supposed to eat seems to give rise to a feeling of satisfaction, but our study indicates that it is more common for parents to be dissatisfied with their children's eating.

4.1.2 Eating or not eating – a constant worry

Food taste is not only something personal (Mennell, 1985 and Bourdieu, 1986), rather it is the result of the ways in which social distinction, such as gender, class, ethnicity and age, operates. Children learn to eat certain things and they develop certain tastes, and in this social process the acts of parents come under scrutiny by others as well as by themselves, which is what we focus on here. Anxiety about the work of feeding is expressed by the interviewees,

often in an indirect way, but the most unambiguous way in which it has been manifested in our interviews is when the interviewees talk about what children are supposed to eat and not eat. In discussing this subject, Louise says:

Yeah, that's how you get, that's for sure, and it gets thrown at you all the time that that's what's it like, that this is no good and that's no good. And so, when you're making fish fingers and frozen dinners, you think about what kind of nutrition they contain, you think about things like that all the time. Oh, darn, that wasn't so good and now you've given them cinnamon buns, and she gets to eat things that aren't so good for her, that you maybe don't want, and you wish things were a little different. But it's not so easy and you know that otherwise she wouldn't eat anything, so she eats a little bit of that stuff. So it's really hard, you wish she was more...that she ate more (Mother of a daughter aged 6)

To Louise, raising her child as a healthy eater is of importance and she often feels that she should do better in terms of getting her daughter to eat more vegetables and to eat the same food as the grownups. During one of our focus group interviews with a group of women studying Swedish, Zara, a young mother who grew up partly in Lebanon and partly in Denmark and Sweden, says:

Zara: The girl eats more at daycare than she does at home. She wants Swedish food. [...] She wants to have sandwiches and cultured milk and crispbread all the time.

I: Yes, that's very Swedish.⁷

Zara: Her father prefers Arabic food, our food; it's hard to make. The children don't like it. I myself do.
(Mother of a son and daughter, 4 and 1.5 years)

In contrast to Louise Zara not only talk about anxiety surrounding whether or not her children eat food considered healthy or not, but also about how she navigates around different tastes. We have come to understand anxiety as something that is present among all our interviewees, but what one worries about and the intensity of that worry differs in relation to one's position, the material conditions and how one relates to that position and those conditions. Almost everyone seems to worry about their children not eating enough vegetables, but they differ in how much they emphasize this in the interviews. We want to argue that the difference in emphasis derives from different discourses of knowledge and ways to express that knowledge and that is one way in which the Swedish middle-class thinking is (re)produced.

4.1.3 Dealing with anxiety – situational solving of a problem

In relation to food and feeding, anxiety takes different forms in different families but also differs within the family depending on the situation. Lisa, who earlier in the interview talked a lot about the importance of eating healthily, says later on:

We talked about Hannes and that we had to do something about his food. He's grown. He's become thin. Sometimes we let him eat junk food just so he'll eat.

(Mother of two sons aged 4 and 15)

In this statement it becomes clear that eating food that is not so 'proper' is all right when there is something more important causing concern, in this case when the parents consider their son

⁷ Here and below 'I' refers to the interviewer.

to be too thin. Altogether there are two perspectives to be considered: *that* the children eat and *what* the children eat. Mealtimes are filled with a great deal of insecurity in that one can never know what will happen. Will the children eat the food being served or will something unexpected occur? Consequently, anxiety is a constant presence in the dialogue with children and teenagers as one confronts their wishes and their responses to one's caring work (DeVault, 1991). Parents end up acting as gatekeepers (Zelizer, 2002; Morrow, 1994), opening up for certain foods, especially when the fact that children eat at all is considered more important than what they eat. Parents try to transfer norms about what is considered as 'proper' food but in the process they respond to their children's reactions and unanticipated things can happen. We would argue that anxiety and parenthood must be understood in relation to each another. As for motherhood, we can see how mothers are constantly put under pressure; they are seen as the ones obligated to fulfil certain norms in the family, and they are the ones who are blamed when this does not occur (DeVault, 1991; Morgan, 1996). We would also argue that although the feeling of anxiety can be more or less emphasized in the reflections of a parent, it is in any case an essential part of parenthood and a socially (re)produced phenomenon. Through our analysis it is clear that what a person is feeling anxious about can only be understood with reference to the context that person speaks from.

4.2 Control in food management

Types of actions and feelings tied up with responsabilisation relate to the division of work. Above we explored how a feeling like anxiety was related to norms of feeding and mothering. In this section we look at a type of action in food management, namely control. In the interviews, anxiety and control were often brought up in the same context. Often control was presented as a solution to worries about children not getting enough 'proper food'. Efforts at controlling were frequently articulated in the interviews and described in relation to how food should be bought, prepared and eaten. In our interview material we found that narratives of controlling were always explicit. An explanation for this is the almost universally held perception that a meal should be pleasant and a collective event, enjoyed by all household members (Ekström, 1991) and it is supposed to be adjusted to the household members' individual schedules (DeVault, 1991). As Lisa says about feeding her teenage son:

We have no control. I can force him to come home, but how nice can that be?

In the following section we show how respondents relate to various dimensions of control in food management. The section consists of three parts. The first is how the interviewee in different ways tries to exercise control in purchasing, food preparing and eating. The second is how the interviewee uses different strategies of control at different times. And the third is how being separated and being together during the day affect the need for control.

4.2.1 Control achieved through purchasing, food preparing and meal situations

The respondent women looked upon food purchasing with a great sense of responsibility. Lisa relates that her teenage son is difficult to get to join in the dinner and that he does not have an appetite for the meals.

I: Are you finally able to find something for dinner that he can...?

Lisa: Yes, he eats something. Yesterday I was at a daycare centre board meeting and Anders [Lisa's husband] said that when they were supposed to eat he didn't want to. When he comes home from school he can put away three bananas and a package of cookies. So you see, he eats really poorly and then he's stuffed and he doesn't want to have a hot meal. So Anders had to force him to sit down to eat. Then, when he did sit down, he ate loads of food. Actually, he was hungry. You have to sort of... He's more difficult to manage than the little one. You've got to watch him more like you would a child. Now it's time to eat. What have you eaten?
(Mother of two sons aged 15 and 4)

She explains how she makes him eat, encourages him to eat dinner, and asks him what he ate when he was away from home. Zara describes a dilemma with food culture, how she approached it with a feeling of great responsibility, and how she feels an obligation to control her daughter's food habits.

I: What's your solution when the kids want to have certain things?

Zara: I want them to eat the same food we do. That's important. I think there's good nutrition in our food [Arabic food] too. I force her. What I mean is I tell her she has to eat. But if I don't go to the trouble, she doesn't eat.

Zara finds food from her home country to be better regarding nutrition. Both women in the examples above describe the need they feel to constantly see to their children's eating and to try to affect their food habits.

Controlling food in relation to household members is often about eating a healthy diet. Women seemed to use different strategies in trying to manage food according to their perceptions of proper food. Some women described how they controlled the intake of 'unwanted stuff' very practically. As in the case of Sandra:

I: What role do the children have in choosing the food you buy?

Sandra: A certain role; they can make a list but it's not certain that's what (we buy). Musli, eggs and stuff like that. And they might say: 'Can't we buy honey puffs? Can't we have that?' So I think about it. Maybe it's a half year since we last had it. They write it down [on a backboard in the kitchen]. So they have a good chance just by writing things down. (Mother of four children aged 4, 11, 17 and 18)

Sandra describes how the children are encouraged to participate in decisions about what to buy, but also that she decides when to let the children have a say. The example she gives of imposing restrictions is related to not getting sugary cereal too often. Choosing when to let the children decide is also a strategy used by Zara. She says:

I: Do the children have any influence on what food you cook? Do they have a lot to say about what you're going to eat?

Zara: I usually ask them: What do you think we should eat today? She usually says spaghetti. She wants the same food every day. It's a problem. We've just had that.

Zara: Otherwise it's pretty good. I'm the one who does most of the cooking.

I: ... decides the most, even if they have an opinion?

Zara: I usually ask when it's time for her to eat a particular kind of food, but not when she always wants the same thing. Dad usually says what he would like, but he doesn't force me, and I say yes if I have the energy to make it. I decide.

The example shows how knowledge about food and taste is complicated and involves both implicit and explicit forms of knowing. Knowledge about food concerns knowing about the

children's specific tastes as well as perceptions of what 'proper food' is. Controlling in relation to what is regarded as healthy is also articulated in the interview with Filippa. To our question about what is important when buying food, she replies:

Filippa: Like if I should buy a fruit drink, not the diet kind because the sugar they use is not good for you; and if I should buy a different kind of pasta, one with whole grain. I try to sneak in healthier stuff. Bread with grain in it, I try to get it in.

I: They put up a bit of resistance?

Filippa: Yes, they prefer white bread.

(Mother of three children aged 15, 17 and 19)

Through the purchasing activity she tries to affect the children's diet. The example of what is desirable here is 'less sugar, more fibre', a wish very similar to the recommendations of public health officials. How to avoid unwanted sugar, in ketchup for instance, is also a theme discussed in the focus groups. There is a consensus among members of the focus group about this, and Fadi, originally from Morocco and a mother of four, tells us about a strategy she uses.

I usually buy..., but we use so much of it, it makes me sick. My son, he takes like [laughs and demonstrates how much he usually takes] [... can't hear]. I usually let a week go by without buying it. I want them to take a pause and they go: 'Mom, buy ketchup.' (Everyone laughs.) 'I will, tomorrow. I buy a couple of bottles but hide one of them.'

(Mother of four children, 17, 16, and twins aged 10)

In most of the interviews the need for controlling children's eating was brought up by the interviewee. In one focus group with immigrant women this topic did not come up and the interviewer questioned the women about how to look upon the children's influence at meals and whether or not the parents regarded the children's choices as 'proper'. The women in the focus group were studying Swedish at elementary school level (*grundskolenivå*) and were not fluent in Swedish. It became clear that they did not understand the words 'healthy', 'wholesomeness' and 'vitamins'. But when the interviewer gave the examples of her own child choosing sweets and chocolate all the time it became clear that they were not unfamiliar with these issues and that they did try to control their children's eating habits. There was consensus in the focus group about the need for restrictions. What to eat and when seemed to be important.

Knowledge about food includes norms about what proper eating is. Intentions, however, are hard to live up to, since practices of proper food have to be embedded in the everyday life and preferences of the household members. The women sometimes were in need of hidden strategies to make the food appear more in line with the children's preferences. The women had perceptions of what the children should eat but they also bent these in the direction of the children's wishes. How this is done in relation to time structure is the subject of the next section.

4.2.2 Certain times, certain levels of control

How products regarded 'less or more' healthy are distributed in the time and meal structure of the family is another side of controlling. Following are examples that show how control is exercised in relation to meals and what snacks are allowed on weekdays as opposed to weekends. Eva says:

Most of the time these days I look to see that there's not too much hydrogenated fat or sugar in it (snacks). And we seldom have... I mean, she doesn't get to eat potato crisps as a between-meal snack, only fruit. So, it's only on the weekends when we can eat cookies or buns. We try, you see, and so I don't eat it either.
(Mother of two children aged four and six months)

Trying to make the children eat during meals is important and in some families it also seems important to have a structure for weekdays and weekends, respectively. Eva says:

But then you hear that when they're a bit bigger it's a good idea to have a Friday menu. And that's all right, but then you have to put it into small bowls and when it's all gone it's gone. So that's what we try to do and so far it's worked; she knows she can get candy only on Saturdays.
(Mother of two children aged four and six months)

Vakava also makes a distinction between weekdays and weekends.

Sometimes I ask, not every day. On Saturdays and Fridays they get to decide [what the family is to have for dinner]. They get to decide everything.
(Mother of children aged 14,12, 9 and 5)

Controlling is mostly about not eating too much fat and sweets. All of the citations above show an effort to keep in check what is to be eaten on weekends and on 'ordinary' days, respectively. The examples show different strategies for controlling and different views on how to control. Eva represents a very restrictive view. She has rules for when to eat sweets and snacks and how much will be served. Vakava allows a more 'free line' on weekends. This result corresponds with our finding – that generally ethnic Swedes from a middle-class background are more informed about health information and they present themselves as eager to put it into practice (DeVault, 1991).

4.2.3 Strategies of control in relation to separation and gathering in meal events

The mothers in our material often described collective meals in the household as something pleasant. Family dinners were seen as special moments in everyday life. It was a chance to gather in the household whereas individuals often are located at different places during the day. Coordinating collective meals in relation to individual schedules were described as hard, especially by the mothers of teenagers. The need to control what was served in those meals eaten together is another subject discussed below.

We start by quoting two women who have a rather different view on this subject. Some find that dinner served at school gives a basic level of 'proper food' which allows more freedom in dinners on weekends. Fadi tells in a focus group that her children choose the food on

weekends.

Fadi: I ask the children [what they want to eat] only on Saturdays and Sundays and on holidays. The rest of the week they eat at school. They eat. I cook what they want.

Zara: I don't trust... I don't know how much... I know they eat, but not how much.

Fadi: When they were small... before it was the same. Now they are grown up and 10 years old, the school teacher tells you if your kids eat or not. Now they eat at school, if they don't they come home and you make them sandwiches.

Fadi, who has older children than Zara, tries to convince Zara that one can trust the children's eating in daycare. Zara does not agree with this perception. The separation from the children makes her worry and she feels obliged to control the dinner on weekends even more strictly. A Swedish woman, Emma, has the same perception as Zara and she is specific about what is wrong with the food in daycare. She says:

And if they have (at preschool) cultured milk, it's with jam, otherwise they have sweet yoghurt. And that's not so healthy either. So they acquire a sugar dependency at daycare. And you try to cut down on it at home and, so it doesn't taste good just because it's not sweet. Or, just because they're so used to it.

(Mother of one, aged 4 years)

Dinner is seen by Emma as a time to correct what one thinks was done wrong during the day, a time to make up for the deficiencies of the daytime fare. However, others in our material, such as Fadi, seem to see the nursery- or school-lunch as a salvation, in that they did not have to worry about what they serve in the evening or on weekends. Different views are presented on how trustworthy food provision is away from home. Zara and Emma represent a view similar to the result Iversen and Holm (1999, referred in Holm, 2005, p. 183f) hold to. In a Danish study done by families with teenagers, they found that when parents were separated from children during the day they worried about their food intake. The parents did not make an issue out of the dinner as long as the children were present. The demarcation lines in our material do not seem to coincide with lines of ethnicity. Both ethnic Swedes and those with other backgrounds describe the problems of separation in relation to food and the need to exert control. What we see above is that Emma, contrary to Zara, is very specific in what the unwanted ingredients (sugar) are and what they can cause (sugar addiction).

For the families with teenagers, a different set of problems and efforts at control are presented. Separation from youngsters during the day and night is common. The children have their own activities and visit friends outside the home. The material shows how parents try to invest more effort in meals when everybody is gathered and how they try to continually maintain control over food despite children's spending time outside the home. Filippa explains how she calls her children to find out their meal situation.

I: Do you usually take some of your meals together? Do you have a kind of schedule?

Filippa: Yes, we try to eat at 5 o'clock every day, but it's not so easy. Sometimes they're at a friend's home,... Because when they were small, we always got together, it was much easier to keep track. You can't do that anymore, otherwise they say I've already had a kebab and they don't tell me before I've already cooked the meal and set the table, and then I have to call them all up, 'Where are you?' 'Yeah, I've already had a kebab.' And here I've gone and cooked food that would suit them... what I'd thought would suit them and then I get angry

and say 5 o'clock every day. And that's the way it is for a few weeks, we meet at 5 o'clock, and then the same thing happens all over again (laughs).

(Mother of three children aged 15, 17 and 19)

She also explains her intentions and how she tries to achieve control over what her children eat.

Fillipa: I want them to eat dinner every day. As long as they've eaten somewhere, that they've had something to eat. Like if he eats at his girlfriend's place or has gone out somewhere.

I: How do you find that out?

Fillipa: The mobile phone rings and I check, 'Did you eat today?' They're used to it ever since they were small ... at least one hot meal a day. Otherwise I know they won't feel well. They get in a bad mood in the evening when their blood sugar drops.

(Mother of three children aged 15, 17 and 19)

Lisa is another mother who describes how she tries to get information about her youngsters eating outside the home.

I always ask, 'What did you eat? [if the boy hadn't been home for dinner] And he says 'a Chinese take-out or a pizza'. I always ask him.

(Mother of two children aged four and fifteen)

Later in the interview she says:

I: So what can you do? (It is difficult to get Lisa's son, Hannes, to eat what his parents eat.)

Lisa: I don't know. Just that there's good food available. And to be really strict. Sometimes he comes home and if he has his own money so he's bought... They have soda pop and candy and potato crisps. That's not good. He gets an upset tummy. You nag: 'Stop doing that'. Sometimes I find empty Coca Cola cans he's drunk on the sly.

(Mother of two sons aged 4 and 15)

Control is a part of the ongoing task of managing food. It is part of responsabilisation and it is both a practical and a mental task. From the examples above, we see how mothers try to exercise control over food and their children's diet. Three aspects of controlling are found. The first is that food management includes control in the purchase and preparation of meals. A second aspect of controlling is how mothers try to keep in check what the children eat, when and how much. A third aspect is that the control is related to the structure of the week (weekdays vs. weekends) as well as to the time of the day. The mothers describe how they try to gather together household members at certain times and make children save their appetite for family meals.

Managing food in families is a work task that contains what Zerubavel (1979) calls continuity maintenance. Continuity maintenance is the constant maintenance of caring, knowing and dealing with household members' eating habits and individual schedules, and trying to coordinate them. Food management is about continually maintaining proper eating and meanwhile being flexible about the individual schedules and preferences of the household members.

5. Concluding remarks and discussion

Children do not provide their own food. Parents, and especially mothers, are the main actors in purchasing and preparing food in families (Bonke, 1998; Thorsted & Sellerberg, 2006). Guiding, controlling and encouraging in relation to food are essential parts of the role of being a mother (Dean, 1991). Socialization follows norms of taste and behaviour related to class and ethnicity. Meanwhile, feeding or food management is intrinsically interactional. Depending on the caring role, norms are also subordinated to the children's decision of whether or not to eat. As Cook (2004) describes, this results in parents seeming to be in a state of ambivalence, struggling to satisfy children's desire while acting as gatekeepers.

Food management is a meeting between preferences of the family and norms regarding 'proper food' and 'proper feeding'. Knowledge about food and taste is a complicated mix of both implicit and explicit forms of knowing. What one wants to do might not be possible and what one actually does might in turn not correspond to what is expected. Feelings of anxiety and actions of control are thus related to the overall discursive knowledge of what 'good' parenting and 'good' mothering is considered to be. The work of feeding is a constant labour, it is situationally bounded and involves constant insecurity in dealing with situations, demands, needs and wants.

In this article the overall theme has been the concept of *responsibilisation*. Starting out with *responsibilisation* we have discussed *anxiety* and *control* as the two component parts of *responsibilisation*, as a set of acts and a set of experiences and feelings related to the division of work in food management among women. *Responsibilisation* permeates food management. Food management comprises both the types of actions and the types of feelings related to this kind of work. The concept of *responsibilisation* articulates the meaning of food and accounts for the role of mental and practical efforts. It includes both feeling, experiences, and practical work such as carrying bags, cooking and cleaning up. In the work of feeding, feelings of anxiety and control are articulated. These categories derive from the women's position in the division of work. It is the experiences of living in this position, bodily and mentally, that we wanted to emphasize in this article. Through investigating descriptions of anxiety and control we have aimed to show that *responsibilisation* is an amalgam of feelings and actions that in turn constantly influence each other. The mothers identify problems and potential solutions and tell how to control what food is eaten at home. With regard to feeding, anxiety was mainly expressed in terms of worries about being a good enough parent, anxiety about how and what to feed children, and concern about dealing with that anxiety in specific situations. In discussing control, our aim has been to present different strategies of control and how these are situationally bounded. Expressions of anxiety and control are given voice by all the mothers in the material. They often refer to the same kind of risks: that the children do not eat enough healthy food and that they, as parents, are not restrictive enough about unhealthy food. Food management in families is never described as easy to control, and the control is never total. Control is always conditioned by the surroundings, by the acceptance by others of one's perceptions of food, and by the incorporation of new ideas. Women tell about how they secretly introduce ingredients that are regarded as wholesome and sanction ingredients regarded as unhealthy. Among the groups with different social backgrounds we find that

ethnic Swedes from the middle class are more explicit about their striving towards wholesomeness, about getting health information and about devising strategies to incorporate this information in everyday life. They are tuned in to the discourse of food provisioning. They often emphasize the importance of proper nutrition and refer specifically to ‘bad stuff’ like sugar and added fat. Nonetheless, we see in both groups that mothers most often strive to keep in check and control what their children eat. Among our segment of mothers not born in Europe we are not able to present a full description of their way of controlling and preparing ‘proper’ food. This may be due to an inability on our part to recognize their strategies and what these strategies mean. Another explanation is that our segment is very broad, with women from Vietnam, China, Morocco and Lebanon.

One result in the material is that the controlling by mothers is a delicate balance in everyday life – too much controlling makes for harshness and coldness in family relations, and too little control is taken as nonchalance, irresponsibility, and failure to live up to the role of mother. Ironically, the cultural construction of mothering and feeding can make it hard for a researcher to get close to the practice of feeding. Despite our spending several hours talking with women about food and feeding, we do not know, through direct observation, how control is actually exercised at their dinner tables. What we can see is that Swedish middle-class mothers are very familiar with the discourse of the need to control food and can be very explicit in expressing this familiarity.

We have combined two perspectives that are normally separated in consumer research. We have described how knowledge about food and consequent actions figure in the process of social (re)production, and we have explored how this process comes to be expressed in the family. From this study we can see how norms are involved in the processes of food management and how these norms, always in the process of being redefined though they may be, are an important part of socialising to attain specific eating patterns. Combining our two perspectives helps us understand feeding in everyday life and understand how a conflict around the dinner table articulates norms about ‘proper’ food and ‘proper’ mothering.

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The role of parents in the socialization of consumption Linking consumption of teenagers and their parents

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Abstract

Everyone is a consumer. Each person has capacities as a consumer. These skills differ from person to person, but every individual has acquired them in some sort of way. How people learn to become a consumer remains somewhat unclear. In this paper, the role of the parents is scrutinized. Corresponding and contrasting elements in a selection of consumer attitudes and practices are put forward. As attitudes, materialism and consumer styles are included. As practices, being influenced by others and basing purchasing decisions on commercials are included. Also more direct questions on parental influence are used. The preliminary results of the analyses in this paper are seen as a step towards a discussion on the role of economic socialization by parents and possible policy issues that could be at stake.

1. Introduction

Being a “good” consumer can be interpreted in all kinds of ways. Nevertheless, it comes a few steps after becoming a consumer *tout court*. Children and teenagers grow to become adult-consumers. At a certain age, they will receive pocket money. At least, most of them do. This money is money of their own, which they can spend the way they want it, of course within the limitations of common sense. Said differently, for the first time in their lives they can theoretically buy something independent of their parents. They can save pocket money for a few weeks to buy a computer game or those earrings that were just calling them from inside the shop. When becoming a consumer, a child or teenager enters the economic market. The market seems to be a “place” where an ever-lasting war seems to be raging. From very different corners, a player in the economic market is called to do this or to buy that or to certainly not buy those things. It is not easy to get used to these things and to cope with them. One could even ask if a human being ever gets used to it.

Being a consumer is one thing. Being a “good” consumer is something else. When using the word “good”, one could think of a *green* consumer, consuming with respect to nature. This is not what is meant here. We use the word “good” to point to the socializing aspect of consumption. More specifically said, people are learned in some way to consume in a certain way. Not spending money one does not have is one

aspect that can serve as an example. There are very different paths to all these different ways. Economic socialization, as this is what it is all about, recognized four main socializing agents for teenagers. First, there is the economic market itself which can indeed serve as tutor for beginning consumer. But also other agents are taken into account: peers, parents and the media. In this paper, the focus will lie on the parents.

Using data on consumption values and practices of as well teenagers as their parents, a first step is taken towards further analysis on the specific role of parents in the economic socialization of their teenaged children. Also the discussion on the possible role of policy in the creation of “good” consumers, can use data like these as a starting point. After a brief review about some main ideas on economic socialization, the method and data are scrutinized. Afterwards, results of bivariate analyses are presented. They are discussed to some extent in this paper, but they mainly serve as an opening towards a discussion on the role of parents in economic socialization on the whole and on a possible intervening or guiding role of policy in these matters. Does policy have to interfere in economic socialization and the *creation* of consumers or do they not?

2. Theoretical Framework

As outlined in the introduction, the theoretical background of this paper is to be found in economic socialization. Having money might be the most important element in this process (Cohen 1993). A lot of educational literature has partly to do with giving pocket money as element of economic socialization. The reason for this prime attention towards pocket money also has to do with the fact that having money is not only important because using it, one can learn how to handle it, but because money can also serve as a symbol of power and the struggle for independence when growing up (Weinstein 1975; Miller and Yung 1990). Money gives the people who use it four kinds of freedom in the economic system. First, the person who has money can choose what he will buy. Second, he has the choice from whom to buy this. Third, he can himself make out when he makes the purchase. And fourth, he has the freedom to accept or reject the selling conditions (Parsons in Ganssmann 1988). Apart from the specific distinction between the several kinds of freedom, one thing can be surely concluded from Parson’s analysis and this is that money means freedom. This freedom is not absolute, but money in the economic system works as fuel for a car. Without it, one can not even think of participating. Some work has been done on the meaning of money and the uses of it, not only from economic but also from sociological perspectives (e.g. Wernimont and Fitzpatrick 1972; Stacey 1982; Furnham and Lewis 1986; Zelizer 1989; Mortimer, Dennehy et al. 1994; Kerr and Cheadle 1997; Furnham 1999; Mayhew 1999; Furnham and Kirkcaldy 2000; Desodt 2002). However, as ever, there is not always a lot of agreement among these perspectives (Belk and Wallendorf 1990) and there is also no systematic sociology of money (Baker and Jimerson 1992).

The freedom that is entangled with money is also present in the economic socialization. Socialization is not a determining system. Otherwise, we would all be more or less the same kind of consumer and it is quite obvious that we are not. Giving pocket money is said to arise consumer skills (Ward, Wackman et al. 1977; Furnham 1999). Receiving pocket money however, is still something else than growing up to

become a consumer. As written in a report of the Belgian Research and Information Centre of Consumer Organisations on the protection of youth in the consumer market: “Must we give youngsters a fish, or must we learn them how to fish” (OIVO 2002).

Becoming a consumer does not start in teenage years. Also children develop certain consumer skills (Abramovitch, Freedman et al. 1991). Growing up to be a consumer supposes skills in different fields. On the one hand, it is supposed to have (practical) knowledge on income, expenses and savings (Noordmans, van Gelder et al. 1995). On the other hand, there is a need for introduction to and experience in the shops, the shopping street, the malls etcetera. Also, there is a need for a capacity to deal with commercials. All this, has to do with economic socialization.

But what is (economic) socialization? Baumrind (1978) defines it as the process that is initiated by the parents and through which children acquire their “culture” through education, training and imitation. They also acquire the habits and values that come with the adaptation to that particular culture. Lassarre and Roland-Levy (1989) define socialization as a general term for the whole process through which an individual develops his specific pattern of socially relevant behaviour and experience, based on transactions with other people. Mainly, two different visions on socialization are discerned. The first is called authoritarian and approaches children as *tabulae rasae* who have to be programmed from the very beginning. The second vision is more permissive and presumes a natural inclination towards self-actualisation. This last approach states that children will learn everything they need to know if one just let them to find it all out themselves. A constructivist inspired view on education and learning is never far away in this.

According to Furnham (1986), economic socialization occurs in three ways. First, there are parental instructions and practices. One example – giving pocket money – has already been discussed to some extent. But parents do also influence and socialize their children in other ways, some of which indirectly and perhaps not intended. For example, when parents go shopping with their children, children will learn a lot about this shopping, even when parents are not directly giving instructions or information to their children (Underhill 2000). A second way is the more formal schooling in economy and related areas, like politics, sociology, accountancy etc. Indeed, in school, children and teenagers sometimes learn about the economic system. A third way of economic socialization is the personal experience through shopping on their own or with friends, through work experience and so on. As Furnham indicates, these aspects can hardly be clearly discerned. Moreover, economic socialization is often seen as something that goes automatically and may not need special attention.

Literature on economic socialization concentrates on two different areas. One area concerns studies about the way children pick up economic concepts and at what age this occurs. These studies often follow the scheme of emotional development as developed by Piaget (1954) (Lassarre and Roland-Lévy 1989). These studies often have a psychological line of approach (Furnham 1986). Examples can be found with Stacey (1982), Jahoda (1983), Ward (1977), Sutton (in: Furnham 1986), Berti (1981), Danziger (1958), Furth (in: Sherman 1986) and Furnham (1984; 1986).

A second group of literature on economic socialization tries to find out how economic concepts can be taught to children and youngsters. Studies on how giving pocket

money can make children find their way on the economic market certainly fall under this heading. Studies on the influence of parental socialization in childhood and adolescence on later knowledge of money and money behaviour are also part of this group (Furnham 1999). To get to know how teenagers handle money and consumption, it is indeed of importance to know the attitude of their parents towards money and consumption (Furnham and Thomas 1984). This does not mean that all children have the same attitudes towards consumption and other things as their parents do. Some research even suggests that parents who have attitudes that are centred around money, have children with less knowledge of money and less experience with it and also have attitudes that are not centred around money to the same extent (Marshall and Magruder 1960).

Both groups are not neatly set apart from each other. Parents and teachers for example, are particularly interested in studies on the acquisition of economic concepts, so that they can teach them to children at the appropriate age (Kourilsky in: Furnham 1986). It also has to be admitted that research in the area of economic socialization is hampered by the fact that most economic processes are not open for direct observation (Jahoda in: Furnham and Thomas 1984). For example, we can see that teenagers buy a certain product in a certain store for a certain amount of money, but the thinking processes that have lead to this behaviour, can not be observed.

Parents are one, but of course not the only socializing agent for children and teenagers. Also media and certainly peers can be labelled as socializers of youngsters. Certainly when teenagers grow up, go to school and develop a life in which parents are not ever present anymore, peers are said to be more important in the economic socialization. Peer pressure can be seen as a special aspect of this socialization. Nevertheless, this paper will focus on the role of parents.

3. Method and Data

Data

Data for this paper come from a large scale study among 3.472 teenagers in Flanders. The original dataset contains data on for instance social background, identity, friends, income, parental influence, consumption, shopping and media use of the teenagers. Only a selection of data will be used here.

Data gathering started in November 2005 and lasted until June 2006. Based on data given by the Department of Education of the Flemish Government, a sample of secondary schools was selected, representative on education year (1st to 6th (or 7th)) and educational type (general, technical, vocational or art). The schools in the sample were asked to participate in the study. Participation consisted of having all students in a specific year of a specific education type completing the questionnaire "Youth & Consumption". Due to the fact that for this study a lot of time was needed and due to the fact that we were not the only ones asking for participation, a second, third and fourth sample had to be constructed, in order to make and keep the sample representative on type and year.

The first sample was constructed in October 2005, the second in December 2005, the third in January 2006 and the fourth in March 2006. Finally, 3.472 usable questionnaires were collected.

All teenagers in the study also received a questionnaire for their parents. Teenagers answered their questionnaires in the school and were asked to give a separate questionnaire to their parents. Parents could send this questionnaire back by mail with a pre-stamped envelope. Of 3472 contacted parents, 1659 returned the questionnaire, resulting in a response-ratio of 48%. It was asked that one of the parents would complete the questionnaire. In 77% of the cases, this was the mother; in 22% the father. For only 1% this was the step-mother, step-father, the guardian or someone else.

All questionnaires were scanned electronically using OMR-software. Afterwards this scanning was controlled and completed where it had originally failed. A dataset for teenagers and a dataset for parents were constructed. Both datasets were combined using the unique numbers of the respondents. On the questionnaires of the parents a number was written, which was the same as the one on the questionnaire of the teenager. In the construction of the variables, all respondents for teenagers or parents will be used. In the analysis of the connection, only the cases where we have data from as well parents as teenagers are taken into account.

This paper will not focus on socio-demographic or socio-economic background of teenagers and their parents. We will speak of *the* teenagers and of *their* parents, making no distinction whatsoever on background differences. This might be seen as setback, but as these analyses are a first step, no problems are foreseen.

Measures

The attitudes of teenagers and their parents regarding consumption are measured in three different ways. An important remark is that it was necessary to use the same items for both teenagers and their parents. The construction of the scales however, was based on an analysis of the results of teenagers. Afterwards, the same selection of items for that particular scale was used for the parents.

First, the attitude towards money was taken into account using a selection of the items of the Money Attitude Scale by Yamauchi and Templer (1982). The selection of these items was based on the pilot study among teenagers. For teenagers, five items were used, but for parents it was decided to leave one item out of these small list, because of possible misinterpretations. The item referred to is "Sometimes I pay others to do things for me". For teenagers, this item worked well, but we were afraid to use it for parents. Therefore it was left out, as well for teenagers as for parents.

For teenagers, the scale reached an alpha of ,76. For parents, a Cronbach's alpha of ,78 was reached. An overview of the items and their factor loadings can be found in Table 1. For the analysis, sum scores are used as measures of the importance attached to money.

Table 1: Money Attitude Scale: items and factor loadings for teenagers and parents

Items	Factor loading	Factor loading
	teenagers	parents
I try to find out whether others have more money than me	,575	,660
I sometimes buy things because I know they impress others	,761	,662
I possess nice things to impress others	,737	,771
I sometimes brag about the money I have	,588	,644
	Cronbach's alpha	,76
		,78

Second, a more general measure of materialism was used. The two most well-known scales that measure materialistic attitudes are created by Belk (1985) and Richins and Dawson (1992). Both scales consisted out of subscales of which the several dimensions have been discussed above. However, the scales constructed by Belk and Richins and Dawson do not always work well with teenagers. Previous research (Mortelmans, Van Assche et al. 2002) and other small investigations in Flanders in which this scale was used, gave proof of this. Also in this research, the materialism scale did not really work well. After the pilot study, a selection of 12 items of both scales was used in the questionnaire. An analysis on these 12 items in the final dataset came to a subset of three items, measuring a kind of comparative materialism. This subscale only reached a Cronbach's Alpha of ,67 for teenagers and ,70 for parents. An overview of the items and their factor loadings can be found in Table 2. For the analysis, sum scores are used as measures of this comparative materialism, which might be labelled as jealousy.

Table 2: Comparative Materialism Scale: items and factor loadings for teenagers and parents

Items	Factor loading	Factor loading
	teenagers	parents
I can't stand it when friends buy things I can't afford	,681	,720
When friends have more than me, I'm jealous of them	,718	,724
I can't stand it when I see people who can buy anything they want	,552	,584
	Cronbach's alpha	,67
		,70

Third, five shopping styles are measured with as well teenagers as their parents. The items came from the Consumer Style Inventory, developed by Sproles and Kendall (1986). This inventory originally discerns eight shopping styles: perfectionist, brand conscious, fashion conscious, recreational, price conscious, impulsive, overwhelmed and brand loyal. The original CSI makes a distinction between these eight styles with 39 items. All the items were used in the pilot study and based on those results, the best fitting 30 (in several subscales) were used in the final questionnaire. In the pilot study, only 3 factors with acceptable Cronbach's alpha's were found. Therefore, some wording of some items was adapted, hoping to get more than three acceptable factors. To this, it has to be added that, according to Bearden (1999), also in the original CSI not all styles or factors reached an acceptable reliability. For example, four of the eight styles did not reach a Cronbach's Alpha of ,50.

In the analyses, the approach was not a blind following of the original distinction of the items of the CSI. Some items could theoretically be appointed to a different factor

as the original CSI puts forward. It was decided to let the data of the teenagers speak. Principal Axis Factoring with Varimax-rotation revealed seven factors, of which five reached an acceptable reliability. The same factors were searched for in the data of the parents. An overview of the factors, the items and their factor loadings can be found in Table 3. As for the other scale variables, sum scores were used as measures of the specific attitudes.

Table 3: Consumer Styles: items and factor loadings for teenagers and parents

Items	Factor loading teenagers	Factor loading parents
Fashion Conscious Shopping		
I mostly choose well-known brands	,783	,865
I prefer buying products of well-known brands	,762	,761
Brand products are of better quality	,586	,598
I have my favourite brands I buy over and over again	,575	,538
I prefer buying the best selling brands	,540	,536
Cronbach's alpha	,83	,79
Overwhelmed Shopping		
There are so many brands, I don't know what to choose	,519	,608
All the information on different products confuses me	,518	,610
The more I know about products, the harder it is to choose	,511	,719
Sometimes it is hard to choose in which stores to shop	,496	,502
I should plan my shopping in a better way	,465	,380
I often regret the purchases I made	,418	,473
Cronbach's alpha	,68	,72
Recreational Shopping		
Shopping is one of the most enjoyable activities I can imagine	,721	,770
I enjoy shopping for the fun of it	,656	,831
Shopping trips do not last long with me* ¹	,533	,261
Shopping the stores is a waste of time*	,326	,356
Cronbach's alpha	,72	,63
Perfectionist Shopping		
I always try to choose products with the best quality	,652	,712
Getting good quality is very important to me	,651	,639
I try to get the best value for my money	,556	,471
I try to make the very best or perfect purchase	,448	,481
Cronbach's alpha	,71	,66
Fashion Conscious Shopping		
I usually have more outfits of the very newest style	,469	,832
My wardrobe sticks closely to fashion	,539	,828
Fashionable styling is very important to me	,519	,759
Cronbach's alpha	,84	,85

As practices, buying based on advertisements, the degree of influence by friends and mutual influences between parents and their teenage children are included. The first refers to buying things because one has seen them in advertisements, most often commercials on television. As well the parents as their teenage children have

¹ Items with an asterisk require reverse scoring

answered to this question, referring to themselves. A frequency analysis of the answers that were given, gave the results that are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Frequency analysis of buying things after seeing them in advertisements or on television (teenagers and parents)

	Teenagers		Parents	
	N	%	N	%
Have you ever bought anything after seeing it in an advertisement?				
Yes	1202	36,9	1189	71,7
No	2054	63,1	469	28,3
Total	3256	100,0	1658	100,0

The degree of influence by friends, as said by teenagers or parents themselves, is a second measure of consumer practice. It is closely connected to influence by commercials, but still something different. As friends can be an important agent in socialization, they certainly find their place in this exploratory analysis. Four answering categories were discerned when teenagers and parents were asked: "To what extent are you influenced by your friends when choosing products and brands?" Table 5 gives the results of the frequency analysis on those variables.

Table 5: Frequency analysis of perceived influence by friends (teenagers and parents)

Degree of influence by friends	Teenagers		Parents	
	N	%	N	%
Never	756	22,6	534	33,3
Seldomly	1006	30,1	475	29,6
Sometimes	1233	36,9	504	31,4
Often	349	10,4	93	5,8
Total	3344	100,0	1606	100,0

Third, regarding the mutual influence, we have asked the teenagers in how far they are controlled by their parents as far as their expenses are concerned. Three answers were possible: yes, sometimes, no. We have also asked the teenagers whether they ever are criticized regarding their expenses and we have asked whether or not their parents have ever forbidden a certain purchase. In the questionnaire of the parents, we have asked whether they have ever controlled, criticized or forbidden an expense of their children. These two viewpoints are contrasted. A frequency analysis of the answers given is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Frequency analysis of controls, critiques and bans of expenses as seen by teenagers and parents

	Teenagers		Parents	
	N	%	N	%
<i>Is there control of your parents regarding your expenses? / Do you control the expenses of your children ?</i>				
Yes	730	21,1	546	32,9
Sometimes	1786	51,7	695	41,8
No	940	27,2	420	25,3
Total	3456	100,0	1661	100,0
<i>Are you criticised by your parents regarding your expenses? / Do you criticise the expenses of your children ?</i>				
Yes	495	14,3	58	3,5
Sometimes	1675	48,5	694	42,0
No	1283	37,2	901	54,5
Total	3453	100,0	1653	100,0
<i>Do your parents forbid you do buy certain things? / Do you forbid your children to buy certain things?</i>				
Yes	964	28,0	72	4,4
Sometimes	1322	38,4	879	53,6
No	1159	33,6	690	42,0
Total	3445	100,0	1641	100,0

In the results-section, we make a step further and we will compare the answers of teenagers concerning attitudes and practices of teenagers with the answers of *their* parents. Therefore, we will only work with teenagers whose parents have returned a questionnaire.

A final word, before turning to the section where results of connection will be given, has to be said on causality. One could easily state that attitudes of parents do have a causal influence on the attitudes of teenagers, as the attitudes of the parents exist for a longer period, are formed in a more strong way and also, this is partly what economic socialization is about. Nevertheless, causality is not the issue in this paper. Thus, we will not state that attitudes or practices of teenagers are causally related to attitudes or practices of teenagers or the other way around. We will only state things on existing relations.

4. Results

Attitudes of teenagers and their parents

In a first part, we will compare attitudes of teenagers with those of their parents, using only correlation analyses. As fundamental analysis, this would not be sufficient, but as exploration in view of this paper, correlation analysis will serve well.

The attitude attached to money by teenagers and their parents does somewhat correlate in a positive way, but one can not say this correlation is strong (pearson correlation is ,080; $p < ,01$; $N=1590$). Another positive but rather small correlation is found between the so-called comparative materialism scale. Teenagers who are more

materialistic also have parents who are more materialistic, but again the relation is rather small (pearson correlation is ,113; $p < ,001$; $N=1565$).

A correlation analysis of different consumer styles between teenagers and their parents, revealed the results as presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Correlation analysis of consumer styles of teenagers and their parents

Teenagers	Parents				
	Brand Conscious	Overwhelmed	Recreational	Fashion Conscious	Perfectionist
Brand Conscious					
Pearson Correlation	,181	,035	,089	,181	,058
Sig.	,000	,184	,001	,000	,025
N	1489	1482	1492	1494	1490
Overwhelmed					
Pearson Correlation	,014	,135	,064	,031	,007
Sig.	,581	,000	,013	,234	,784
N	1479	1472	1483	1487	1482
Recreational					
Pearson Correlation	-,005	,027	,127	,023	-,003
Sig.	,855	,299	,000	,380	,921
N	1493	1486	1497	1500	1496
Fashion Conscious					
Pearson Correlation	,073	,039	,142	,189	,039
Sig.	,005	,137	,000	,000	,132
N	1499	1493	1503	1507	1501
Perfectionist					
Pearson Correlation	,013	-,043	,040	,045	,024
Sig.	,611	,100	,117	,083	,350
N	1495	1489	1500	1504	1498

As can be read from Table 7, four of the five discerned consumer styles among teenagers do correlate with the specific attitudes among parents. A brand conscious, overwhelmed, recreational and fashion consumer styles of teenagers goes hand in hand with the same attitude among their parents. Nevertheless, most of these attitudes of teenagers do not correlate *only* to that specific attitude of their parents. A brand conscious style of teenagers does also correlate with a recreational, fashion conscious and even a perfectionist style of parents. An overwhelmed style of teenagers does also correlate – to a small positive extent – with a recreational style of parents. Third, the fashion conscious style of teenagers does correlate with the recreational style of parents. So, even though the relations between the consumer styles of parents and their teenaged children are not as clearcut as one would like to see, the relations that exist do point in that direction.

Practices of teenagers and their parents

The first practice that was included concerned whether or not teenagers and their parents have bought something after they had seen it an advertisement, whether or not in a commercial. In Table 8 it can be read that teenagers of parents who state that they

have bought something after seeing it in a commercial have a higher chance of also having done this than with parents who have never engaged in such behaviour.

Table 8: Crosstabs: Buying things after seeing them in a commercial (column percentages)

		Buying after commercial - Parents					
		Yes		No		Total	
Buying after commercial - Teenagers		N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes		417	38,3	140	31,7	557	36,4
No		672	61,7	301	68,3	973	63,6
Total		1089	100,0	441	100,0	1530	100,0

Chi² = 5,81; p < 0,01

The second included practice was the influence of friends that was – in a way – admitted by teenagers and their parents when choosing brands or products. A crosstabulation of these two variables however, did not reveal significant relations (Chi² = 12,21, p = ,202).

Direct mutual influences

The third group of aspects is somewhat more direct. We have asked teenagers whether their parents control the way they spend their money, whether their parents sometimes have critique on the way they spend their money and whether their parents sometimes forbid them to buy something. We have also asked the parents whether they have done that. Contrasting these viewpoints can shed an interesting light on these ideas of direct interferences.

Table 9: Crosstabulations of three different aspects of interference in expenses by parents, contrasting viewpoints of parents and their teenagers (column percentages per item)

Controlling expenses – viewpoint teenagers		Controlling expenses – viewpoint parents				
		Yes	Sometimes	No	Total	
Yes	N	170	126	66	362	
	%	32,0%	18,6%	16,2%	22,4%	
Sometimes	N	290	392	177	859	
	%	54,5%	57,7%	43,4%	53,1%	
No	N	72	161	165	398	
	%	13,5%	23,7%	40,4%	24,6%	
Total	N	532	679	408	1619	
	%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	

Chi² = 111,85 ; p < ,001

Critique on expenses – viewpoint teenagers		Critique on expenses – viewpoint parents			
		Yes	Sometimes	No	Total
Yes	N	20	123	70	213
	%	36,4%	18,3%	7,9%	13,2%
Sometimes	N	29	379	381	789
	%	52,7%	56,5%	43,0%	48,9%
No	N	6	169	435	610
	%	10,9%	25,2%	49,1%	37,8%
Total	N	55	671	886	1612
	%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Chi² = 137,48 ; p < ,001

Forbidding expenses – viewpoint teenagers		Forbidding Expenses – viewpoint parents			
		Yes	Sometimes	No	Total
Yes	N	26	293	151	470
	%	36,1%	34,4%	22,4%	29,4%
Sometimes	N	25	351	251	627
	%	34,7%	41,2%	37,2%	39,2%
No	N	21	207	273	501
	%	29,2%	24,3%	40,4%	31,4%
Total	N	72	851	675	1598
	%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Chi² = 53,05; p < ,001

One thing that can already be concluded based on a mere overview of Table 9, is that viewpoints differ. Of the parents who state that they, for example, forbid to buy things, only 36% of their teenaged children gave the same answer. There are even 29% who say that their parents do not forbid to buy certain things, when these parents themselves answer yes to the very same question. But also they other way around, these differences exist. Of all parents who say that they never give critique on the way their teenaged children spend their money, 8% of these teenagers say that their parents do.

It is not stated that there is no agreement at all concerning this contrast. On the contrary, a lot of agreement does exist, especially because one can discuss the difference between answering sometimes and answering yes on these particular questions. Taking these elements of analysis into account, it is time to turn to a discussion and conclusion. Why are these results important?

5. Discussion and Conclusion – Linking Research and Policy

Education by parents is in very different kinds of ways a free something to a large extent. There are no specific rules when educating children in the process of growing up. Markets and book stores are filled with books for mothers and fathers to help them during the growing up of children and teenagers, but these books do not have to be necessary. Fathers and mothers do not have to pass an exam before they are allowed to raise children. Parents who are candidate to adopt children have to pass exams, but these exams do not ask for an education or socialization plan. In very rare cases, and after sentence by a judge, parents are sometimes “releaved” from their parental responsibilities, but no cases are known were “bad introduction to the consumer market” was the reason for this sentence.

So, parents are free in whether or not and to what extent they introduce their children to the economic market. They can bring along their children when they go shopping but they don't have to. They can give pocket money to their children, but they don't have to. They can mingle in what their children do with their money, but they don't have to. So many degrees of freedom make it impossible to create one single path for economic socialization by the parents. And as said before, such a path is not necessary. But still, an introduction to the consumer market and a teaching of consumer skills, sometimes seems necessary. Is it then a task of policy to interfere? Saying no is the obvious answer, and this is the situation we live in now. Governments often provide for information and sometimes governmental research

and control centres and association exist, like for example the Belgian “Child and Family”, but they do not focus at all on consumer skills.

On the other hand, there might be a need for more interference when consumption seems to go the wrong way. Often, later financial problems of persons and households have roots in the economic socialization (apart of course from bad economic situations to be raised). Nevertheless, consumption of teenagers is not a topic that should raise worries these days. From a constructivist viewpoint, one could state that all individuals have to learn from consumption by trying, trying and trying. Government’s role remains in informing all individuals and in controlling the observance of agreed economic rules by industries, shops etc. But they do not have to take individual consumers by the hand.

In this paper, some connections between attitudes and practices of the consumption of teenagers and their parents were focussed upon. Some connections do seem to exist but the story of socialization is not straightforward. Teenagers who are more materialistic also have parents who are more materialistic, but the link is not so strong. Also consumer styles seem to gave some agreements, but not in a determining way. Practices gave the same ambiguous results. Some seem to have a connection, others don’t. We must be cautious with these results as they are only bivariate and we stay as far away as possible from any statements on causality, but they might be seen as pointing in some direction.

Also the more direct questions on parental interferences in the expenses of their teenage children state that parents mingle – to a large extent – in what teenagers spend their money on. Sometimes teenagers think differently in saying that their parents do or do not interfere, but one can not put forward that parents on the whole do not seem to mind. Thus, most parents are indeed involved in raising their children as consumers. Of course, more analyses are needed to make a distinction between parents who do and parents who do not.

This paper contained only preliminary results with quite some setbacks. We only included parents. In a true story on economic socialization, also other agents like media and peers have to be included in a more profound way. Also, only one of the parents is included and often, teenagers live with two parents, both having a possible socialializing influence. More and more families no longer are a typical father-mother-children-houshold. Divorces, one-parent-families and other demographic possibilities grow in importance. In our sample, 70% of the teenagers, live with father and mother, so they are still the majority, but in our analyses, no account is made of other possibilites and this can be important. We also did not include any reference whatsoever to socio-economic background and the like.

Therefore, this paper is not intended as “state-of-art” regarding economic socialization, but as a preliminary starting point towards more analyses of existing differences between parents and their teenaged children, not only on the subject of consumption, but also on the subject of choice of friends and perceived influence by the peer group. If one thing is to be concluded from these analyses, it is: parents matter.

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Consuming Children: A panel based on the research project "Consuming children. Commercialisation and the changing construction of childhood"

Commercialisation and the Changing Construction of Childhood is a research project at the Norwegian Centre for Child Research, Norwegian University of Technology and Science, Trondheim, Norway. This is an interdisciplinary project which includes the disciplines Media Education, Early Childhood Education, History, Media Science, Psychology and Childhood Studies. The project will last in the period 01.09.2006 - 31.08.2009. Project directors are Professor David Buckingham and Associate Professor Vebjorg Tingstad who runs the project together with Senior Researcher Tora Korsvold and Associate Professor Ingunn Hagen. The Research Council of Norway is the financial supporter of the project.

The main aim of the project is to study marketing to children, and to assess the role of commercialisation and consumer culture in changing the definitions and lived experiences of childhood. The project seeks to integrate three aspects of this phenomenon - namely, marketing, the product and the consumer. The project will include the theoretical focus on the relation between structure and agency, the analysis of gender issues and childhood identities, and the use of ethnographic research methods and forms of discourse analysis. In addition, we establish and run an interdisciplinary international network and aim to develop comparative research projects during the project period.

We are doing six sub-projects altogether and three of them will be presented at the conference.

Proceedings of the Nordic Consumer Policy Research Conference:

**PLAYING ON CHILDREN'S DESIRES AND FEARS: ON CREATING
BRAND LOYALTY AMONG NORWEGIAN CHILDREN**

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Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to examine and discuss some of the strategies applied to create brand loyalty among children in Norway for Captain Sabertooth. I will focus on the brand based on this fictional character – a pirate - who has been (and still is) enormously popular among Norwegian children - especially boys preschool age - for the last 17-18 years. What are the reasons for this popularity?

The Captain Sabertooth character, his men and their fictional universe are one of the main attractions in Kristiansand Zoo (a theme park and zoo in Southern Norway). Captain Sabertooth has – through annual summer shows (theatre performances), video releases, and numerous other media texts and spin-off products - become a “must” for Norwegian children and thus a great economic success. Captain Sabertooth has become an important identification figure and also part of especially pre-school (boy's) play culture in Norway.

One challenge in this paper is to explain the long-lastingness of this “craze” among Norwegian children. Thus, the strategies used to create brand loyalty among children for Captain Sabertooth will be compared to the strategies used by global central actors who try to promote their products to children in different countries, including Norway. Examples of such brands are Pokemon and Disney products.

1. Introduction

“-Mum, is it true that the Pokemon cards are made so that some people should make lots of money when we buy them? The mum of my friend said so.”

“Yes, this is true,” I responded to my son in order to support this mother's attempt to make the children aware of the commercial pressure behind some of the `crazes` they take up.

-“No, I don't think so; the cards must be made in order for us to have fun when we play with them. I really like them.”

Pokemon is a global “craze” which has had its peak with children (see Tobin, 2004), but as the above quote indicates, new generations are still being recruited, despite some resistance from parents. This paper is, however, not about Pokemon's rise and fall. It is about another, national “craze” which is very intense in Norway, particularly among preschool boys. Indeed, Captain Sabertooth has been a national “craze” almost since the figure was created in 1989.

This pirate and the stories, songs and products related to him are enormously popular among Norwegian children - especially boys. And this craze has had a surprising longevity, being able to fascinate new generations of boys (and girls) for almost two decades. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to examine and discuss some of the strategies applied to create and maintain brand loyalty for Captain Sabertooth.

Captain Sabertooth has - since the beginning - been a great success story. The story about this pirate – Captain Sabertooth – was created by Terje Formoe, the former Director of Marketing and Entertainment of Kristiansand Zoo (see Hjemdahl, 2003). He started to develop annual summer shows (theatre performances) for Kristiansand Zoo, with himself as Captain Sabertooth. In Kristiansand Zoo, where Captain Sabertooth’s famous nightly summer shows still take place, there are now several areas dedicated to this pirate. There he has his ship (the Black Lady), and his castle near the “pirate harbour/village” called Captain’s Sabertooth’s World, where daily small shows take place, and where one can find numerous restaurants, cafés, and souvenir stores in a “pirate environment”.

However, from the beginning, Captain Sabertooth has not been limited to Kristiansand Zoo. Soon the creator and the growing number of companies added numerous Captain Sabertooth media products like films (on video and later DVD), cartoons, books, music (in the shows, films, CDs and audio tapes), TV series, activity books, magazines, and computer games. In addition to the various media products, there are numerous Captain Sabertooth spin-off products; like swords, pirate robes, T-shirts, nightgowns, Captain Sabertooth’s ship, plastic pirate figures, Sabertooth purses, food boxes, bags, pirate jewellery etc.

In addition to all the media outlets and spin-off products, Terje Formoe as Captain Sabertooth often visited different cities in Norway, and also hospitals. According to Hjemdahl (2003), it is almost like Norway has been “piratized”: You find Captain Sabertooth everywhere and in all forms; as ice-cream, as potato chips, as bread, as cod liver oil, on children’s bed linens etc. In his “search for gold”, the pirate and its creator also conquered a large audience in Norway, perhaps especially through the rather catchy Captain Sabertooth music. What started out in Kristiansand as a summer family show and later a tradition has developed into a national craze and something that could be regarded as a children’s classic in Norway (see Nakken, 2007).¹

Thus, it is hardly surprising that Captain Sabertooth has also become an important character for identification and thus a part of especially preschool (boy’s) play culture in Norway. In her analysis of Nordic theme parks and how the figures from them are present in children’s everyday lives, Hjemdahl finds that it is especially Captain Sabertooth who is present in the preschools (Kindergartens) she visited. She found the presence of Captain Sabertooth through numerous spin-off products, through songs that the children sing, through acting out the stories, and especially through sword battles all over the preschool playgrounds. “Some children even *are* Captain Sabertooth,” Hjemdahl writes (p. 128). It was especially the boys age two to six years who were the most eager Sabertooth fans. Captain Sabertooth is a permanent part of the boy’s role play (in addition to cowboy and “police and thieves” games).

My own son was no exception. It was through his and his friends’ embrace of the Captain Sabertooth that I became aware of the intensity of the children’s relationship to this figure. Young boys (and girls) in my son’s preschool pretended to be Captain Sabertooth or one of

¹ I have functioned as the academic advisor for Øivind Nakken’s case study, which is written up as his MA thesis. We have both been part of the “Consuming Children” research team.

his men and constantly involved themselves in sword battles and play fights. These role plays and battles took place with or without the Sabertooth clothes and swords that the children had picked up in Captain Sabertooth's world in Kristiansand Zoo or in the local toy store. Most children knew the stories and the songs well - from CDs, films or theatre performances.

In my son's preschool the obsession with Captain Sabertooth was so intense, especially among the boys, that the pirate play fights often got out of hand. Thus, the pre-school staff at one point forbid the children to dress up like Captain Sabertooth for the annual Carnival in the Kindergarten. But then there were so many disappointed boys that being dressed as their favourite pirate had to be allowed for the following pre-school summer party.

As already indicated, a major aim in this paper is to understand the strategies that are used to promote the intensity of the relationship that children seem to have to this fictional character. Another challenge is to explain the long-lastingness of this "craze" among Norwegian children, compared to more short-lived international crazes. Thus, the strategies used to create brand loyalty among children for Captain Sabertooth will be compared to the strategies used by other central actors who try to promote their products to Norwegian children. Some relevant brands for comparison are for example Pokemon and Disney.

2. Commercial Childhood and "Crazes"

The case study of Captain Sabertooth (and the strategies used to create brand loyalty among children) is part of the larger research project "Consuming Children: Commercialization and the Changing Construction of Childhood" (see the project website: www.svt.ntnu.no/noseb/Consuming/, and also Buckingham and Tingstad, 2007). The point of departure for this research project is the fact that commercial culture and consumption is very present in the lives of today's children, from a very early age (cf. Cook, 2004; Kline, 1993). The increased commercialization of childhood has been much discussed in Norway in recent years, both in the media, in academic literature and in public reports (e.g. BFI, 2001; Hagen, 2001; and Tingstad, 2006).

Marketing to children involves larger questions related to contemporary childhood. For example, the commercial influences or pressures are often contrasted with notions of a free and "natural" childhood. What does children's participation in the intensified global, mediated consumer culture mean for the continuity between generations? In stead of reducing these questions to dichotomous claims about children as "natural" or "exploited", or as "agents" or "victims", the aim of the Consuming Children project is to get a deeper understanding of children and their parents' role in consumer culture. The premise of this project is that it is most fruitful to theorize the relationship between the structural market forces and children's active negotiation of these forces and the identity definitions available to them (see also Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 2004).

Due to global trends like globalization and media convergence, there has been increased market competition. Thus, different commercial actors are looking for new customers and niches. The child market is particularly interesting for several reasons: children are getting increased allowances of their own, and from an early age children have considerable "pester power" in their families. By creating brand loyalty among children at an early age, companies can secure a profitable future. Thus, marketers will try to identify children's desires, fears, and group norms; their worshipping of (often very masculine or feminine) heroes, their

fantasies and dreams (like their love of pets and animals), their (often slapstick) humour and their peer group identities (wishing to be “cool” and included, fearing to be excluded) (cf. Kline, 1993; Seiter, 1993).

In the above-mentioned, multi-disciplinary Consuming Children research project, the aim is to integrate analysis of three aspects of children’s consumption; marketing, the cultural product/text and the child consumer (Buckingham, 2000, cf. Hall, 1992/1980). In the Consuming Children project, the empirical focus is on two age groups that are currently of particular interest to marketers and marketing research – preschool children and “tweens”. For the Captain Sabertooth products, the primary target group is preschoolers, or more specifically 2-8 year old children. But efforts are also made to target the whole family, something I will return to.

The case study of Captain Sabertooth is part of subproject 1b in the Consuming Children project, where the purpose is to explore the contemporary practices of the media, advertisers and related industries. One of the aims in this subpart of the Consuming Children project is to understand how marketers respond to the often fragmented markets by global ambitions and the development of “synergies” – where successful products often are adapted to a number of media platforms; like TV, film, computer games and printed material. In contrast to what has been the case with Captain Sabertooth, typically products targeted at children often become short-lived “crazes”, of which Pokemon is a well-known example (see Tobin, 2004). Disney is another example (see Wasko, 2001; and Wasko et al., 2001), where movie characters like Pocahontas, Winnie the Pooh, Narnia and the Incredibles often lead to crazes.

The global, commercial media environment and its intensive marketing is a precondition for cross-media products, where brands cross media borders, organizations and national borders. There are numerous such cross-media phenomena or crazes like Teletubbies, Bob the Builder, the Little Pony, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Barbie, Bratz, Super-Heroes, and Harry Potter are some of the recent ones. These crazes are brands or multimedia trends that spread on a global scale, based on inter-textual references and integrated marketing (cf. Lindstrom and Seybold, 2003). After a movie or another media product, these brands spread like fire across countries and across media and product categories. The successful crazes become part of children’s everyday lives and play practices. To have the products in question and be part of the “craze” is important for children, since this relates to processes of inclusion in or exclusion in the peer group, especially in institutional settings like preschools or schools.

Our point of departure is an interest in understanding the marketing strategies related to Captain Sabertooth, since he is a figure of central importance in the lives of pre-school children, particularly boys, in Norway (see Hjemdahl, 2003). Indeed, Captain Sabertooth is clearly a national craze among pre-school children in Norway. And it is a craze which has received little academic attention in Norway, except for as part of Hjemdahl’s ethnographic study of three Nordic theme parks, and by Nakken’s case study of Captain Sabertooth as part of the Consuming Children project.

As indicated, I want to understand the reasons that this Norwegian “craze” has been so surprisingly long-lasting among Norwegian children. Our concern is especially how brand loyalty has been and is created among the children (and their families). For this purpose one needs to examine the encoding processes related to the brand and the products or texts. Through analysis of interviews with central actors behind the Sabertooth phenomenon and the numerous products and texts, three key categories emerge: synergies, inclusion and brand

control (Nakken, 2007). These categories will be elaborated below. Our hope is that the insights related to the case study of the Sabertooth brand may also illuminate mechanism that could be present in marketing of other products and brands to children.

3. Captain Sabertooth and Brand Loyalty

Despite the meagre academic interest in Captain Sabertooth so far, it is a phenomenon worth studying. As a multi-media child culture phenomenon and an intense craze in at least preschool boy's lives, Captain Sabertooth should be of interest to at least media researchers, pedagogs, psychologists, cultural analysts, and marketing researchers. But the Captain Sabertooth phenomenon is also interesting because it differs clearly from a number of the crazes mentioned earlier.

The most obvious aspect is that Captain Sabertooth is a national craze, not a global one, even though some attempts are made to introduce the products to children in other countries. It is also noteworthy that Captain Sabertooth was created by one person – the singer and at that time Director of Marketing and Entertainment at Kristiansand Zoo Terje Formoe – while most global crazes (like Pokemon) often have large global media conglomerates (like Nintendo or Disney) to promote their products. As mentioned earlier, compared to other well-known crazes, the craze around Captain Sabertooth has been unusually long-lived. Many global crazes as indicated, have spread in a fire-like speed to new audiences and consumers, Captain Sabertooth has expanded gradually from the start as a theatre show and had an almost constant growth for the last 18 years (see Nakken, 2007). Thus, it is of interest to understand what is particular about the Captain Sabertooth brand and what strategies producers and marketers have used to create strong brand loyalty.

According to Blindheim (2003), branding is so important because products often have little real differences. Thus, control over a brand is a way to play on the desires and fears that consumers have, often unconsciously (for example; “what do I need to have? “Who should I be?”). Naturally, to create brand loyalty will be a very important goal of marketing. Such brand loyalty means that a consumer will buy products related to the brand numerous times (repurchase behaviour), often without considering alternative brand choices. Another indicator of brand loyalty is when positive experiences with the brand lead consumers to recommend the brand to family and friends (word-of-mouth). The concept of brand equity is often discussed related to brand loyalty, referring to the extra value a brand can add to products (see Nakken, 2007). For example, how consumers perceive a product depends on much more than the concrete products, it also depends on the reputation and public image of the company. Is the toy produced by Disney, for example, we may associate it with nostalgic childhood innocence. The brand will create certain associations and expectations. Thus, to achieve brand loyalty will mean great competitive advantages for the company behind it.

In Nakken's MA thesis on Captain Sabertooth, brand loyalty is the main topic. This is signalled already in the title: “Captain Sabertooth – Adventurous Brand Loyalty”. Nakken claims that it is unquestionable that Captain Sabertooth has high brand equity, since it has developed into such an integrated part of children's culture (cf. Hjemdahl, 2003). The stated research purpose of this thesis is: “... to identify and understand more deeply the fundamentals of the brand loyalty to Captain Sabertooth among Norwegian Children.” He formulates the research question: “How has the brand loyalty been created through structures and processes, and how is this loyalty related to other components of brand building and brand equity?”

(Nakken, 2007: 24). He sets out to analyse what is particular about Captain Sabertooth – the stories, songs and products – that make them appeal so much to young children. He also pays attention to the structure and nature of the organizations behind the Sabertooth success. The results from this case study of Captain Sabertooth will be discussed below.

4. Synergies

The concept of synergies includes the cross media properties of a brand like Captain Sabertooth and the organizational structure and networking surrounding the products (cf. Nakken, 2007). Thus, it becomes possible for the audience to consume the texts and products through a number of channels and also via several sensory modalities.

It is easy to understand that children feel at home in the Captain Sabertooth's concept culture or universe (cf. Hjemdahl, 2003). The same – simple and almost archaic - pirate stories are told over and over again in different ways and in various forms. This reuse of the stories and also the songs may be central in making the different products recognizable and thus likeable to small children (who often love repetition). In his study, Nakken finds organisational support for such a concept culture: There is a well-developed network of production and marketing supporting the Sabertooth Brand, crossing both media and company borders. Like emphasized by Lindstrom and Seybold (2003), appealing to different senses – like sound, sight, smell, taste, and touch - is an important part of brand building. These authors highlight sound as particularly powerful in stimulating the imagination. The Captain Sabertooth brand - or the various connected products - appeals to several senses, and also creates synergies between them. Sound, both in form of music and talk, is available both on CDs, in the theatre show, in movies, the theme park, in sound books and in computer games. Visually, one can take in “powerful images, characters, costumes, scene settings and animation” (Nakken, 2007: 37).

The relationship between sound and image can be described through the concept of anchoring (cf. Seiter, 1992/1987), indicating that the verbal text or sound directs the readers' attention towards specific aspects of the image, while ignoring others. In the case of Captain Sabertooth, songs, music and sound effects often make the images subordinate. For example, one may look at the official website (www.captainsabertooth.com), where the familiar music and Captain Sabertooth's voice are very prominent. But children today do not only want to listen to songs, they also want to sing along (cf. Lindstrom and Seybold, 2003). As emphasized by Hjemdahl (2003), singing is an important and integrated part of Captain Sabertooth's appeal, and the songs seem especially fit to inspire bodily movements, battles and role-play. There are also Captain Sabertooth Songbooks available to support this aspect.

Other senses – like smell, taste and touch – are also stimulated by various Captain Sabertooth products. These senses are used related to licensed Captain Sabertooth products like ice-cream, bread, or liver cod oil. But it is especially the theme park in Kristiansand Zoo that children come close to have physical contact with the whole pirate adventure. There children (and their parents) can eat Sabertooth dishes (like pizza, hotdogs or popcorn) and drinks (like brain coolers) in restaurants and cafés. They can hear the familiar voices and songs, and ever meet their heroes for a photo opportunity. They can also enter the Sabertooth ship, the Black Lady, which when crossing the “Grass Ocean” is firing at the meeting “enemy ship”. When the children come home with their newly acquired (and old) Sabertooth gear, like movies on DVD, songs and sound books on CD, and perhaps costumes, this will remind them of the

whole sensory experience from the theme park. According to Nakken (2007), these synergies between the senses that may have been created, probably have strengthened the whole Captain Sabertooth adventure.

In her book, Hjemdahl (2003) points to the overlapping of scene setting, production, promotion and consumption of Captain Sabertooth, something that may strengthen the experience and accessibility of the brand. According to Nakken (2007), synergies include this overlapping, and he tries to explain this in terms of the two interconnected sub-categories Synergies of Production and Integrated Marketing. The concept Synergies of production refers to the structure of the production network related to Captain Sabertooth. According to Terje Formoe, the author and copy right owner of Captain Sabertooth, this network consists of 24-25 different companies of various sizes.

Some concretization may be illuminating: Terje Formoe owns Captain Sabertooth A/S – which is at the centre of the network. Formoe also has shares in Piratprodukter A/S and Seven Seas Production A/S. Piratprodukter A/S is managing the Captain's Sabertooth's World (in Kristiansand Zoo), and they own the restaurants and the spin off shops in the theme park. Until recently, the majority of spin-off products were also licensed to Piratprodukter A/S. Seven Seas Production A/S is a film company, producing the Captain Sabertooth cartoon in 2003. Svensk Film A/S, another film company, has produced, distributed, and marketed the DVDs (based on the theatre performances). Moreover, Captain Sabertooth books are licenced to two publishers, Gyldendal and Cappelen Forlag. The Captain Sabertooth comics are licenced to Egmont A/S, while the audio and video-material are licenced to Grappa Musikkforlaget A/S. Barneselskapet A/S (a Grappa-Egmont daughter company) distribute and market this material. The computer game was produced by Artplant A/S and distributed and marketed by Panvision A/S (see Nakken, 2007; appendix F and E for more detailed and extended lists).

These organizational synergies can be illustrated by the close cooperation between Terje Formoe, Kristiansand Zoo, and Piratprodukter A/S. These people and companies work closely together, and the effect appears to be stronger and more profitable companies that if they had worked independently (Nakken, 2007). Kristiansand Zoo was, as mentioned, the birthplace of Captain Sabertooth. This Zoo is still the site of the nightly theatre summer shows. In 1995, there was a dispute between Terje Formoe and Kristiansand Zoo about Captain Sabertooth. When Terje Formoe removed the Captain Sabertooth summer shows to Asker (near Oslo), both he and Kristiansand Zoo experienced fewer visitors. Kristiansand Zoo was worst hit, with a 65 000 decrease in visitors and a deficit of 17 million NOK. The following year, when Terje Formoe and Captain Sabertooth were back in Kristiansand Zoo, the visitors returned. No wonder that the new director of Kristiansand Zoo was eager to cooperate: "It is essential in our co working that our ways of thinking are not different from the ideas of the originator Terje Formoe. We must all pull in the same direction" (Managing Director Reidar Fuglestad, in Nakken, 2007: 40). This cooperation may also result in equity transfer, since both Captain Sabertooth and Kristiansand Zoo are strong brands, they may both gain more equity by cooperating.

Such organizational networking is also valuable when it comes to the next sub-category, integrated marketing. According to Lindstrom and Seybold (2003), a cross-promotion or marketing in several channels is important for brands to survive. Organizational networking ala the one around Captain Sabertooth brand usually works as a basis for more flexible communication and marketing strategies (cf. Stohl, 2001). According to Nakken (2007), the

integrated marketing strategies are characterized by cooperation between different companies in the way that campaigns in one company may have indirect effects on the others. For example, when Panvision A/S marketed and distributed the computer game (produced by Artplant), this would also indirectly market the whole Captain Sabertooth brand. Similarly, when Svensk Film A/B marketed and distributed the Captain Sabertooth cartoon movie in 2003, it also indirectly promoted the whole Captain Sabertooth industry. Otherwise, there is not a very aggressive marketing of the different Captain Sabertooth media and spin-off products. This brand also relies heavily on the indirect effects of press coverage and “word-of-mouth”. Entertainment institutions like theme parks need to stay in the public mind, for example through media coverage (Hjemdahl, 2003). Such media coverage is almost secured by Kristiansand Zoo’s role as a cultural institution in Norway, strengthened by even Royal presence at several occasions, so the cultural context of Captain Sabertooth is ideal for promoting the brand. Terje Formoe’s own position as a national celebrity is also adding positive brand value. And again, there are possible synergies from the two, also related to positive media coverage. Thus, there is less reason to smooch journalists in Norway related to Captain Sabertooth, in the way Wasko (2001) reports is the case for Disney.

5. Inclusion

Inclusion in this paper refers to the brand’s ability to involve the audience (e.g. children of different ages and gender, and their parents) in a variety of ways, through intertextual references, and also through textual strategies like creating closeness and presence, and through characters for identification. Based on his textual analysis of the different Captain Sabertooth products, Nakken (2007) finds these entertainment products to be very including. In order to understand how the Captain Sabertooth texts may be inclusory, I will present a summary of their main characteristics.

Central features in all stories are events, characters and setting. Nakken (2007) uses these concepts from Kozloff’s narrative theory to discuss the Captain Sabertooth stories. The setting is the Seven Seas, the ocean where several mystical islands are located. Captain Sabertooth – the most feared pirate of the Seven Seas – and his men sail his ship (the Black Lady) here for different adventures and treasure hunts, often assisted by a map. Thus, the events of these stories are predictable and easy to grasp. Complications happen when others are looking for the same treasures. The main character is the same in all the stories – the cruel and greedy Captain Sabertooth. He is feared by his men, Longfinger (also called Captain Sabertooth’s shadow), the fat, and hopeless twins Wimp and Wally, the often clumsy and foolish Benjamin, and the chef Tully (who uses everything for his cooking, including rats and insects).

Another central character in the Captain Sabertooth stories is Tiny, a small boy who often assists Captain Sabertooth, although the latter would never admit this. Thus, Tiny is often the real hero of the stories. As suggested by Nakken “the relationship between Captain Sabertooth and Tiny might be considered the core of the whole adventure” (2007: 53). Tiny is the youngest of Captain Sabertooth’s crew. At first, he dreams about becoming a feared and respected pirate. But life is hard since none of the older crew takes him seriously, despite his active role in the successful achievements of Captain Sabertooth and his men. Tiny misses someone to talk to who respects him. In several of the stories, Tiny is teamed up with Veronica – a young, cute girl his own age from the cosy village Luna Bay. This friendly place of “ordinary people” is contrasted with Abra – the invisible island of Captain Sabertooth and

his men, where Tiny grew up as an orphan. Despite her nicer environments Veronica suffers from some of the some problems as Tiny, she is not taken seriously. Through Tiny Terje Formoe is able to communicate certain values or dilemmas that are central in all the various cross-media stories about Captain Sabertooth: Happiness may not be achieved through finding gold, friendship and love are the real treasures of life.

When one reads the different Captain Sabertooth stories, one is often struck by the simplicity of their plots; the stories seem adjusted to fit for very young children. This is also found by Nakken in his analysis: “He [Terje Formoe] has been good in simplifying the stories as much as possible, making them easy to follow for the children – and in that way inclusion processes are facilitated” (2007: 54). The non-complicated story structures – with kernels and few storylines involving only some of the characters – seem adjusted to the expected cognitive abilities of the preschool audience. The main target group of the Captain Sabertooth stories is children 2-8 years. But there are often differences between the implied readers (those targeted) and the actual readers; those in fact consuming stories and products.

Producers are often concerned if there is a discrepancy between the target group and the actual consumers. This was also the case for the production network around Captain Sabertooth. As already indicated, the main consumption group consists of boys 2 to 8 years old. Girls are not interested in Captain Sabertooth to the same degree, something the author is aware of and trying to change:

It has been a majority of boys so far, probably because boys in general play in a rougher way. Yet, I am working quite consciously and intensively to appeal to more girls. In my next show, I will present more female characters. And actually...I have already noticed more and more girls dressing up like *Captain Sabertooth* when they come to *Kristiansand Zoo*...painting their faces white and even painting a moustache. But still...many of the female characters being presented in my stories so far, have been very traditional girls...in traditional roles. But in my next show you will meet rougher girls...who can be tough just like the boys. And that is quite important for me...to represent both boys and girls.” (Terje Formoe, 2006, see Nakken, 2007:56).

Thus, the author of Captain Sabertooth intends to have tougher female characters or tomboys that more girls can identify. Several authors (e.g. Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 2004) have pointed out that the child market is very difficult to reach, and that it is very fragmented according to age and gender. Boys are often resistant to anything “girlish”, while girls often consumes what is traditional female and also what is more “boyish”. In Captain Sabertooth, Tiny and Veronica represents this blue-pink division. Young boys may find potential heroes in both Tiny and Captain Sabertooth. Female characters include traditional, sweet Veronica, and the scary witch Miriam, who are both less prominent characters in the stories. But as we see in the citation above, girls sometimes also want to be the pirate Captain Sabertooth.

However, Captain Sabertooth is not only being aimed at children of both genders, but also their families like parents or grandparents. This is a fruitful strategy, since it most of the times are the adult family members who pay for the fun. Some of the products - especially going to Kristiansand Zoo and to take part in the nightly theatre shows - do require that children go there with grown-up. Terje Formoe is very clear about this in the interview with him:

What is very important in my shows in *Kristiansand Zoo* is to create not only entertainment for the children, but a happening for the whole family. One of my greatest interests is that the children can experience *Captain Sabertooth* together with adults. I want it to be an experience for several generations. I want parents and grandparents to join the play. When children watch their parents having fun as well, the intensity of these children’s experiences will increase. I try to reach all generations – but everything *through* the children. Because it should all be on their premises (see Nakken, 2007: 57).

For comparison, the Disney Corporation has been able to create positive and nostalgic childhood associations related to their products. The consequence is that new generations

introduce Disney products to their children, despite their feelings that Disney is more aggressive in their marketing (Hagen, 2001; Wasko, 2001). Terje Formoe has succeeded in making the summer shows in Kristiansand Zoo as summer tradition for many families with small children. During 18 years Terje Formoe has turned his pirate into a children's classic, something new generations of children will be introduced to (like with Disney) and enjoy together with their family. But how are the parents becoming involved in the Captain Sabertooth stories? Different textual strategies are used to also include parents, for example by often containing phrases or statements that will also be funny for adults, for example the short-comings of adult characters or refer to gender-relations and battles. Nakken also discusses what he identifies as inter-textual references to Norwegian folktales, which are mostly familiar to the parent generation. Moreover, Captain Sabertooth is made less a threatening to children by contrasting him with worse villains in the stories. In addition, Tiny and Veronica are blond and blue-eyed children, archetypes that are familiar to Norwegian parents.

Kosloff's terms narrators and narrates are useful when discussing the bond that is created between Captain Sabertooth and the audience (cf. Kosloff, 1992/1987). Narrators are the characters in the stories, representing different qualities and values. The narrator is the you that the narrator speaks to, directly or indirectly, for example through a song. Nakken (2007) finds that this strong bond between narrators and narrates is fundamental in the brand loyalty created to Captain Sabertooth, emphasizing subcategories like presence and closeness. Indeed, the Captain Sabertooth universe of pirates is very open to involvement from the audience. Captain Sabertooth's World in Kristiansand Zoo is probably the place where this happens the most. Here children can dress up like pirates, take part in the singing and even join up with the pirate characters (like Longfinger, Wimp and Wally, and Benjamin) walking around and participating in photo sessions (with the children) and small shows. Even Captain Sabertooth himself can occasionally be observed on the roof of his castle.

A central aspect of children's involvement with and loyalty to Captain Sabertooth is related to identification. As already mentioned, identification with and acting out Captain Sabertooth himself - the pirate with a sword in his hand - can work very well especially for small boy's entry into play and mastery of life and social like in for example a preschool (see Hjemdahl, 2003). Moreover, a number of the characters, as indicated, are crucial in these identification processes. Since the whole Captain Sabertooth universe is so available to children, they may easily feel at home and at ease in identifying themselves with several of the different characters, their personalities and also the situations that they typically are a part of. Nakken notices (2007) that humour in Captain Sabertooth is often derived from someone trying to be something he (most often male characters) trying to be braver and tougher than they are. A familiar theme to young children, one may assume.

Finally, the notion of inclusion can also account for some of the indirect marketing strategies used by Terje Formoe and his partners. The presence and closeness described above, make the whole universe of Captain Sabertooth very familiar for the children, and probably promotes their integration of this phenomenon into their everyday lives. Going to Kristiansand Zoo and being there among the Captain Sabertooth happenings and places also have a considerable indirect marketing effect, by the phenomenon being so available for the children. Also creating two-ways communication with the children can be considered an indirect marketing strategy. This happens through the website (www.captainsabertooth.com) and through the cartoon (also called activity magazine). In the latter magazine, children are encouraged to send in their pictures of themselves with their pirate heroes or draw Captain Sabertooth. One

striking example of how two-way communication and emotional bonds are created is the very clever creation of the so-called Pacifier Heaven:

Well...We in *Captain Sabertooth A/S* do not use marketing...I mean direct marketing to children...marketing in it's traditional sense. But we communicate in a different way; we get a lot of questions and letters here from children and their parents. For instance, we have a comic named "Kaptein Sabeltann" (*Captain Sabertooth*), which is a comic/magazine of activities through which we communicate with the children sending us letters and pictures that we put in. And we get a lot of letters from...different people...for instance related to *Captain Sabertooth's Pacifier Heaven*, which is an offer from us to the youngest children at about 4 years who are about to quit using their pacifier. They can send their big treasure here to *Captain Sabertooth* who promises to keep it and take care of it in his *Pacifier Heaven* – a treasury with seven chests full of pacifiers. Everybody who sends their pacifier to *Captain Sabertooth* receives a letter from him saying he will keep an eye on their treasure.... So we communicate at various levels, but we try to communicate through the stories and the universe that we represent." (Terje Formoe, 2006, see Nakken, 2007: 65).

This example illustrates some of the efforts made to create an emotional bond to small children, by offering to take care of one of their dearest belongings. This is definitely a strategy aimed at creating brand loyalty to Captain Sabertooth among the very youngest children. The cross-media properties of Captain Sabertooth also allow for children to move between passive and more active modes of consumption.

6. Brand Control

The core category in explaining the brand loyalty related to Captain Sabertooth is the notion of brand control. Brand control may be considered "the glue keeping the other components of brand building together and making them work properly" (Nakken 2007: 3). Brand control works at both the organizational and textual level.

Terje Formoe seems to have more long-term ambitions for Captain Sabertooth, making sure that this continues to be a children's classic in Norway, rather than a passing craze. Thus, according to Hjemdahl (2003), the author is the only one slowing down the economic aspect of his product, focusing on the cultural aspect. Terje Formoe expressed that improving his songs and stories in the only way to develop the brand. His business strategy is strict control over the product development related to Captain Sabertooth. This brand control seems to be a premise for the synergies of the network around Captain Sabertooth discussed earlier. In the words of Terje Formoe: "I have very strict rules which say that I shall improve everything related to Captain Sabertooth, that means the proper expression and also the way children are communicated to"(2006, see Nakken, 2007: 67). In order to secure that the different Captain Sabertooth products stay close to the origin, Formoe's company Captain Sabertooth's A/S work as a kind of quality control police. According to Formoe, only companies that he considers serious are given licence, and many producers who contact him are rejected.

The production network around Captain Sabertooth seem to share the understanding that the strict control that Terje Formoe exercises is important for the success of the brand, and especially for its long-term survival. This control is made possible by the fact that the production rights to Captain Sabertooth are licenced to different companies by Terje Formoe. Such licence agreements have proved to be an efficient way to develop the (economic) potential of a brand (Lindstrom and Seybold, 2003). Carelessness when giving licence rights to different producers may lead to economic losses, something that was the case with Nintendo and its Pokemon craze (see Tobin, 2004). Moreover, brand alliances may strengthen the brand (like Captain Sabertooth and Kristiansand Zoo), but they are also risky. As noticed by Nakken (2007), from the beginning Terje Formoe seemed very careful about whom to be

associated with; Due to his ambition to make Captain Sabertooth into a children's classic, he even changed the publisher house he cooperated with, in order to have one with more cultural weight. There are also brands one does not want to be associated with, in order not to tarnish the brand. The following quote from the interview with Terje Formoe may illustrate this:

Yes....once I cooperated with *McDonald's*. My publishing house *Cappelen* [a Norwegian publishing house] convinced me. We made two small campaigns with two small books. Actually, those books were quite all right. So....I thought....if they sell out....or give out a bunch of those books – which we already had sold out in the shops – that might be a very good promotion of the whole *Captain Sabertooth* concept. However, these campaigns became such a success for *McDonald's*...that they returned to me and asked for CDs and other stuff as well. But then I was clear on the issue: Now it was enough *McDonald's*. In fact, *McDonald's* is not what I want to be associated with first of all....Actually....it think it turns out a little bit wrong connecting *Captain Sabertooth* to *McDonald's*. But – as I said – it was *Cappelen* who convinced me, and *Cappelen* for me is a very serious company. I let me convince because I found the product quite good.” (TF, 2007, see Nakken p. 69)

The strict control also means keeping the stories and products close to their origin. For example in Captain Sabertooth the universe and characters are predictable and recognizable. Nakken (2007) argues, based on the interviews with Terje Formoe and the other network informants, that strict control is a precondition for creating a solid brand with a long life span, despite the fact that less control could have been more profitable in the short run. However, control is not only important related to production aspects of the brand. It is also important what is communicated about the brand to the public. The “Sabertooth war” in 1995 – when disagreements between Terje Formoe and Kristiansand Zoo about copyrights and royalties made big newspaper headlines, illustrated the negative effect when communication about the brand is beyond control. According to Hjemdahl (2003) this public argument about money could have undermined the credibility as cultural institutions of both Kristiansand Zoo and Captain Sabertooth.

7. Conclusion

In this paper, I have discussed some of the strategies used to create brand loyalty to Captain Sabertooth among Norwegian children. The categories of “synergies”, “inclusion” and “brand control” have been discussed as central elements in these strategies. The discussion is based on Nakken's case study of Captain Sabertooth (2007) where he claims that these concepts are highly interrelated (see figure p. 79). Brand control is regarded as the main foundation for creating brand loyalty to Captain Sabertooth, but this category presupposes and is related to the two others.

Synergies, as indicated, means that the structures and processes related to production are related. The cooperation between the production networks created synergies across organizational borders and across media borders. The result of this is also integrated marketing. Like more global crazes and cross-media products such as Pokemon and Disney (Tobin, 2004; Wasko, 2001), synergies of production may also lead to synergies between children's senses. In the case of Captain Sabertooth, the fact that the product is available in so many forms, probably has strengthened the experiences related to the brand.

Inclusion refers to the fact that the Captain Sabertooth brand is very including, in the sense that the content and products involve and activate children. The brand is also including in the way it communicates to a broad audience. Both boys and girls are given figures for

identification in the stories, and through inter-textual associations parents and also grandparents may be drawn in as well. But the main target group is of course children; the including nature of the stories and the different products enable children to enter this adventurous pirate universe. Thus, Captain Sabertooth becomes a cultural practice which does not only involve consuming, reading and watching, but also acting out and playing.

Brand control related to Captain Sabertooth is so central that it can “be considered the glue that keeps together all the other economic, organizational, social, psychological, and textual components of brand loyalty creation” (Nakken, 2007: 77). The author had a good “school” though his earlier cooperation with the Disney cooperation. Thus, Terje Formoe has been able to maintain control of the Captain Sabertooth brand while the content has been spread through numerous media channels. He has also been successful in choosing his partners in order to create positive brand alliances.

Brand loyalty among children is not easily created in a country like Norway, where globalization and an increased commercialization of childhood create fierce competition from other crazes, media products and toys. Despite the fact that the commercial aspects of Captain Sabertooth also has been heavily criticised in Norway (cf. Hjemdahl, 2003), Terje Formoe and his partners have been able to create strong brand, and even a children’s classic, where new generations of children are introduced to this phenomenon.

In fact, the brand loyalty of children for Captain Sabertooth is an important asset in further brand building. In the words of Nakken “Ever since his first success, Terje Formoe seems to have used a success as a fundament for a new success” (2007: 97). Again and again, he has improved the quality of the brand, and thus the equity, and thereby increased the loyalty among the audience. This is the secret between the long-lasting life-span of the Captain Sabertooth craze in Norway. The question is whether and how this good circle can be maintained, if Captain Sabertooth is going global like his originator is hoping to.

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On the track of Norwegian childhood and the consuming child

The history of marketing to children: a study of the Norwegian company 'Proper Toys' ('A/S Riktige Leker') founded 1946¹

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to examine and discuss the products that are perhaps most strongly associated with the consuming child: toys. When describing and analysing the rise, growth and segmentation of the children's toys sector, focusing on the Norwegian company Proper Toys, we ask the following questions: What characterizes 'proper toys' in the definition of the company Proper Toys, and what forms the foundation for such a definition. By looking at how 'proper toys' are defined and singled out from other products, we also acquire an insight in how adults define childhood, how children's play is valued, and how children are considered as modern consumers, connected to an everincreasing level of marketing directed specifically towards them. The aim, therefore, is not to investigate a 'typical' toy store. Proper Toys was chosen based on its significant historical background and combined with the assertion that is implied in the very name: selling 'proper toys'. By arguing that something is 'proper' for children while something else is not, at some level one is also claiming that one knows what is 'best' for children. Such knowledge is likely to be based on certain notions of what childhood is and how adults should relate to children. Bringing these notions to the surface is the 'hidden agenda' of this paper.

¹ Tora Korsvold's *Selling childhoods and the history of marketing to children* is a subproject within the interdisciplinary project by David Buckingham and Vebjørng Tingstad, *Consuming Children: Commercialization and the Changing Construction of Childhood*. It is located at NOSEB for the period 2006-2009. Funding by the Norwegian Research Council is gratefully acknowledged. The paper is based on Linda Bomann's master thesis (forthcoming) *'Proper Toys of Norway. On the track of Norwegian childhood and the consuming child: A case study of the Norwegian company A/S Riktige Leker (1946-2007)*, which falls within the subproject.

Introduction

I well remember the first time I bought a wheelbarrow from Proper Toys² ... for my son who then was about two years old. I felt like a good mother because I had gone there to shop. So in some way I had already then, in the late 1960s, a consciousness that...or that Proper Toys meant something more than any other toy store. (From an interview with the chairman of the board of the company).

Consumption, in all its form, is a diverse and complex phenomenon. Consumption is most fully explicated and understood as a multifaceted concept (Edwards 2000: 30). The position of children here is of special interest. Empirical historical studies from other countries, like those by Daniel Cook (2004), Garry Cross (2004) and Ellen Seiter (1993) in the USA, have all shown us that children have been the focus of interest since the start of modern mass marketing. Marketing to children is not a new phenomenon, but so far we know very little about the rise of the Norwegian consuming child. Nevertheless, a modern consuming society took form in Norway in the 1930s, on the threshold of the Norwegian welfare state. Since the 1950s children have clearly been visible in the advertising of many products, like soft drinks.

Today consumption is a part of the everyday lives of most children and adults. In Norway, as one of the richest countries in the world, children's access to toys, as well as to products like mobile phones, computers and TVs, is extremely high. In 2006 85% of the population had access to a PC, 79% to the Internet and 80% to a DVD player (ssb.no/emner/07/02/30/medie/). Since Norway entered the consumer society in the post-war period, Norwegian families' patterns of consumption have changed dramatically. Families spend money both to buy and to organize their spare time, and they possess more consumer goods than ever. This development is also noticeable in the bedrooms of Norwegian children, with their large supply of all kinds of toys, leisure equipment and clothes for all kinds of activities (Brusdal 2001). The growth in consumption is enhanced by marketing directed specifically at children.

On the other hand, the Norwegian welfare state has created guidelines in order to protect children from the culture of mass consumption. Norwegian marketing regulations are intended to create suitable marketing practices. There is a particular concern here to protect children and young people from being exploited due to their 'inexperience and vulnerability' in the face of marketing pressures (NOU 2001: 6). There are also quite extensive regulations concerning marketing towards children in broadcasting. In this way, Norway stands out from other western countries and consumer societies such as England and USA. However, here we can observe interesting dilemmas and challenges in relation to the construction of childhood. The aim of this paper, however, is not to investigate the rise of the modern Norwegian consuming child, but more to describe a modern consuming culture. Children of pre-school age will be studied in greater detail by focusing on the company Proper Toys.

Data

Our text is based on a few, though important historical sources, both retrospective interviews and some written sources (see p. 12). The transcribed material from the interviews consists of 165 written pages. One interview was with the current manager of Proper Toys, who has worked for the company since 1989 and before achieving this position worked especially in marketing. He is an educated preschool teacher with work experience within his profession, but also has some training in marketing.

² Henceforward in this text, we will refer to the company as Proper Toys.

The second interview was with the Proper Toys chairman of the board, who has been with the company for an even longer period, since 1985. She is also a preschool teacher and is the president of the national committee of the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education (OMEPE). Our third informant is Norway's first ombudsman for children and a former customer of Proper Toys. As the leader of a psychological institute for children in need of therapeutic help (the Nic Waal Institute, founded after World War II), she was in contact with the company in the 1960s. Her educational background is as both a preschool teacher and a psychologist. She is also an important informant because her mother, one of the founders of Proper Toys, was also a well-known psychologist. The fourth person has been a shareholder since the founding of the company in 1946 and a central figure in it for more decades. She is a preschool teacher and a psychologist who took additional courses in pedagogy, and she worked in an institute of child welfare. She also knows the history of Proper Toys very well, from both her private and professional lives.

All our informants, however, had a great deal of knowledge of the company's history, which had been handed down from generation to generation. This, along with the fact that the running of the company has been continuous and that it has never been sold to 'outsiders' or gone in and out of business due to bankruptcy or other conditions, was helpful for us in obtaining valuable information. It is also clear to us that all the informants are speaking from a certain position of power, a rather elite position, at least as regards pedagogical and psychological knowledge. Since the beginning well-educated women have been engaged in the company. The structure of gender is itself worth considering, but we do not have the space to go into it in this paper.

The foundation of Proper Toys

Norwegian society has a generally positive attitude towards children judging from the level of political commitment that exists in establishing and supporting welfare services, but also from the laws that protect children. The positive attitude can also be regarded as an expression of the Nordic quest for equality and individual rights for children. In this respect the Norwegian authorities were in the vanguard.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the developing Nordic preschool profession made important contributions to a specifically Nordic construction of childhood, stressing the children's point of view in early childhood education and taking care of children's need and interests. The pedagogy was based on a tradition of combining education and care. As we know, the Swedish pedagogue and novelist Ellen Key also urged the government to make the twentieth century the century of the child. In the 1930s the Swedish couple Alva and Gunnar Myrdal were strong advocates of state care. The foundation of Proper Toys must be seen within a broader context of Nordic child welfare and the role of the profession of preschool teacher.

By founding the Norwegian company Proper Toys in 1946, the active figures were a group of people consisting of preschool teachers, psychologists and others with a great interest in the welfare and upbringing of children. The idea was to open a toy store offering toys that were *riktig* in the Norwegian sense of the word, that is, 'right for children', 'proper' or 'suitable to play with'. Learning about the importance of providing children with toys, about which toys were proper for different age groups, and how to make such toys were all parts of the education of preschool teachers at the time (Korsvold 1997). The potential of the 'proper toy' for developing the child pedagogically, ergonomically and psychologically was therefore an important aspect

of this endeavour. It had to match the child's individual level of competence; neither too easy nor impossible to master. A typical indicator of this level was the child's age.

By using this knowledge to start a business of their own, the founders of Proper Toys wanted to make it easier for kindergartens to get hold of this kind of toy without having to produce it themselves. The concept of Proper Toys was based upon the idea of providing the very few Norwegians kindergartens with the ability to buy pedagogically 'correct' quality toys.

The company can therefore be regarded more as an aid to kindergartens and other institutions in their task of bringing up children rather than a company aiming at economic success by profiting from this need. From the very beginning the company had an idealistic profile, providing kindergartens but also parents with the ability to acquire affordable and 'pedagogically correct' quality toys by making such products available in their store, but also by spreading information about which toys were good, that is, suitable for the children. The preschool teacher's strong involvement in and commitment to Proper Toys also contributed to confirming their newly acquired professional significance in the area of raising children (Greve 1995, Korsvold 1998).

Vision and ideology

This profile, resembling that of an ideal organization, although in fact it was structured as a commercial company, contributed to the Norwegian Ministry of Social Affairs supporting the company financially with a subsidy from the very beginning. This was mainly because of the company's information work. In accordance with the regulations, Proper Toys had an educated preschool teacher attached to its office and appointed a 'pedagogical council' consisting of three individuals to ensure that the toys offered in the store were 'really proper'. A representative from the Ministry of Social Affairs participated on this 'council', which illustrates the political value of this endeavour for Norwegian society.

Above all, the founders must be seen as idealistic, working from a child-centred point of view in extending the provision of proper toys to children.

After World War II more kindergarten and day nurseries were built, albeit at a modest level. The new institutions needed more provision, such as new toys and other equipment. Since access to material resources was rather scarce, preschool teachers had to make toys for the kindergartens on their own (Korsvold 1997: 267-73). They also wanted to protect children from toys that might splinter and fall apart and even thus hurt children. The toys should be made of proper materials so they would last and be safe for children to play with.

From now on Proper Toys was to provide fresh support for this. The children were not addressed as customers, even though the products were made for them to use. It was the adults providing money for the products who were addressed directly by Proper Toys. In this cases, both preschool teacher and parents were being addressed.

Secondly, Proper Toys wanted to protect children from war toys, guns or the like, i.e. the new toys being produced on a more global market. The selection of toys created a 'wall' against 'the new' coming from the outside world. Therefore, the toys produced and sold by Proper Toys were based on a certain selection of toys. That is, it should be possible for the parents and preschool teachers to be able to recognize the same toys from their own childhood. Tradition and nostalgia were important elements informing the selection.

The members of the council shared the same professional or academic background as the initial founders and the stockholders. This shared background also led to a shared view of what were 'proper toys' for children. In its early years, the

company seemed to have a common basis of ideology, laying the ground for a new and better future starting with the children. A new interest in a child-friendly selection of toys, stimulating children's development and putting the children's point of view at the front, were central elements in the new ideology.

Here, the war toys were among the first toys to be considered im-proper for children to play with. There existed a clear pacifist tone in the board of Proper Toys in the late 1940s and in the 1950s, protesting not only against the cold war between east and west, but also against the marketing of certain toys to pre-school children. A trend in children's play, which was more than frowned upon by the founders of Proper Toys and other concerned adults, was playing with war toys, such as toy soldiers, tanks, bombers etc. The battle against war toys was therefore one of the most important causes the company took on, and in addition to not selling such toys, they also did important information work. Exerting ideological influence through information had increased through the new confidence in science that had grown up in the post-war period.

As the main criteria for proper toys was that they should stimulate the child's development and be of good quality (due to the product's durability), another important aspect of morality entered the scene when it came to defining im-proper toys.

In the 1940s and early 1950s, the toys were mainly produced in Norway by both private producers such as carpenters and other craftsmen, and official institutions such as prisons and rehabilitation centres for alcoholics, where the prisoners or patients produced toys on demand. In the 1960s and 1970s wood was regarded as a particularly suitable material from which to make good quality toys, as long as it was appropriately handled so that it was safe for the children to play with.

In the 1980s, new safety regulations for toys were introduced by the state requiring certain testing and documentation which could not be provided by the local toy manufacturers. This, along with the economic and cultural globalization of society in general, led to Proper Toys having to look internationally for new suppliers who could provide toys that would stand up to their new definitions of 'properness'. At this time the management alone had the necessary competence to perform the evaluation which was in accordance with the company's standards of properness. It was therefore decided that the responsibility for selecting and evaluating toys was to be handed over to the manager. Eventually the manager and the chairman of the board of Proper Toys began to buy shares as shareholders and passed them on to people who cared about the company. After struggling through the changes and economic challenges of the 1980s, on the threshold of the next decade, a new time began for Proper Toys: it started making money.

The child consumer

In this section we will go further by introducing some theoretical perspectives on childhood and the child consumer. According to David Buckingham, childhood as cultural representations are generally produced by adults, having the common feature of saying more about the idea than about children's actual lives. They can even be regarded as part of a continuous effort on the part of adults to gain control over childhood and its implications for children (Buckingham 2000: 8-9). As David Buckingham points out, childhood needs to be regarded as a historical, cultural and social variable, whose meaning is subject to a constant process of struggle and negotiation. Collective definitions of the group we call children are thus the outcomes

of social and discursive processes, where particular assumptions about what children are and should be are reinforced and naturalized (ibid.: 6-7).

Daniel Cook (2007) also looks at how the interests of capital, as represented by producers, marketers and advertisers, have formed a relationship with childhood represented by the consuming child, in which the first-mentioned group poses as the latter's allies, pledging their allegiance to 'the kids', and claiming that 'children come first'. This relationship was formed in the 1990s, and it has resulted in a considerable growth in the children's market. Cook defines this relationship as a discourse of children's empowerment through goods, and claims that it uses the term 'child empowerment' to offer 'solace' to parents, educators and any observer who may be concerned about the over-commercialization of childhood, thus selling goods along with their 'solace'. Children are often described as 'free market actors', thus making marketing to them a more morally acceptable practice.

Gary Cross's thesis is that the cute child redefined adult understanding of childhood in the rituals of family life in the early twentieth century. Later he describes a new shift, to the cool. He argues that the cool ultimately comes from the adult's romantic idea of the cute, the wondrous child, and the child's simultaneous embrace of and reaction to the cool. The key to understanding this transition is the child's need for distance from its parents, says Gary Cross. Early in the history of consumer culture, children found their own ways of becoming independent of adults.

Cross has also shown how toy companies and the new media have realized that they have to appeal to the wishes and wealth of children if they wanted to stay in business. Different companies at different times learned how to create a special world of children's own consumption. They also pulled young children much further from their parent's culture and experiences. How these processes were carried out, at different times and with different results, has not yet been clearly investigated. The late industrialized Scandinavian welfare states are drawing on other discourses of childhood, as is also the case for Proper Toys, a theme we will come back to.

Exploitation and individual autonomy

To sum up, both Cross's and Cook's studies deal with the history of modern children's culture and of how children contribute to this history, what is suitable for children or not, and how these attitudes have changed in different historical periods. Furthermore, they discuss the recent development in the 1990s, and the new relationship between capital and childhood. Both scholars strengthen the two important categories of class and gender, i.e. white urban middle-class parental values and their hegemonic role, but also how these values have been challenged by the market, and by the children themselves. They both also show a rather critical involvement with the terrain of capitalist childhood. As Daniel Cook has written in his book *The Commodification of childhood*, today children are born, live and grow in tandem with commercial culture. The twentieth century has not only been 'the century of the child', as it was christened by Ellen Key in 1909 – it must also be seen as the century of the child consumer (Cook 2004: 21). Markets shape persons in and through the consumer culture of childhood, though child consumers grow up to be something different than adult consumers and, let us add, the consumer culture and notions of childhoods are imbedded in national identities which differ.

Cook's historical research on the rise of the child consumer highlights how designers and marketers have managed to cultivate a consumer market at a deep level, beyond simple functional needs. Consumers are approached and addressed, as Cooks says, as having desires and aspirations that transcend the specific product at hand: the

need for belonging, for respect, for individuality and for being seen as someone worthy in the eyes of others. 'I felt like a good mother', the chairman of the board of the company Proper Toys insisted. As Pierre Bourdieu describes it, cultural capital consists of knowledge, tastes and preferences: it is the totality of an individual's learning, both formal and informal (Bourdieu 1995). As Bourdieu briefly explains, taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Taste is therefore seen precisely as the mechanism through which individual distinction operates alongside a wider question of social conformity. Cultural capital sees middle-class knowledge and expertise about proper toys – from moral values to issues of access and control across a wide range of toys, as well as including some toys and excluding others – as a key mechanism in the maintenance of social status. Proper toys paid for by adults to foster the skills of cultural capital will go through a selection process. Adults know what is 'proper' for children: they define 'outs' as well as 'ins' through the important factor of the exclusion of toys. In this way, consumption is connected to a more structural question of gate-keeping. Furthermore, children's consumption is very central in processes like individualization, inclusion and exclusion or marginalization because it is related to feelings of identity or belonging to a group of children or young people (Seiter 1993).

The changed relationships between children and parents are also extremely important. The recognition and appeasement of the child's point of view in commercial contexts began in the US in the 1930s and in Norway in the 1950s, marking a change not only in marketing and merchandising, but also in parent-child relations. From now on, the child's view was acknowledged, addressed and satisfied in many areas of social life. As Cook says, for a parent to do otherwise was to set themselves up as morally suspect.

Toys are more than tools in children's play, as Garry Cross also declares. They are also significant in the relationship between children and parents, where they serve as messages telling children what their parents expect of them, while also telling parents that their children seek recognition and freedom from them. These messages and how they have changed over the years mirror the history of childhood and child-raising (Cross 2004).

Here, as Cross implies, adults have created their own 'monsters'. By inflicting toys, signifying cuteness, suggesting what adults want children to be due to their own romanticized fantasies and idealized notions of the 'good childhood', making children accustomed to receiving such artefacts and opening the eyes of the toy industry to this immense potential, the 'nature' of available and popular toys have changed. As the toys have changed from properly sweet to improperly sexual, violent, grotesque objects threatening the 'innocent landscape of childhood', the latter was suddenly killed off by the change in its own symbols: the toys.

In the fragmented landscape of consumption today, the child consumer stands for both exploitation and individual autonomy. The marketers and advertisers have been able to position themselves and their products as children's allies. The social meaning of their goods and brands has reached a position where children 'come first'. Cook analyses this development by trying to uncover the hidden meaning of children's empowerment. Markets produce and reproduce social meaning, the meaning of things, of people, and generate particular meanings surrounding childhood and the child consumer. According to Cook, the construction of the autonomous child consumer shows the rational actor as the model of and for children's consumption. Since the 1990s the marketers have even come to believe that children are better equipped to resist the power of advertising and marketing due to changes in family structure and

to the increased choices offered to them in the market place.

What is often overlooked, is that to be empowered or to gain empowerment implies that one had already been in a state of disempowerment and that empowerment in some form is to be expected, desired and deserved. Through choice, recognition and involvement, the marketers want to liberate children from their powerless, circumscribed position in an adult-dominated world. They positively identify with children by adopting their point of view and perspective on the world. How is Proper Toys navigating today in this fragmented landscape?

The balance between proper and im-proper toys

We will now examine more closely Proper Toys' 'properness', seen within the innocent and threatened landscape of childhood. Since the notion of childhood is a social construction that indicates that every society has particular concepts about children and childhood which require and encourage the young generation to learn certain ways of behaving, thinking, speaking and interacting in terms of time and space, we also find different proper toys. The 'proper' toys that were marketed to children in 1946 or in the 1960s or today, are different, but we also find continuity.

How is the idea of 'properness' to be preserved when this idea is actually changing continuously? The toys offered by Proper Toys are selective, but how should they be profiled today? The child can choose, but with what possibility to choose 'im-proper' toys? Proper Toys means 'something else', as our informant said, but what?

Though Proper Toys was and is a commercial company, it is not a company that simply goes after the children's pocket money rather than their parents. The philosophy of the company or their idealism has changed but seems to have been compatible with economic prosperity, at least until the more recent period.

The problematic selection

Over the two last decades, there has been a steady growth in Proper Toys' economy. The company's definition of 'properness' has changed into something other than its legacy of idealism concerning what is best for the child.

The competence of the manager and chairman is, as already noted, that of educated preschool teachers. Their competence therefore seems satisfactory in relation to the company's traditional standards. The chairman is even the Norwegian president of the World Organization for Early Childhood Education or OMEP. The 'bond' between this organization and Proper Toys seems to be a tradition, given that many of the founders of Proper Toys also worked in this organization.

The company is still selective concerning the range of products that are offered in the store. Proper Toys distinguishes itself from other toy stores by not focusing on the heavily marketed, popular toys or the even more extreme and short-lived toy 'crazes', spin-offs from media texts, toys that 'every' child has to 'have' for a relatively short period of time. However, today this is a complex field.

Freedom of choice

For the first: Proper Toys markets a broad selection of toys to its customers. Individual differences between children are given as an important reason for this offering. Today the notion of diversity is important, that is, the ability to offer toys for every child, at least in the age group 0-6, whether a boy or a girl or a child with special needs. The greater variation allows children to relate to their own surroundings, since freedom of choice is closely related to modern consumerism,

where the choice between consumers and activities is emphasised, as it is by Proper Toys too.

Variety

Secondly, manifold is important. When it comes to prices too, Proper Toys makes an effort to have something to offer for 'everyone', not only those who are better off financially.

Aesthetics

Thirdly, as in the formative years in the 1940s and 1950s, design still plays an important role, emphasising the aesthetics of the toys. As taste varies individually, this is the argument for diversity in design.

Nostalgia

Fourthly, nostalgia is an underlying element that should still not be overlooked when studying the selection of proper toys. Parents want 'the best' for their own children, and their reference for this often seems to be certain positive memories of their own childhood. Symbols of a past childhood, such as toys with a nostalgic appeal (at least the wrapping), are therefore popular, and Proper Toys encourages this, as they have a broad selection of toys which have a nostalgic appeal to both parents and grandparents. From an adult point of view, cool toys can become 'cute in a cool way', as they see the 'cool' toys from their own childhood as 'cute' in retrospect.

Defining 'properness' through 'im-properness'?

In the last section we examine more closely how regarding some toys as im-proper toys has created a complexity that is hard to understand.

Proper Toys still does not sell toy weapons of any kind or 'aggression promoting toys', for example, action figures such as Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles or Transformers. It does, however, sell superheroes like Superman or Batman, but none of their 'violent' accessories. They sell certain historical figures like Norseman figures, pirates, knights or cowboys, although these figures often tend to be holding weapons. However, they do not sell any modern figures that use 'high-tech' weapons. The argument for selling historical figures with weapons is that they represent a part of 'our' history, a play with certain narrative qualities, included characters and storylines. We find fictional portrayals of childlike figures, created in agreement with the adult image of children, and often exposed to challenges which they must handle in order for the story to take the right turn and for the characters to develop in the 'right' direction (Cross 2004: Chapter 5), thus agreeing with, and taking lessons from, the values that are regarded as proper by adults. The possibility that this hegemony increasingly seems to produce the reaction of children rebelling against it is another question.

Proper Toys has a legacy, manifested by its history, committing it to not selling war toys. The company wants to keep adult customers who expect to find carefully selected proper toys in its store, something different than what is being sold in other toy stores. They want 'the cute', not 'the cool', they want 'progress', not 'frivolity'.

For its part, the company has to modernize and select continually in order to stay in business. One of the strategies it has adopted has been to include a few of the new spin-offs from multimedia phenomena. Popular toys, even some of the 'crazes' such as Pokèmon from the Nintendo Company, have been included for a while.

Although the company still prefers toys which are ‘useful for children’s development’ above those which are generally popular and heavily marketed as entertainment, or better as ‘edu-tainment’, they have loosened their criteria for which toys can be included in their selection. Fun for the children seems to be more important than ‘the right progress of the child’, although selectivity is also a key word in this context. Spin-off products seem to constitute rather a supplement than a main attraction constituting a new commercial strategy. If the latter were the case, the company would come to appear like every other toy store and thus lose a segment of the market instead of keeping its core business going.

Like the Lego company (Hjarvard 2004: 52), Proper Toys is in some way is a rather restrictive one. Its development and power (or at least the symbolic power) seems to be based on its own ideas and values within a Nordic culture. An example of this protection and responsibility is the attitudes of both companies towards the Barbie doll. The Barbie doll is an example of an item that Proper Toys chose not to sell. The decision in the early 1960s was founded on their view of the Barbie doll as a toy that was discriminating in relation to women, an im-proper toy just as much as the ‘war toys’. A Barbie/youth soap-universe for older girls, in which exclusive leisure activities, above all fashion, make up the dominate play activity, , was considered im-proper. As with Lego’s educational and proper image, some fictional genres and narrative components were missing. Not only was violence strongly deprecated, but some sexual themes were also completely absent. The company did not want to encourage a beautiful or sexualised expression of childhood or femininity.

Proper Toys still does not sell Barbie dolls or any of the other fashion dolls either, as it does not want to promote this glamorous ‘all-about-beauty’ lifestyle to girls. As an alternative they sell dolls from the lesser known ‘Only Hearts Club’ brand. Here the dolls are more ‘normal’ looking, with various faces resembling girls in actual life. Although the manager acknowledges that Barbie is different today than she was in 1960s, since the general attitude towards her has changed, the manager still has reservations about her. In a steadily more complex and subtle market of new toys for children, the manager explained how at one point the company sold a collection of the brand new Bratz dolls. The dolls were considered acceptable for a while, until the new collection for the summer season came along: ‘This is getting more and more “porno”; get rid of it!’ There were fewer and fewer clothes on the dolls, he explained to us in the interview. The company regarded the increasing sexualisation of girls in media representations and the advertising of fashion clothing as a rather negative development.

The company still filters out the kinds of toys which are thought to send ‘wrong’ or morally incorrect messages to children, here exemplified by the ‘sexualized’ toys for girls. The reason for this is that the owners of Proper Toys relies on both their competence as educated preschool teachers and the norms of the company in the decision-making process. The more recent inclusion of some popular branded toys in which the pedagogical function is regarded as not being all that evident illustrates a greater appreciation of the entertaining function of toys than was apparent in earlier years. It shows that Proper Toys has opened its doors to toys which are popular. This popularity, however, is commercially produced. As Stig Hjarvard puts it: ‘The revolution in consumption has paved the way for a “hyper consumption”, in which a steady amount of consumer goods has to be sold and consumed within an ever-shorter time cycle’ (Hjarvard 2004: 45).

Conclusion

By looking at how proper toys are defined and singled out from other products, we also acquire an insight into the way in which adults define childhood, how children's play is valued, and how children are considered modern consumers, projected to an ever-increasing level of marketing. Markets produce and reproduce social meaning, as well as generate particular meanings surrounding childhood. Through choice, recognition and involvement, the marketers want to liberate children from their powerless, circumscribed position in an adult-dominated world above all because they want to sell goods.

However, parents and grandparents still come in to Proper Toys and decide what they want for their children and grandchildren. It would be wrong to say that children are forced to make the 'right choices', but probably they are more guided in doing so compared with other toy stores.

The toys seem to be very parent-friendly in their approach and profile. We still do not find 'war games' or 'sexualized' toys, but selecting them has become much more complicated than before. Today toy makers base new toy designs on children's fantasies based on children's own desires, which are separate from those of adults. A toy company invites children to help it in designing new products. Today advertisers are telling adults that childhood is a time for the child's exploration of play and fun, and they positively identify with children by adopting their point of view and perspective on the world.

The rhetoric of play as progress has a strong tradition within the company. This tradition builds on the hegemony of adults, which claims to know children's 'own good' better. Though individuality today is very important, Proper Toys takes a pride in offering something for every taste, but stimulating some kinds of play while excluding others, and balancing between pedagogical discourses on one hand and market forces on the other. This is a form of the progress rhetoric of play, pursued in order to maintain adult hegemony, says Sutton-Smith. He finds it paradoxical that 'children, who are supposed to be the players among us, are allowed much less freedom for irrational, wild, dark or deep play in Western culture than adults, who are thought not to play at all' (Sutton-Smith 1997: 151-2.)

Nonetheless Proper Toys still stands out as a niche store which specializes in offering a broad selection of toys and by filtering out toys that are perceived as im-proper by adults. Its selection of toys appeals both adults' nostalgia and taste, as it stresses design in a market which has changed fundamentally since 1946. The question is, however, whether proper toys today can be 'cool' enough for the 'new' kids, at a time when it has become even childish to play with toys, but attractive to play with media. By not addressing children as customers, Proper Toys' ideologically seems to agree with the notion that children should be protected from advertising due to their vulnerability as modern consumers, in line with the attitude of the Norwegian welfare state, which has created guidelines to protect children from the culture of mass consumption.

The company's changing definitions of proper and the im-proper toys are therefore part of a wider discourse produced by adults about children. Claiming to sell toys that are proper to children also entails promoting a view of adult responsibility, of what is 'best for children'. The selection of toys is made by adults and promoted towards adults, who provide them for their children. Toys given in such a way also serve as a message from the parents in telling children what their parents expect from and offer to them. By filtering out im-proper toys, such as the 'violent' toys and the 'sexualized' toys, from certain moral values which seem to pose a threat to the

hegemony of adults, Proper Toys poses a 'safe haven' for adults who want to guide children through a complex field of child consumption.

The store's name bears a legacy which seems to legitimize its right to define 'properness', although the company draws a fine line between an ideological commitment to the past and the position of a commercial company in a contemporary society defined in part by consumption. Coming closer to the present, it becomes even more necessary to consider marketing as a global phenomenon, the most important characteristic of our contemporary society (Baumann 1999). The emerging global market for children's goods is creating a new connection between children's personhood and children's consumption that we still know less about. Not at least, it is necessary to draw greater attention to the increased role of entertainment.

Finally, the history of Proper Toys is a history not only of marketing to children, but also of certain notions of what a Nordic childhood and Nordic culture are. To analyse how toys, childhood and the consuming child are viewed within certain discourses in Norway as a western consumer society, we can obtain more insights into consuming culture as its complexity.

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The politics of food: Childhood, obesity and television advertising

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Abstract

This paper is based on a study which intends to analyse debates surrounding the regulation of 'junk-food' advertising to children, in the UK, the US and Norway, and the constructions or definitions of childhood that are at stake in these debates. These analyses will include media coverage, public debate and policy discourse; TV as well as press, if possible, corporate publicity, political documents and statements and textual analysis and interviews. The project seeks to contrast the ways in which child consumers are defined in the context of Norway with a much more consumer-oriented context like the US and a 'semi-regulated' setting like the UK.

1. Introduction: Obesity as a hot topic

Obesity has the recent years become a hot topic in policy debates, media discourse and academic literature in many countries. The phenomenon is even spoken of with concepts like *global epidemic* (Okie 2005) *globesity* (Dávidsdóttir 2005) and a *pandemic* which is suggested to be by far the fastest growing public health crisis in the industrialized world (Shell 2003). Among 8-12 years old children in Oslo (Norway), 21 % of them has an overweight/obesity problem (Andersen et al 2005) and at a national level this number is about 10-15 %. Obesity is not equally distributed in all families. Families where the parents have low education tend to have the highest level of child obesity. There are also some significant differences between Norway and other European countries and also compared to other Nordic countries. According to the National Council for Nutrition, there are significant differences for instance in food intake. In EU, 30 % of the child population is said to have a serious problem with the weight and the concern is that Europe will go in the same direction as US

and face an obesity problem out of control. A crucial question is how to tackle this problem. There has been a longstanding public concern over the potentially harmful effects of food promotion on children (Livingstone and Helsper 2006). And as a way to avoid this development, UK has banned television advertisement of unhealthy food to children under the age of 16 this year. In Norway, the situation is different. I will return to this later.

Discourses of the consuming child

This paper is part of a sub project *Discourses of the consuming child* under the umbrella “Consuming Children, Commercialisation and the Changing Construction of Childhood” which is a 3 year research project, financed by the Norwegian Research Council, running at the Norwegian centre for child research in Trondheim, Norway from 2006-2009.

<http://www.svt.ntnu.no/noseb/Consuming/> Some of the sub projects have already started, while some are about to start. I am developing my part of it this fall, so this presentation will be based both on some overall research questions, perspectives and approaches at this stage of the study.

What we intend to do is to analyse debates surrounding the regulation of ‘junk-food’ advertising to children, in the UK, the US and Norway, and the constructions or definitions of childhood that are at stake in these debates. These analyses will include media coverage, public debate and policy discourse; TV as well as press, if possible, corporate publicity, political documents and statements, etc. and textual analysis and interviews. The project seeks to contrast the ways in which child consumers are defined in the context of Norway with a much more consumer-oriented context like the US and a ‘semi-regulated’ setting like the UK. A MA-student has together with the project directors, David Buckingham and me, done interviews with key informants in UK. I am planning to do the same in Norway. This sub-project is a kind of reflexive meta-project – that is, one in which we will be interrogating the assumptions and discourses about childhood that characterise the whole range of areas we are considering here, including not just marketing discourse but also policy, academic discourse, public debate, etc.

As a ‘hot’ topic in policy debates in many countries, the obesity debates raise a series of questions. Some questions to be addressed (from the proposal, <http://www.svt.ntnu.no/noseb/Consuming/TheProject.htm>) include:

- To what extent, and by whom, are children defined as competent or incompetent, as passive consumers or as active agents, as vulnerable and ignorant or as ‘savvy’ and sophisticated?
- How do these competing discourses about child consumers relate to broader definitions and representations of childhood in the public sphere?
- To what extent are these discourses based on essentialist notions of childhood and adulthood as separate ‘spaces’?
- What evidence is adduced to support the various positions that are adopted?
- To what extent is the commercial targeting of children precipitating a public health crisis?
- To what extent might the regulation of marketing practices (e.g. advertising of ‘junk food’, food labelling) be able to prevent this?

This topic relates to children quite literally as ‘consumers’; and the debates that have been carried on (in the public media, in policy circles) raise, as already mentioned, fundamental questions about the relation between the state and the market, about the construction of children’s ‘wants’ and ‘needs’, about relations between parents and children, and so on. They also raise questions about the relationship between academic research (which is actually quite equivocal on these issues) and the making of public policy (which needs to be seen to provide ‘solutions’). The debate raises some interesting questions about the construction of childhood (‘innocence’ versus ‘experience’), and about the role of marketing (corrupting the innocent).

The project, as I describe it here as a discourse analyses based on material from so different contexts as UK, US and Norway, might look too ambitious, even impossible to carry out. We have, however, not any ambition of doing a comparative study in a strict sense, but rather use the different contexts to identify differences and similarities.

One way to approach these questions in a concrete and manageable way is to figure out:

- Who are the actors in these debates?
- What are their arguments?
- What conceptions of childhood are implicitly embedded in the debates and arguments?
- On what kind of rationale and evidence are political recommendations based?

A crucial question to ask is also whether the industry and the market are becoming easy scapegoats to be blamed for causing problems that are far more complex than being isolated to a matter of one single cause-and-effect.

Public debates

In public debates, child obesity is often presented as the most serious aspect of the obesity problem. Media coverage such as the newspaper headlines below, gathered over a couple of weeks in Norway in the spring of 2003, shows some examples of a cultural discourse where food and beverage, nutrition, health and body is intertwined with contemporary anxieties about children and childhood.

- To get slim is becoming an increased problem among children.
- Children get too much sweet drinks and sweets.
- Young people get diabetes 2.
- Day care children risk mal nutrition.
- With jam on the time table (Rogers and Tingstad 2003).

An increasing number of debates over the last years calls for immediate action to tackle child obesity. Several activist groups and experts of different kinds emerge to take care of these issues, such as different consumer groups and consumer organisations as well as nutritionists, medical experts and politicians. Food and health are not any longer a topic just for a few experts. The obesity debates escalate in a context which in terms of time and space is linked to other hot issues related to food, such as food additiveness in food, anorexia, bulimia, mal nutrition and global inequality in food distribution. With reference to food scandals, such as the outbreak of BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy), the debates over GMOs (genetically modified organisms) and salmonella and dioxins in chicken, Lien (2004) regards the 1990s as to represent a historical watershed with regard to the way food is thought about, talked about and handled. She argues that what could previously be left to food-safety authorities and nutrition expertise, hit the headlines of the news media and became a topic of expert controversy and public debate. Food is no longer simply a much-needed material resource. Its purchase is now linked to the need to balance monetary concerns with issues of risk and distrust. Lien argues that contemporary issues about food and nutrition require that

our notion of the politics of food is expanded to fields not traditionally thought of as 'political'.

Theoretical approach

Food and nutrition thus have emerged as discourses in contemporary societies. In this paper, I use the term 'discourse' in a wide and non-technical sense (Potter and Wetherell 2001), taking the view that since representations of the world are interpretations, they imply constructions, some of which will be obvious and natural and therefore hegemonic (Gullestad 2002). Such interpretations emerge in discursive formations that are constantly undergoing changes.

Foucault states that discourses are "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault 1972: 49). By studying them, it is possible to identify connotations that are related to social categories and how they shift according to historical, political and social contexts.

Food is, whether it refers to scandals or child obesity, highly political and controversial in the sense that it is linked to a wide range of issues and complex processes in society, like global market economy and various commercial interests, conflicting ideas of national regulation, nutrition and health, environmental issues like "green and clean food" and "short travelled food" (kortreist mat), cultural traditions, personal food preferences and cultural constructions of body and appearance. As food and obesity relate to a "reality" which is closely connected to these various issues, processes and interests, the rationale beyond different arguments and the definitions of the concepts in use are also complex and often contradicting and problematic.

The concept of obesity is, for instance, problematic as it often is taken for granted as a fixed and clear concept. But as Pollock has described, this concept has traditionally been dominated by biological and medical criteria. These have been based on a dimension of body image that is formulated around a particular society's considerations of acceptable body size and with strong negative overtones through the development of philosophical tenets that support the idea that the flesh must be controlled by the spirit...or the mind over the body (Pollock 1995). For children such considerations may mean that they from birth are measured and evaluated according to 'normal' standards of height and weight.

"A number of different measures to define obesity have been proposed in the literature. These enable a numerical value to be assigned against which it is possible to assess whether a particular body is over-or-undersized. Body mass index (BMI) has

been the value most widely used in the United States and Britain; this correlates weight in kg with height in cm squared to yield a figure somewhere between 20 and 30 as a desirable weight/height ratio for western adults (Pollock 1995: xviii).

These measures have, according to Pollock, been questioned as they are derived from select groups of participants, not from a random selection of any given population. Another question is that such measures of obesity have been derived and used as indicators of the risks of certain diseases or of mortality; i.e. that a particular BMI qualifies a person for the risk of suffering coronary heart disease, hypertension and associated diseases such as diabetes. The focus has also here been mainly on western populations. An interesting dimension, as mentioned by Pollock, is that large body size was identified as a risk to survival in 1911 when the first life insurance data were being compiled. These studies established the baseline for acceptable versus non-acceptable standards of body size in both the United States and Great Britain (Bray 1979). As a result, standard average tables have become established that correlate height with weight. The question Pollock asks is whether the very existence of these kinds of overall measures may be as much the cause as it is part of the treatment, arguing that a number of authors have contested the association between obesity and western diseases. Several authors raise cautions about linking food practices too closely to obesity. These authors argue that there is a loose linkage between food intake and body weight; rather they argue for a wider genetic-environmental interaction (Huenemann et.al 1996; Sobal and Stunkard 1989). A recent article challenges the dominant idea that the driving factors behind expanding epidemics such as obesity are ascribed to a mismatch between the body's homeostatic nutrient requirements and dietary excess, coupled with insufficient exercise (Grün and Blumberg 2007). These authors present a hypothesis, proposing that exposure to a toxic chemical burden is put on top of on these conditions to initiate or make worse the development of obesity and its associated health consequences. It is obvious that it makes a difference, politically, whether the focus in the obesity discourse is placed on the individual intake of sugar and fat and the level of exercise or, on the other hand, on a more global 'politics of food', in which wider questions about food production are involved.

Regulating television advertising: the question of age and competence

It has been taken several initiatives both nationally and internationally, intending to deal with obesity as a serious health problem. The "diagnose" and the "medicine" which different actors prescribe are, however, rather contradicting. There seems to be an emerging consensus that

regulation of food advertising to children is both necessary and achievable (Ashton 2004). In May 2006, the World Health Organization organized a Forum and Technical Meeting on the marketing of food and non-alcoholic beverages to children. This meeting was held in Oslo. The objectives of the Forum were “to review the current state of knowledge regarding the influence of marketing, including advertising, of foods and non-alcoholic beverages on children’s dietary choices; to discuss the implications of this influence on children’s nutritional status; and to review national experiences and actions taken by various stakeholders to address the issue” (WHO 2006). ‘Marketing’ includes here all forms of commercial promotion; that means promotion that is deliberately targeted to children and scheduled to reach them and promotion that is targeted at other groups but to which children are widely exposed. An interesting aspect in the WHO report is linked to the definition of the concept of children. ‘Children’ is, not surprisingly, agreed to mean all persons aged under 18 years, following the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. But in this context, it was recognized that “children under the age of about 13 years are more vulnerable and may therefore require more stringent protections” (WHO 2006:1). The report also highlights what is assumed as a fact; that food advertising affects food choices and influences dietary habits and specifies that food and beverage advertisements should not exploit children’s inexperience or credulity. A question to ask is on what kind of rationale this exact age indication was decided. As Livingstone and Helsper argue, it is widely assumed in academic and policy circles that younger children are more influenced by advertising than are older children (Livingstone and Helsper 2006). By reviewing empirical findings in relation to advertising and children’s food choice, they critically examine the theoretical gap in the literature regarding the relationship between advertising literacy and advertising effects. They reject the assumption that younger children are more influenced by advertising than older children. They hesitate to draw the opposite conclusion, namely that teenagers are more affected by advertising than young children. There is evidence, they argue, that children of all ages are affected by advertising.

The ongoing debates and formal encounters and reports about the relations between child obesity and television advertising, which this WHO meeting was a part of, represent a discourse, raising fundamental questions. These questions go beyond the issue of food, such as the relation between the state and the market, parents and children, children and media, the various ways in which children’s everyday lives are organised, such as the apparent declining level of physical activity and the sedentary lifestyles compared to a few

generations ago (Ashton 2004), and not least, the questions of age and images of childhood.

It is possible to analyse the discourses about childhood and obesity in terms of the concept 'moral panic' (Cohen 1972). Referring to Great Britain, Jenkins (1992) discusses the role of moral panics in the 1980s concerning what was characterised as social problems, such as drug and drink problems, violence, and interest groups approaching what is defined as social problems. "In each case", he argues,

"...we find a number of influential claims-makers, each with a set of interest or a political agenda. There is evidence for the role of all types of moral entrepreneurs and interest groups: individuals, pressure groups, and bureaucratic agencies, with a complex and often shifting pattern of alliances between them" (Philips 1992: 10).

Looking at the obesity discourse, we may also face a certain level of convergence and an "interdependence of panics", not least related to competing definitions of childhood that are apparent in many public policy debates. This interdependence means that problems and panics are closely connected to each other, and it is essential to understand them as an interlinked complex rather than as single and independent incidents. One panic is fruitful for another and vice versa, so to speak. This approach will constitute a central theoretical perspective in the study which I now am going to present.

The banning of junk food advertisements in Great Britain

A context which surrounds the debates about children and obesity is the British banning of junk food advertisement in children's television and the arguments that the food industry, the market and the media are the ones to blame for the obesity epidemic. Ofcom (Office of Communication), the British media regulator, introduced new restrictions in 2007 on the television advertising of food and drink products to children. Ofcom decided that one of its regulatory objectives is to reduce significantly the exposure of children under 16 to the advertising of food and drink products that are high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS). This will be done, according to Ofcom, by the most targeted and proportionate means as possible, balancing this objective against its statutory duties to secure television programmes of high quality and wide appeal. Ofcom has also decided that restrictions targeting the advertising of HFSS products will use the current Nutrient Profiling scheme developed by the Food Standards Agency. On the balance of the evidence, Ofcom believes that the best way to

achieve its objectives would be a total ban on HFSS food and drink advertisements in and around all programmes of particular appeal to children under the age of 16, broadcast at any time of day or night on any channel.

The Norwegian case

In Norway, this situation is somewhat different. A crucial aspect is that television advertisement has always been strictly regulated. The public broadcaster NRK was the only television channel until early 1980s when the commercial television channels were introduced for the first time and the monopoly of NRK was challenged. Television companies which produce children's television and send from Norway are not allowed to show advertisements in their programs. With the exception of an increasing number of spin-off products, being promoted from early 1990s, children have to a large extent been protected from direct marketing through television targeted to them. The Office of the Consumer Ombudsman is an independent authority that monitors marketing activities and negotiates contracts between consumers and business. In addition, the Ombudsman can impose sanctions. The Marketing Control Act is the general regulation for all marketing activities supervised by the Consumer Ombudsman. This act states that marketing activities should not be in conflict with good marketing practice or otherwise unfair on consumers. Marketing should not be misleading or incorrect. The Office of the Consumer Ombudsman has handled several cases of misleading or incorrect marketing practices, most of which have been initiated by consumers. The ombudsman says in the WHO report that there is no overall self-regulatory framework to address food marketing aimed at children in Norway. Several companies claim to have internal guidelines, but do not promote them. No initiatives have been taken by trade associations to establish a self-regulatory framework.

As a conclusion, there is no final conclusion yet where the policies is going in Norway; the arguments so far seem mainly to have been in favour of a politics of self-regulations, trusting the food industry and marketers. Hopefully, this study will give more knowledge on this issue.

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Theme 3. Competition, (de)regulation, and consumer behavior

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Five years after the euro changeover – How long does it take to learn prices?

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Abstract

As expected, immediately after the changeover to the euro, consumer price knowledge in Finland was clearly weaker than in the era of the Finnish mark. However, a surprising result of our study was that this weakening was not only an initial and short-term shock caused by the new currency. Consumer price knowledge has not improved significantly in five years. It looks probable that the reason for the decreased price knowledge is the change in nominal values. Earlier literature has shown the relevance of nominal values in the market. The results of our study indicate that nominal measures have a strong impact on how consumers estimate prices and, therefore, on how they learn prices.

1. Introduction

Price is one of the most important criteria in the choice of both stores and products (see e.g. Monroe & Lee, 1999; Binkley & Bejnarowicz, 2003). Its importance, however, depends on the product, situation and consumer characteristics. In grocery retailing the price of a product is an elementary attribute, both for retailers and consumers. Retailers by and large apply prices in their marketing activities. Because consumers visit grocery stores several times a week, and buy certain items frequently, we may suppose that they learn the prices of these products. Furthermore, price development is officially followed in inflation rates.

In neoclassical economics it is assumed that consumers collect all the relevant information and are therefore conscious and rational actors in the market. In practice this assumption is incorrect (see e.g. Vanhuele & Drèze, 2002). Several studies have demonstrated that consumers do not even know the prices of the products they have just selected in the store (e.g. Dickson & Sawyer, 1990; Wakefield & Inman, 1993). This has been explained by a lack of attention and motivation among consumers, difficulties in storing and retrieving prices from the memory, as well as the disturbance in a store environment (Vanhuele et al., 2006, 163).

The introduction of the euro in 2002 confused people's conceptions of prices. Consumers throughout the eurozone claimed inflation to be higher than it was officially calculated to be right after the changeover in early 2002. The gap between actual and perceived inflation grew even wider in the course of 2002. The euro is not the only explanation for this confusion. Another important reason, according to the ECB, is the concurrent rise in the prices of frequently purchased goods, such as food and petrol. (ECB, 2002.) The prices of products that belong centrally to consumers' everyday life have too much emphasis when laymen estimate inflation.

The euro changeover stimulated price knowledge research in Europe (e.g. Jonas et al., 2002; Aalto-Setälä & Raijas, 2003a, 2003b, 2005; Anttila, 2004; Guido & Peluso, 2004; Marques & Dehaene, 2004; Gamble, 2006). The issue is interesting in many forums: in science, politics, retailing and consumers' everyday life. In our earlier study (Aalto-Setälä & Raijas, 2003a) we found that the introduction of the euro was a shock for consumers and resulted in a dramatic fall in their knowledge of prices, even of frequently purchased groceries (Aalto-Setälä & Raijas, 2003b). The same result was also found in Austria and Portugal (Marques & Dehaene, 2004).

This study further examines the consumer price-learning process. Our long-term study utilizes the massive real experiment in Western Europe – the euro changeover – to witness how long it will take for consumers to learn prices expressed in a new currency. Based on the assumption that grocery prices are frequently seen everywhere, we would like to determine the speed of this learning process.

The paper is organized as follows. The next section reviews earlier research in this field, following by a description of the data and methods used in our study. After that we present our empirical analysis and results. The final section contains discussion and our conclusions.

2. Previous studies

Price awareness or *price knowledge* refers to the ability of consumers to remember the prices of commodities. In earlier studies, price knowledge has mainly been operationalised as the ability of shoppers to 1) tell the exact prices for those products they have just bought, 2) rank items according to their prices, and 3) recognise the price of a particular item (see Monroe & Lee, 1999). Consumer price knowledge has been widely studied, especially for frequently purchased groceries such as coffee, breakfast cereals, soft drinks, and milk (Conover, 1986; Dickson &

Sawyer, 1990; Krishna et al., 1991; Wakefield & Inman, 1993). These studies have concluded that consumer price knowledge is quite limited.

Since March 2000 the European Commission has regularly monitored the changes in citizens' general perceptions concerning the euro in all 12 euro countries. Here we examine the results for Finland. In 2006, over two thirds of Finns had adjusted to the euro without difficulties. The other side of the result, however, is that a sizable proportion of Finnish citizens still have at least some difficulties with the euro. In Finland the adoption of the euro has proceeded faster than in the eurozone on average, where 59% have reported no difficulty in the use of the euro. Even though the majority of euro citizens feel quite comfortable with the euro, improvements in handling euros from 2003 to 2006 have been minor. In other words, those who had no difficulties with the euro adopted it immediately after the changeover, and those who have had some problems are learning to get used it very slowly. Consumers have found the benefits of the euro to include the convenience when travelling around Europe, price comparison between the euro countries and Europe's stronger status in the world. However, consumers are still convinced that the euro has influenced inflation: as many as 91% of Finns thought that the introduction of the euro has increased prices. (European Commission, 2006, 5–34.)

The euro changeover brought consumers to a situation where they had to create a new set of monetary references and a new scale of prices (see Guido & Peluso, 2004, 200). All this can be learned easily in case of frequently purchased products, but when making more rare purchases of expensive items the former currency is more easily utilised. With small purchases, Finns are able to think in euros, but with exceptional purchases they still lean on the former currency. Consumers tend to convert prices to the euro in an uncomplicated way. In Finland the euro corresponds to 5.94573 Finnish marks, so the rounded conversion rate is six. Nonetheless, three out of four think that dual pricing is not useful for them. (European Commission, 2006, 12, 20.)

Market prices and pricing strategies have a considerable effect on how consumers learn new prices (Juliussen et al., 2005). Research has suggested that consumers live in a "euro illusion" where they evaluate prices in a nominal, not a real value (Burgoyne et al., 1999; Jonas et al., 2002). The term 'money illusion' refers to a tendency to think of prices in terms of nominal rather than real monetary values. Money illusion was already described in the first half of the 20th century (Fisher, 1928). However, the success of the rational expectations revolution caused money illusion to disappear as a topic of economics until behavioural economists started to examine the issue again. Perhaps the best-known articles about money illusion are those of Shafir et al. (1997) and Fehr and Tyran (2001). These articles showed that people often think about economic transactions not only in real terms but also in nominal terms. Fehr and Tyran further showed that money illusion has an impact on market mechanisms. The impact of money illusion is especially significant after a negative nominal shock because people are reluctant to reduce nominal prices.

The euro changeover is obviously a huge possible source of money illusion. In Finland, like in most euro countries, nominal prices are lower in euros than they were in the former national currency. With the euro illusion, consumers systematically overestimate prices with a high

nominal value and underestimate prices with a low nominal value (Gamble 2006, 532). When nominal prices expressed in euros are lower than in the former national currency, prices appear to be cheaper than earlier. This might have some influence on shopping behaviour. Almost half of Finns told that the euro has had no influence on their purchasing behaviour, but more than one in three said they buy more because they have difficulties understanding how much they are spending (European Commission, 2006, 13).

3. Data and methods

We have examined the price knowledge of Finnish consumers since the euro changeover and reported the results in several papers (Aalto-Setälä & Raijas, 2003a, 2003b, 2005). We developed a completely new approach to studying price knowledge, comparing consumer price estimations with actual market prices. Our study thus follows one of the main traditions in price knowledge research (see Dickson & Sawyer, 1990; Mazumdar & Monroe, 1992; Estelami 1998), as we compare consumers' estimated prices with actual prices. Our longitudinal data are, however, unique because we have collected the data at several points in time before and after the changeover to the euro.

This study utilizes unique data sets from the era of the national currency (2001) up until five years after the euro changeover. The aim of the study is to examine consumer price knowledge with two data sets: price data and price estimate data. The data sets were collected at six time points: at the end of 2001 (just before the euro changeover), in March 2002 (three months after the changeover), January 2003 (one year after the changeover), January 2004 (two years after the changeover), January 2005 (three years after the changeover), and January 2007 (five years after the changeover). As a consequence, we have obtained unique information about the consumer price-learning process from the end of 2001 until the beginning of 2007.

For our study we selected five everyday products sold in grocery stores. The products in the data are: a 1.5 litre bottle of *Coca Cola* soft drink, a 500 gram package of *Juhla Mokka* coffee, a 580 gram package of *HK sausage*, 1 litre of 1% fat milk, and a 1 kilogram package of sugar. *Coca Cola*, *Juhla Mokka* and *HK sausage* represent the leading brands in their product categories in Finnish grocery markets. The brands of milk and sugar were not specified. Milk and sugar are homogenous products that have no significant variation between brands in either quality or price. There are also very few companies in Finland that produce these items.

Price data

The price data set contains observations of the actual prices of the selected items mentioned above. The price inspectors from the Finnish Consumer Agency visited 82 grocery stores around Finland during two days at the six time points (from 2001 to 2007, see above), collecting the prices of the designated products. The data collection process was identical each year. The retailers were given no prior notice of the inspectors' visits in order to ensure that the prices

would be “normal.” Of course, as always, some of the items could be on special offer at a particular point in the data collection. Price data were gathered from the sample, which included all types of grocery stores, small and large. However, the sample is biased towards supermarkets and hypermarkets and, as a result, does not generally represent Finnish grocery stores. Large grocery stores typically have a lower price level than smaller ones, and so the prices in our data would have been slightly higher had we collected more price data from small stores.

Price estimate data

The data on the consumers’ price estimates were collected by telephone interviews. The sample of consumers was stratified. The price estimate data include 1000 interviews in each year and the data collection was conducted at the same time as the price data. The consumers were not the same in each data collection period but were selected randomly. In the telephone interview we assumed that the respondents had no opportunity to check any prices but had to immediately tell the price they remembered. The sample represents the adult population between 15 and 79 years old in Finland. Half of the respondents were women and half men. The data emphasized the older age groups: 27% of the respondents were 35–49 years old and 42% were 50–79 years old. Altogether, 28% of the respondents had attended elementary school and the same percentage vocational school. A quarter of the respondents were workers, a quarter were retired and a fifth were officials; 38% of the respondent lived in families with children, 25% were childless couples, and 21% lived alone. The respondents lived in different parts in Finland: 41% in Southern Finland and 35% in Western Finland.

Methods

This study examines consumer price knowledge from 2001 until 2007. In our analysis we utilize two measures of price knowledge: the *proportion of the respondents* who were able to estimate the prices of the selected products and the *mean difference* between the average market price and the single price estimate. The mean difference is calculated as the proportion of the average price.

4. Results

Table 1 presents the proportion the respondents who could estimate the prices of the selected products and the mean difference between the average market price and single price estimate. In the empirical analysis we divide the respondents into three age groups: 15–29 years, 30–49 years and 50–74 years.

In 2001, 94% of the participants were able to give price estimates. The youngest consumers were most often able to give a price estimate while the response rate of the oldest consumers was the lowest. Immediately after the changeover, the average response rate dropped from 94% to 84%. Although the response rate was already lowest among the oldest participants in 2001, it also decreased more after the changeover in this age group than among younger respondents.

Surprisingly, the response rate has improved very slowly since the changeover, and at present it is still 6 percentage units lower than in 2001.

In 2001 the average mean error was 0.197, meaning that the difference between the average market price and the single consumer price estimate was on average 19.7%. The mean error increased after the changeover to the euro and has not decreased since then. As a matter of fact, the mean error is even higher five years after the changeover in 2007 than it was immediately after the changeover in 2002. The mean error among the youngest respondents has been the highest with the exception of 2007, when the oldest respondents had the highest mean error.

Table 1. The proportion of participants in each age group able to provide price estimates for selected products (response rate) and mean error of price estimates from 2001–2007

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2007
<i>Response rate:</i>						
15 – 29 years	97	90	93	94	92	95
30 – 49 years	96	87	90	92	90	92
50 – 74 years	89	74	75	78	77	77
Average	94.0	83.7	86.0	88.0	86.3	88.0
<i>Mean error:</i>						
15 – 29 years	0.22	0.26	0.24	0.29	0.28	0.27
30 – 49 years	0.18	0.20	0.20	0.23	0.24	0.25
50 – 74 years	0.19	0.21	0.21	0.26	0.25	0.28
Average	0.197	0.223	0.217	0.260	0.257	0.266

The development of consumer price knowledge over time can be distinctly seen in Figure 1. The values of the response rates and mean errors (from Table 1) have been indexed to be 1 in 2001. Thus, the years 2002 to 2007 are compared to 2001. Figure 1 illustrates that the response rate decreased immediately after the euro changeover and has recovered to only a minor extent. The mean error deteriorated immediately after the changeover. Surprisingly, the mean error has not improved during the five years since the changeover and was highest in 2007. Thus, it appears unlikely that consumer price knowledge will recover in the near future to the same level as before the euro changeover.

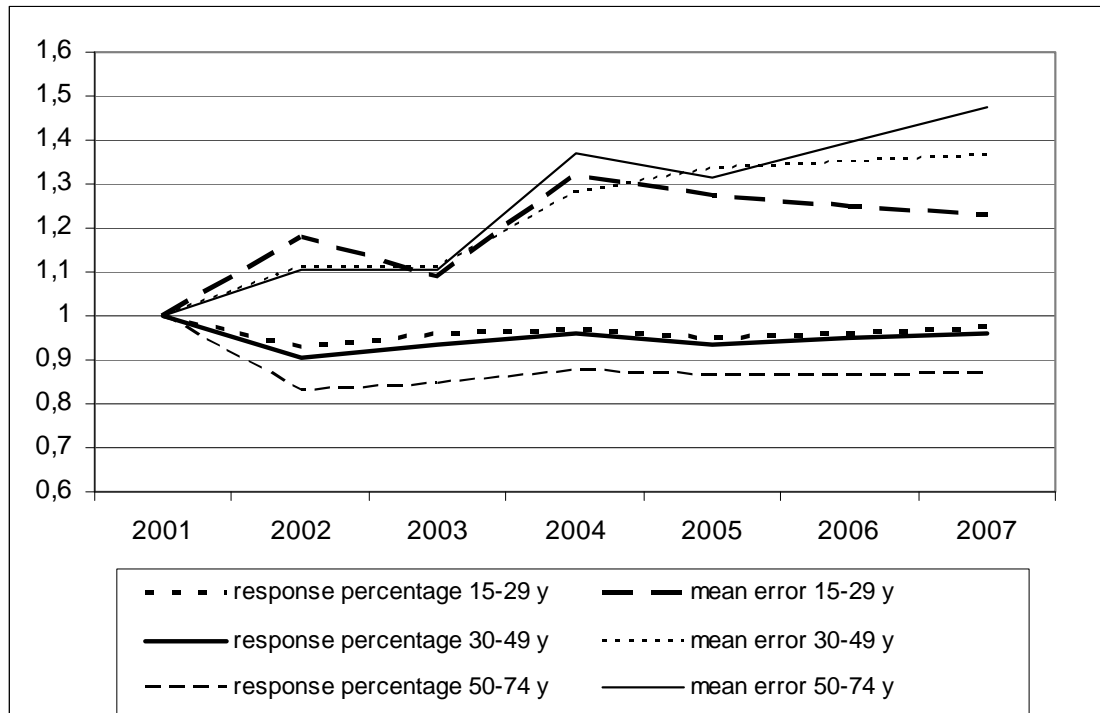


Figure 1. Development of the response rate (proportion of participants able to give a price estimate for selected products) and the mean error of price estimates from 2001 – 2007 relative to the values in 2001

It is relevant to note that the age groups were not fixed at the time the euro changeover. Instead, all the age groups have received younger respondents during the euro period and lost older respondents, respectively. For example, the youngest respondents of the age group 15–29 years in 2007 were only 10 years old at the time of the changeover and the oldest were 24 years old. Thus, the youngest respondents in 2007 were less familiar with the old currency, and for them it has probably been easier to learn euro prices. Some of the respondents in the middle age group have moved to the oldest one, which should have caused the price knowledge of the oldest age group to rise. This has not, however, happened. Because our results indicate that the youngest respondents had a better response rate than the older ones at all time points, the composition of the age group should at least have a significantly effect on the response rate. However, as shown above, the improvement in the response rate has been very slow.

5. Concluding remarks

As expected, immediately after the changeover to the euro, consumer price knowledge was clearly weaker than in the era of the national currency. However, a rather surprising result of our study was that this weakening was not only an initial and short-term shock caused by the new currency. Consumer price knowledge has not improved significantly in five years. We expected the price estimations to become more accurate, but this did not happen. This suggests that the

main reason for the decreased price knowledge has not been the change in prices itself but something else. If the change in prices was the main reason for decrease in price knowledge, consumers would be expected to learn the new prices in euros within five years. However, it appears that nominal euro values are more difficult to learn than earlier markka values. Another possible explanation for the decreased price knowledge is ignorance of prices: because of the rising standard of living, consumers are indifferent to the prices of products that are inexpensive. Unfortunately, we have only one cross-section of the data from the period under the national currency.

However, it appears more likely that the reason for the decrease in price knowledge has been the change in nominal values. Previous research has demonstrated that nominal values affect the behaviour of consumers and even market outcomes (Shafir et al., 2001; Fehr & Tyran, 2001). The results of our study indicate that nominal measures have a strong impact on how consumers estimate prices and, therefore, on how they learn prices. The very slow recovery of price knowledge appears to be mainly due to a lack of clear patterns in pricing compared with the era of the national currency. In other words, under the national currency retailers had an established pricing system that was familiar to consumers (Aalto-Setälä, 2005). Thus, the euro not only changed individual prices but also transformed the whole pricing process. Consumers no longer have reference prices because retailer pricing strategies are strange to them.

The nominal value of the euro is much lower than that of the former national currency. The products chosen for our study have a low nominal value and therefore, as we stated earlier, consumers tend to overestimate their prices. Therefore, it appears that the scale on which consumers estimate prices has changed. In the period of the national currency, one Finnish mark (≈ 0.16 cents) was the interval of frequently-used estimates. In the euro period, 1 euro or 50 cents has become the interval of price estimates. In other words, the scale of price estimates has become considerably cruder.

We found the respondent's age to contribute to the price learning process: the price knowledge of those respondents aged 50–74 years decreased most and the younger consumers learned the euro prices best. What is the destiny of the oldest consumers? Will they remain confused with the currency for the rest of their lives? Do consumers still think of prices in the former national currency?

To summarise, the price learning process following the changeover to the euro has been complicated because consumers have had two major issues to learn: the new currency and the new pricing system. This phenomenon should be investigated further, focusing on the background of the price learning process.

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Modern Retailing and the Meaning of Body as a Technique of Discipline.

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Abstract:

Although the idea of the self-governing consumer has been widely disputed (Packard 1955), shopping spaces are seen as the key arena of the sovereign and empowered consumer. Still, purchasing patterns seem predictable over time, something that is explained as the result of consumer routines and habits. Inspired by Foucault's (1975) general thesis that individual freedom presupposes techniques of discipline, this paper explains consumer routines as an outcome of governance structures in modern retailing. First, shopping in modern supermarkets is described as a sort of embodied practice that hinge on various techniques of bodily discipline. Secondly, we relate these techniques to merchandising and customer programmes in grocery retailing. We conclude by saying that power and discipline is an underscored explanation to consumer routines.

Introduction

The modern supermarket with its endless shelves of products and varieties is seen as the ultimate arena of free choice. In the supermarkets, says Milton Friedman, "you get precisely what you voted for, and so does everyone else" (Friedman and Friedman 1980:65). In spite of portrayals of the modern shopper as sovereign, unmanageable, disloyal and exploring, there is a parallel story emphasizing that consumer's choice follows relatively stable and predictable patterns. Regardless of socio-demographic shifts in society, people prefer "food that they are used to" (Lupton 1996), and food and eating patterns in many countries seem to be relatively stable (Douglas and Gross 1981, Murcott 1982, Døving and Bugge 1999). Furthermore, consumer demand for major product groups like pork, tomatoes, orange juice etc do fluctuate,

but changes very seldom appear as radical shifts and tendencies can only be observed over a number of years¹. Even though it exists a popular belief in the “battle of brands”, an astonishing continuity in their market shares are observed. The market share of major national and international brands do swing, but less dramatic than one is lead to believe. But as market researchers have been able to show, brand loyalty remains even if competing brands are sold at a lower price and switching costs are low (Hoyer and Brown 1990, Aaker 1991).

The recognition that the content of our shopping basket is predictable over time has produced different explanations. Economists argue that routines arise in contexts where consumers economize on searching costs or reduce risk (Stigler and Becker 1977). Routines are at once partly inherited and partly adaptive (Nelson and Winter 1982), and can be seen as a result both of learned behaviour and a response to changing environments. Learning is essential, once an agent accumulates sufficient knowledge about a certain action, the action is performed without repeated reflection, this then become a habit. Consumers are able to choose habits as a heuristic device (Kahneman and Tversky 1979). Linked with this notion of habitual action is the idea of learning by doing. The repetitive character of food shopping illustrates a situation that give rise to habitual behaviour because agents tend to avoid continued deliberation.

Sociology of consumption also emphasizes the significance of routines. But instead of pointing to routines as a result of rational conduct, routines are regarded as an integral part of everyday life and governed by “social pressures or contexts” (Tomlinson and McMeekin 2002) at a micro-level. Consumption has a role in the creation and reproduction of family relations, where the making of meals and making of family are regarded as closely intertwined (DeVault 1991). A related explanation is applied to practice of shopping by Daniel Miller (1998) in a study of lower class housewives in London. He demonstrates that

¹ Even after drops in consumer demand from so-called “food scares”, consumption tend to return to previous levels after a certain amount of time (Kjærnes et al 2005).

shopping is less a reflexive and self-regarding conduct because choice is driven by the notion of care, the interest of others and the integrity of household. Shopping and the provision of food are typically an inconspicuous, unremarkable and a recurrent activity that erases the distinction between everyday life and consumption (Warde 2002).

The science of marketing tends to identify consumer choice as switching between brands. A loyal customer is valuable because switching become a less viable option. Brand loyalty can be defined as “measure of the attachment that a customer has to a brand” (Aaker 1991:31), and might explain stability in food consumption patterns. Brand loyalty ensures a price premium and a competitive advantage on non-price competition. Levels of brand loyalty might vary, but strong consumer-brand bonds are characterized by affective components of commitment, love and trust (Fournier 1998). Relationships of loyalty can be promoted by communicating quality, symbolic values and increasing switching costs in order to keep customers. Several grocery items in supermarkets represent typical low involvement product where familiarity become particularly important (Aaker 1991). Brand loyalty also fits with a notion of routines – as brands serve as a symbolic or iconic reference during the evolvement of habitual action.

In this paper a fourth explanation is introduced. Not very many contributions have been occupied with the relationship between routines and power, although there are crucial exceptions. Bourdieu’s (2005) concept of *habitus* obviously captures power as a key element in the formation of consumer habits, as taste can be viewed as driven by the desire for social distinctions and class dominance. Likewise, there are contributions that conceptualize power as a determinant in the “macro social shaping of demand”, by showing how economic and non-economic institutions act at societal level – such as the modern supermarkets – structure the power relationship between producers and consumers through the range of products (Mintz 1986, Harvey 2001). On a more aggregate level, consumption practices, and shopping

in particular, has been described to develop in relation to monopolistic retailers and manufactures aspirations for market development and maintenance and public regulators need for control and legitimacy. As such social theorists have tended more to stress the restricted and manipulated nature of consumer choice rather than the free agency seen from within orthodox economics.

In this paper we also want to accentuate that institutional power also are exerted at a micro level that more concretely relate institutional power to consumer habits. We will do this by maintaining that consumer choice is directly linked to institutional order by means of bodily control. Inspired by the work of Foucault and others it is argued that the design of modern supermarkets is paralleled with what can be termed as an *embodiment of consumer choice*. Thereafter we draw on our own research on in-store marketing practices and slotting allowances among Norwegian grocery chains. We show that programmes of product placements and payments for shelf space links bodies and their daily actions to specific institutional arrangement designed by powerful suppliers and retailers within the distribution chain. By the help of monetary rewards and physical arrangements – proven to be profoundly efficient – purchasing behaviour is *normalized* and directed towards major brands and key categories of manufactured grocery items. In the last part we argue that these findings have consequences for the study of shopping behaviour and consumer habits, as they both challenge and supplement existing explanations of stability in consumption patterns.

The embodied purchase

Although retailers and marketing practitioners have been aware of the function of body as an important factor for in-store promotion for many decades, very few social scientists has paid any attention to this issue. In the Foucauldian approach to governance and discipline, bodily control is a key issue, but mostly reserved for non-market institutions, such as military,

schools and hospitals. There have been fewer attempts to transfer these insights of power into market settings, such as the stores and supermarkets. This absence is interesting, as long as there is a common acceptance among economists and social scientists that markets are institutionalized and that transactions are subjects of governance. One reason might be that Foucault himself did not extend his initial theory of power and discipline to the market sphere². Another reason might be that economists tend to regard the market as an abstract mechanism rather than a market place (Granovetter 1985). And although sociologists insist on the social impact of a market, they often overlook the meaning of its material attributes. The science of marketing acknowledges the market as a physical and geographical entity both as an analytical unit and as a technique. This particular cognition, in our view, also allows for the issue of discipline and bodily control to be inquired. Although the idea of discipline intuitively connotes to corporal control in most people's mind, Foucault elaborated on this interrelationship more profoundly and scientifically in his writings on total institutions (Foucault 1979). According to Foucault, discipline may be identified neither with specific institutions nor with apparatus "it is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures that may be taken over by institutions that use it as means of reinforcing mechanisms of power" (Foucault 1979:121). In this part it is argued that the theories of body control are applicable to the field of shopping. We will show how the approach of Foucault and others are relevant to the field of shopping and consumer choice.

There are certain historical developments within retailing that have made disciplinary techniques relevant to the field of shopping. The significance of controlling bodily behaviour was preceded by fundamental changes in the retailing in the early 20th

² From the outset, he took a divergent position. Foucault maintained that we have to accept the idea of the utility-maximizing *homo economicus* in order to understand economic development of the 20th century (Foucault 2004). His approval of the market as governed by the invisible hand to a large extent conjoins with the neo-classical economics of the Chicago school (Steiner 2007). But as later will be demonstrated, his notion of *homo economicus* also depicts an individual at the disposal of governance.

century, which decomposed the direct social relationship between the salesman and the shopper. First of all, the organisation of the store was dramatically changed by the rationalization of the sales clerk. Although the American chain store Piggly Wiggly is regarded as the inventor of the self-service principle in 1916, the F. W. Woolworth Company introduced self-service at large scale in the early 1920's (Markin 1968). Woolworth's stopped building storage shelves behind counters and moved all items to counter tops where shoppers could reach them without asking a sales clerk for help, as self-service meant lower labour costs and lower costs suggested bargains. Furthermore, the transformation to self service permitted a growth in floorage and increased selling space, increasing the scope of choice without dramatically increasing costs. The combination of packaging on open shelves and limited service made it easier in many ways for women to shop. They were liberated from the social control exerted by the selling clerk, reinforcing the idea of the autonomous consumer choice. The idea of a shopper got a new meaning, as she could move freely among the shelves without social interference during the purchasing process.

This transition within retailing, widely recognized as a precondition for the emergence of mass consumption, confronted retailers with three main challenges. First of all, self-service and large selling spaces confronted shoppers with a problem of movement. "Stores grew to warehouse size, and aisles of goods became acres of products" creating "repetition and banality within unpredictable patterns of consumption". (Ada Louise Huxtable in Zukin 2004). A problem of physical orientation in space emerged in supermarkets, because "as buildings become larger and more differentiated in function, orientation tends to become a more acute problem". Arbitrary locations of product categories inside a warehouse would most likely lead to confusion and chaos. All together this created a problem of moving bodies around in a defined, but open space, from the entrance to the checkout.

Furthermore, there was the problem of efficiency and time to ensure a commitment to shopping. On the one hand shoppers were expected to spend as most time as possible inside the shop to be tempted to buy more goods. On the other hand there was a need to avoid that individuals did not squander too much in order to avoid congestion of bodies, purposeless rambling. Shopping presupposed a certain level of self-control among consumers, not to sniff at products or open lids and packages. “Banality and repetition” – in Huxtable’s terms - had to be avoided in order to keep the attention of the shopper and create a “mood for shopping”. This could be done by a prearrangement of time and a division of activities into successive segments. Parking lots, shopping carts and multiple checkout lines represented a break up of the composite parts of shopping. And although these arrangement of activities made it faster to get in and out of the stores, “it took longer to escape the supermarkets totalizing environment” (Zukin 2004:79).

Lastly, but not least important, the introduction of self-service meant that clerks no longer were able to affect buying during face-to-face interaction at the point of purchase. Sales assistants have been – and still are – immensely important instruments in marketing strategies, as “pushers” of certain products by producing recommendations, doing product promotions, arranging special deals, introducing new products, reminding shoppers of buying necessity products etc. In their absence, shoppers were left between the aisles outside the scope of direct control from managers. The predictability of shopping and choice that previously was ensured under the influence of sales clerks had to be restored. In the transition from the traditional store to the mass distribution of products in modern superstores a vacuum of influence emerged, which motivated retailers and supplier of manufactured goods to find new techniques of influence and control over shoppers. We will argue that the medium of body became a new opportunity for controlling the behaviour of the shopper. Three fields of knowledge seemed to be valuable in the design of the modern self-service store.

First, although a store represents a defined, physical enclosure, problems of moving people around emerge in large floor spaces. Methods were borrowed from both psychology and geography in order to explore spatial behaviour and increase capacity of cognitive orientation (Downs and Stea 1977). The understanding “mental mapping”, a technique used both in psychology and geography for studying cognitive orientation and spatial behaviour (Sommer and Aitkens 1982) became an aid by identifying “location cues and mnemonic aids what is essentially in and undifferentiated area”. Furthermore, location cues involved that floor space had to be coded in a manner to become understandable for the shoppers. In order to get “a hold over this whole mobile” of shoppers, retail planners responded by inventing various forms of “traffic flow patterns” (Berman and Evans 2004:460), that is architectural solutions of in-store inventory that not only facilitated self-service, but also enabled people to move around without irritating interruptions. Various solutions of spatial arrangements - such as the so called Straight Traffic Pattern or Curving patterns - were invented by retail planners in order to meet these requirements. In general, these measures can be seen as a response to what Foucault denotes as “a problem of distribution of individuals in space” (Foucault 1977:141), of moving bodies from one location to another. Functional sites of product categories were arranged attempting to link assortment categories together so that shoppers with their wheeled trolleys were moved from one place to another along routes. Aimed at “pulling” the bodies of the shoppers throughout the store, essentials like bread and milk were placed at the back of the supermarket. In large stores, closing walls of shelves were placed between the entrance and the register inhibiting individuals to take short-cuts through the store etc. “Speedhumps” – such as shock sellers, selling trays, end caps and striking visual signs and lightening – were introduced to avoid consumers rushing too rapidly through the store.

Secondly, in the absence of the salesperson, other strategies were introduced to “generate consumer enthusiasm”. Environmental aspects of retail shopping behaviour entailed lightning, noise, temperature and colours in ways that could have predictable effects on buying behaviour (Harrell et al 1980). Planners have used behavioural psychology based on stimuli-response models to increase the mood for buying (Mehrabian and Russel 1974). In-store temperature is adjusted to exterior conditions – during cold weathers shoppers are welcomed with a wall of warm air to create a “relaxed state of mind”. In supermarkets, fruit shelves are placed at the entrance to create an association of freshness and delicateness, the bakery a little further up to evoke appetite and so on. Crowding has to be avoided, as a high density of people not only was assumed to create irritation but also to produce “stimulus overload from inappropriate or unfamiliar social contact” (Harrel et al 1980:45). Textbooks in retailing strategies have endless lists of recommendations of architectural designs – stretching from flooring to wall textures – assumed to have a certain influx on the state of mind of the shoppers amplifying the willingness to buy (Berman and Evans 2004).

Lastly, knowledge on corporal behaviour within space became relevant. As Paco Underhill so strikingly remarks, shopping along aisles with a trolley in your hands represents a clash between seeing and moving. The “effort makes you vaguely uncomfortable because it requires you to train your eyes somewhere other than when you’re walking” (Underhill 1999:78). To display products so that they can be seen therefore become important. Retail planners soon became aware that some placements were more eye-catching than others, and started to refine their approach from ergonomic studies of people at work. Retail planning took account of scientific knowledge on visual work from workplaces and workshops, f ex how vertical and lateral viewing angels affect visibility of objects (Eastman Kodak 1983). Normally, it is assumed that shelves are read like books, from left to right, and that the optimal viewing angle is 15 degrees below standing height. To attain the attention of the

shopper, the best relation between a gesture and the overall position of the body were optimized. This has led to studies on the “grab factor”, which varies according to the shelf placement (Underhill 1999). The most inconvenient shelf position is at the top and floor level. Not only because it falls outside the “reliability zone” – where items are observed only if looked at intently – but also because shoppers are required to do inconvenient bodily movements, such as bending down and exposing the “butt”³. Hence, the science of ergonomic design in workplaces were transferred from factories and offices to shopping in order to adjust physical design to corporal dispositions in order to increase the correlation between the body and the gesture. All these techniques were subsumed under the heading of merchandising. Merchandising, strictly defined as providing the availability of products in demand⁴, came to include everything from store location to product differentiation in a broad sense. From the consumer’s point of view, being able to conduct shopping in supermarkets requires a considerable amount of training and exercise which involves cognitive and bodily competences. From the outset, shopping in a modern store demands skills and experiences. In order to avoid the total confusion in front of the shelves; the consumers depend on an individual learning process which enables them to move unstrained inside a retail landscape. A competence for shopping evolves from numerous trials and errors; the shoppers acquire a mental map of the structure of a store which is transferable to most other cases of stores.

In sum, the introduction of self-service and the large scale store demanded a new approach to the shopper. On the one hand, shoppers were appealed to as reasoning and rational subjects capable of conducting autonomous choices without support from sales assistants. On the other hand, marketing techniques and the lay out of the store had to address

³ Bending down can cause immediate embarrassment to female shoppers, who expose their “butts”, something that might call for a “corrective facework” in order to avoid unwanted male attention (Goffman 1967).

⁴ Textbooks of retailing define merchandising as “activities involved in acquiring particular goods and/or services and making them available at the places, times and prices and in the quantity to enable a retailer to reach its goals” (Berman and Evans 2001:546)

corporal functions in order to educate the shoppers. This is illustrated by the fact that merchandising took account of knowledge generated in other disciplines, such as ergonomics, studies of cognitive perception and environmental psychology.

The science of merchandising got a new meaning at the micro level, involving spatial arrangements and traffic flow patterns, coding of activities by categorical linking of shelves and product placement, and training. These techniques have parallels in more conventional disciplinary techniques as described by Foucault (1979:135-69), such as drawing up tracks, linking together functional sites, and prescribing movements. A trained consumer therefore must have a mental map of a supermarket that in the form a generalized representation and applicable to most other cases. The notion of being a skilled shopper – not only require the ability to process market information, but also to acquire a repertoire of gesture techniques adapted to move around in a retail landscape without resistance. Shopping in this manner represents a process of incorporating practice and routines. Embodiment of consumer choice thus can be described as an incorporation of practices and routines – visualized as track sheets on a floor space and taught movements – that interacts with what becomes apparent as a choice between alternatives. The embodiment of consumer choice can be described as incorporated practices of shopping that frames what becomes a subject of awareness and reasoning. Choice is implanted in corporal movements and gestures. In other words, by reinstating the concept of a carnal consumer new dimensions power and governance are expected to emerge.

We have argued that shopping can be viewed as an embodied activity, and how the body is affected by design (the structure of the store), merchandising (what is put in the shelves) and operations (the role of the employees). But still there lacks a connection between the embodiment of consumer choice on the one hand, and institutions of power on the other.

Our next section explores how shoppers are produced as embodied subjects and connected to specific large scale organisations.

How shopping is normalized

At the core of our approach is the recognition that shopping can be assumed as just another “technique of the body” – in Mauss’ term – shaped in order to attain certain goals (Mauss 1979 [1889]). For most social scientists it is impossible to view techniques of the body as decoupled from social institutions. Mauss argues that techniques of the body are “assembled by and for social authority”, and Foucault maintains that the body constitutes the link between daily practice on the one hand and the large scale organisation on the other (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982). If this supposition were to be relevant for the case of shopping, we would expect to find the body as medium for exercise of power. More specifically, it would be interesting to explore whether specific techniques are applied for means of correctional purposes.

In order to explore those relations in more detail the processes and institutions that, findings from a study of slotting fees in supermarkets are presented⁵. Slotting fees are monetary support paid by the supplier in order to ensure in-store promotional support from the retailer. The study of slotting fees is interesting in at least two respects. First, it sets the framing for merchandising programmes, as it finances marketing activities at the point of purchase. Secondly, slotting fees reflects market power. The size of slotting fees reflects the retailer’s ability using buying power to extract a rebate from the supplier, while powerful suppliers use slotting allowances to ensure superior promotion inside the store.

⁵ Our presentation relies on an investigation of Norwegian slotting fees practices in grocery business (Dulsrud and Beckstrøm 2005). The study was based on a qualitative research design including the four main retailing groups and around twenty suppliers. Both an analysis of negotiation impacts and estimation of its total monetary impact were conducted.

The data, which originally were provided in order to describe the extent of vendor allowances and slotting fees in Norwegian grocery retailing, contains findings that have relevance to understanding of other market contexts. Although the Norwegian grocery retailing displays some peculiarities concerning the internal organisation of business, it resembles retailing in most other European markets as it is heavily concentrated and that power in the distribution channel has switched from manufacturers to retailers (Dobson 2003). During our empirical fieldwork, the actors were not familiar with the concept of “slotting fees” to describe promotional payments. Instead they used the collective term “joint marketing”. The negotiations over joint marketing serve to functions; on the one hand it is a technique from the retailers of using their channel power for extracting rent from their suppliers, in other word to transfer profits from manufacturers to retailers. The other function, which is the issue in this article, is to plan the physical distribution inside the store. As shown below, the concept of joint marketing contains four main practices.

Listing fee. Listing fees is paid simply for store presence, and refer to payments that suppliers provide retailers in order to be registered as a customer within a range of specific time. In some countries listing fees are formalized and made explicit. The rationale for the retailer to claim a listing fee is to cover basic promotionally tasks, such as registration of products into files, bar coding, shelf replenishment schemes etc. In our case, listing fees were not explicit, implying that the size of the fee depended upon the negotiation power of the supplier. In our terms, a listing fee reflects the most necessary and trivial part of supplier-retailer relationship. A listing fee serves as a screening mechanism for access between various store formats with in retailing group. It provides physical availability of a product and decides in which retail formats the products are to be distributed, as some formats might offer better availability,

convenience and location for consumers than others. Number one brands normally have an extensive marketing budget and will typically be represented in all formats.

Slotting fees. Negotiations over joint marketing also serve as slotting fees, as suppliers can affect the shelf positioning of products. During these negotiations so-called planogrammes are used as a tool of shelf management. Planogrammes give a virtual representation of shelves within a given retail format, whether it is a discounter, hypermarket, supermarket etc. Space management programmes, which is linked to cash register data, enables profitability of shelf space to be recorded and processed continuously. The cheapest products are normally placed very high or very low on the shelves, while the dominant brand normally has the most attractive place. Another strategy is to pay for an exclusive placement out-of-sight from bothersome competitors. In these cases, suppliers receive a defined place or “property” within the store, detached from alternative choice. This means that your product appears as a self-evident “first choice” while competitors are positioned into the margins of the viewing angle. This is the art of in-store marketing, finding strategies to position products so that they are separated from spaces where they are forced to compete on equal footing with their competitors. Equally, a physical cost is imposed upon the shoppers, as finding alternatives requires extra time searching or asking the sales assistants.

Promotional activities. A related, but separate negotiation issue are “promotional activities”. Promotional activities mean that a product receives special attention within the store during a certain period of time which implies that price offers are linked to attractive positions. A typical example is “3 for 2 deals” located at end-of-aisles displays or gondola ends. This activity is built on the assumption that as a shopper appears the end of an aisle she will naturally slow down the trolley to get round the crush at the corner. The eyes will probably

fall on whatever is on the shelf, making end-caps especially attractive. Known as “hot-spots”, these are the most profitable shelves in the store, so they are always full of offers. Suppliers can also achieve hot-spots permanently by financing in-store inventories such as coolers for milk and beverages, freezers for ice cream etc., as these inventories often represent a high capital cost for retailers. In return suppliers receive exclusive display which protects them from the comparison of competitors. Promotional activities appears as one of the strongest instruments, as they combine physical arrangements with monetary rewards

Category management implies that suppliers and retailers can negotiate over the scope of products within a given product category, such as soups, beverages, frozen vegetables etc. A special version of category management is known as category captaincy. This refers to “arrangements in which a supplier takes on a significant role in the retail management of the category, including the brands of competing suppliers” (Desroches et al 2003). A retailer said that they developed a committed relationship with “leading partners”. These suppliers were responsible for running the space management programmes and had considerable influence on the assortment. A supplier of a branded product gave a rationale for becoming a category captain. Becoming a category captain is reckoned to be very beneficial, as captains are free to choose whether competing suppliers should be listed or where their product should be positioned. It is not unusual that the captain runs the space management on the behalf of the retailer, which also include shelf replenishments and access to inhibit side-by-side comparisons. Besides, category management are in many cases linked to exclusivity arrangements and other rebates, implying that the captain can “drive out” competing brands

by extra payments⁶. We explored that a brand leader can hold a captaincy role several retail chains, thus increasing their coordinating powers.

From our point of view, joint marketing programmes is built on the assumption that marketers are able to govern the choice of shoppers. It gives leading partners an opportunity to avoid intra-brand comparison and to consolidate its market power. By legally price discrimination against smaller, less powerful channel members, the market leading manufacturer provides an incentive for the retailer to concentrate on its line. To use the words of Hoch and Deighton, in-store marketing can serve as a tool to “either reinforcing the agenda or blocking exposure when experience is ambiguous” (Hoch and Deighton 1989:1). Slotting fees were favoured both by dominating manufactures and retailers. Our findings lead us to believe that there are concurrent interests between retailers and dominant actors among suppliers, as they are beneficial to both brand leaders and retailers. Therefore it is reasonable to say that joint marketing is an agreement between the top-dogs – between the market leaders. In economical terms this could be described as techniques of profit sharing being beneficial both to manufacturers and retailers⁷.

The ultimate agenda of the in-store strategies is to regulate the state of mind, the manner in which consumers learn to experience, move around and use their eyes and how the nature of choice is perceived. Under such circumstances, seeking out alternatives to the “obvious choice” will require additional physical efforts in terms of finding another store, searching among shelves and questioning of shop assistants. Inconvenience is used as means of influencing shopping behaviour. As a case, the organization of joint marketing among

⁶ After the first presentation of our data it appeared that the near monopolist of dairies (Tine BA) had offered payments to reside as an exclusive supplier among two retail groups of which they were fined by the Norwegian Competition Authorities (Konkurransetilsynet 2005).

⁷ In return for slotting fees, retailers accept higher wholesale prices from their leading suppliers, a point that is further explored and demonstrated by Shaeffer.

Norwegian grocery retailers has its national peculiarities, but as a set of practices, it is quite similar to the system of slotting fees practiced in the rest of Europe and the US.

Slotting fees combine corporal techniques with monetary rewards. Words like “free”, “extra”, “more”, “value”, “savings” and “bargain” used in product campaigns promote the idea of value for money and reinforce the self-conception of the shopper as a “rational consumer”. Plastic cards and customer loyalty programmes add values into customer relationships through score of points, and serve as a differentiating tool, by dividing customers into categories and ranks. Exclusive customer clubs and golden cards are similar to the honorary silver epaulette among soldiers. The shoppers who qualify for the “honorary” category are entitled exclusive rights, such as access to selective rebate programmes, invitations to special events, introductions to new product innovations etc. In this manner, not choosing special offers, using plastic cards in order to increase “scores” that give rise to rebates, is made to appear as a monetary loss. The disloyal consumer is punished by loss of scores in programmes of rebate. It works against the popular idea of a price conscious consumer.

In-store cameras, installed for surveillance purposes, can be applied for systematic human experimentation. By exposing the shopper to various forms of “stimuli” – such as lightening, price offers, product positioning and exposure - the store can be turned into a scientific laboratory for the study of in-store behaviour. Underlying this approach is a notion of the “human animal” that smells feels and responds to external impulses⁸. This is a functional reductionism of man intended to adapt her to the man-machine.

In this section slotting fees and in-store marketing organized by suppliers and retailers has been analysed in terms of disciplinary power. Their techniques, procedures and measures

⁸ Paco Underhill of the consulting firm Envirosell is quite explicit on this point as he argues that successful retailing must address the shopper as a “human animal” and explore “how human machines are built and how anatomical and physiological aspects determine what we do” (Underhill 1999:43)

have strong similarities with how the exercise of discipline is performed in other institutional settings. There are nevertheless differences. Contrary to correctional institutions like the prison or schools, retailers do not rule over punishment or reprimands as means of power. Their means of correction are more subtle. Along the punishment-gratification axis of correctives rewards is by the far most important. Deviations from the “obvious choice” emerge primary as a perceived loss of rewards, but also as increased physical strains and inconveniences. These processes increase the cost of switching both at a cognitive and a corporal level. This line of strategy is evident throughout the whole distribution chain.

By aiming at getting access both to the body and the soul of consumers, modern supermarkets share – as Zukin argue - some properties with classical totalizing institutions in a Foucauldian term. Yet, the concept of “dressage” – meaning that purchases only are responses to external constraints acting onto the body is too strong. The purchase is a product of the disciplinary techniques traced in the material structure that erases the scholastic distinction between the intentional and the habitual, rational and the emotional, the corporeal and the mental. This does not imply that purchasing is a reaction or a reflex to external forces. Rather we should regard in store marketing as *normalizing* processes. Normalizing processes, as it is instituted by large scale institutions thus stabilizes and make our consumption patterns predictable by a combination of mental and physical barriers. The process of normalization penetrates the distribution channel. We should look upon consuming – in Bourdieu’s terms of an economic agency – as a “conditioned and limited spontaneity” (Bourdieu 2005).

Discussion

Modern supermarkets are – as mentioned in our introduction – often identified as a market arena that guarantee our freedom to choose and provides for the sovereignty of the consumer. Our main point is that the physical and structural changes within store planning – motivated

by cost saving programmes – coincide with the growth of mass consumption. This development has produced the need for releasing crowds of shoppers without direct surveillance inside huge spaces that created new modes of controlling techniques. Shopping in supermarkets presuppose disciplinary techniques. This case illustrates Foucault's very general argument that the reality of an autonomous individual is at the same time produced by tools of power that includes discipline. Our intention by presenting slotting fees as a case has not been to reveal that shoppers are exposed to manipulating techniques and "hidden persuaders" that mask, repress or conceal reality. In terms of a consumer policy approach we should neither be surprised nor annoyed. Rather than look upon consumers as victims that can be empowered by juridical protection or regulatory reforms, we should keep in mind that institutional solutions themselves reproduce discipline. Foucault himself does not recommend any strategy of action except that as long as power exists at the micro level, resistance also must start at the micro level (Flyvbjerg 1998).

Marketing scholars, contrary to most social scientists accept that stores and outlets are institutions with specific material and physical attributes. This perspective has allowed us to investigate shopping as an embodied activity, where the body constitutes a link between daily practices on the one hand and large scale organisation on the other. In this approach, shopping and consumer choice becomes an integral part of what could be denoted as a "body memory". The appliance of a "micro-physics of power" to shopping gives us an opportunity to discuss existing explanations to consumption routines and habits. It gives us a stronger sense of how institutional power is imported into the field of every-day life and consumption routines. To some extent, this notion supplements existing theories. In principle, there is only a tiny step between the "track sheet" of consumers moving in supermarkets and the concept of routines.

Our conclusions supplement economics and its explanation of routines by relating the embodiment of shopping to learned behaviour and the meaning of the individual history of the

shopper. The embodiment of shopping practices illustrates what items that come into consideration and become subject to consumer's experience. On the other side, our discussion plays down the rationale of routines as a heuristic enterprise or as a deliberate choice. It illustrates the limitations of routine formation practices as a cognitive enterprise and a result of an individual rational consideration – it pinpoints instead the significance of the material structure of the market and how it regulates the space of possibilities. In this perspective, bodily functions become a part of switching costs. To a stronger extent, our discussion brings in structure and distribution of power within and between manufactures and retailers as an explanatory factor to routines.

The notion of embodied consumer choice and normalisation also add to sociological studies of habits. Although there are “large scale” theories of how power structures supply and demand – Bourdieu's term of economic habitus are just one example – there is a lack of a link that shows how consumer practice is more obviously linked to market structure. In-store marketing techniques – viewed as corrective means - interact with consumer habits. It shows how market power is imprinted into daily shopping behaviour. In many ways, the concept of a physical shopper exemplifies what Shilling describes as the “micro-physics of power” by operating in modern institutional formations “through progressively finer channels, gaining access to individuals themselves, to their bodies, their gestures and all their daily actions” (Shilling 1993:151). Supermarkets are not merely institutions that “organize and articulate demand differentials” among consumer socio-economic by means of product differentiations and product range, as Mark Harvey puts it (Harvey 2001:202). Supermarkets are more active in the structuring of demand itself, as they operate as an orchestration of choice. This process explains that certain brands have come to be symbols of care – in Daniel Miller's terms – and how they support the image of integrity of households. Food items are integrated into patterns

of meals, the repertoire of recipes among housewives, the routines of child care etc. Care is managed by and through certain brands of products.

Our discussion supplement marketing theories by exploring the influx on shoppers from what marketers themselves conceive as the “hidden side of marketing” (Bloom et al 2000), that is techniques of marketing that normally is not visible to the public. On the other hand, our concept of normalizations reinterprets and challenges the rhetoric of marketing on many accounts. It emphasizes that brand-building to a larger extent is about physical availability of products and shelf layout, as Hoch and Deighton (1989) indicates, than its lifestyle image. As such, consumer loyalty can be more of a “biologico-sociological phenomenon” than a psychological attachment.

So far we have discussed the institutional, micro and supply-side framing of consumers and shopping, and could easily be accused for objectifying and even victimizing the consumer. Instead of praising a sovereign king, we may be blamed of drawing up a marionette in the hands of big business. Social scientists – and sociologists in particular - are often, rightfully or not, accused for doing this (Wrong 1961). To avoid this misconception we have to look at the micro-level realities of everyday consumption practices and the related handling of shopping. From this point of view, discipline – rather than being an outcome of a conspiracy among few – is regarded as an inherent technique in most institutions. The modern supermarket as such is no exception. This is also where consumer agency takes place, sometimes in total disregard of attempts to frame and orchestrate the outcomes.

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Barriers to Consumer Switching in the Swedish Electricity Market

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Abstract

It is believed that household consumers in the deregulated Swedish electricity market fail to switch from their incumbent suppliers to other suppliers when they offer lower prices. If such switching inertia exists, it would counteract that the deregulation leads to increasing competition and lower prices for consumers. In a proposed conceptualization of switching intention, it is hypothesized that sales promotion triggers information search which, if successful, leads to acquisition of knowledge. Based on the acquired knowledge an informed choice to switch or not to switch is made. There are however several barriers to switching including loyalty to the incumbent supplier, high information search costs, and too small economic benefits. A survey of a random sample of 474 Swedish household consumers showed that as expected loyalty prevented switching intention to be formed and the impact of economic benefits was strongest in the stages where intention becomes stronger. Not as expected, the impact of sales promotion increased with the strength of switching intention, and information availability had some influence independently of the strength of switching intention

1. Introduction

In recent years, similar to many of the countries in the rest of Europe and states in the United States, consumers in Sweden have had the opportunity to choose supplier of electricity. Since the deregulation of the energy commodity market in 1996, a large number of suppliers are competing on a free market. These suppliers buy electric power at the Nord Pool Spot Market, an exchange market for electricity, and resell it to their customers, the retailers of electricity. The retailers are not necessarily the producers of electricity although most producers are also

retailers. About half of the retailers' customers are households who use the electricity in their homes.

The aim of the deregulation was to open the electricity market to competition among suppliers in order to reduce prices to the benefit of consumers (Swedish Consumer Agency, 2002). However, prices have gone up ever since the deregulation of the electricity market (Statistics Sweden, 2007), probably in part because household consumers do not choose the supplier who offers the lowest price (Waterson, 2003). Thus, households tend to stay with their incumbent supplier and do not switch. Furthermore, they are reluctant to choose variable price agreements because they expect and are averse to nominally increasing prices (Juliusson et al., 2007).

Research on consumer decision making has shown that consumers make trade-offs between accuracy of the decision outcome and the effort they are willing to invest in the decision strategy (e.g., Bettman et al., 1998; Payne et al., 1993). Consumer decisions vary in complexity as well as in the decision makers' degree of involvement. For instance, buying groceries would not trigger the same amount of cognitive effort, nor emotional strain, as do choosing a new home or buying an expensive car. Choices among products are complex when they vary on many attributes. In contrast, electricity is a homogenous product where price per unit constitutes the major or only difference between suppliers. Thus, the choice of the most inexpensive supplier should be relatively easy, and although involvement may be low, consumers should be motivated by the fact that they are unwilling to pay more for a commodity that does not differ in quality between suppliers.

Dissatisfaction with the incumbent supplier should be an impetus to switch. A recent report indicates that Swedish electricity consumers are dissatisfied with their incumbent supplier (Svenskt kvalitetsindex, 2006), more than they are with suppliers in the land-line telecom and home insurance markets where switching is more frequent (cf. Gamble et al., 2007). Why then does dissatisfaction not lead to more frequent switching among consumers? In the next section we present a conceptualization of switching intention that identifies barriers to switching. We then report an empirical study of a random sample of households that examines the impact of these barriers.

2. Conceptualization

In our conceptualization of switching intention (see Figure 1), it is hypothesized that some events (referred to as sales promotion) trigger information search which, if successful, leads to acquisition of knowledge. Based on this knowledge an informed choice to switch or not to switch is made. Some factors may however prevent this and will therefore constitute barriers to switching. In the following we briefly comment on each.

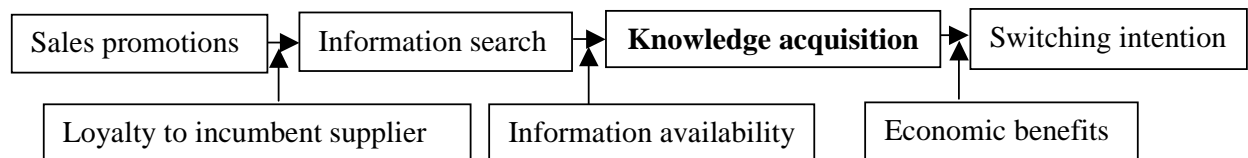


Figure 1. A conceptualization of the process of switching supplier in the electricity market.

First, loyalty to the incumbent supplier is one possible barrier making sales promotion ineffective. In consumer research loyalty to a brand or supplier has been conceptualized as

being closely related to satisfaction (Oliver, 1999). Whereas satisfaction has both a cognitive and emotional component, we assume that loyalty is an emotional attachment to the chosen alternative, perhaps closely related to the endowment effect (Kahneman et al., 1990; Strahilevitz & Loewenstein, 1998), status quo bias (Samuelson & Zeckhausen, 1988), or sunk cost effect (e.g., Karlsson et al., 2006). Loyalty to the incumbent supplier would possibly result in feelings of failing one's supplier when considering switching to another supplier.

A second possible barrier is that information search costs are too high. Costs for searching information may be divided into two parts (Johnson et al., 2003), the time it takes to access the necessary information, and the cognitive effort required to process the accessed information. Both lead to a low information availability.

Even if information search has led to that knowledge is acquired, a third possible barrier is that, due to small price differences among suppliers, consumers perceive that the economic benefits are too insignificant to warrant switching. Competition in a deregulated market is assumed to cut prices for consumers; however, when consumers fail to switch, this will result in that prices do not differ much between suppliers (Klemperer, 1987). This is further augmented in the case of a homogenous product such as electricity.

3. Empirical Analyses

3.1 Sample

In this paper we report re-analyses of the data presented in Gamble et al. (2007) obtained from a random sample of 488 Swedish residents between 18 and 69 years of age who volunteered to answer a questionnaire in a mail survey. The response rate was 24.8%. A description of the sample is given in Table 1. In the following section we report index measures of the hypothesized determinants of switching, followed by an analysis of how in this sample switching intention is influenced. Note that because of internally missing values the analyses reported here are confined to 474 respondents.

Table 1. Description of the sample.

Variable	n	Descriptive value
Sex (% men)	487	48.3
Age (years) (M/SD)	487	48.8/13.1
Education	484	
High-school (% degree)		30.6
College (% degree)		33.5
University (% degree)		36.0
Married/cohabiting (%)	487	74.9
Households with children (%)	484	87.9
Annual household income (10 ³ SEK) ^a	480	
200 or less (%)		12.7
201-300 (%)		19.3
301-400 (%)		18.3
401-500 (%)		19.3
501-600 (%)		16.2
More than 600 (%)		14.1
Quarterly electricity cost (SEK)	444	
500 or less (%)		5.4
501-1000 (%)		21.7
1001-1500		13.1
1501-2000		12.8
2001-3000		15.5
More than 3000		33.7
Housing (% apartment)	486	35.4
Electrical heating (%)	469	42.2

^a1 SEK is approximately 0.20 US\$.

3.2 Determinants of Switching

Respondents were asked to check statements presented in the questionnaire selected as possible motives for their unwillingness or willingness to switch electricity supplier. For each statement respondents indicated on a 5-point Likert-type rating scale, ranging from completely disagree to completely agree, the degree to which they agreed with the statement describing their motive for switching or not switching. The ratings were averaged across three questions to obtain an index of each motive. Questions were also asked about the frequency with which the respondents had encountered events that promoted switching. Ratings were obtained on 5-point scales ranging from never to very frequently. An index was constructed by averaging across the ratings of three different events. As Table 2 shows, the reliabilities assessed by Cronbach's α s are unsatisfactorily low for sales promotion but satisfactory ($>.65$) for the other indexes.

Table 2. Means, SDs, and Cronbach's α s for indexes of determinants of switching in the Swedish electricity market. (The indexes are constructed by averaging across the ratings on five-point scales (1-5) of sets of three questions also shown.)

Scale/item	M	SD	α
Sales promotion	2.3	0.7	.55
Words-of-mouth	1.9	1.0	
Advertisements in the mass media	2.6	1.0	
News in the mass media	2.4	1.0	
Loyalty to incumbent supplier	2.1	0.9	.73
Canceling an agreement with the supplier is unpleasant	2.5	1.2	
Switching supplier feels like being disloyal.	1.7	0.9	
Remaining loyal towards the supplier is important	1.9	1.1	
Information availability	2.5	0.8	.66
Price information from different suppliers is easily obtained	2.4	1.1	
Comparisons between suppliers are straightforward	2.8	1.1	
Information provided by suppliers is easily understood	2.2	1.0	
Economic benefits	2.9	0.9	.80
Switching supplier is economically beneficial	3.0	1.1	
Switching supplier entails cutting the electricity bill	2.6	1.0	
Switching supplier will save money	3.1	1.1	

3.3 Switching Intentions

In order to obtain a measure of switching intention, respondents were requested to check one of four alternatives ranging from “no intention to switch” to “have already started to switch” electricity supplier. The distribution of the answers was positively skewed. Only 6 participants indicated that they had started to switch. These respondents were excluded since preliminary analyses suggested that the results for them deviated from the trend. In order to further reduce skewness, the remaining two strongest intention categories with 35 and 23 respondents, respectively, were collapsed into one category. Thus, the scale ranged from “no intention to switch” (no intention, $n=129$) to “will probably or certainly switch” (strong intention, $n=58$) over “will perhaps switch later” (weak intention, $n=287$).

Based on our conceptualization of switching intention (see Figure 1), we expected the indexes of loyalty and sales promotion to both decrease, the index of information availability to first increase and then decrease, and the index of economic benefits to increase with intention to switch. Figure 2 shows the index means for each degree of switching intention. As can be seen, the results are as expected for loyalty and economic benefits showing opposite changes with switching intention. However, sales promotion increases whereas information availability shows no clear change. A 3 (switching intention) by 4 (determinant) analysis of variance with repeated measures on the last factor yielded significant main effects at $p=.05$ of switching intention, $F(2, 471) = 5.02, p=.007$, determinant, $F(3, 1431) = 74.40, p<.001$, and their interaction, $F(6, 1431) = 74.40, p<.001$. Separate one-way analyses of variance showed that sales promotion, loyalty to the incumbent supplier, and economic benefits increased reliably with switching intention due to the linear trend, $F(1, 472) = 17.42, p<.001, 17.57, p<.001$, and $26.24, p<.001$, respectively. For loyalty also the quadratic trend was significant, $F(1, 472) = 12.14, p=.001$.

Paired *t*-tests showed that for no switching intention, loyalty, information availability and economic benefits did not differ and all exceeded sales promotion, whereas for weak switching intention all differed from each other, and for strong switching intention all differed from each other except the difference between sales promotion and information availability.

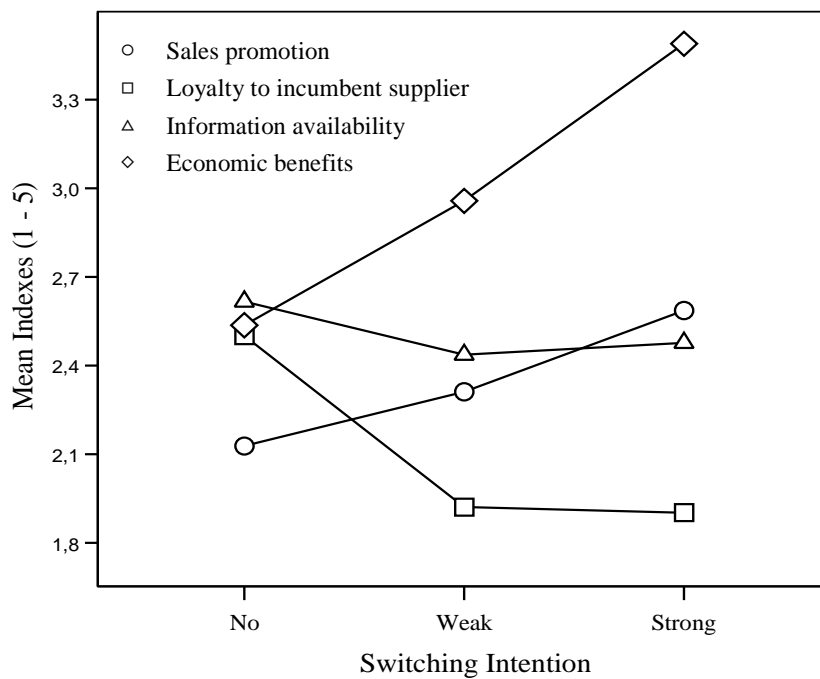


Figure 2. Mean indexes of determinants of switching for degrees of switching intention.

4. Discussion

The results showed that reliable measures were possible to construct of motives for switching or not switching from the incumbent electricity supplier to another supplier. These measures varied with strength of switching intention, partly in the way hypothesized. Loyalty to the incumbent supplier seemed to counteract that a switching intention is formed, whereas economic benefits had the effect of strengthening a switching intention already formed. However, information search appeared to be influential at all stages of switching intention. It is possible that the type of information search differs at different stages but the obtained information was too crude to determine this. The influence of sales promotion increased with strength of switching intention. A possible reason for this unexpected finding is that information is processed selectively. When the strength of the switching intention increases, consumers may become tuned to sales promotion and report more such events. It should also be noted that the measure of sales promotion had a low reliability, probably reflecting that the frequency of different events (i.e., words-of-mouth, advertisements, and news in the mass media) do not necessarily covary.

The present study has several limitations. One is that conclusions are drawn about the process of forming a switching intention from data collected on a single occasion, comparing households who presumably are in different stages of the process. A panel study would have been preferable. Another problem in the present study, as well as in a panel study, is the low frequency of switching. Another limitation is that inferences are made about causes of switching or non-switching from non-experimental data. To remedy this, an experiment was performed by Gärling et al. (2007) in connection with another mail survey. In this experiment participants in four different experimental conditions (n approximately equal to 100 in each)

first made a choice of an electricity supplier, then were faced with several choices between this already chosen supplier and other suppliers who differed on one or several of the attributes price, information provided about electricity consumption ad costs, market share, and availability of choices of green electricity. Comparisons with a control condition in which participants made no initial choice of a supplier showed that the experimental groups more frequently chose the already chosen supplier. This “lock-in” effect was observed despite that most of the alternatives were better (as judged from the choices made in the control condition). Persuading participants in one of the experimental conditions not to feel loyal to the incumbent supplier had the effect of decreasing choices of the already chosen supplier. Experimental evidence was thus obtained for the role of loyalty. In addition to this, it was shown that lower prices and availability of information about usage and costs augmented choices of the alternatives.

The emerging picture from this research is that several factors account for household non-switching in the Swedish electricity market. One way of understanding the multi-determined nature of the phenomenon is our proposed conceptualization (see Figure 1), at least as a starting point for additional research. It may be noted that economic benefits appear to be the most important motive for those (relatively few) who intend to switch. At the same time, non-switching may be assumed to partly determine that switching offers few economic benefits. Apparently, this becomes a vicious circle since increased price differences depend on switching, whereas switching to some extent depends on price differences. As demonstrated by Goett et al. (2000), large discounts on prices may break this vicious circle.

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The consumer and the conglomerate – Consumers perceptions of retailers’ and insurance companies’ banks

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Abstract

This paper deals with consumers’ perceptions of new retail banks owned by retailers and insurance companies in Sweden. We present the first results from an exploratory consumer study within a research project on consumers’ relationships to companies that expand to other markets.

1. Introduction

The phenomenon that awakened our interest is the recent trend in Sweden where two major retailers (Ikea and Ica) and two main insurance companies’ (Länsförsäkringar and Skandia) have extended their core business to also offer retail banking services by *opening an own internet based bank*. In markets with keen competition or in markets where the Swedish Competition Authority prevent the dominant actors from growing bigger, the companies can expand to other markets and thereby form a conglomerate¹.

Behind such a move is the increased competition for consumers’ spending power. One could expect that the retail companies Ikea and Ica aim to establish stronger long term relationships with their customers who return to the same store only if they please or if they are tied to the companies’ via membership in customer clubs. Ikea offers its customers a Family Card and Ica offers Ica card with multiple benefits for the card

¹ A conglomerate is defined as a group of companies that operate in different markets. Compared to the conglomerates of the 60:ies and 70:ies the companies in our study are much less diversified.

owner. Insurance companies on the other hand have more complete customer registers but the sales are difficult to increase by selling more insurance products to same clientele. Retail banking services make sense to combine with both retailing and insurance businesses.

Due to the financial deregulation it is easier nowadays to obtain a banking license from the Financial Supervisory Authority. Although the Swedish financial regulation currently provides banking licenses to new actors, there are still extensive procedures and steps to take before the allowance is obtained and there are regulations of what a bank is allowed or required to provide². The new niche banks are small in relation to the existing main retail banks and the competition authority welcomes the newcomers to increase competition in that market. The authority has concerns if the new niche banks are treated fair by the existing main banks when entering the payment network (Swedish Competition Authority, 2006). At the same time, the competition authority is concerned about the consumers and urges the need to improve consumer mobility in the retail banking market, which is necessary if the competition is going to have an effect. These kinds of issues are in the pipeline in many European countries today.

To date, consumers' yearly bank switching rate lies around 5 percent (ECA, 2006). It is good to have several alternatives banks to choose among, but the consumers also needs to be active. In order to improve consumers' activity, Consumers' Bank and Finance Office³ in Sweden provides information for the consumers how to switch banks and other types of information of bank services or financial issues. An important issue is whether consumers really are interested in switching banks, and in particular, if they would be interested in switching to the new entrants. According to recent empirical evidence, consumers in Sweden have a high confidence towards banks compared to other business sectors. They are also satisfied with the service banks provide (Synovate Temo, 2007). Would it in this kind of situation be likely that bank switching is desirable for a consumer? Do the consumers know about the new entrants to start with and what are their perceptions of these companies and their banks?

Our concern is the consumers and how they are affected by the fact that companies grow and want obtain a larger share of their wallets. Consumers are inferior to the company concerning the knowledge and information about the products and services they buy and hence it can be unpleasant to use only one company. At the same time, it can be convenient for the consumer and save both time and money to concentrate one's affairs. Can the companies be trusted not to misuse the situation? Are the consumers able to choose freely if they establish relationships with large conglomerates? Do the consumers have influence on the relationships and how these develop in the future? These questions have economic as well as social and ethical dimensions.

² A new law on banking and financing companies state that a bank has to offer both payment services through the general payment system as well as offer savings opportunities for a customer that are available for the creditor within at most 30 days (Finansinspektionen, 2004).

³ The consumers' bank and finance office is an organ led by the Swedish Financial authority, consumer office, Swedish Bankers' Association and a couple other main financial associations.

The aim of this paper is to explore how consumers perceive conglomerates and discuss economic, social, and ethical aspects of being customers to them. We also aim to explore how knowledgeable the consumers are of the new niche banks and how much confidence they have for the newcomers. In addition we aim to get some indication about the contact preferences as the niche banks mainly offer Internet banking and personal telephone service without branch offices.

A short description of the methodological considerations is presented in section 2. The “phenomenon” of niche banks as part of a conglomerate is described in section 3, including international and Swedish examples and a presentation of reasons for retailers and insurance companies to offer retail banking services. The consumer perspective in Section 4 starts by a review of the theories on financial services consumer behaviour and it shows some empirical evidence about consumers’ bank switching and split-banking behaviour. The last part of Section 4 is about reasons for consumers to be customers to the conglomerates. Our own study about consumers’ perceptions of the conglomerates and relationships with them is presented in Section 5. The paper ends with a concluding discussion in Section 6.

2. Method

We started our research project with a literature review of conglomerates within retailing, banking, and insurance and of the financial consumer behaviour literature. Then, we collected empirical material of the Swedish retailers and insurance companies who have established their own banks. Based on this understanding, we developed a questionnaire for consumers in order to explore their perceptions of the conglomerates and especially of their new banks. We conducted 8 interviews with consumers late May 2007 in Göteborg. It was a convenience sample of consumers in our vicinity that we anticipated would give us a variation in perceptions and experiences. While the original aim of these interviews was test questions for our coming survey during the fall 2007, we found the results to be interesting enough to be presented by them selves. The consumer perspective is seldom examined and the area is topical.

3. Description of the “phenomena” in Sweden and internationally

An international comparison shows that the phenomenon of combining retailing or insurance with banking is not only a Swedish occurrence or totally new for that matter. In fact, a combination of both retailing or insurance and retail banking has a reasonably long record.

3.1 Combining banking with retailing and insurance

The U.K market offers one of the first examples to combine retailing and banking. There retailing companies have started by launching a store card/loyalty card/club card as the first step into the financial services markets (Worthington & Welch, 2006). Marks and Spencer, the leading clothing, food and household retailer, was the first and it introduced their card in 1985. Ten years later in 1995, another large retailer, Tesco,

launched its first Club card. Subsequently, in 1997 Tesco made a joint venture with Royal Bank of Scotland and opened an own Tesco bank. Sainsbury supermarket group opened Sainsbury's Bank in 1997.

In the U.S., supermarkets and banks have co-operated since the 1990's. To date Supermarket banking is a common praxis (Flur, Ledet, & McCoy, 1996). By supermarket banking is meant that a local or community bank establishes an in-store branch and in so doing gets an access to a larger customer base. In return the supermarket earns rental income but it does not offer financial services of its own. In the U.S., financial regulation imposes legal separation between banking and commerce and so closer co-operation or mergers are beyond question.

Other banking ventures combined with retail companies can be observed in Canada, New Zealand, and Australia or are currently being planned in Japan. It appears as the phenomenon offer interesting prospects for the companies.

Concerning a combination of insurance and banking, the phenomenon first appeared in early 1980's in France and it is called bancassurance. It is the provision of financial- and insurance-related products through a single corporate provider (Staikouras, 2006). It can also be called assurance bank or Allfinanz. Bank assurance is traditionally a European phenomenon but later during the 90's and in the beginning of the 20th century it has spread out to different parts of the world. It can be found in emerging markets such as Brazil, Mexico, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Korea. Financial conglomerates are also found in Japan and Australia. In the U.S., the phenomenon appeared after 1999 when the regulations were modernized and cross-ownership of banks and insurance companies became possible. Nowadays these financial conglomerates are common in The U.S.

3.2 Swedish examples - Presentation of case companies

In this study, we focus on four rather new banks that are branches of other companies. They are the four largest niche banks in Sweden. Two of them, Icabanken and Ikanobanken, belong to two major retailers (Ica, grocery stores and Ikea, furniture- and furnishing stores). The other two, Länsförsäkringar bank and Skandiabanken, belong to two main insurance companies' (Länsförsäkringar and Skandia). Ikanobanken is more loosely coupled to Ikea compared to the close relationships between the other banks and their mother companies, both in terms of ownership and in their presentation to the public. For example, when entering the homepages of Ica, Länsförsäkringar, and Skandia, their banks are presented as businesses of equal merit with the original businesses. In Ikea's homepage, you must go through several pages to see that their customer card is connected to Ikanobanken. The relationship between Ikea and Ikanobanken is also hard to find at Ikanobanken's homepage⁴.

⁴ Ingvar Kamprad owns Ikea and Ikanobanken via different foundations. Besides being an internet bank, Ikanobanken administers the IKEA customer card and offer banking services to other companies as well.

Ikea was the first in line and started Ikanobanken in 1996. Länsförsäkringar and Skandia, opened their banks in 1996 and 1998 respectively. Ica, followed in 2002 and established Icabanken. Länsförsäkringar bank and Skandiabanken are the two largest niche banks, both in terms of assets and deposits and loans to the public sector – i.e. primarily households and companies in Sweden and abroad (table 1).

Table 1 The case companies in figures

Bank	No. of branches	No. of employees	Lending to the public	Deposits from the public	Shareholders' equity	Assets	Est.
Länsförs.bank	96	651	9 264	24 035	3 248	61 471	1996
Skandiabanken	1	164	41 566	51 124	1 948	56 164	1998
Icabanken	2	174	4 489	6 393	632	7 367	2002
Ikanobanken	1	171	5 168	5 442	1 074	6 837	1995

Source: Swedish Bankers' Association, 2007: Bank- and finance statistics 2006

The four niche banks all have a wide assortment offering complete banking services, but the market shares are small on the household market. Together they have 8 % of Swedish households' deposits (table 2). Their shares of bank loans to Swedish households via banks are also 8%. Only Länsförsäkringar bank has a mortgage institute. The others offer housing loans within their banks.

Table 2 The case companies' market shares of household markets.

Share %	Deposits	Lending (Mortgage inst.)	Lending (Banks)
SkandiaBanken	4	-	5
Länsförsäkringar Bank	3	3	2
ICA-banken	1	-	0,5
IKANO-banken	1	-	0,5

Source: Svenska Bankföreningen/ECON. Konkurrensen på bankmarknaden.

Länsförsäkringar bank is very closely connected to the insurance business, the name of the company is in fact Länsförsäkringar bank and insurance. They offer a full range of banking and insurance services (table 3). The situation is almost the same in Skandia. Icabanken and Ikanobanken have narrower product lines.

Table 3 Assortment of banking and insurance services in the case companies.

	Länsförsäkringar Bank & insurance	Skandia Insurance & bank	Icabanken	Ikanobanken
Bank				
Current account	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Debit card	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Savings account	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mutual funds	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Shares	Yes	Yes	No	No
Mortgages	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Loans	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Credit card/account	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Insurance				
Non-life products	Yes	No	A few	No
Pension insurance	Yes	Yes	No	No
Life insurance	Yes	Yes	No	No
Capital insurance	Yes	Yes	No	No

Sources: www.lansforsakringar.se; www.skandia.se; www.ica.se; www.icanobanken.se

3.3 Reasons for retailers' and insurance companies to offer retail banking services

Increased competition is the main explanation why retailer/insurance conglomerates have come about. Companies cannot within their original business grow further due to the law governing the restrictive practices and hence they expand to other businesses. See appendix for an overview of the dominant companies among grocery stores, insurance companies, and bank in Sweden.

According to a recent report on competition in the retail banking the explanations why niche banks have been started in Sweden are mainly four-fold: 1) companies have large customer bases, 2) they have a good knowledge of the markets, 3) they are financially strong and 4) they have strong trade marks (ECON, 2007).

Theoretically, the main reasons behind the conglomerate phenomenon lie in the synergies that can be found when companies merge, co-operate, or start an own additional business (Staikouras, 2006; Singhal & Vij, 2006). Growing bigger is motivated by economies of scale and scope that follow when synergies across the different business activities and service lines are combined. The cost of producing and selling the services jointly implies better utilisation of the resources. Especially, an important factor behind the phenomenon is the better utilisation of the customer base when the conglomerates cross-sell additional services to their existing consumers. The conglomerate position changes the competitive position in form of a stronger market power. Thereby they might be able to affect the price level. At the same time, a conglomerate is an innovation in terms of a new combination of product- and service lines that might appeal to the new larger customer base. So, the negative effects, from the society's point of view, of a stronger market power can be offset by the positive innovations to meet consumers' needs.

The “One stop benefit” is one of the most significant reasons why both retailers and insurance companies have extended their business to retail banking services in the U.K. (Worthington & Welch, 2006). By offering multiple services in one place, they hope to get a larger share of their customers’ spending power. Also, research evidence from U.S. proposes the same one stop idea as the main rationale why banking and retailing suit together (Flur, Ledet, and McCoy, 1996). It is beneficial to all. However, some concern is raised whether consumers prefer to combine grocery shopping and retail banking together (Flynn, 1997; Quinn, 2001).

However, as retail companies manage large amounts of transactions daily, the idea of starting a bank is not far away. In the U.K. it has been found that retailers’ main motivation to offer financial services originate from the retailers attempt to reduce the cost of accepting payments (Worthington & Welch, 2006). Retail companies also enjoy a strong reputation and these have tried to take advantage of the dissatisfaction towards the traditional retail banks.

Insurance products and banking products are in many ways complementary services. A mortgage needs to be insured and it makes sense from a company perspective to combine banking and insurance. From the demand side the same is true. However, the companies are commercial corporations and so they are entitled to maximise their own profits whereby the concern whether consumers are exploited remains.

4. The consumer perspective

As shown above, there are several reasons for retailers and insurance companies to offer retail banking services. In this section we introduce the consumer perspective. The section starts with a review of theories on financial services consumer behaviour, continues with empirical evidence of consumers bank switching and split-banking behaviour, and ends with reasons for consumers to become customer to the new banks.

4.1 Financial services consumer behaviour

The literature on consumer behaviour in the financial service sector has parallels to traditional consumer behaviour theory and services marketing literature, but there are also examples of concepts used in a different way. Classification of the financial service attributes and labelling various behavioural patterns are common. The managerial perspective is strong. There is an urgent need for more research that pays attention the consumers’ situation, e.g. the role of financial services in consumers’ everyday lives.

One of the studies with clear parallels to the general characteristics of services that e.g. Berry (1980) discuss is Ennew and Mc Kechnie (1998). They put forward a list of characteristics of financial services:

- Intangibility
- Lack of intrinsic value
- Inseparability of consumption and production
- Heterogeneity
- Long-term nature

- Fiduciary responsibility (the banks cannot always provide the service to the consumer even if he/she had made the decision to buy)

Financial services are comparatively necessary services for all inhabitants in modern societies. Having a normal life all people need a current account to receive an income and make payments. However, financial services are not always interesting as themselves but they are usually used in order to obtain the actual demand, for example, a house or a car. Depending on the customer's time preference the actual demand is obtained through a loan or savings/investments. Therefore, it is said that the financial services lack of intrinsic value, which is why it is not likely that when a customer has acquired a well functioning service, he/she would be interested in other similar services or to switch supplier. This kind of behaviour is additionally reinforced by the long-term nature of financial services, which does not necessitate the consumer to be very active during the product's lifetime. Both of these qualities counteract the customer's interest for financial services from the start. On the other hand, the characteristics intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity and long-term nature of the financial services make financial services very complex to understand and evaluate. The complexity consecutively means that the information search of financial services and evaluation of alternatives is cumbersome for the consumers. These problems correspond to an important concept, namely switching costs, which express the costs for time and effort that a customer incurs when switching suppliers (e.g. Porter, 1985).

Beckett et al (2000), propose that financial consumer behaviour is determined by the strength of two main dimensions: consumer confidence and involvement. The consumer confidence dimension corresponds to uncertainty, which is due to complexity of the product and certainty of the outcome associated with that product. Involvement in turn is consistent with customer control, participation and level of contact. A matrix of consumer behaviour divides the consumers into four ideal types:

- Consumer confidence high – involvement low: Repeat-passive consumers
- Consumer confidence high – involvement high: Rational-active consumers
- Consumer confidence low – involvement high: Relational-dependent consumers
- Consumer confidence low – involvement low: No purchase

Beckett connects the matrix with a third dimension that is proposed to have a great impact on customer behaviour: the choice of preferred delivery channel.

Repeat-passive behaviour is described as once customers have made their original decision about the service provider they tend to continue the relationship although they were not satisfied or loyal. The reason is that they perceive little differentiation between financial providers, they seek convenience and are inert, and they associate high switching costs with changing banks. These customers mainly use relatively simple banking services such as current account, deposits and loans. In the increased competition and information flow, and due to the new delivery channels, switching costs will be diminished. These tendencies make it increasingly difficult for the banks to "keep" their customers in this category.

Rational-active customers experience high levels of confidence in the purchase process and consequently they focus on price as the main decision variable. This type of

consumer is likely to use modern delivery channels extensively and the types of service they seek are, for example, insurance products.

Relational-dependent category of consumers uses complex financial services, such as investment and pension products, and they prefer face-to-face contact with the bank personal adviser. To have trust is of utmost importance for this group of bank customers. They value relationships but at the same time demand a high level of service.

The consumers that belong to the quadrant '*no purchase*' represent an important source of potential new business. The main obstacle to overcome is to increase these customers' level of involvement and confidence, i.e. to make them more active/informed/interested in financial services and diminish their uncertainty.

Recent theories on financial services consumer behaviour propose a shift from relationships to experiences in retail financial services (O'Loughlin, Szmigin, & Turnbull, 2004). While personal relationships have become weaker due to the technical development and internet banking, relationships continue to be an important factor in attaching, maintaining and enhancing customer relationships. Consumers form relationships with brands and the brand relationship incorporate notions such as reciprocity, mutual exchange and fulfilment of promises in consumers' minds. At the same time the findings suggest that the consumer power has increased. Despite the fact that financial services are complex and multi faceted services, it is difficult for a bank to create unique offerings. However, if a bank succeeds to create relevant brand values and experiences for the consumer it should affect the customer satisfaction and increases the consumers' likelihood to stay with the existing bank. The relationship management paradigm is found to be highly relevant in the financial services context where the main challenge is to find an optimum balance between relationship, brand and transactional experience benefits (ibid). On the other hand it is to be acknowledged that not all consumers desire relationships but want to seek variety.

To sum up, the prevalence of high switching costs, as a result of information and evaluation problems, makes the customer's buying process risky since the customer needs to trust the service provider not to misuse the exposed situation. In the long run, concerning the relationship continuation, switching costs are weighed against customers' degree of trust and confidence in the bank. The degree of trust, confidence and reliability can be interpreted as prerequisites for customer to be satisfied and also to develop loyalty.

4.2. Bank switching and split-banking behaviour

Concerning the customers' bank attitudes and behaviour it has been found that a) customers are increasingly seeking the best value for money, b) customers are increasingly demanding service and convenience, and c) customers are increasingly comfortable with using technology (van den Bosch and van Wauwe, 1995; Kimball et al, 1997). Consequently, although customers were satisfied with the bank pricing (which they currently are not) they are more alert to find alternatives and to take the best offer. Van den Bosch and van Wauwe (1995, pp. 370) have argued: "All change is ultimately decided by the customer and banks can no longer rely on the total loyalty of the

customer as they once could.” A totally loyal customer from the bank point of view would only use one single bank for the whole of his/her lifetime. The lack of the total loyalty for the bank means a situation where customers are “shopping around” and/or “switching” banks. For example, in the UK in 1986, 15 percent of the consumers had accounts at more than one bank, which was an increase of 40 percent on the previous 12 months (Burton, 1994). According to a report concerning the development in the UK, the share of the population having more than one current account in different banks in 1999 had increased to 35 percent (Mintel, 1999).

At the same time there is also evidence that 50 percent of the UK population has never changed their current account provider and those who have done so, did so more than five years ago (Mintel, 1999). These numbers indicate that split banking and/or bank switching is not very common, but this trend of customer disloyalty is likely to continue in the future.

Another study about student retail banking customers in Gothenburg, Sweden in 2001, it was found that 68.7 percent of the students used only one bank, 63.7 percent had never changed banks and 51.5 percent had no future switching intentions (Mankila 2001). On the other hand, approximately 25% of the students had a relationship with two banks and as many had changed banks once. Concerning the future switching intentions 39.1 percent were uncertain what to do while 9 percent were sure about switching. The numbers confirm the picture that the mobility in the retail banking market is not very high but these figures also suggest that the mobility is increasing.

A report from the Nordic competition authorities (2006) concerning the Nordic retail banking market put forth that bank switching rates are approximately 5 percent per year. Unfortunately some figures concerning split banking were not present but the report clearly made a point that consumers increasingly use more than one bank for their banking needs and such split banking is another current trend. What is not known however is for what reasons consumers do it: 1) how many consumers switch banks completely and end their previous relationship, 2) when do they want to keep the existing relationship and use it actively but need add something specific from a complementary bank; or 3) how many consumers leave the exiting relationship alive but don't use anymore.

The latest results from Synovate Temo institute show a significant improvement concerning the confidence that the public experiences for banks in Sweden (Synovate Temo, 2007). It had increased from 69 percent 2006 to 76 percent in 2007. 58 percent of the public is relatively or very satisfied with the service that banks provide and that is an increase by 3 percent. 62 percent of the public perceives that the number of banks for private customers in Sweden is enough. The share that uses only one bank is unchanged: 55 percent both in 2007 and 2006. There is no statistical significant difference concerning the share of consumers that use two or three banks. However, a significant share of the public has several bank relations. Most of the (51 percent) with a bank is done via the Internet and the share has not changed since 2006. However, the share of public that has never used the internet service has diminished from 36 percent to 28 percent compared to the last year. The share of contacts via the branch office has remained on the same level.

4.3. Reasons for consumers to become customers to the new banks

In the light of literature and the cases presented above, there are three main arguments that are possible reasons for consumers to become customers to the new banks.

One-stop benefit: To be able to satisfy the basic financial (banking and insurance) –and in Ica’s case basic grocery- needs from a same source can sound appealing and convenient for a consumer. To have only one relationship to satisfy such needs saves time and simplifies life.

Price: The new niche banks are mostly internet based and hence they do not have traditional branches. However, the Ica stores offer deposit and withdrawal services for customers to Icabanken and Länsförsäkringars’ insurance offices offers personal advice to their bank customers. On the other hand, the niche banks offer noteworthy better interest rate on the current account compared to the existing banks which may turn into opening an account in some of these.

Bonus program would be another important motivator to start a relationship with the new banks. We have reported about Ica’s customer card that offers bonus checks the more groceries the customer buys with the card. At times the card offers also special prices for these customers. While we have not seen any price advantages combined with the banking products the Ica-card may be a sufficient reason to start the banking relationship. Länsförsäkringar bank has also developed a bonus program for the customers who concentrate their affairs to the bank and offer some price reductions for such bonus customers.

5. Results from the consumer interviews

We interviewed 5 women and 3 men between 28 and 56 years of age. Some of them are singles others cohabiters or married. 3 of them have children and 4 of them have a car.

In the interviews we talked about their: 1. current customer relationships with companies’ in retailing, insurance, and banking; 2. ideal number of relations within different business areas; 3. perceptions of loyalty; 4. importance of image, price, convenience, product line, quality, and loyalty programs; 5. knowledge, use and perception of the companies’ new banks; 6. trust and confidence in the mother companies and their banks.

5.1 Customer relationships and loyalty in retailing, insurance and banking

The interviewees are more loyal in terms of continuity than exclusivity in the retailing and insurance sectors. Their bank relationships tend to be both exclusive and continuous. Our consumers mostly⁵ stay for a long period of time. We find many of the

⁵ Throughout the account of the interview results we mention if none, few, some, many, most, or all of the interviewees agree – to get a feeling for the variation in our empirical material. These quantities should not be generalised to other consumers.

long customer relationships in the sectors of banking and insurance, but there are also examples of being customer to retail chains for 20 years or more. Among the interviewed consumers, comparing companies and complete switching from one to another is rather uncommon in all the investigated sectors, i.e. the mobility is low. Most of the comparisons are simple using easily accessible information. The consumers compare the grocery stores they use to purchase in, they only compare insurance companies when they need a new insurance, and they mostly look at interest rates when comparing banks. There are just two examples of frequent and detailed comparisons in our interviews – both regard banks and these consumers happen to be customer to niche banks.

Exclusive customer relationships, i.e. being customer to just one company, is most frequent in banking (5 of 8), followed by insurance (3 of 8) among the consumers we talked to. When buying groceries and furniture, all of them visit more than one retail chain. Loyalty as continuity rather than exclusivity is in line with the interviewees own definitions of loyalty to companies. Long-term relationships and being able to trust agreements is important part of their definitions. No one mentions that you shall keep to one company. Instead, some of them points out that you can be loyal to many companies at the same time; the important thing is no switching. The consumers want to be loyal if the company care for the customers own good and is sensitive to what type of relationship the customer wants.

The preferred number of relationships differs somewhat from the actual numbers mention above. More consumers want two or more banks in their portfolio compared to the number of consumers who want more than one insurance company. Most of the interviewees (6 of 8) want just one insurance company, due to convenience and because it is a better deal for them. Half of the consumers prefer one bank, some of which have more than one today. The interviewees are mostly satisfied with the number of relationships they have today in retailing. They prefer to buy groceries in two or more stores because they can't find everything in just one or because it is more fun. The interviewees all want to buy furniture and furnishings in more than one retail chain, as they already do. It would be boring to just have one alternative.

In-store self service is the obvious choice for our consumers when buying groceries, but occasionally some of them want personal service, e.g. advice in delicatessen counters or -shops. When buying furniture and furnishings the interest in personal service is much greater, but most of them want to be able to look around in the store without being disturbed. In insurance and banking most of the consumers want a combination of self service via internet and personal service via telephone. One of the consumers wants to have personal service most of the time, but the others are content with personal service when buying a new service or if they have complicated questions. Only one of the consumers prefers to meet the bank personnel face-to-face for expert advice.

5.2 Importance of attributes

We measured the importance of six different attributes for grocery stores, furniture/furnishing stores, insurance companies and banks. The attributes were: the image/reputation of the company; price; convenience; assortment; quality; discount/

loyalty program. They were measured on a 5-point scale from unimportant to very important.

Convenience, assortment and quality came out as the most important attributes of grocery stores. 6 of 8 respondents gave top priority to each of them. Price wasn't unimportant, but only one of the consumers marked "very important". Discounts/loyalty program is the least important attribute. The opinions about importance of image/reputation vary a lot among the respondents – this pattern is the same in the following sectors too.

The consumers preferred nearly the same attributes of furniture/furnishing stores, but convenience was much less important to them in this sector. Price was slightly more important compared to grocery stores and discount/loyalty programs were less important.

Price and quality were the most important attributes for the respondents when evaluating insurance companies. Interestingly, assortment of insurances is rather unimportant for most of our consumers. Convenience is fairly important and discount/loyalty programs, again, is not very important to them.

The respondents graded quality and convenience as the two most important attributes of banks. Price and assortment are important to some of them and rather unimportant to others. Again, discount/loyalty program is the least important attribute, but compared to the case of furniture/furnishing stores it is much more important.

5.3 Knowledge, experience, and perceptions of nischbanks

The consumers in our study have very different levels of knowledge about the four nischbanks; ICA-banken, Ikanobanken, Länsförsäkringar bank, and Skandiabanken. For each company, there is at least one consumer who knows nothing about it and at least one consumer who is very well informed about its business.

Three consumers have experience of being a customer to a nischbank. The first has Skandiabanken as his main bank. The second has Länsförsäkringar bank as a supplementary bank for savings and the third has had a loan at Ikanobanken.

Three interviewees are totally uninterested in nischbanks. One of them because they are not banks primarily and he does not want to be bound to the mother company. Another wants ordinary bank branches and the third wants only one bank and the nischbanks lack overall solutions for him.

Only one of the interview consumers is positive to all four nischbanks. He believes they improve the competition. Three consumers are positive to one of the nischbanks. Two of them like the company they are customers to and the third appreciates ICA-banken for the possibility to make deposits and withdrawals when visiting the ICA-store.

One of the consumers in our study is sceptical to nischbanks, but could accept a nischbank as a complement if there are economic benefits and no obligations to be customer to the mother company.

5.4 Trust and confidence in the nischbanks and their mother companies

Most of the interviewees trust the companies as a whole – they are large companies who have been on the market for a long time. However, three consumers mention that they don't trust Skandia because of the recent scandals⁶ and one consumer is uncertain about ICA's price worthiness.

The level of trust the consumers have in the nischbanks is lower than their confidence in the mother companies. They often question the companies' competence as a banks, especially the ability to offer a full assortment of bank services.

The consumers all have their own demands on the companies in order to feel confidence in them. Some of the demands are: convenience, freedom to move, easy accessible, long history, good products, high moral and ethics, keeping promises, respectful treatment of customers, personal contact, high customer integrity, good reputation, good handling of problems, and follow the consumer purchases act.

6. Concluding discussion

The aim of our paper is to ponder consumers' perceptions about having a customer relationship with conglomerates and to consider possible economic, social and ethical aspects/consequences for them if an increased relationship is established. In this first consumer study we have listened to consumers' viewpoints and reasoning around the areas of: 1. Current customer relationships with companies' in retailing, insurance, and banking; 2. Ideal number of relations within different business areas; 3. Perceptions of loyalty; 4. Importance of image, price, convenience, product line, quality, and loyalty programs; 5. Knowledge, use and perception of the companies' new banks; 6. Trust and confidence in the mother companies and their banks.

The *economic* dimension is probably the most tangible consequence for consumers and easiest to observe in consumers wallets. We witnessed that some consumers, if interested and knowledgeable of financial services, took the chance to switch to or complement with a niche bank, because it is perceived valuable. However, these consumers have to spend time on being updated and to contact the new bank. For them the switching costs were not a hinder and these consumers most likely earns from the increased relationship with the conglomerate. What can then be said of those consumers that for some reason or other have remained passive? One of the "passive" consumers said it would not be worth to switch since she had so little money. Another person could not even think of having a relationship with any of the niche banks although they were cheaper. The one-stop benefit of the niche banks was only mentioned once. At the same time, another respondent wanted the new niche banks to be separated from their mother

⁶ Unlimited bonusprograms and illegal fringe benefits among the top managers.

companies – otherwise they would not consider becoming customers. The economic dimension is just one of the valuable dimensions for the consumers but not the most important. This conclusion is also supported by the fact that when the respondents evaluated the importance of different attributes, price came on the fourth place in the banking business. Convenience, company image, and quality were evaluated higher. Additionally our results showed that only a few consumers' used discounts or loyalty cards and this attribute category got a low importance score irrespective of the branch in question.

If a consumer chooses to establish a relationship with any of the niche banks s/he can be sure that most of the contacts with that bank will be via the Internet or the Telephone. The general impression was that it was totally accepted by the consumers. The use of Internet banking increases constantly as the Synovate Temo 2007 figures showed earlier. Still, without the personal banking service via telephone the niche banks would probably not survive. Some *social* relations are always needed although these would be remote. The consumers need personal telephone service for sorting out difficulties or when they have a question about a complex service. Otherwise the consumers seemed to want to “mind their own transactions”. This result confirms the findings that we presented of the latest theory of financial consumer behaviour in Section 4.1 where it was proposed that consumers create relationships with brands and experience transactional benefits rather than long for face-to-face personal relationships. Still, the social communication and the feeling of being a valued customer should not be dismissed. Social relationships with personnel are important for consumers to feel loyal (Holmberg, 2004). In retailing, there is a positive relationship between frequent contacts and perceived loyalty (ibid). A reason why frequency is more important than exclusivity is that frequent visits encourage personal contacts and socialization with the store personnel, which in turn encourage consumers to come more often. Consumers who know the personnel well receive extra service and thereby they feel special. We believe that the social dimension is a real challenge for the niche banks. Being someone for the consumer, and not merely a technical solution with better prices, is necessary to grow from a marginal phenomenon to respected actors.

In the introduction chapter we raised some possible concerns with regard to *ethical* issues if a consumer decides to have a relationship with a conglomerate company and its niche bank. We could sense from some of the consumer reflections that the concerns were true for them to some extent. Not all of the consumers expressed their concern, but many enough. It emerged as a noteworthy issue. Consumers did not want to feel “locked in” and many of the consumers talked warmly about having several relationships instead of only one and embraced competition between the companies. Even if they do not practice switching very often, they want the possibility to switch. Consumers also indicated that mutuality and continuity in the relationships is appreciated, while exclusivity is not, when they were probed on what loyalty meant for them and what they expect company loyalty to be towards the consumers. This is in line with the current theory on financial services behaviour where brand relationships build on reciprocity, mutual exchange and fulfilment of promises in consumers' mind's (O'Loughlin et al, 2004). An important factor in this respect would be to improve consumers' perceptions of conglomerates' images in order to appear unique and caring.

This paper presented the first findings from our research project on consumers' relationships to companies that expand their business to other markets. Within this project we also participate with questions about switching behaviour and number of relationships to grocery stores, insurance companies, and banks in a national survey of 3000 Swedish citizens. We will receive the data in February 2008. The next step is to plan a structured questionnaire based on the findings from the exploratory interviews. The questionnaire will be sent to 1000-1500 consumers in Sweden and the results are expected to be ready in the Mid Spring 2008. After the survey, we plan to make a round of in-depth interviews with consumers who are or have been customers to nischbanks to gain insight of their experiences.

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Appendix

Market structure and competition

The concentration within the sectors grocery retailing, insurance, and retail banking is high in Sweden. The four largest companies have market shares around 80% in their largest consumer markets in each sector. In grocery retailing, the largest company's market share is rather close to 50%.

Grocery retailing

In Sweden, there are four large retail companies for groceries, who own or cooperate with 16 larger store brands. Together they have 84% of the grocery sales in grocery stores, approximately 190 000 million Swedish crowns in 2006⁷. ICA's market share is 43%, the Cooperation 19%, the Axfood-sphere 16%, and the Bergendahl-sphere 7%. In addition, there are a number of companies operating one or two store brands, most of them local concepts.

Insurance

There are 135 national insurance companies in Sweden. 12 of them are unit linked companies and 33 are other life insurance companies. 90 are non-life insurance companies.⁸ The four largest non-life insurance companies are Länsförsäkringar, If Skadeförsäkring, Trygg-Hansa, and Folksam. Their total market share of premium income is 83%, including both the consumer and business markets (table A.1). In insurance categories where private consumers dominate; "householder & homeowner" and "accident & health", their market share is 80% and 92%.

Table A.1 Market shares of premium income in some insurance branches. Non-life insurance companies.

Share of premium income, %	Total	Householder & homeowner	Accident & Health
Länsförsäkringar	30	29	14
If	20	12	7
Trygg-Hansa	18	13	40
Folksam	15	26	32
Others	17	20	8
Total	100	100	100
Total in 1000 mill. SEK, 2006	56	11	5

Source: Association of Swedish Insurers, 2007. Swedish insurance in figures 2006.

⁷ Market magasin, 2-3 2007.

⁸ There are also 226 local non-life insurance companies, 81 friendly societies and 31 Non-Swedish companies.

Retail banking

There are 129 banks in Sweden of which 31 are limited companies, 26 branches of foreign banks, 2 membership banks, and 70 local savings banks (ECON 2007). The four largest banks are Swedbank, Nordea, Handelsbanken, and SEB. The companies' share of Swedish households' deposits are 72% (table A.2). They all have their own mortgage institutions. Their market share of mortgage loans to Swedish households via institutes are 88%. Their share of loans to Swedish households via banks are 42%.

Table A.2 Market shares of household markets.

Share %	Deposits	Lending (Mortgage inst.)	Lending (Banks)
Swedbank	26	31	15
Nordea	18	15	9
Handelsbanken	16	27	12
SEB	12	14	6
Others	28	12	58
Total	100	100	100
Total in 1000 mill. SEK, 2006	676	1241	392

Source: ECON 2007.

Distributional Effects of Lower Food Prices in a Rich Country

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Calculations Based on Household Demand for Food in Sweden

(Very preliminary version, please do not quote)

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Abstract

Even if controlling for differences in taxes and transportation costs, the Nordic Competition Authorities claims in a report from 2005 that the Swedish food prices are 11-percent higher in Sweden compared to the EU-15 countries. This paper focuses on distributional effects of a price decrease on food in Sweden. Based on a simple model of household utility the households demand for food is derived and estimated. The empirical results are based on a data set covering 1,313 Swedish households. Based on this data set, price- and income elasticities for different income groups are calculated. These calculations suggest that food is a normal good with an average income elasticity of approximately 0.17 and a price elasticity of 0.44. The results indicate the income elasticity to differ across income groups while price elasticities are constant.

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1. Introduction

Based on data from Eurostat and own calculations controlling for differences in VAT, other taxes and price campaigns, the Nordic competition authorities claims in an report from 2005² that food prices in Sweden are 11-percent higher compared to the EU-15 countries. The Nordic competition authorities argue that part of this price difference can be explained by the limited degree of competition on the food retailing market. This suggests a potential for lower food prices in Sweden. From an economic perspective lower prices would be, all other things equal, beneficial for consumers. However, the effects of a price change on food are not obvious. For instance, will the households consume more food if prices are lowered or will they spend more money on other goods? From a policy and redistribution perspective, it is also of importance to analyze if and to what extend price- and income changes affect the demand for food differently across income groups.

This paper constitutes a starting point for analyzing the effects of price changes on food on households' demand for food focusing on the Swedish situation. Based on a simple model of household utility, the main issue is to estimate the household demand for food and based on these estimates calculate income and price elasticities for food for different income groups. The demand for food is estimated using a dataset covering 1,313 households in a well defined area in Sweden. The dataset includes a large set of household characteristics collected from a survey. This information is then linked to price information from the food stores in which the household have reported to make their food purchases. Price information has been collected on site from the stores and covers all food stores in the area ranging from hypermarkets to bakeries. Based on the estimated ordinary demand function, price- and income elasticities are calculated in order to analyze potential distributional effects of an 11-percent decrease in Swedish food prices.

Analysis of the demand for food is of importance from several perspectives; for the private household, firms as well as for the policy maker. First, with, at least to our knowledge and with no exceptions, human beings need food in order to survive which indicate that food is a necessary good. Second, the number of household who are self-supported when it comes to food has at least in the industrial part of the world decreased dramatically during the last 150 years which means that a majority of all households have to spend part of their income on food.³ Based on these two 'facts' it could be argued that the demand for food should not be sensitive to

² Report from the Nordic competition authorities (2005).

³ Statistics Sweden (SCB, 2001) estimated that 20-percent of the Swedish households' budget is spend on food.

income or price changes; whatever the price and income levels households have to buy food. On the other hand, as incomes increase the individual household could afford to buy more expensive or more “luxury” food items. Therefore, the effect of income and price changes on food demand is an empirical question and may also differ across income groups and regions. If the demand for food is sensitive to income changes this is of importance for the policy maker when it comes to the design of transfer programs. From a business perspective, the income elasticity is of importance as it (together with information on the regional income- and demographic development) constitutes one indicator of the local market potential. That is, in the decision to enter or not to enter a local market, local income changes is not a sufficient indicator of changes in market potential. Moreover, if the demand for food is sensitive to price changes it should be taken into account in the design of VAT on food, and maybe especially so if the sensitivity vary across income groups.

The previous empirical literature on food demand have to a large extend been based on data from undeveloped countries where under- and malnutrition are large problems. Abduali and Aubert (2004) find income and socio-economic variables to be of importance in explaining food demand among Tanzanian households. Sengul and Tuncer (2005), who use the Linearly Approximated Almost Ideal Demand System (LA/AIDS) to estimate food demand of poor and extremely poor households in Turkey, finds that food demand of extremely poor households’ tend to be more sensitive to changes in income and prices compared to poor households. This is of importance from a policy perspective as it suggests that equalization of incomes (i.e. income transfers from rich to poor and extremely poor) or decreases in VAT on food to have a positive effect on food consumption amongst the poorest.

In an interesting study Deaton and Paxson (1998) finds, given constant per capita total expenditures, the food budget share decreases as the size of the household increases. This result proved to hold for seven countries of quite different character, such as the United States and Pakistan. In contrast to expected this relationship turned out to be larger for countries with low income levels. Although Deaton and Paxson (1998) performs an analysis among countries and the present paper focuses on differences in demand pattern among income groups within a country it is relevant to mention since it highlights the importance of giving attention to differences among income groups.

This paper contributes to the existing literature on household demand for food in several ways. First, the empirical analysis is based on detailed information on both household characteristics and prices. Second, analysis of food demand based on information from households living in a rich country where starvation is not a large problem is scarce. Therefore, it is of interest to compare our results with other studies based on data from poor countries. Third, distributional effects between income groups are always of interest from a policy perspective.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. A simple theoretical model is developed and the demand for food is derived in Section 2. The data set is described in Section 3 followed by a discussion of estimation technique and functional form in Section 4. The results are presented in Section 5 and final discussion and conclusions are given in Section 6.

2. A Simple Model

Consider a representative household, i , who receive utility (U_i) from consumption of two goods; food (g_i) and other goods (G_i). The utility function of household i could then be defined as

$$(1) \quad U_i = u_i(g_i, G_i; Z_i)$$

where other household characteristics are captured in Z_i . Denote by y_i the household total income and by p_i the price level of food faced by the household (i.e. the price level in the food store where household i makes her food purchases). Normalize the price on other goods to 1, the household then maximizes its utility (1) subject to the budget constraint, $y_i = p_i G_i + g_i$ and solves the maximization problem

$$(2) \quad \max_{g_i, G_i} L = u_i(g_i, G_i; Z_i) - \lambda (y_i - p_i G_i - g_i)$$

As the household maximum utility will be a function of its income y_i and the price on food p_i the indirect utility function, which indicate the maximum utility attainable at given prices and income, can be written as

$$(3) \quad v_i = v_i(y_i, p_i; Z_i)$$

which is increasing in y_i and decreasing in p_i and must hold for all v and y . Hence, it can also be written as $y_i = y_i(p_i, v_i; Z_i)$ where y_i indicate the minimum income at given prices to achieve a given utility. Holding utility constant at v_i^0 the compensated demand curve is given by

$$(4) \quad \frac{\partial y_i}{\partial p_i} = g_i(p_i, v_i^0; Z_i)$$

By totally differentiating (3) still holding utility constant give

$$(5) \quad \frac{\partial \bar{v}_i}{\partial p_i} dp_i + \frac{v_i}{y_i} dy_i = 0$$

As utility is held constant $dy_i = -g_i dp_i$ and by Roy's identity the ordinary demand function is

$$(6) \quad g_i^* = g_i(p_i, y_i; Z_i) \quad \frac{\partial \bar{v}_i}{\partial p_i} / \frac{v_i}{y_i}$$

From (6) it is easy to calculate the income elasticity $E = (\partial g^* / \partial y) / (y / g^*)$ as well as the price elasticity $e = -(\partial g^* / \partial p) / (p / g^*)$.

3. Data

The data set used in this study originates from two different sources. Household characteristics and information on the households food consumption have been collected by a questionnaire to a representative selection with respect to the age distribution of 3,000 households in six Swedish municipalities; Bjurholm, Nordmaling, Robertsfors, Umeå, Vindeln and Vännäs. These municipalities, who border on to each other, form the Umeå region with Umeå as the largest municipality located in the northern part of Sweden. As these municipalities differ in size (see Table 1 below), the number of questionnaires to each municipality has been weighted by the relative number of inhabitants.

Table 1. Population, number of questionnaires and respond-rate.

Municipality	Population in 2004 (%)	Questionnaires (%)	Usable answers (%)
Bjurholm	2,588 (1.8)	55 (1.8)	21 (1.6)
Nordmaling	7,511 (5.3)	164 (5.4)	68 (5.2)
Robertsfors	7,106 (5.0)	152 (5.0)	60 (4.6)
Umeå	109,390 (77.6)	2,320 (77.3)	1,029 (78.4)
Vindeln	5,773 (4.1)	126 (4.2)	47 (3.6)
Vännäs	8,525 (6.1)	183 (6.1)	88 (6.6)
Total	140,893 (100)	3,000 (100)	1,313 (100)

Note: Percentage is given in parenthesis.

The number of usable answers was 1,313 (44-percent) and the data is fairly representative in terms of preserved weights attached to each municipality. The questionnaire provide information on store preferences, how much the household spend on food per month and household

characteristics such as the households' total income before tax, the number of persons in the household, their age, the highest education of a family member, how many times per week members of the household dine out etc. The household was also asked to name its primarily choice of store for three types of shopping; large scale, supplementary, and occasional. These three types of shopping correspond to the budget shares spent on each type. All households in the data have reported large scale shopping behavior while some of them do not go for occasional shopping trips and some do neither do occasional nor supplementary shopping. The questionnaire has been developed in close collaboration with practitioners within the food market and the survey was performed in October 2004.

The second source of information concern prices which has been collected directly in the stores. In total, the respondents listed 117 food stores which is basically all stores that sells food in the area. From each store, prices of up to 171 different items have been collected and based on this information two different price indexes has been calculated based on two typical food baskets defined by the Swedish National Board for Consumer Policies (KO). One price index (p_1) is calculated for a typical single person household, the other one (p_4) for a typical 4 person household with two adults and two children. Here, (p_1) is used for families with less than three adults, otherwise (p_4) is used. The price indexes from the different stores are then weighted by the share of the households' monthly food expenditures spent at each of the stores listed by the household. As all 171 items in the KO-basket were not supplied by the stores in the lower tail of the size distribution two different price indexes has been tested. Firstly, the price for a missing item is assumed to be the mean price of that specific item within all the stores where the item was found. Alternatively the price for a missing item is assumed to be the highest price for that specific item within all the stores where the item was found. However, as it turned out, the results are not sensitive for the choice of price index. We argue that if a given store does not hold a specific item, then it is reasonable to assume that the stores cost to add this item to its assortment is high. Therefore, the latter definition is used in the empirical analysis below.⁴

⁴ This is actually a problem of missing observations. By using the highest value instead of the mean value may introduce additional bias on the estimated parameters. We are aware of this. However, as we believe the higher price to be a better estimate of the actual price if the store should hold that specific item, we argue that our definition will instead reduce the potential bias.

Descriptive statistics of household characteristics and prices used in the empirical analysis are displayed in Table 2 below. The dependent variable (g) is defined as the households' total monthly spending on food in SEK.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Spend (g)	3,933.8	1,880.2	500.0	13,750.0
Price (p)	1,344.2	694.1	704.4	3,038.2
Income (y)	30,491.2	16,599.4	5,000.0	75,000.0
Car (car)	1.2	0.8	0.0	7.0
External freezer (ext)	0.5	0.5	0.0	1.0
Students dean (sd)	0.02	0.15	0.0	1.0
Apartment (ap)	0.42	0.49	0.0	1.0
Private house (pb)	0.43	0.50	0.0	1.0
Terrace house (tb)	0.11	0.31	0.0	1.0
Credit cards (cc)	3.1	1.3	0.0	8.0
Lunch out (lo)	1.5	1.9	0.0	7.0
Dinner out (do)	0.3	0.7	0.0	7.0
Age 0-6 years ($a06$)	0.2	0.5	0.0	3.0
Age 7-15 years ($a715$)	0.4	0.8	0.0	6.0
Age 16-19 years ($a1619$)	0.1	0.4	0.0	3.0
Age 20-24 years ($a2024$)	0.2	0.6	0.0	9.0
Age 25-64 years ($a2564$)	1.3	0.8	0.0	4.0
Age 65- years ($a65$)	0.2	0.5	0.0	3.0
Often (of)	2.1	1.5	0.0	7.0
Univers. edu. (ue)	0.7	0.8	0.0	9.0

Among the potential determinants of household demand, price (p) and income (y) are central in order to calculate price and income elasticities. The price variable has been defined above. In order to increase the respond rate on income, the question regarding the households' total income before tax was originally discrete where the respondent were asked to mark within what interval the households total income was. This information has then been transformed into a continuous variable.

It is reasonable to assume that the demand for food depend on other household characteristics than income. For instance, the accessibility of transportation device, storing capabilities, and characteristics of living conditions are likely to affect the demand for food. The accessibility of transportation device is measured as the number of cars ($cars$) available to the household and is assumed to reflect the possibility for the household to transport large quantities and/or 'economy packs'. Note the broad definition; access to instead of owned. Storing capabilities and capacity

are captured by a dummy variable for external freezer (*ef*). As this variable only capture the storing capabilities of frozen foods, three additional dummy variables reflecting housing conditions are used to capture the storage capability of other items. These variables are information on if the household live in a students den (*sd*), private house (*pb*), terrace house (*tb*), or apartment (*ap*). Note that apartment includes both co-operative apartments and apartments with right of tenancy. In the empirical analysis below, apartment will serve as the reference category.

A natural substitution for buying food in the store is to visit a restaurant. Ma *et al.* (2006) argue that to understand household demand for in house food consumption the households' food away from home preferences need to be accounted for. Ma *et al.* (2006) estimates the food away from home expenditures with data from urban China and finds income to be a strong predictor. To control for this, two variables are used; the number of dinners (*do*) and lunches (*lo*) that the members of the household eat at restaurants per week (this includes lunches at staff dining rooms). Note that lunches prepared at home and brought to work (lunch box, sandwiches etc.) are not included in *lo*.

Finally, it is also reasonable to assume that the age composition of the household, shopping frequency and educational level might have effects on the households demand for food. For instance, a large number of children aged 7-15 years or 16-19 years may have a different impact on the household demand compared to a household with many aged 65 years or above. These effects are controlled for by the use of information on the number of children within the household aged 0-6 years (*a06*), 7-15 years (*a715*), 16-19 years (*a1619*), 20-24 years (*a2024*), 25-64 years (*a2564*), and above 65 (*a65*). The households shopping frequency is controlled for by information on how often each week the household visits a food store (*of*) for large scale shopping for food and the educational level is measured by the number of individuals within the household who holds a university degree (*ue*). Finally, five dummy variables are used to control for potential structural differences between regions, where regions are defined as the municipality.

4. Functional form, pre-testing and estimation technique

Different functional forms and estimation techniques have been applied in the literature on food demand (references to be included here). Here, the households' demand for food is supposed to take the form

$$(10) \quad g_i = \alpha + \beta_p p_i + \beta_y y_i + \beta_{y^2} y_i^2 + Z_i' \lambda + \varepsilon_i$$

where α and the β 's along with the elements in the vector λ are parameters to be estimated and ε is the error term.

Even if there are good reasons to assume non-orthogonality between p and ε which suggests the use of an estimator based on instrumental variable (IV) techniques as OLS in such a case will be biased and inconsistent, IV estimation will be less efficient compared to OLS if p actually is orthogonal to ε . In order not to make this erroneous assumption, the Durbin-Wu-Hausman test of the endogeneity of p based on the OLS estimate of the error variance is used.⁵ With a test statistic of 4.45 and a p-value of 0.03 the null hypothesis of orthogonality between p and ε is rejected which suggest the use of IV-estimators. Given this, the next issue is to select instruments for the endogenous variable p . Besides the requirement that these instruments should be correlated with the endogenous regressor and at the same time orthogonal to the errors, the literature gives little guidance on the matter of where these instruments are to be found, and maybe especially so in applied work based on cross-section data where the use of lagged values of the endogenous regressor is not an option.⁶ Here, information on the distance between the household and the city centre of Umeå, the category of the store the household have chosen for it's large scale shopping for food (that is, if this store could be categorized as a supermarket or a middle sized store) and if this store is associated with the two largest retail chains in the region are used as instruments for p . Based on IV estimation of equation (10), the validity of the chosen instruments are then tested for by the use of the "partial R^2 "-test proposed by Shea (1997).⁷ An F -statistic of 9.93 and a p-value of 0.00 suggest that the selected instruments are valid.⁸ Further, the Sargan statistic⁹ is applied to test for overidentification of all instruments (test of the instrument's independence from the unobserved error process). With a Sargan statistic of

⁵ The DWH test, which is distributed as chi-sq, was first proposed by Durbin (1954) and then by Wu (1973) and Hausman (1978) and comes in different versions. Here we have used the one based on the OLS estimate of the error variance (the Durbin statistic) because it is more efficient compared to the version based on the IV estimate of the standard errors. This version of the test also has the advantage that it performs better when the instruments are weak (see Staiger and Stock (1997)).

⁶ Lewbel (1997) discuss and suggest a solution to the problem of constructing instruments when no additional data are available. We have tried his approach with very mixed and "unstable" results.

⁷ This test, which is an F -test, is actually similar to the one suggested by Bound *et al.* (1995) for the case with only one endogenous regressor. However, the statistic proposed by Shea (1997) has the advantage that it takes the intercorrelations among the instruments into account.

⁸ As a rule of thumb for a single endogenous regressor, an F -statistic < 10 is cause for concern (see Steiger and Stock (1997)).

⁹ This test is distributed as chi-sq. For further details of this test, see Sargan (1958).

4.39 and a p-value of 0.36 the null hypothesis could not be rejected which indicate that the instruments are not correlated with the error process.

Although the consistency of the IV coefficient estimates is not affected by the presence of heteroskedasticity, IV estimates of the standard errors become inconsistent which prevent valid inference. This could partly be overcome by the use of heteroskedasticity-constant or “robust” standard errors and statistics. The conventional IV estimator is, even if it is still consistent, inefficient in the presence of heteroskedasticity. One common solution to this is the use of a robust General Method of Moments (GMM) estimator¹⁰ which makes use of the orthogonality conditions to allow for efficient estimation in the presence of heteroskedasticity of unknown form. Here, the Pagan-Hall general test statistic, which is distributed as chi-sq, is applied to test the hypothesis of heteroskedasticity where the null is homoskedasticity.¹¹ As the Pagan-Hall test is non-significant (58.19, p-value = 0.00) the hypothesis of homoskedastic errors can be rejected which suggest the use of GMM. However, for comparable reasons we will present both the IV and GMM estimates. Finally, to ascertain the instruments independence from an unobserved error process the Hansen *J* statistic is employed.¹² That is, to test for overidentifying restrictions. This is supported by the Hansen *J* statistic (5.41, p-value = 0.25).

5. Results

Let us first comment on the IV and robust GMM parameter estimates of equation (10) displayed in Table 3 below, and then turn to the calculation of price- and income elasticities. The regional dummy variables are suppressed in order to save space.

As is evident from Table 3 the IV and robust GMM estimates are quite similar even though the significance differs for some variables. For instance, both models predict the demand for food to be negatively correlated with price which suggests that the demand function has a negative slope. This correlation is statistically significant in both models. However, the positive correlation between the demand for food and the households’ income (β_y) is only significant at the 95-percent level in the IV model (significant at the 94-percent level in the GMM model). However,

¹⁰ GMM was first proposed by Hansen (1982) and is now frequently used in empirical research.

¹¹ See Pagan and Hall (1983) for further details regarding this test. In comparison to other frequently used test for heteroskedasticity like the ones proposed by Godfrey (1978), White (1980), Koenker (1981), and Cook and Weisberg (1983), Pagan and Hall (1983) points out that these test will only be valid if heteroskedasticity is only present in the IV regression and nowhere else in the system including the first stage regressions.

¹² The Hansen *J* statistic is distributed as chi-sq.

both models predict this effect to decrease with income as β_{y^2} is estimated to be negative. The accessibility of a car for transportation is estimated to have a positive effect on the demand for food as λ_{car} is positive and significant in both models. This contradicts our previous assumption that access to a car (or cars) would facilitate transportation of large quantities and/or ‘economy packs’. One possible explanation for this is that the possession of car(s) correlate with income and hence is an indicator of purchasing power. However, as the correlation between the two variables income and car is only 0.35 this interpretation is ruled out. Another potential explanation is that car owners actually have an ‘overconsumption’ of economy packs. That is, they tend to buy too large quantities which they in the end do not use up before the ‘best before’ date comes along.¹³

Turning to storage capabilities and capacity which are captured by the dummy variables for external freezer (*ef*) and housing conditions (if the household live in a students den (*sd*), private house (*ph*), or terrace house (*th*) where those living in apartments serves as reference group). The effects of external freezer (λ_{ext}) and if the household lives in a student dean (λ_{sd}) are estimated to be positively and negatively correlated with g respectively. However, the significance of these effects differs between the two models. While the positive effect of an external freezer is non-significant in both models, the GMM estimates suggests that those living in student deans to have lower expenditures compared to those living in apartments. Positive effects are also estimated for households living in private houses (λ_{ph}) and terrace houses (λ_{th}). Again, one suspects these two variables to be correlated with income as it is reasonable to assume that households with higher incomes are more likely to afford to live in a private house or a terrace house. However, with correlation coefficients of 0.26, 0.23 and -0.23 respectively (the last correlation is between income and students dean) we disregard the interpretation that these variables are indicators of the households income. Therefore, we once more suggest the interpretation that households with large storing capacities tend to buy larger quantities which they in the end do not use up before the ‘best before’ date comes along. Another potential explanation is that these households have preferences for more expensive items. Unfortunately, we are not able to discriminate between these two potential explanations.

¹³ This interpretation was proposed to us by Carina Selander, an interpretation that we find plausible and fully support.

Table 3. IV and GMM estimates and corresponding t-values of equation (10).

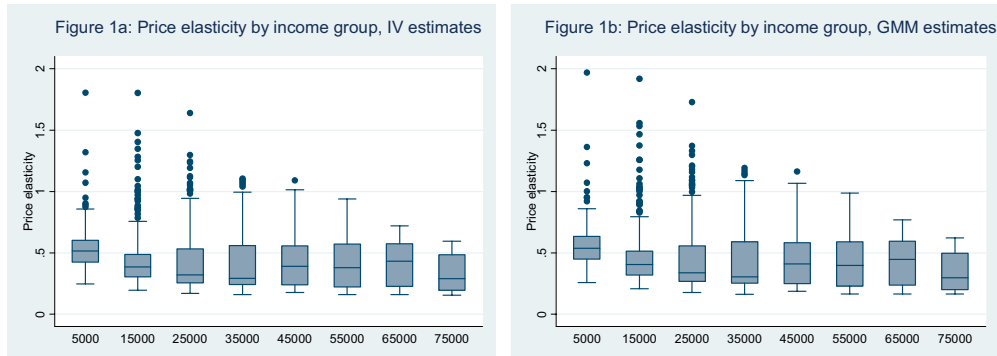
	IV		GMM	
	Estimate	t-value	Estimate	t-value
Price (β_p)	-1.21	-2.14	-1.27	-2.22
Income (β_y)	0.02	2.22	0.02	1.89
Income sq. (β_{y^2})	-2.79×10^{-8}	-0.20	-1.17×10^{-8}	-0.07
Car (α_{car})	138.30	1.94	147.15	1.94
External freezer (α_{ext})	113.02	1.11	108.85	1.00
Student dean (α_{sd})	-412.52	-1.37	-390.65	-2.06
Private house (λ_{ph})	328.03	2.74	295.26	2.35
Terrace house (α_{th})	413.03	2.58	405.59	2.39
Credit cards (α_{cc})	111.25	3.13	110.44	3.21
Lunch out (α_{lo})	-16.77	-0.60	-15.56	-0.55
Dinner out (α_{do})	147.76	2.28	79.35	0.74
Age 0-6 (α_{a06})	994.42	3.30	1,055.37	3.49
Age 7-15 (α_{a715})	1,101.49	4.94	1,113.82	4.96
Age 16-19 (α_{a1619})	1,423.60	4.66	1,443.56	4.63
Age 20-24 (α_{a2024})	758.27	3.50	804.31	3.64
Age 25-64 (α_{a2024})	903.26	3.96	903.59	3.91
Age 65- (α_{a65})	778.59	4.29	785.42	4.14
Often (λ_{of})	294.11	2.88	281.08	2.65
Often sq. (λ_{of^2})	-22.37	-1.43	-20.48	-1.24
Univers. edu. (α_{ue})	-157.22	-2.72	-161.42	-2.40
ϕ	1,281.91	3.35	1,373.39	3.41

Another potentially important factor is the possession of credit cards. Again, it is likely that the number of credit cards within the household correlate with income. A correlation coefficient of 0.26 between income and the number of credit cards indicates this not to be the case. The estimates presented in Table 3 suggest a positive correlation between g and cc . If the number of credit cards within the household also reflects the use of credit cards, one potential interpretation is that households who use credit cards are less price conscious than households who pay cash. The argument by Ma *et al.* (2006) that to understand household demand for in house food consumption the households' food away from home preferences need to be accounted for is not supported by the parameter estimates presented in Table 3. As the two

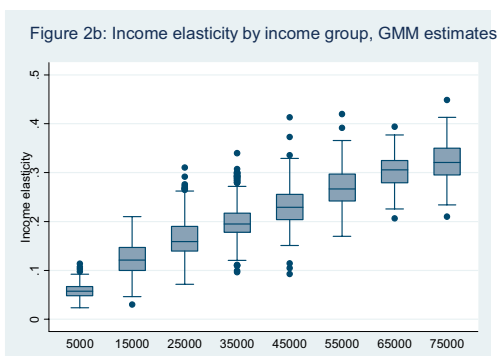
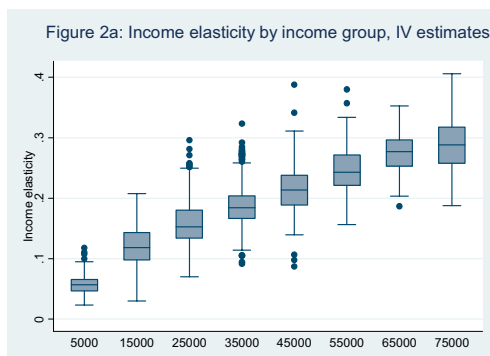
parameters (β_{lo}) and (λ_{do}) are non-significant, there is no evidence for such effect for the household included in our data.

As expected, the number of household members is estimated to have a positive effect on the households' food expenditures. However, our model predicts the magnitude of this effect to be different depending on the family members' age. For instance, an extra individual aged between 16 and 19 years (β_{a1619}) is estimated to increase the households' expenditures on food by approximately SEK 1,430 while an additional family member aged above 65 (β_{a65}) is estimated to increase the households' expenditures by approximately SEK 782. This difference is significant and so are all other differences except for $(\lambda_{a06} - \lambda_{a715})$, $(\lambda_{a06} - \lambda_{a2024})$, $(\beta_{a06} - \lambda_{a2564})$, $(\beta_{a06} - \lambda_{a65})$, $(\beta_{a715} - \lambda_{a2565})$, $(\beta_{a2024} - \lambda_{a2564})$, $(\lambda_{a2024} - \lambda_{a65})$, and $(\lambda_{a2564} - \lambda_{a65})$.

Let us continue with calculations of price- and income elasticities. Based on the estimates of equation (10) displayed in Table 3, the average price elasticity (e) is 0.43 and 0.46 for the IV and GMM estimates respectively with a standard deviation of 0.23 and 0.24. This suggests $0 < e < 1$ (at least at the 90-percent level of significance). Moreover, the average income elasticity (E) is calculated to be 0.17 (IV) and 0.18 (GMM) with a standard deviation of 0.07 in both cases which suggests $0 < E < 1$ at the conventional 95-percent level of significance. Hence, based on these calculations we conclude that food is on average a normal good. However, these elasticities differ across income groups. For instance, as shown in Table A1 and visualized in Figure 1a and 1b below, the price elasticity ranges from an average of 0.57 for the households with the lowest incomes to an average of 0.34 for the group of households with the highest incomes. However, this difference is not significant, nor is any other difference between income groups displayed in Figure 1a and 1b.



Differences in income elasticities between income groups are more evident than the differences in price elasticities, see Figure 2a and 2b below. Income elasticity range from 0.06 for household's with the lowest incomes to approximately 0.32 for households with the highest incomes. At first glance, these findings may seem strange as it would have been more likely to find high income elasticities among low income households. However, one potential explanation for these findings goes as follows. Relative many other countries, Sweden is a rich country where under nutrition is not a large problem (even though malnutrition might be), not even among households at the lower end of the income distribution. When these households receive some extra money, they have other needs than food to fulfill and therefore they use this extra money for consumption of other things. On the other hand, households at the upper end of the income distribution tend to buy more expensive food items when receiving extra income.



6. Concluding remarks

This paper deals with the households demand for food where the main issue has been to analyze distributional effects due to a potential change in food prices. The results presented in the paper are based on a data set covering 1,313 households in the mid-northern parts of Sweden. The main findings are that the effect of such a decrease in food prices will affect households with different incomes differently. For instance, our calculations suggest the income elasticity to be much higher for high income households compared to low income households.

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Appendix

Table A1. Price- and income elasticities by income group

	Observations	Mean	IV Std. Div.	Min	Max	Mean	GMM Std. Div.	Min	Max
Price elasticity (ϕ)	1.313	0.43	0.23	0.15	1.81	0.46	0.24	0.16	1.97
Income elasticity (β)	1.313	0.17	0.07	0.02	0.41	0.18	0.07	0.02	0.45
<i>Price- and income elasticity by income group</i>									
<i>0-10,000</i>									
(ϕ)	136	0.54	0.21	0.25	1.81	0.57	0.22	0.26	1.97
(β)	136	0.06	0.02	0.02	0.12	0.06	0.02	0.02	0.11
<i>10,000-20,000</i>									
(ϕ)	260	0.45	0.24	0.20	1.80	0.47	0.25	0.21	1.92
(β)	260	0.12	0.03	0.03	0.21	0.12	0.03	0.03	0.20
<i>20,000-30,000</i>									
(ϕ)	272	0.43	0.26	0.17	1.64	0.46	0.27	0.18	1.73
(β)	272	0.16	0.04	0.07	0.30	0.17	0.04	0.07	0.31
<i>30,000-40,000</i>									
(ϕ)	283	0.41	0.22	0.16	1.10	0.43	0.23	0.16	1.19
(β)	283	0.19	0.04	0.09	0.32	0.20	0.04	0.10	0.34
<i>40,000-50,000</i>									
(ϕ)	212	0.41	0.19	0.18	1.09	0.43	0.21	0.19	1.16
(β)	212	0.21	0.04	0.09	0.39	0.23	0.04	0.09	0.41
<i>50,000-60,000</i>									
(ϕ)	81	0.41	0.20	0.16	0.94	0.43	0.21	0.17	0.99
(β)	81	0.25	0.04	0.16	0.38	0.27	0.05	0.17	0.42
<i>60,000-70,000</i>									
(ϕ)	42	0.40	0.18	0.16	0.72	0.42	0.19	0.17	0.77
(β)	42	0.27	0.04	0.19	0.35	0.30	0.04	0.21	0.39
<i>70,000-</i>									
(ϕ)	27	0.34	0.15	0.15	0.60	0.35	0.16	0.16	0.62
(β)	27	0.29	0.05	0.19	0.41	0.32	0.06	0.21	0.45

Table A2: VIF values.

Variable	VIF	1/VIF
<i>y</i>	16.13	0.06
<i>y</i> ²	13.84	0.07
<i>of</i>	11.18	0.09
<i>of</i> ²	11.17	0.09
<i>p</i>	3.20	0.31
<i>Umeå</i>	3.11	0.32
<i>a2565</i>	2.94	0.34
<i>a65</i>	1.95	0.52
<i>pb</i>	1.93	0.52
<i>Nordmaling</i>	1.73	0.58
<i>a715</i>	1.73	0.58
<i>Robertsfors</i>	1.67	0.60
<i>a2024</i>	1.67	0.60
<i>a06</i>	1.65	0.61
<i>car</i>	1.56	0.64
<i>Vindeln</i>	1.52	0.66
<i>ext</i>	1.42	0.71
<i>A1619</i>	1.42	0.71
<i>tb</i>	1.37	0.74
<i>ue</i>	1.28	0.78
<i>lo</i>	1.26	0.79
<i>Bjurbolm</i>	1.25	0.80
<i>sd</i>	1.16	0.86
<i>cc</i>	1.13	0.88
<i>do</i>	1.12	0.89
Mean VIF	3.35	

Note: A VIF value above 10 is reason for caution.

The Substitution Patterns of Pharmaceuticals: the Case of Statins

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Abstract

The market of statins is characterized by the large number of products, which are similar in their clinical features but which can have even large price differences. This paper examines the choice of statins with the discrete choice demand model in the differentiated product market. The results indicate that consumers prefer lower prices and the demand of statins is sensitive to price changes, when preferences are allowed to be correlated within the group of therapeutic substitutes and the endogeneity of prices is taken into account in the estimation of the nested logit model. Furthermore, the demand of statins is found to be more responsive to changes in the prices of therapeutic substitutes than other products.

Keywords: discrete choice, demand, product differentiation, nested logit, elasticity, pharmaceuticals.

1. Introduction

The industry of pharmaceuticals has been under the public debate and has been examined also from the point of view of economics not least because of dramatic increase in health care expenses in almost all Western countries during the past few decades. One market in Finland, where consumption and, in consequence, expenses for both consumers and the society are at high level is statins (HMG CoA reductase inhibitors), which are used to decrease high serum cholesterol. In 2005, the total expenses for statins was over 108 million euros, which was 30 % of the total expenses of cardiovascular system drugs and 7 % of the total expenses of all pharmaceuticals (National Agency for Medicines & the Social Insurance Institution, 2006).

The purpose of this article is to analyze the price sensitivity of the demand of statins. This market is especially interesting, because although clinical differences between statins are small in practice, there are relatively large number of products in the market and significant price differences between them. Furthermore, price developments and increase in the number of products in the market during 2003-2006 suggest that price competition between statins might have strengthened.

The demand of prescription drugs can be described as a multistage decision making process. At the first stage, the demand is restricted by a physician, who selects a prescription drug and thus a method of treatment possibly among several potential alternatives. The physician can, however, be an imperfect agent to the consumer: the physician does not necessarily select the product that maximizes the utility of the consumer, because search for price or quality

information can create costs to the physician. If the physician takes patient's welfare into account, then costs induced by the use of pharmaceuticals to the patient can affect on the choice of the physician. At the second stage, a pharmacist chooses a product, which can be a generic or a brand, with the patient and within the limits of legislation.

The demand of statins is analyzed with the discrete choice model in the differentiated product industry. In particular, a nested logit model, which takes the multistage nature of demand into account by allowing preferences to be correlated within the group of therapeutic substitutes, is used. Furthermore, prices are allowed to be correlated with unobserved product characteristics including, e.g., reputation or perceptions about quality. The endogeneity of prices should be taken into account, as was shown by Berry (1994) in Monte Carlo studies or Berry et al. (1994) in an empirical study of the automobile industry. Indeed, the results of this article support this statement.

One alternative to discrete choice models is a basic log-linear demand model, which, however, has some well-known undesirable features, especially, if the number of competing products in the market is high. In that case, the number of cross-price elasticities to be estimated is also large, if one is not willing to make some sort of aggregation or *a priori* assumptions about the magnitudes of elasticities, for example, by setting some of them to zero.

This would be a relevant problem also in the market of statins, where the number of products is relatively large, and thus, for instance, the model of multistage budgeting used by Ellison et al. (1997) is not applied here. An advantage of this article compared to Ellison et al. (1997) and also to Berndt (1996) is that the substitution patterns of pharmaceuticals are analyzed with a relatively rich monthly panel dataset for substitutable products in 2003-2006.

The main result of this article is that the demand of pharmaceuticals is sensitive to the changes of prices, which might be explained by the market environment of statins characterized by the relatively large number of products with high price differences or it can partly reflect changes in the stocks of pharmacies, when prices change¹. Furthermore, the demand is fairly unresponsive to changes in the prices of other products, which is caused by the correlation in preferences between therapeutic substitutes, the relatively large number of products in each group of therapeutic substitutes and thus low within group market shares on average. Anyhow, the demand is more sensitive to changes in the prices of therapeutic substitutes than other products.

The article is constructed in the following way. Section 2 illustrates in brief the pharmaceutical markets in Finland and, in particular, the industry of statins on the basis of the data. Theoretic and econometric models of discrete choice demand are represented in section 3 and estimation results are looked through in section 4. Finally, section 5 summarizes the results.

2. The Overview of Pharmaceutical Markets in Finland

The pharmaceutical market environment changed substantially in 1.4.2004, when a compulsory drug substitution law was implemented in order to cut drug expenses down by

¹ See Appendix 1 The Data for the construction of the dataset.

increasing competition between drug firms. According to the law, a substitutable non-patent drug has to be exchanged with the cheapest or cheap enough generic substitute by a pharmacist if neither the consumer nor the doctor denies the substitution.

Substitutable drugs belong to the same substitution group and so-called price band is composed for each group. A cheaper equivalent product offered by a pharmacist is selected from the price band. The lower limit of the band is determined on the basis of the cheapest drug of the group in every three month. The upper limit is +2 euros from the lower limit if the lower limit, or the cheapest drug, is less than 40 euros, and otherwise the upper limit is +3 euros from the lower limit. The aim of the band is to guide generic substitution, and the consumer has always a right to get the cheapest substitutable product.

Pharmaceutical companies can, in principle, set their products' prices freely, but if they want their product under the basic refund, the wholesale price of the product must not be higher than a "reasonable" wholesale price confirmed by the Pharmaceutical Pricing board. Out-of-pocket prices paid by consumers depend also on the National Health Insurance Scheme, which covers 42 % of basic refunded drugs' expenses and before 2006 it covered 50 %, exceeding consumer's excess (10 EUR in 2003-2005) per purchase. Furthermore, drugs are refunded according to the lower or higher special refund for some serious and long term diseases, when the health insurance can cover even 100 % of drug expenses, exceeding consumer's excess (3 EUR) per purchased preparation². Overall, the drug reimbursement system is quite complete and prices and pharmaceutical markets are regulated and controlled by several authorities in Finland.

Companies can change prices biweekly and the price of a certain drug is the same in all pharmacies. As a consequence, there can exist price competition between drug companies but not between pharmacies. In Finland, a firm has, basically, two optional pricing strategies for a substitutable drug: it can raise or keep the price of the drug as high as possible and count on product's brand name or lower the price to the band. In the former case the demand faced by a company can be lower but the price is higher than in the latter.

2.1. The Industry of Statins

HMG CoA reductase inhibitors i.e. statins are used to decrease high serum cholesterol, which is a significant risk factor for cardiovascular diseases. Although the mortality for cardiovascular diseases has decreased during the past few decades, they are still the most common cause of death in Finland. For example, in 2004 their share of the total death rate was 40 % for men and 43 % for women (Salomaa, 2006).

Although the total patient days³ of substitutable medicines has a clear upward trend, the average of patient days has decreased from the beginning of 2003. Furthermore, the average price and price differentials have decreased partly because of competition between products and cuts in the wholesale prices by the Pharmaceutical Pricing Board. (Figures 1 and 2.)

Even though clinical differences between statins are small in practice, there can be remarkable price differences between products (see Klaukka et al. [2], 2006). In the end of

² See National Agency for Medicines & the Social Insurance Institution (2006) for the details of the reimbursement system in Finland.

³ See Appendix: the Data for the definition of patient days.

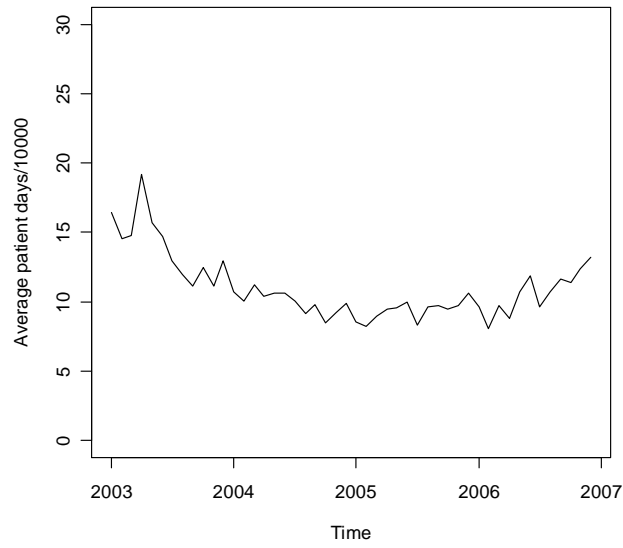


Figure 1
Average Quantity (Patient Days/10000)

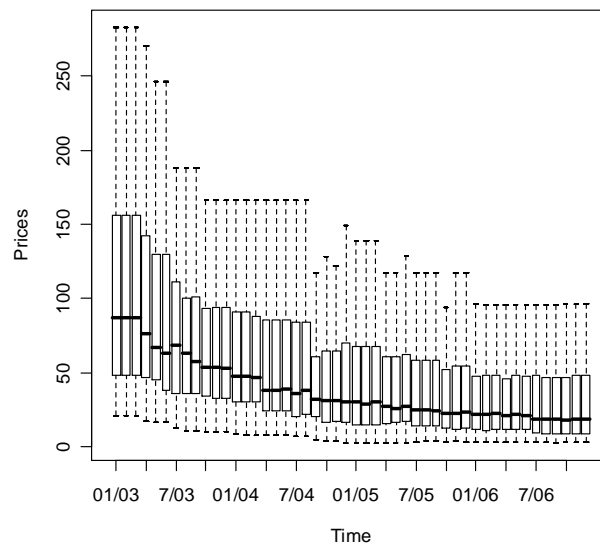


Figure 2
Boxplot for Prices in EUR

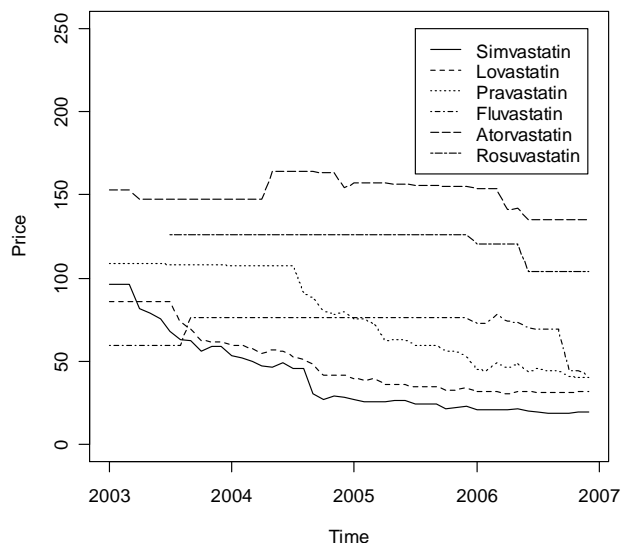


Figure 3
Average Prices in EUR by ATC –class

2006, the average price of substitutable products was the lowest, 20 euros, for the group of simvastatins, in which the number of products has increased fast from the beginning of year 2003, and the highest, 135 euros, for atorvastatins, where the number of products is moderate compared to simvastatins. (Figure 3.)

The prices of simvastatins, which have been in the market in the beginning of 2003 and also in the end of 2006, have declined the most, 76 %, on average from the beginning of 2003 and remained the same in the case of pravastatins. In the groups of lovastatins, pravastatins and especially simvastatins, where the average prices have declined significantly, the number of products have increased. Furthermore, the number of manufacturers in these groups has increased from 2, 2 and 5, respectively, in January 2003 to 5, 6 and 12 in December 2006. These observations suggest that the price competition between these products might have strengthened during the past few years.

Although the number of products within a substitution group, which is defined separately for each package size, varies only from 1 to 7, price differences within the group can still be significant. On average, the maximum price differed from the minimum price of the substitution group 10 euros, and as much as 175 euros as a maximum. (Table 1, Appendix 2.) Thus, if the physician has prescribed a medicine outside of the price band, the consumer could have saved a significant amount of money by changing the medicine to a cheaper one.

3. The Model and Estimation

3.1. The Discrete Choice Demand Model

In this subsection, a characteristics space demand model in the oligopolistic differentiated product markets is considered and it is mainly based on Berry (1994) and also on Berry,

Levinsohn and Pakes (1995). Discrete choice demand models are applied in some form by several authors for very different products from cars (Berry et al., 1995; Verboven, 1996) to cereals (Nevo, 1999) and also for pharmaceuticals (Stern, 1996) in the field of empirical Industrial Organization.

Assume a utility maximizing, rational individual facing a discrete choice problem among alternatives $j=0, \dots, J$. To simplify the presentation, I have dropped the time subscript t . Thus the consumer chooses one alternative maximizing her utility, which is specified as a function of individual characteristics, such as age and income, the price of the product and observed and unobserved (to econometrician) product characteristics, such as safety, side-effects and efficacy. There exists large unobserved heterogeneity between consumers in the valuation of drugs, because, for example, their responsiveness to drug therapy can differ and they can have different valuation for side-effects and medical conveniences (Berndt, 2002).

More formally, the conditional indirect utility for consumer i from the consumption of drug j is defined as

$$U(\zeta_i, p_j, \mathbf{x}_j, \xi_j; \boldsymbol{\theta}), \quad i = 0, \dots, N, \quad j = 0, \dots, J, \quad (1)$$

where ζ_i is an individual characteristic, p_j is the price for product j , \mathbf{x}_j is a vector of product characteristics, ξ_j is an unobserved product characteristic and $\boldsymbol{\theta}$ is a parameter vector to be estimated. Thus preferences are defined in the characteristics of the product. Here alternatives $1, \dots, J$ are different competing “inside” goods and alternative 0 denotes “outside” good for not to buy any of inside goods⁴. Furthermore, let’s assume, that the unobserved individual characteristic, ζ_i , has some known distribution (either empirical or standardized) conditional on characteristics vectors (\mathbf{x}, ξ) and the price vector \mathbf{p} .

Each consumer buys *one unit* of product j if and only if the purchase of the good maximizes her utility conditional on $(\mathbf{x}, \xi, \mathbf{p})$ i.e.

$$U(\zeta_i, p_j, \mathbf{x}_j, \xi_j; \boldsymbol{\theta}) \geq U(\zeta_i, p_l, \mathbf{x}_l, \xi_l; \boldsymbol{\theta}) \text{ for all } j \neq l, \quad l = 0, \dots, J.$$

Let’s define the set of individual characteristics for a chosen good j as

$$A_j = \{\zeta : U(\zeta_i, p_j, \mathbf{x}_j, \xi_j; \boldsymbol{\theta}) \geq U(\zeta_i, p_l, \mathbf{x}_l, \xi_l; \boldsymbol{\theta}) \text{ for } l = 0, \dots, J\}.$$

Thus, for a given probability distribution of ζ , $F(\zeta)$, which is a function of the characteristics of all goods in the market, the *predicted* market share for a product j is

$$s_j(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}, \xi; \boldsymbol{\theta}) = \int_{A_j} dF(\zeta),$$

where integration is done over the alternatives $\zeta \in A_j$.

⁴ If the outside good is not included into the model, the consumer is forced to buy one of alternatives $j=1, \dots, J$ and the demand depends only on price differences (Berry, 1994). Furthermore, when the outside good is included, the aggregate demand as a function of prices and product characteristics can be modeled (Berry et al., 1995).

Because the outside good is included into the model, the choice is made among $J+1$ alternatives and thus the observed market share for a good j can be calculated as $q_j = Ms_j(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}, \xi; \theta)$, where q_j is the observed quantity of the good j and M is the number of potential consumers in the market. As stated by Berry (1994), M is either known, when it can be set, for example, as a number of households in the economy, or it is a parameter to be estimated. Here I assume that each of the potential consumers consumes at most 1 patient day in a day, and the number of potential consumers is defined as 65 % of Finns aged 25-64⁵. Then the *observed* market shares are $s_j^n = q_j / M$.

3.2. The Functional Form Specification

In order to estimate the discrete choice model, the utility function is specified as

$$\begin{aligned} U(\zeta_i, p_j, \mathbf{x}_j, \xi_j; \theta) &= \mathbf{x}_j \boldsymbol{\beta} - \alpha \ln(p_j) + \xi_j + \varepsilon_{ij} \\ &\equiv \delta_j + \varepsilon_{ij}, \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

where $\delta_j = \mathbf{x}_j \boldsymbol{\beta} - \alpha \ln(p_j) + \xi_j$ is the mean utility of a good j and is the same for all consumers. Although typically price enters to the mean utility linearly, also different type of specifications have been used. See for example Verboven (1996) for the use of nonlinear nested logit model with Box-Cox –transformation for prices. Here the logarithmic transformation was selected, because it linearized the relationship between prices and explanatory variable.

In the standard multinomial logit model, when all products are assumed to be strict substitutes, $\{\varepsilon_{ij}\}$ are assumed to be independent and identically distributed (IID) across products and consumers with type I extreme value distribution $P(\varepsilon_{ij} \leq e) = \exp\{-\exp\{e\}\}$ (McFadden, 1977). Although this model is computationally very simple, it imposes some unreasonable substitution patterns. The well-known property of the logit model is the independence from irrelevant alternatives (IIA), when the ratio of two odds is independent of the characteristics of other products.

The assumption of the IIA –property will not probably hold in the case of pharmaceuticals. Suppose, for example, that a brand name drug with a high price and another drug with a low price in a different therapeutic group have the same market shares. Then the model predicts that they have the same cross-price elasticities $\partial \ln q_k / \partial \ln p_j$ with respect to any third drug k , which can be a therapeutic substitute to another drug. Thus it might be reasonable to assume, that pharmaceuticals within the same therapeutic subgroup are closer substitutes than products between these groups.

There are several ways to relax the IIA property of the multinomial logit model. One is McFadden's (1978) nested logit specification, when IIA is assumed to hold within the same

⁵ According to the national FINRISKI 2002 study report by Laatikainen et al. (2003), for over 65 % of research subjects aged 25-64 the serum cholesterol was over recommended 5,0 mmol/l. Because there are several other cardiovascular risk factors, such as sex, smoking and weight, this measure for the number of potential consumers has to be viewed as a very rough approximation.

subset or the nest but not between the nests. In the nested logit model, products are divided to exclusive sets D_g , $g = 0, \dots, G$, and only outside good belongs to the set D_0 . Furthermore, the utility is specified as

$$U_{ij} = \delta_j + \sum_g [d_{jg} \zeta_{ig}] + (1 - \sigma)v_{ij}, \quad (3)$$

where d_{jg} is an indicator variable, that gets value 1, if product $j \in D_g$, and 0 otherwise, and v_{ij} is IID with type I extreme value distribution.

However, the nested logit requires ex ante specification of exclusive nests⁶. In the case of pharmaceuticals, the ATC –classification is used, because it is presumable that drugs within the same nest are closer substitutes than drugs between the nests. Here the subgroups of statins (ATC –class C10AA) are formed on the basis of 5th level of ATC –class within which the pharmaceuticals can be considered as therapeutical substitutes, because they have the same active ingredient.

An other option is to use more general Berry's et al. (1995) random coefficients model, which is computationally more demanding. The nested logit can, however, be viewed as a special case of the random coefficient model with random coefficients on group –specific dummy variables as stated by Berry (1994).

3.3. The Estimation and Identification

When the unobserved characteristic ξ_j is included to the model, the estimation of mean utilities becomes more difficult, because it appears in the demand equation

$$s_j^n = s_j(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{p}, \xi; \theta) \quad (4)$$

nonlinearly and unobserved characteristics can be correlated with prices.

To solve this estimation problem, Berry (1994) introduced transformations for market shares, that depend linearly from ξ_j . In particular, he proved that for every \mathbf{s}^n there exists unique δ such that $\mathbf{s}^n = \mathbf{s}(\delta)$ ⁷, and when $\mathbf{s}^n = \mathbf{s}(\delta)$ can be inverted to $\delta = \mathbf{s}^{-1}(\mathbf{s}^n)$, observed market shares determine mean utilities, when $F(\zeta)$ is known.

In the case of the standard multinomial logit model, it can be easily shown, that the regression model to be estimated is of the form

$$\ln(s_j^n/s_0^n) \equiv \delta_j(\mathbf{s}) = \mathbf{x}_j \boldsymbol{\beta} - \alpha \ln(p_j) + \xi_j, \quad (5)$$

⁶ There are also some generalizations for this to allow e.g. overlapping nests, see e.g. chapter 4 in Train (2003).

⁷ Under some weak regularity conditions on $F(\zeta)$ and when the $\delta_0 = 0$, which are assumed to hold further.

where vector \mathbf{x}_j includes some drug –specific variables, such as price band indicator or the manufacturer of the drug, that may or may not change in time.

Here the price p_j can be correlated with unobserved product characteristics. When the conditional expectation of the error term conditional on regressors is not zero, ordinary least squares estimators can be biased and inconsistent. The solution is to estimate parameters by using the two stage least squares (2SLS). Furthermore, because I do not have data from different markets, such as from different countries, fixed effects can not be used in the estimation, because some explanatory variables do not change in time. See e.g. Brenkers et al. (2006) for the use of fixed effects in the 2SLS estimation of the two-level nested logit model.

For the nested logit model with the utility function (3), Berry (1994) showed by using unconditional and conditional choice probabilities that the model is

$$\ln(s_j^n/s_0^n) = \mathbf{x}_j\boldsymbol{\beta} - \alpha\ln(p_j) + \sigma\ln(\bar{s}_{jg}^n) + \xi_j, \quad (6)$$

where \bar{s}_{jg}^n is the observed market share of product j in the group D_g . Corresponding the logit model (4), it is assumed, that product specific variables \mathbf{x}_j are exogenous and that the price p_j and the share \bar{s}_{jg}^n are correlated with the error term.

McFadden (1978) showed, that the nested logit is consistent with stochastic utility maximization, if the coefficient σ measuring the degree of substitution is in the unit interval. If $\sigma = 0$, the model reduces to the basic logit model and if $\sigma \rightarrow 1$, preferences become perfectly correlated and cross-price elasticities between products in different groups goes to zero. For example, pharmaceuticals within the same ATC –group have similar characteristics, such as active ingredient, by construction, and are thus they assumed to have positive correlation in preferences.

Because cost shifter instruments are not available in the data, I use mark-up shifting instruments as suggested by Berry (1994) and Berry et al. (1995) and done by several authors such as Brenkers et al. (2006), Verboven (1996) and Stern (1996), to name a few. To be exact, I use the sums of other product’s characteristics, because in the oligopolistic competition framework, firm’s pricing decision depends on the characteristics of a product, other products of the firm and the products of competing firms⁸. Following Stern (1996) and also Brenkers et al. (2006), the instrumental variables measuring the intensity of competition and ownership structure used in the estimation of the nested logit model are: 1.) the number of other products, 2.) the number of other products produced by a firm, 3.) the number of other manufacturers, 4.) the number of other product within the ATC –class, 5.) the number of other products of the firm within the ATC –class and 6.) the number of other manufacturers within the ATC –class. In the logit specification, instruments 1.)-3.) are used. Furthermore, exogenous product characteristics and a time trend and its square were used as instruments in all models.

⁸ Here the supply side is not, however, specified, because the main interest is in the demand side parameters. See, for example, Berry (1994), Berry et al. (1995) and Verboven (1996) for the specifications of the supply model.

TABLE 1 Selected Estimates of Demand Models (5348 Observations)

Coefficient Estimate	OLS Logit	IV Logit, Model (8)	IV Nested Logit, Model (9)
α	-0.64 (0.03)	0.11 (1.44)	2.26 (0.14)
σ	-	-	0.35 (0.17)
R^2	0.34	-	-
Hausman test ²	-	0.27	310.3

Note 1: Standard errors are in parentheses. Other explanatory variables: a constant, manufacturer indicators, a time trend and its square. In the OLS specification, a price band indicator was also included.

Note 2: the Hausman specification test: OLS vs. 2SLS.

4. Estimation Results

Table 1 presents the selected estimation results of the demand system for different specifications: results from the OLS logit with exogenous prices are reported in the 2nd column and for the logit and nested logit models estimated with instrumental variables (see equations (5) and (6)) in the 3rd and 4th columns, respectively. In all models, explanatory variables are a constant, a trend and its square, $-\ln(p_j)$ and manufacturer indicators, which control distinction in preferences across different manufacturers. Trends are included to control exogenous changes in the demand caused by, for example, changes in the regulation of pharmaceuticals. Furthermore, an indicator variable describing, whether the price is within the price band or not, was dropped from IV logit and IV nested logit specifications, because its coefficient did not significantly differ from zero, and logarithmic within group market shares $\ln(\bar{s}_{j|g}^n)$ was included to the nested logit model. As described in the previous section, logit and nested logit models with instruments are estimated with 2SLS.

Although the basic logit model with exogenous prices leads to potentially very implausible substitution patterns between different products, it was estimated in order to study the significance of unobserved products characteristics, when prices are assumed to be exogenous. According to the results, unobserved product characteristics cause 66 % of variance of the mean utility. Although other coefficient estimates seemed quite reasonable, the coefficient estimate on $-\ln(p_j)$ is significant and has a “wrong” sign. Berry (1994) gave some examples of studies, where the ignorance of price endogeneity has led to misleading results and even to the positive effects of prices on the demand, which is the case here. (Table 1.)

When prices are assumed to be endogenous in the logit model, coefficient estimates change substantially from the logit specification estimated with OLS. Surprisingly, the coefficient on the price band indicator is no longer significant and so it is omitted from the model. Secondly, the coefficient estimate on $-\ln(p_j)$ is now positive and relatively small, which means that when prices decline the mean utility and the demand does not really change, but it is very imprecise. In this specification, the coefficient estimate of negative logarithmic price gives a relatively good approximation of price elasticities, because market shares, s_j , are typically very close to zero. (Table 1.)

TABLE 2 Average Elasticity Estimates by ATC –class, the IV Nested Logit

ATC -group	Average Price in EUR	Own-Price Elasticity	Number of Observations
Simvastatin	34.57	-3.44	2784
Lovastatin	44.45	-3.40	917
Pravastatin	63.56	-3.39	868
Fluvastatin, Atorvastatin, Rosuvastatin	124.24	-3.24	779
Whole industry	54.03	-3.39	5348

Note 1: Fluvastatin, Atorvastatin and Rosuvastatin are considered here as a one group.

In the nested logit model with instrumental variables⁹ the coefficient on negative logarithmic price is statistically significant, positive and, clearly, higher than in the logit specification. Furthermore, the coefficient on endogenous within group market shares is almost significant and the results are consistent with utility maximization because $0 \leq \hat{\sigma} \leq 1$ even within its 2.5 % confidence intervals. Thereby, on the basis of these results, there is correlation between preferences within the group of therapeutic substitutes and so the nested logit specification with endogenous prices might be more appropriate than the basic logit model to describe the choice of statins. Put differently, the degree of substitution is thereby higher among therapeutic substitutes than other products. Furthermore, consumers have high preferences for the products of certain well-known manufacturers, and the market shares of statins has a downward-sloping, diminishing time trend, other things being equal. (Table 1.)

Table 2 reports average prices, own-price elasticities¹⁰ and the number of observations by the ATC –class and in the whole industry. Fluvastatins, Atorvastatins and Rosuvastatins are grouped into the same class, because the number of products in these groups is relatively low compared to other groups. When interpreting the results of this group, one must remember that the significance of atorvastatins is the most emphasized, because the number of observations is the highest, 417, compared to 194 and 168 of fluvastatins and rosuvastatins. In addition, these markets are somewhat different, which is partly reflected by the development of average prices (see chapter 2.1.).

Because of quite low within group market shares with average of 0.05, the model specification and large number of products in the most of classes, the own-price elasticity is almost the same in all classes, but is slightly higher in absolute value in the groups, where the number of close substitutes is higher and the average price is lower. The results suggest, that when e.g. the correlation in preferences within the ATC –class is controlled, consumers prefer to pay lower prices. (Table 2.)

Average cross-price elasticities reported in Table 3 measure, how responsive is the demand of the product to changes in the price of therapeutic substitutes and other products. Cross-price elasticities are positive and, as a result, products can be considered as substitutes. The results

⁹ For a comparison, the nested logit model was also estimated with the generalized method of moments (GMM) allowing heteroscedasticity of unknown form. The results were very similar, for example $\hat{\alpha}_{GMM} = 2.34$ and $\hat{\sigma}_{GMM} = 0.35$.

¹⁰ Elasticities are derived from unconditional choice probabilities and are defined as $e_{jj} \equiv \partial \ln q_j / \partial \ln p_j$.

TABLE 3 Average Cross-Price Elasticities by ATC -class, the IV Nested Logit

ATC –groups	With Products	
	in the Same ATC – group ¹	in Other ATC – group
Simvastatin	0.02	0.004
Lovastatin	0.06	0.005
Pravastatin	0.05	0.005
Fluvastatin, Atorvastatin, Rosuvastatin	0.07	0.003
Whole industry	0.014	

Note 1: Fluvastatin, Atorvastatin and Rosuvastatin are considered here as a one group.

Note 2: The cross-price elasticity is $e_{jk} \equiv \partial \ln q_j / \partial \ln p_k$, where $k, k \neq j$, is an index for products in the same or a different ATC –class.

suggest that demand of statins is fairly unresponsive to changes in the prices of other products in the industry level and in all groups. This is primarily explained by the relatively large number of products in each groups and thus low within group market shares on average, but also the correlation in preferences between therapeutic substitutes. In addition, the average cross-price elasticity in other groups is almost zero. (Table 3.)

Furthermore, the average cross-price elasticity with products in the same group is the highest in the ATC- classes of fluvastatins, atorvastatins and rosuvastatins, where the average price is the highest and the number of products is the lowest. These elasticities are even higher if the ATC –groups of fluvastatin, atorvastatin and rosuvastatin are analyzed separately, which follows directly from the formulae of cross-price elasticities in the nested logit model. For example, in the ATC –group of expensive atorvastatins, where the number of observation is 417, the average elasticity with products in the same ATC –group is 0.14 and with products in other ATC –groups is only 0.003. In conclusion, the demand of statins is more responsive to changes in the prices of other therapeutic substitutes than other products. (Table 3.)

Logit and nested logit specifications estimated with instrumental variables were compared to constant-only –models with the same instruments as in the full models. The F –type test statistic¹¹ was as much as 51 for a logit and 35 for a nested logit model. In addition, the Hausman¹² test for the nested logit model suggests that instrumental variables might be needed. The test for over-identifying restrictions¹³ is used for studying, whether the extra instruments are uncorrelated with the error term. However, when the sample size is large enough, this H_0 -hypothesis is typically rejected. Although R^2 is in the nested logit model only 0.04 and in the logit model slightly smaller, 0.01, the H_0 -hypothesis is rejected, because

¹¹ F –type statistic is constructed by using residual sum of squares from restricted and unrestricted second-stage regressions. See Wooldridge (2002) pp. 98-99.

¹² See chapter 8.7 from Davidson et al. (2004) for a testing procedure and interpretation problems related to this test.

¹³ See chapter 8.6 from Davidson et al. (2004) for a testing procedure and interpretation problems related to this test.

the number of observations is large, 5348¹⁴. Thus there might be a possibility, that some of the instruments can be invalid. Even so, the nested logit model estimated with these instruments provided reasonable estimates for demand side parameters.

5. Concluding Remarks

Because drug expenses for the consumer can partly or fully be covered by the health insurance, the price of a drug is not necessarily an important factor for the consumer choosing a drug. As a matter of fact, the demand of several drugs can be quite inelastic up to high price levels. Even so, for example, Ellison et al. (1997) and Stern (1996) found own-price elasticities less than -1 with very different estimation methods. In the markets of statins, the number of products, which have only small clinical differences, is quite large and price competition can be quite intense. In addition, price differences between products even within the substitution group, where the products are biologically equivalent, can be significant as it was shown in chapter 2.1. These things together can cause the demand of statins to be elastic. The results indicate that consumers prefer to pay lower prices and that the demand is sensitive to price changes and more responsive to changes in the prices of other therapeutic substitutes than other products. These findings are somewhat similar with Ellison et al. (1997) and Stern (1996).

Another explanation for elastic demands could lie in the construction of the data. In particular, the consumption data is based on the amount sold by drug wholesalers to pharmacies and thus some part of the products might be stored by a supplier or a consumer (National Agency for Medicines & the Social Insurance Institution, 2006). As a consequence, the elasticity estimates might not reflect only the price sensitivity of consumers but also the sensitivity of suppliers on changes in wholesale prices, which, for one, determine retail prices, a price list for drugs and also the sales margins of pharmacies in the date of sale. Thus it would be interesting to analyze the short-run dynamics of prices and quantities with biweekly data and to study, whether pharmacies buy products to the stocks, when wholesale prices are low, and whether wholesale prices increase after that. The latter is an interesting question, if prices are not hard to change. This seems to be the case in the market of statins on the basis of monthly data.

There are several challenges for the future work. One is to define appropriate model for the supply in the market, where prices are regulated, and to analyze the market power of companies and welfare effects from policy changes, in which the empirical results from this article can be utilized. In addition, the demand model can be generalized to include more general substitution patterns with random coefficient models and to take into account income effects. These models are, however, computationally more demanding than models represented in this article. In the models used here, consumers were assumed to make decisions myopically and thus not to be forward looking. The one challenge is to include dynamic aspects of the demand to the analysis.

¹⁴ In the nested logit model estimated with the GMM, test statistic for over-identifying restrictions was smaller, 46.

Appendix

1. The Data

The panel data for period October 2002 - January 2006 is provided by the National Agency for Medicine (Lääkelaitos). It includes monthly information on all prescription drugs in Finland that are under generic substitution, such as prices, sold quantities (packages/month), active ingredients and WHO's ATC/DDD (Anatomical Therapeutic Chemical) – classifications. Datasets and especially sold retail quantities are confidential information. Prices are derived from the dataset by using information on retail sales volumes and the number of sold quantities. Because volumes are reported with the precision of several decimals, this method should provide a good enough approximation of prices. Furthermore, the consumption data is based on the amount sold by drug wholesalers to pharmacies and thus some part of the products might be stored by a supplier or a consumer (National Agency for Medicines & the Social Insurance Institution, 2006).

Drugs are grouped at 5 levels in the ATC -classification system: the 1st level corresponds main groups, which all have pharmacological/therapeutic subgroups at the 2nd level. Furthermore, chemical/pharmacological/therapeutic groups form 3rd and 4th sublevels and the chemical substance forms the 5th level. (See WHO Collaborating Centre for Drug Statistics Methodology.)

The drug consumption is transformed into patient days with the following formula:

$$\text{Patient days} = \frac{\text{Milligrams sold}}{\text{DDD in mg}}, \quad (1)$$

where Milligrams sold = Packages sold · Pieces in a package · Strength and the strength is the quantity or a concentration of the active ingredient in the product. Furthermore, the DDD (defined daily dose) is the theoretical maintenance dose per day used internationally in the compilation of medicine statistics. Patient days in (1) is actually the same as the total number of defined daily doses. Of course, one must remember that DDD is only a theoretical concept and thus actual daily doses can differ from it. (See National Agency for Medicines & the Social Insurance Institution, 2006.)

2. Tables

TABLE 1 Selected Statistics within the Substitution group¹

Statistic	Minimum	Mean	Maximum
Difference of Minimum and Maximum Prices in EUR	0.0	10.1	175.2
The Number of Products	1	2.3	7

Note 1: Substitution groups are defined separately for each package size.

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Theme 4. Consumer culture

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Papers

Aaltonen, Heli & Outi Uusitalo: Alcohol Advertising as a Consumer's Resource

Cassinger, Cecilia: Disturbing the circuit through brand realization

Ekström, Karin M.: Zooming in the collector's identity

Mikkonen, Ilona & Johanna Moisander: Online anti-Christmas communities as sites of consumer resistance

Moisander, Johanna & Joonas Rokka: Ordinary cosmopolitanism as a form of postmodern consumer identity in global marketplace cultures

Rokka, Joonas, Hanna-Kaisa Desavelle & Ilona Mikkonen: Appropriation of Western ideologies of beauty in Nordic consumer culture

Torell, Ulrika: Sweetstuff, Place and Cultures of Consumption. Confectioneries and Sweet Shops in the Urban Landscape of Stockholm, from 1850 to 1915.

Uusitalo, Liisa & Marja Rassi: Consumers as citizen – Do consumers value a landscape? A case study of the importance of cultural landscape in big environmental construction projects

Valtonen, Anu & Vesa Markuksela: Senses in Consumer Culture

Østergaard, Per & Suzanne C. Beckmann: Consumer Policy and Consumer Society: The Need for a Cultural Turn

Alcohol Advertising as a Consumer's Resource

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the consumer's perspective and own experiences of alcohol advertising. The aim of the study is to enhance the understanding of advertising as a resource to consumers. The interview and diary data from ten young adults was analysed by the hermeneutical interpretation. The marketers' intended resources embedded in selected commercials were compared with the participants' own experiences. Seven different types of resources were identified. The results indicate that the consumers deploy alcohol advertisements as a resource in various ways. One particular advertisement may offer several types of resources to the consumer. Implications to advertisers and policy makers are also discussed.

1. Introduction

In many nations, alcohol advertising constitutes a significant part of the total volume of advertising. Because alcohol potentially causes social and health problems, alcohol advertising has been studied extensively, particularly in the field of social and health sciences. In the Finnish society alcohol advertising has recently been at the centre of political discussion. Alcohol advertising has been regulated, and new legal restrictions regarding advertising of low-alcohol content drinks were enacted in spring 2007. Underlying presumptions in this discussion have been that advertising creates consumer needs and increases unnecessary consumption. In addition, consumers are conceived as passive objects of advertising.

Much of the earlier research of alcohol advertising focuses on the impact of advertising on consumers, and tries to find a correlation between advertising and consumption. The results of these studies do not form a coherent understanding of the consequences of advertising from the consumers' point of view. Especially, the idea of an active consumer using advertising to various

purposes is absent in most of the studies. The consumer's social and cultural context is often ignored as well. For this reason, there is a noticeable gap in the alcohol advertising research taking into consideration the consumer's point of view.

Recently advertising researchers have begun to pay more attention to consumers' advertising literacy and the complex relationships between advertisements and their audiences (Ritson and Elliott 1999; O'Donohue 1994). These studies regard consumers as active users of advertising. One view is that consumers use advertisements as resources when constructing their identities or social interactions and their place in the social context (Ritson and Elliott 1999).

This paper focuses on the consumer's perspective and own experiences of alcohol advertising. The aim of the study is to enhance the understanding of advertising as a resource to consumers. The research questions are 1) What types of resources does alcohol advertising convey to consumers? 2) How do consumers use alcohol advertising as a resource? This study examines the consumers' own experiences, and thus we are concerned with the subjective meanings that consumers attach to the advertisements. In order to understand the meanings and interpretations of alcohol advertising, the consumption habits and lifestyles constituting the consumption context also have to be understood.

2. Theoretical background

This section briefly reviews the previous studies on how consumers use advertising and the theoretical background of our study. There is an increasing interest in studying advertising from the consumers' perspective, in particular focusing on how consumers use advertising. This view assumes that consumers do not just react to the ads, but they actively use them for various purposes (Scott 1994). The use of the advertisement may or may not be connected with the purchase of the product portrayed in the advertisement. The process of using the advertisement is much more subtle and creative than supposed by the decision making theories (Scott 1994). What is more, the socio-cultural context where audiences receive and use advertising requires deeper research.

The previous studies concerning the consumers' uses of advertising have drawn on various theoretical backgrounds, such as uses and gratifications theory (Mitchell, Macklin and Paxman 2007; O'Donohue 1994) and a reader-response approach (Mick and Buhl 1992; Parker 1998; Ritson and Elliott 1999; Scott 1990). In addition, Buttle (1991) reviewed studies of advertising effects and discussed the integration of advertising into everyday life. He, thus, recommended the accommodation theory as an adequate approach to study what people do with advertising.

The uses and gratifications theory posits that the mass media constitute a resource on which audiences draw to satisfy various needs (O'Donohue 1994). Importantly, the theory assumes an active audience (Katz, Blumer and Gurevitch 1974). Studying media consumption with the uses and gratifications approach usually implies identifying the motivations for using a particular medium or program (Stafford and Stafford 1996). The theory has not been widely applied to advertising, but O'Donohue (1994) used the uses and gratifications perspective in a qualitative study of advertising. The reader response theory stems from literary theory and it focuses on the study of reading rather than the study of texts (Scott 1994).

In this study we draw on the consumer culture theory, CCT (Arnould and Thompson 2005), and especially the cultural resource view (Arnould, Price and Malshe 2006). The consumer culture theory (or *theoretics*, see Arnould and Thompson 2007) is a synthesizing approach consisting of four clusters of theoretical interests linked together. These clusters concentrate on the relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace and cultural meanings. It is worth underlining that CCT is not a unified system of theoretical propositions and it should be used only as an orienting device. (Arnould and Thompson 2005; 2007). We draw on the CCT cluster called *mass-mediated ideologies and consumers' interpretive strategies*. Accordingly, our emphasis lies on the micro level: consumers' active uses of media and critical readings of codes. Consumers, thus, are defined as active co-creators of meanings, connected to their socio-cultural context, conscious of advertisers' commercial purposes and advertising literate (Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998; Lannon and Cooper 1983; Leiss et al. 2005; McCracken 1987; Ritson and Elliott 1999).

The cultural resource view originates from the resource management which, in turn, is one theme in strategic marketing research and emerging marketing thought. Resource management explores, for instance, intangible resources, co-creation of value and relationships from firm-specific perspective (Day 1994; Lusch and Vargo 2006; Srivastava, Fahey and Christensen 2001; Vargo and Lusch 2004). The cultural resource view, instead, assumes the consumers' perspective. The basic concepts of this view comprise consumer's operant and operand resources, co-production of value and conditioning elements (Arnould et al. 2006).

Consumers deploy both operand and operant resources to achieve their personal goals. Operand resources are economic and tangible (e.g. income, real property, material resources) over which a consumer has allocative capabilities. This consumer's economic and material "power", however, constitutes only a target for consumer's operant resources which, in turn, are virtual by nature. The consumers exert authoritative capabilities over their operant resources and accordingly, these resources can be applied in varied circumstances. Operant resources are divided into three categories. First, social operant resources consist of networks of relationships; on the one hand with traditional groups like families, and on the other hand with emerging groups, like brand communities and subcultures. Consequently, the consumers' decision making does not occur in social isolation. Second, cultural resources can be defined as specialised knowledge and skills of cultural schemas, life expectancies, and history and imagination. Finally, physical resources consist of the consumers' mental and physical endowments. Consumers vary in the type, quantity and quality of their resources. Importantly, the combination of the consumers' operant resources influences the use of their operand resources and their use of firms' resources, i.e., how consumers engage in the value-creation processes. (Arnould et al. 2006).

The focus of the resource perspective, thus, is on the value-creation process, i.e. resource interaction involving the consumer as a co-creator of value, not merely a target (Arnould et al 2006; Lusch and Vargo 2006,181; Vargo and Lusch 2004, 11). The interaction between the firms' and consumers' resources implies that both parties offer their resources to the value-creation process. Firstly, the firms use their operant resources to mould operand resources, which are packaged, for instance, into brands, personnel, pricing strategies, advertising (Arnould 2005, 90) and "appliances" (Vargo and Lusch 2004,11) as value propositions to the consumers. Secondly, the consumers participate in the process by deploying and activating (Arnould 2005, 93) their operant

resources, expecting to benefit through this co-production of value. In other words, this interaction should generate valued consumption experiences and enable the consumers to pursue their goals (Arnould 2005). The interaction process, however, does not occur in isolation, but is conditioned by four elements. First, control of the process can be commanded either by a firm or a consumer, or jointly. Second, temporality represents changes in meanings and value of brands, changes in cultural environment and changes in consumers' goals. Temporality may influence, for instance, the consumers' sense of continuity and connections to the past. Third, multiple firms constitute the competitive environment from which the consumers can select their preferred brands. Finally, existence of multiple customers means that a consumer may be linked to the brand only through other consumers. Thus, the relationship between a brand and a consumer may be mediated through the consumer's social operant resources. (Arnould et al. 2006).

In order to evoke this illustrated resource interaction, it is essential to communicate with the consumers (Lusch and Vargo 2006, 181). Brands are communicated through advertising which constitutes both a means to create and transfer meanings into culture and a cultural resource itself (Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998; Leiss et al. 2005; McCracken 1987, Ritson and Elliott 1999, 274). As mentioned earlier, advertising represents one part of firms' resource package. Thus, the firms' resources seem to be embedded in advertising. Elliott and Wattanasuwan (1998, 135) consider brand advertising as a symbolic resource to consumers. They classify these symbolic resources into mediated and lived experiences and suggest brand advertising as a mediated experience of events spatially and temporally distant from the consumer. The consumers utilise mediated experiences selectively to construct themselves, and hence, the relevance of the experience to the self varies widely.

The consumers, however, do not always deploy firms' packaged resources, including advertising, in a way the firm intends. Instead, the consumers use creative ways to derive value from the package (Arnould et al. 2006, 95). Thus, the resource view, as well as the consumer culture theory as a whole, manifests the consumers' co-creative competence. Advertising may be consumed independently and not related to the product purchase or use (Leiss et al. 2005; Mitchell, Macklin and Paxman 2007; O'Donohue 1994; Ritson and Elliott 1999).

The theoretical background defines the foundation and the key assumptions of the present study. According to our interpretive approach, we do not apply a strict theoretical framework to direct an interpretation of data, but instead we apply a more inductive way of inference.

3. Methods and data

This study uses the interpretive approach in order to capture the complex nature of the phenomenon. The interpretive approach provides for describing, understanding and interpreting the meanings of the everyday lived world and experiences of the participants (Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Kvale 1996). In accordance with this approach, we collected the data through personal interviews and written diaries. Kvale argues that an interview is perhaps the most powerful means for attaining an in-depth understanding of another person's experiences (Kvale 1983, *cited in* Thompson, Locander and Pollio 1989). Also McCracken (1988, 9) suggests that the long interview gives an opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do.

Thus, we adapted guidelines of the phenomenological interview (Thompson et al.1989) and the long interview (McCracken 1988). Both methods are in-depth by nature and they aim to take into account a holistic view of the participants' world. However, our interviews were not purely phenomenological, because we had a short questionnaire of background questions and the interview was semi-structured relative to the commercials.

Written diaries are one means to attain reliable person-level information (Bolger, Davis and Rafaeli 2003, 581). In our study the diaries aimed to supplement the interviews. Instructions to write the diary were semi-structured and we applied a variant of event-based type design (Bolger et al. 2003, 590). We asked the participants to write self-reports of their experiences of alcohol consumption and other activities, interests and opinions regarding their lifestyle (Holt 1997). They wrote the diaries within approximately two months after the interview and they were asked to send their texts according to a certain schedule.

The interviews

Before conducting the interviews we contacted three major Finnish breweries and one importer of alcohol products. The aim was to improve our pre-understanding of the industry and discuss their advertising and research practices, as well as to ask them to supply adequate TV commercials for our research purposes. We interviewed three managers and selected four TV commercials and two posters that represented brand advertising of low-alcohol content drinks. The selected brands represented various types of low-alcohol content drinks that were supposed to be relevant to the participants. The commercials were "Baileys" cream liqueur, "Koff" beer, "Kurko" long drink and "Upcider" cider (see Appendix). The breweries also provided non-alcoholic beverages and promotional materials to be given to the participants as a compensation for their time and effort.

Ten voluntary participants were selected purposively. They were recruited by electronic bulletin boards, directed email group messages and colleague networks. The academic nature of the research, the terms of taping interviews, anonymity and confidence, and a reward for participating were explained in the invitation messages. Four male and six female young Finnish adults, who used low-alcohol content drinks volunteered to participate the study. Their ages ranged between 19 and 33 years. Nine of them were students and one was a working professional. Some of the students already had a working career and they were studying their second occupation. According to the remaining selection criteria the participants were unknown to the interviewer and each other, they did not have special knowledge of advertising or contacts with the brewery industry or importers, and they committed themselves to the interviews and the diary writing. Table 1. presents the background information of the participants. Each participant was interviewed once, and with two participants a second supplemental interview was conducted. The participants were rewarded with a crate of non-alcoholic beverages.

Pseudonym	Age	Status	Main subject/ (previous) industry
Annie	19	student, university	chemistry
Brad	22	student, university	mathematical information technology
Carrie	25	student, university	computer science and information sys-

			tems
Daniel	31	student, university	computer science and information systems
Eric	22	student, polytechnic	business and administration
Fred	23	student, polytechnic	cultural services/ (paper industry)
Gina	26	student, polytechnic	cultural services/ (ICT)
Hannah	22	student, polytechnic	catering
Iris	33	working professional	sociologist, local state administration
Janet	21	student, polytechnic	nursing/ (social and health services)

Table 1. Summary of the participants.

The interviews were conducted at two Finnish cities during February and March 2007. They took place in the meeting rooms of the University of Jyväskylä and the Helsinki School of Economics in Mikkeli. One supplemental interview was conducted in a teamwork room at the university library. The duration of the interviews ranged from 1 hour 10 minutes to 2 hours 5 minutes.

In the beginning of the interviews the participants were explained the purpose and background of the study and the terms of participation. Every participant subscribed a written agreement regarding these terms. After that the participants filled in the short questionnaire of background questions to ensure that the basic information of every participant is consistent with others (McCracken 1988). They were enquired, for instance, to estimate their own alcohol consumption¹ and to list their favourite alcohol brands. The aim was to complete a view of the participants' alcohol consumption habits.

The interview procedure consisted of two parts. First, four TV commercials and two posters of low-alcohol content drink brands were viewed and discussed. The commercials were shown one at a time, each of them twice and in the same order for every participant. After that the participant was asked to describe how he/she experienced the given commercial. The interviews were conversational by nature and the participants were given plenty of room to talk. Relatively few questions were planned in advance and the follow-up questions emerged mainly from the discussions. The second part of the interview focused on the lifestyle and consumption habits of the participants. The conversation covered several themes, for instance hobbies, work, friends and social life, entertainment like music, movies, magazines, television, theatre and restaurants, sports, travelling, family, food, fashion, home décor and religion. All interviews were taped.

Data analysis

The hermeneutical interpretation method was applied in analysing the data. According to Kvale (1996, 46) the purpose of the hermeneutical interpretation is to "obtain a valid and common understanding of the meaning of a text". Language implicitly conveys a person's cultural meanings and shared beliefs and language has a critical role in the hermeneutic analysis (Arnold and

¹ The questions regarding alcohol consumption were consistent with the World Health Organization's (WHO) Audit test (alcohol use disorders identification test)

Fischer 1994; Thompson, Pollio and Locander 1994, 434). Thompson (1997, 442) suggests that “texts generated by phenomenological or long interviews are particularly well suited to hermeneutical analysis”. Although there are no specific guidelines to the hermeneutic method (Arnold and Fischer 1994, 61), for instance Thompson et al. (1994) and Thompson (1997) present a hermeneutic framework to the study of consumer meaning. Furthermore, the hermeneutical analysis in consumer research is discussed by Arnold and Fischer (1994) based on philosophical hermeneutics and by Thompson et al. (1989) based on existential-phenomenology. Spiggle (1994), again, distinguishes the concept of analysis from interpretation and describes useful operations to manipulate qualitative data, including iteration and metaphors. In our hermeneutical analysis we have taken into account the underlying methodological assumptions of pre-understanding, fusion of the horizons, autonomy of the text and the assessment criteria (Arnold and Fischer 1994; Kvale 1996; Thompson 1997; Thompson et al. 1989; 1994).

Our analysis consisted of four phases, which are named according to their contents as follows: 1) Preparing the data 2) First impression and a general sense of the whole, 3) Perspectives and metaphors and 4) Identification of resources. Based on the analysis process, we made conclusions regarding the resources that the advertisements represented to the participants.

All interviews were listened and transcribed literally by the first author. During the transcribing the situation, atmosphere and content of the interviews were recalled. After transcription every participant was asked to read his/her own text and he/she was given an opportunity to revise it. Two participants corrected their texts. The transcribed interviews resulted in 146 single-spaced pages of texts. In addition the data included 39 pages of diaries, 24 pages of notes, 10 questionnaires and four TV commercials and two posters with the literal description (see Appendix), and the marketers’ resource definition of each ad. It is worth mentioning that all the data was generated in Finnish. All texts are first analysed in Finnish and then the analysis is translated into English, aiming at maintaining the original idea of expression.

First impression and a general sense of the whole

Next phases of analysis were conducted by both authors. We read through all texts several times to get a general view of each participant’s data and the entire data. During the reading we took marginal notes to extract the key issues. We paid attention, for instance, to the participants’ general attitude towards the commercials and alcohol consumption, and to the features typical to his/her consumption habits and current life situation. At this phase we also paid attention to how the participants used language, their willingness and ability to express themselves, and their advertising literacy (Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998). In order to keep an open mind (Thompson 1997) we did not try to make any classifications at this phase. The brief notes regarding each participant were written in a table format, which facilitated creating the general view. This first analysis phase mainly represents an intratext cycle (ibid.), although we also made interactive movements between different interviews.

Perspectives and metaphors

Before proceeding to the identification of resources, we tried to understand the participants’ personalised cultural frames of reference (Thompson 1997, 440). Therefore, the second phase aimed

to identify the participants' personal perspectives and a symbolic metaphor (Thompson et al. 1994). The symbolic metaphor is analogous with themes in interpretive research. Themes, however, tend to highlight similarities among participants, whereas symbolic metaphors sensitize to differences between the participants (ibid.).

At this phase we got acquainted with each text. We concentrated on the participant's experiences of the commercials and tried to look at the world from his/her viewpoint; what is typical in his/her viewpoint; through what kinds of "lenses" (McCracken 1986) he/she views the world; and how to explicate and verbalize it. During the reading we took notes and wrote key words emerging from the texts to outline mind maps. Several alternative expressions of the perspective and the symbolic metaphor emerged from each participant's text. As the symbolic metaphor we looked for a spoken, exemplary event or image that conveyed interconnections between the consumer's assumptions, concerns, values and meanings (Thompson et al. 1994). At this phase both the intratextual and intertextual cycles interacted (Thompson 1997). In other words, we implemented a series of part-to-whole and whole-to-part iterations. Finally, we wrote summaries concerning each participant's sociocultural background based on lifestyle and consumption habits, interpreted meanings related to alcohol consumption and alcohol advertising and descriptions of the selected perspective and the symbolic metaphor. We also extracted citations from the original interviews to justify our interpretation. As a result of this phase, we had developed understanding of the participants' perspectives, symbolic metaphors and sociocultural contexts.

Identification of resources

This phase aimed to identify what kinds of resources advertising seems to represent to the participants. Thus, we compared the marketers' resource definitions of the commercials with the participants' own experiences. Moreover, the participant's given perspective and symbolic metaphor underlie our interpretations. Our starting points, based on the resource view (Arnould et al. 2006) were that 1) a commercial may act as a marketer-supplied resource and as the marketer has intended, ie. the commercial and the product generate valued consumption experiences to the consumer, or 2) a commercial acts as a resource to the consumer in some other way, or 3) a commercial represents no resource to the consumer.

Our analysis had two main cycles. During the first cycle we read through all interview texts, one by one, and highlighted words and sentences expressing the participants' experiences regarding the viewed commercials. We paid attention to, for instance, how much and what kinds of subjective meanings the commercial evoked and how the participant expressed them. Consequently, we defined if the given commercial represented a resource to the participant, or not. After that we proceeded focusing on the nature and the qualities of the perceived resources. Importantly, the nature and qualities emerged from the texts and relied on the participants' own terms and categories (Kvale 1983 *cited in* Thompson et al. 1989, 140). We continued listing the types of emerging resources in to a table format. The table included 1) descriptions of the nature of the perceived resources and 2) descriptions and reasons why we linked the given resource to a certain participant and commercial.

The second cycle aimed to revise and adjust our interpretations. We read the interviews, marketers' definitions of resources and our interpretations and compared them once again. Some ad-

justments to our interpretations were made. Finally, after having analysed all the participants' interpretations of four commercials, in total 40 cases, we had identified seven different ways that the commercials seemed to represent a kind of resource to the participants. In the next chapter we present a synthesis of the findings.

4. How consumers use advertisements as resources: findings from a pilot study

In this chapter we describe the resources that emerged from the hermeneutic analysis. Seven different types of resources were identified and the descriptions below portray the essential nature of them. The citations from the interviews illustrate each resource description. However, these citations represent only a limited part of evidence. Interestingly, it seems that some of the commercials represent various resources to one consumer. What is more, in some cases the commercial acted as no resource to the consumer. The summary of perspectives, metaphors and identified resources in relation to each participant and commercial is presented in Table 2.

The commercial	Baileys	Koff	Kurko	Upcider
The participant (perspective and metaphor)				
Annie (romanticism/ control, girls)	Meaningful consumption experience	Entertaining moment	Entertaining moment Demonstration of developing consumption habits	Positioning oneself
Brad (rejection, neutral)	No resource	No resource	No resource	No resource
Carrie (voluptuary/ reflection, good life)	Meaningful consumption experience	No resource	Entertaining moment	Positioning oneself
Daniel (elitistic/sarcastic, low-class people)	Nostalgia	Positioning oneself Nostalgia	Positioning oneself	Entertaining moment Positioning oneself
Eric (idealistic, superior person)	Meaningful consumption experience	Positioning oneself	Positioning oneself Entertaining moment	Entertaining moment
Fred (creative, chill out)	Meaningful consumption experience Supporting and developing professional expertise	Supporting and developing professional expertise	Meaningful consumption experience Supporting and developing professional expertise Common language	Supporting and developing professional expertise
Gina (distant/ external evaluator, drama)	Entertaining moment Meaningful con-	No resource	No resource	No resource

	sumption experience			
Hannah (uncomplicated, Finnish manhood)	Entertaining moment	No resource	Entertaining moment	Entertaining moment
Iris (hedonism/convenience, quality time)	Meaningful consumption experience Nostalgia	Meaningful consumption experience Demonstration of developing consumption habits	Positioning oneself	Entertaining moment (posters) Positioning oneself (commercial)
Janet (controlling, drunkenness)	No resource	Common language	Positioning oneself Common language	Positioning oneself

Table 2. Summary of findings.

Meaningful consumption experience

A consumer's experience of the advertisement seems to be almost consistent with the marketer's intentions. The commercial awakes favorable subjective meanings and it is experienced positively. In this case, the participants were involved with the advertised brand and they described enjoyable and satisfying consumption experiences of the given low-alcohol content drink. For six participants Baileys commercial seemed to convey a meaningful consumption experience. "...with my girlfriends we usually drink (Baileys) just in the home evening parties, or if we are going dancing in the town, then we mix small (Baileys) drinks, so that it is related to that kind of relaxed situations in my life..."(Annie), "...mixing a couple of drinks (of Baileys)... spending time with friends, possibly before going out to a bar..." (Fred), "...in the evenings I used to have a few drinks when watching TV, and like this guy, putting ice in a glass and then pouring small amounts (of Baileys)...with one female friend, we often drink Baileys (in a bar), we both are fond of creamy drinks..." (Eric).

Positioning oneself

In this case the advertisement illustrates activities, ideologies or models, which are distinctive or opposed to the consumers' prevailing views. The consumers do not accept these views, but disprove them, and argue for their own views. The advertisement enables the consumers to define their own positions in relation to the product (low-alcohol content drinks), other drinkers, drinking habits or drinking situations presented in the commercial. Consumers may, for instance, argue against dissociate reference groups; they may criticize the product category; or they may consider the story of the commercial as immoral. Therefore, the advertisement seems to serve as a means to reinforce and justify the consumers' own prevailing views and to clarify his/her own position through a negation. Koff, Kurko and Upcider commercials appeared to act as the positioning resource. "...well, that (Kurko commercial) invoked quite disgusting feelings... when I was younger I was familiar with people like those... probably unemployed, probably living off their poor retired mothers, and their only hobby is to drink that kind of expensive drink at mothers' expense..." (Daniel), "...I at once remembered my mother's advice, that it won't be worth while to spoil an already bad day with alcohol...(I) don't value alcohol that much: ok, my telly was stolen but oh yes, two bottles of cider are still left ...it doesn't fully suit my way of thinking." (Annie/

Up cider), “*In my opinion there is no sense in trying to solve problems by drinking, they can’t be solved with it (drinking), but should be solved in other ways, I associate it (alcohol) more with having a good time with friends.*” (Janet/ Upcider).

Demonstration of developing consumption habits (cultural changes)

This type of resource implies that the advertisement manifests cultural changes in the conventional consumption habits. Advertising may either reinforce the consumers’ existing insight of the changes, or advertising may encourage the consumer to become aware of novel trends. Importantly, the consumers are the initiators and they are approvingly disposed towards the cultural changes portrayed in the advertisement. In our study two of the commercials seem to be deployed as the demonstration of cultural changes. “*...I think this (Koff commercial) has a rather fresh approach... a woman doesn’t always need to hold a glass of wine in her hand, but it is equal for a woman to drink what she prefers...I feel it is important that women also enter the masculine territory.*” (Iris, original emphasis). “*...(the situation in the Kurko commercial) was a bit of unnatural, but, however, the society is developing and things uncommon in the past may become common and ordinary, that men drink light cider...*”

Entertaining moment

In this case the value of the advertisement seems to be based on its entertaining power and capability. The advertisement is seen as a pure performance, an enjoyable story or even a joke, which is consumed independently from the advertised product. The pleasure could be based for instance on jingles, slogans or visual elements of the ad. The brand or the product may not be relevant to the consumer. Consequently, the consumers may not remember the advertised brand after viewing the commercial. In our study each of the commercials acted as an entertaining resource to some participants: “*...every time (when seeing the commercial) I burst into laughing herein...*” (Hannah/ Baileys), “*...the ad is funny, but I wouldn’t have remembered the product, if you wouldn’t have mentioned it...*” (Carrie/ Kurko), “*Funny, authentic and kind of marvelous...it is so humorous...*” (Hannah/ Kurko), “*...this ad was so amusing...(Eric/ Upcider).*”

Common language

In the case of common language an individual element, for instance music, brand name or slogan, is disconnected from the commercial and used for the consumers’ own or the community’s purposes. This resource seems to be used in order to reinforce togetherness and fellowship. The resource may not be connected to the consumption of the product. The use of these elements serves as a shared language, which is valid only during a limited time. In other words, the content of this common language is not permanent; on the contrary, the existing language gives way to a new one as new commercials appear. The present study proposes two commercials, in which the jingle or tag lines were deployed as a common language. “*...and this is catchy haba haba tsut tsut badam bam (sings the jingle)...in those days this haba haba tsut tsut was on everyone’s lips...perhaps at that time when it (Kurko commercial) was screened on TV, it could perhaps get caught on the mundane life among the lads, in some situations...*” (Fred), “*...with my friends we imitate these lines ...while sitting for instance in snow in the ski slope, and some other pal coming in, so he will be shouted (the lines)...and while I’m cleaning the toilet at home, and my mother comes to look on, I will say her (the lines)...*” (Janet/ Koff).

Nostalgia

Some advertisements seem to create positive nostalgic experiences to the consumers. The experiences can be related to the advertised product or they can emerge independently. However, the advertisements are not experienced as merely entertaining, but they convey personal meanings to the consumer. In this study two commercials, Baileys and Koff, acted as the nostalgic resource. *“...cream liqueurs were in fashion among us teenage girls and I remember even asking my own mother to bring me a duty-free bottle from a ferry cruise, we drank Baileys...even those girls who didn't like the taste of alcohol, were able to drink (Baileys), which was extremely ((laughing)) important...” (Iris), “...(when I was young) Baileys was a very attractive drink... Baileys had a certain kind of significant position...it was one of the few drinks appealing to me...” (Daniel), “... when I was a child I spent great many summers with my grandparents, and there was just that kind of hut (maitolaituri)... that landscape created a feeling of familiarity, in some positive way.” (Daniel).*

Supporting and developing professional expertise

This type of resource emerged in relation to one participant, whose hobbies, studies and perspective could be delineated as creative. The commercials seemed to be viewed as a technical performance, ie. the viewer actually considered himself more as a creative professional than a consumer. The viewer may analyze and evaluate for instance the dramatization of the story, the cast, the characters and acting. Accordingly, the viewer is familiar with the professional terms and advertising language. *“...series of events flew all the time, and basically, they didn't happen in one scene. The other (commercials) did, in the Koff commercial they are situated in that one particular scene, and in the Kurko commercial they are stayed in one certain scene...And also the Baileys (commercial) took place in one certain scene...” (Fred/ Upcider), “...a simple production...it is just shot with only a couple of cameras...and four sofas, a crate of Kurko and an old tape recorder are brought there...” (Fred/ Kurko), “...they have built a well-defined group. One is the boss, who is talking...there is a clear hierarchy between them...those two (girls) are only supporting her (the boss)” (Fred/ Koff).*

No resource

In the case of no resource the commercial seems to be insignificant to the consumer or the consumer can not make sense of it. The commercials may be regarded negatively; their messages may be rejected or their meaning may be downplayed. In our study each of the four commercials was interpreted as no resource in some cases. *“...I see nothing in these commercials, but “again some kind of product named something”...I'm not guided by advertisements at all...In my opinion there (in the Kurko commercial) exists a (Kurko) titled drink, and nothing more.” (Brad), “...the point (of the Upcider posters) can't be caught at all...I don't understand the logic.” (Hannah)*

5. Discussion and implications

This study aimed at enhancing the understanding of advertising as a resource to the consumers. Our focus was placed on the consumers' own experiences of alcohol advertising. The interview and diary data from ten young adults was analysed by the hermeneutical interpretation. The marketers' intended resources embedded in selected commercials were compared with the partici-

pants' own experiences, taking into account the participants' particular perspective and symbolic metaphor.

The results indicate that the consumers deploy alcohol advertisements as a resource in various ways. Interestingly, one particular advertisement may offer several types of resources to the consumer. First, the consumers may deploy the advertisement in a way the marketer has intended. In our study we denominate this as *meaningful consumption experience*. It seems that this type of resource may emerge when mediated and lived experiences (Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998) are interconnected. The Baileys commercial is an illustrative example of this. Despite the participants' varied perspectives and the ad's foreign cultural origin, the Baileys ad succeeds to convey and offer acceptable resources to the Finnish consumers.

Second, the consumers may deploy the advertisement independently and for other purposes than the marketer intended. In our study we identified six ways. The case of *positioning oneself* constitutes an ambiguous resource. It differs from O'Donohue's (1994) category of self-affirmation, which emphasizes positive experiences of the given ad. Instead, *positioning oneself* seems to be based on the consumers' opposite or distinctive views of the advertisement. Furthermore, some consistencies with the findings of O'Donohue (1994), Mitchell et al. (2007) and Ritson and Elliott (1999) can be perceived regarding the resources *entertaining moment*, *demonstration of developing consumption habits*, *common language* and *nostalgia*. O'Donohue (1994), for instance, categorized enjoyment, familiarity and social interaction as non-marketing uses. Mitchell et al. (2007) and Ritson and Elliott (1999) also noted uses in a ritual manner and emphasized the social use of advertising. The participants also seemed to be advertising literate (Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998). They discussed the nature of advertising itself and were familiar with advertising strategies and the industry's terminology. Nevertheless, the emerged theme of *supporting and developing professional expertise* was evident in relation to one participant. Finally, in some cases the advertisements represent *no resource* to the consumers. However, this can not be considered as surprising. The experiences of some participants can also reflect "the myth of personal immunity" (Pollay 1986); they may conceive themselves as immune to persuasion and regard the advertisements as trivial.

As an implication to policy makers, the consumers seem to be active interpreters of alcohol advertising. It seems that the consumers assess advertisements critically and in many cases the resource-based use of the ads is independent from the promoted product. The advertisements seem to offer the consumers material to work through their own values and principles, in a way contrary to what the advertiser intended.

This study also has a number of implications to advertisers. Advertising, as Buttle (1991) suggests, is a raw material to be processed and reprocessed within our social actions to make sense of the world. Different consumers' interpretations of the same ad may be contrary to each other. For example, the Koff commercial represents a theme of equality between women and men to the one participant, while the other regards it as a sexual exploitation of women. Advertisers should also pay attention to communicating the basic value proposition; otherwise the interpretations of an imaginary advertisement may be fragmented (Bulmer and Buchanan-Oliver 2004) and the advertisement does not convey the intended resource. It can be supposed that the consumers' varying "power" - social, cultural, economic and physical resources (Arnould et al. 2006) - underlie

their interpretations of alcohol advertising. Thus, these components of power, i.e. the consumers' resources, are suggested to constitute a basis for consumer segment profiles. This also underlines the co-creation of value in the interaction process, where advertising serves as a conveyor of the advertisers' resources. This process is not one-way; instead, our study shows that value is mutually produced.

6. Limitations and further research

The limitations and the quality of interpretive research can be approached in several ways. Koskinen, Alasuutari and Peltonen (2005, 258)² stress the importance of systematic reporting of both the research process and the paths to interpretation and conclusions, as well as reporting the verification of the generated data and reporting other motivations, such as funding. Most importantly, other scholars must be provided with possibilities to trace (Lincoln and Guba 1985) the process and assess (Mäkelä 1990, *cited in* Koskinen et al. 2005, 256) the findings. Arnold and Fischer (1994, 64) emphasize coherence of the interpretation and systematic documentation of themes and supporting evidence.

The aim of our study was to enhance understanding of advertising as a resource to a consumer. Regarding the limitations of this study it is worth discussing at least the methods, the participants and the implementation of analysis and interpretation. First, we collected the data through three different methods: using the personal interviews, the diaries and the questionnaire. The use of multiple methods aimed at obtaining a profound understanding of the phenomenon; however, in interpretive research an objective truth can not be captured (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, 5). We argued for the adequacy of these methods earlier in this paper. As a limitation, our method did not take into account the context of communication related to the natural advertising exposure (Cook 2001,4; Ritson and Elliott 1999, 273). We note the intrusiveness of the interview situation, for example, the commercials were projected on the wall and viewed at least twice. In addition, all commercials might not have been relevant or interesting for every participant. So, it is possible that these circumstances had an effect on the participants' experiences. The meanings and interpretations, however, do not originate merely from an advertisement itself, but an interpretation is also related to an individual's sociocultural context (Bulmer and Buchanan-Oliver 2004; Mick and Buhl 1992). The diary method also included some limitations. All participants did not seem to be equally committed to write according to the instructions. The semi-structured instructions, in addition, could have been confusing and a rather long reporting period might have been a burden. (Bolger et al. 2003).

Second, one weakness of this study arises from the small amount of participants. It should, however, be reminded that our study aims at understanding the phenomenon, not explaining. The issue within an interpretive study is not of generalizing and, accordingly, the participants are not chosen to represent some part of the larger world (McCracken 1988,17; Kvale 1996). The other possible limitation related to the participants resides in the critical role of language as a conveyor of meanings (Arnold and Fischer 1994). There seemed to be differences between the participants' ability and willingness to express their experiences. Most of them were able to generate rich de-

² Adapted from the original idea of Douglas (1971, 29-30) and Grönfors (1982, 178-179).

scriptions, in contrast to more narrow expressions of some participants. Furthermore, we do not know to what extent the participants described their actual experiences, or whether they coloured or distorted their statements. This study also highlighted experiences of a group of young adults - mainly higher educated students. It is likely that different meanings would have emerged from consumers having different socioeconomic backgrounds (Thompson et al. 1994).

One challenge of implementing analysis and interpretation resides in its subjectivity (Arnold and Fischer 1994; Spiggle 1994,499; Thompson 1997). As Arnold and Fischer (1994, 57) state, “[T]here is never any one, or objective, understanding of a text” and “while some interpretations will be judged superior to others, multiple interpretations are possible”. In our study both authors conducted all analysis and interpretation phases separately, but in the same manner. Working as an interpretive group (Thompson et al. 1989) enabled us to discuss each others interpretations, question and evaluate supporting evidence and view from a broader perspective and pre-understanding. We also tried to report the research process in a consistent way that is easy to follow. Finally, it is worth mentioning that we analysed consumers’ experiences of advertising from a certain hermeneutic perspective. From another perspective, however, these same experiences could result a different interpretation which is equally justified.

In the future research, more attention should be focused on the resource-based interaction between an advertiser and a consumer, especially from the consumers’ perspective. First, the consumers’ social and cultural resources as underlying factors influencing the interpretations constitute an interesting issue. Second, the process of co-creating value in relation to advertising deserves more attention. Third, based on our study, the additional research could focus on the nature of particular resources. For instance, a detailed examination of *meaningful consumption experience* could produce interesting results, as well as a dissection of *positioning oneself*. Moreover, in relation to the empirical data collection, the methods applying the natural advertising exposure and the diary method could be developed in further research.

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Appendix

Descriptions of the advertisements and the embedded marketers' resources.

Baileys cream liqueur

A group of youngish Afro-American –looking adults is gathered together in the patio of a wealthy-looking villa. Sounds cheerful buzz of conversation. People are casually dressed. The weather seems to be warm and sunny. A serving table stands in the middle of the space; a bottle of Baileys, glasses and a bowl of ice are on the table. The main character, the man behind the table tries to put ice cubes in his glass with tweezers. One after another the ice cubes drop bouncing on the floor. Two men and one woman sitting on the sofa start to cheer for his attempts: "You're all right there buddy? ...Focus, focus!" The man leers at them and calmly pours Baileys in the ice bowl. "What are you doing?" "Wait a second...Ooohh". The text: contains 4 cl serving. The man drinks Baileys from the bowl with a straw. Content with his drink he joins the people on the sofa. The text: Serve chilled. The voice: Baileys now comes in a delicious new flavour. Baileys with a hint of mint chocolate.

Marketer's resources: Pleasurable lifestyle, indulgence and enjoyment. Comfortable leisure with friends. Respecting individuality. Caring for friends. A smart choice for a man's drink. International atmosphere.

Koff beer

A hot summer day in a peaceful countryside landscape, birds are singing. Three young women sit at a small, old-fashioned red wooden hut. They hold canned beer in their hands and sip at beer. They move themselves back and forth as if in rhythm with the music. The girl in the middle shouts at her friend's ear: "It's still a bit quiet feeling here, but don't worry, it'll take off!" A skinny young man drives up the village road with a moped. While passing the girls, a girl in the middle raises her hand. The man returns and the girl in the middle bends down to him and shouts loudly: "Evening! We would like to have another beer, but we'll get back to the menu later!" The man stares at them but says nothing. The girl sings out "Thank you!" and they keep on moving themselves in rhythm. The text: The Bar Feeling offered by Koff. Music starts. Sound of opening a can. The close-up: the girl holds the canned beer in front of her breasts.

Marketer's resources: Fair and uncomplicated attitude towards life. Urban lifestyle (self-ironic perspective). Nostalgia. Respecting traditions (and traditional brand). (Note: Despite of the women as the main characters, the marketer does not intend to position the brand especially for women.)

Kurko long-drink

A sunny summer day in a suburb. A few old high rises stand in the background and in the front is a rocky landscape. There sounds a distant noise of traffic from a highway and caw of crows. Old sofas and armchairs are carried outside to the cliff-top. Four men in their thirties sit there, each having his own chair. They look like ordinary working men. A robust man glances at another man, who glances at the third one. All stay stony-faced. Suddenly the robust man flips on an old recorder and rhythmic music starts. The men start to perform aerobics exercises and they use the bottles of Kurko as weights. They exclaim: "Keep your body moving!", "Keep up the good work!", "I do nicely!", "This was really Kurkobic!". The text: Two new light Kurkos. Caution: Only 30 kilocalories per a decilitre. Sound of laughing, the music continues.

Marketer's resources: The real Finnish manhood and masculine togetherness. Freedom to wander off (without women). "Retrosociality" is favourable; outward appearance and weight watching are regarded with a sense of humour. Light drinks are accepted, but also with a sense of humour.

Upcider cider/ commercial

Rhythmic music starts. Two young men drive a forklift curving inside a warehouse. They collide with a stack of boxes, and the stack collapses. An angry manager storms out shouting from an office. He throws money as a payoff and points to a door. The boys collect the money and walk out laughing. A car passes them and splatters water over them; they jump aboard and get a speedy ride. They laugh. Two angry dogs hunt them, they escape running and get an electric shock while climbing up a fence. They still laugh. While walking home they encounter a dodgy man carrying a television. The home door is open, everything is robbed and there is a mess-up. The music slows down. The boys walk to the fridge, open the door and there exists two bottles of Upcider floating in the air. The music speeds up again. The men sip at cider with relieved feelings. The text: "It's not worth moping". Image of a green bottle cap. Sound of opening a cider bottle.

Upcider/ posters

Poster 1: A wedding dressed beautiful woman and a wedding suited fat pig sit on the back seat in a car. The woman laughs and winks at the viewer. She holds a big bottle of Upcider in her hand.

Poster 2: A man lies in a luxurious bed with upper body undressed. He smiles and upraises the Upcider bottle in his hand. Beside him sleeps a bream with a lacy eye patch.

It says in the bottom of both posters: "It's not worth moping". Image of a green bottle cap.

Marketer's resources: It would be worthwhile to enjoy life, be optimistic and carefree. Friendship and sociability.

Disturbing the circuit through brand realization

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Abstract

Within consumer research there has recently been an increased interest for applying the circuit of culture model to the study of brands (e.g. Goldman and Papson 1998). While this model illuminates how meanings of the brand are reworked along the different moments in the circuit, it has neglected the role played by place and space for shaping the brand. In this paper I imagine and explore the brand as modes of ordering, which are realized in spatial arrangements (Law 2000). This is carried out by means of telling stories of how distributed modes of ordering are put into practice at home. I argue that the brand emerges as different objects in these stories, which disturb both the one-dimensional logic of the circuit as well as its defined moments.

Introduction

Within consumer research there has recently been an increased interest for applying the circuit of culture model to the study of brands (e.g. Goldman and Papson 1998). This interest demonstrates a shift away from the old dichotomy of the consumer as a passive receiver of brand meanings on the one hand or as an active creator of the meanings of brands on the other. Instead the reworking of meanings of the brand is traced along the different moments of the circuit. The circuit of culture approach was developed within cultural studies as a response to the linearity of traditional commodity chain analysis. While in commodity chain analysis the progression of the commodity follows a casual sequence of such diverse moments as design, retailing, advertising and finally consumption, the circuit culture model emphasised that the tracing of the commodity can go in both directions and that moments interacts and overlaps one another (Cook et al 1998). The foundation of the circuit culture model underlying these studies can be traced to the circuit culture approach elaborated on by Richard Johnson (1986). Drawing on a particular combination of Marxist and poststructuralist theory, for Johnson the circuit is at one and the same time a circuit of capital and a circuit of the production and circulation of subjective forms. The view of consumption is partly premised on a metaphor of reading, even though Johnson acknowledge that reading include existing cultural elements within the lived culture and the social relations upon which they depend. These reservoirs of discourses and meanings serve as the raw material for cultural production and belong to the cultural conditions of production. The influence of this model, though not always explicit referred to in consumer research on brands, can be seen in the way brands are approached as a form of cultural resources which are valorised due to their association with or role in particular stories circulating in popular culture (Holt 2006; Twitchell 2004). The problem with seeing brands as cultural symbols is that it tends to turn the brand into an abstract entity, which is not accomplished by concrete relations of everyday life. Instead the brand is seen to be, at least partly, mediated by larger actors not directly connected to the lived culture where the consumer is situated Even though the meanings of the brand on the

representational level are acknowledged to vary between the sites in the circuit, its different material realizations when the brand is enacted in a particular time and place are seldom reflected upon.

In this paper I suggest that a consideration of the spatial dimensions of the circuit of culture approach could further the understanding of how the brand is realised. Place and space have largely been neglected in the study of brands. In other disciplines their significance for shaping the commodity chain has been demonstrated. The geographers Deborah Leslie and Suzanne Reimer (1999) argue that gaining understanding for how space mediates the relations in the commodity chain could assist in developing more comprehensive policies for the coordination of sites along the chain, which could balance the traditional predominant focus on production. Moreover, because commodity chains culminate in the production of space when the good is consumed, sites such as the home are likely to shape the dynamics of the chain as a whole. A focus on space could thus capture the leakiness of the chain and the ways in which the various sites are linked to each other. In order to demonstrate how a spatial approach to the cultural circuit of the brand could be undertaken, I want to imagine and explore the concept of brand image as stories, particular modes of ordering¹, coordinated by a form of a shared imaginary. This approach to brand image draws on recent developments within economic sociology, influenced by the traditions of Science and Technology Studies (STS) (Barry and Slater 2005) and the new form of spatial awareness within geography (Thrift 2006), where the assumption of pre-existing subjects and objects that can be unproblematically represented has been questioned. It diverges from the view of stories in the cultural approach to brands within Consumer Culture Theory, by suggesting that the brand is an object that is accomplished through enactment. In a recent anthology on the technological economy, Celia Lury (2005) compares the objectivity of the brand with that of a car. In an illuminating paragraph she writes:

We are easily ready to accept that a car is an object, although it typically comprises many parts or components. Moreover, while each of these parts is more or less essential to the capacity of the object to move its passengers from one place to another, none of the individual components has this capacity. It is their relation to one another that makes the components of a car into a car. We also tend to think of a car as discrete or closed object, but it is of course only a functioning car when it is in a controlled relation to elements of its environment: the atmosphere, the driver and the roads. In other words, the car is an object in a dynamic relation to its environment (Lury 2005: 183).

In a parallel manner she approaches the brand as an object that emerges in relations between products and services in a dynamic relation to consumption and everyday life (*ibid.*). Due to the dynamic nature of these relations, the brand is able to emerge as qualitatively different objects. Within the STS tradition numerous studies have demonstrated that there are no important differences between stories and material objects (e.g. Law 2000; de Laet and Mol 2001; Verran 2001). Stories take place in the material world in the form of social relations and in the form of machines, architectural and other material arrangements, bodies and so on (Law 2000). This means that stories are not just narratives in a linguistic sense but enacts (or performs) and arrange material relations that give raise to different types of spaces (*ibid.*). To put it a little differently objects are stories, which enact spaces. With this follows that stories do not merely describe or assign meanings to a single world; they craft different worlds that interfere and interact with one another (*ibid.*). Adopting a definition of the brand as a story of this kind involves talking about brands that take place in different relations and environments.

¹ I borrow the definition of stories as modes of ordering from Law (2000) who takes this term from Foucault's early writings on discourse.

In order to demonstrate what this could look like, I will tell stories of distribution and consumption practices involving the furnishing retailer IKEA². Consequently, I will limit the analysis to these two moments of the circuit. From the perspective of studying spatial practices IKEA is a particularly interesting case in point as it is organised around several concrete places like the store, the warehouse, the home and other in-door settings. It thus enables an exploration of spatial realizations of the brand. The stories were collected between 2005 and 2007 at different sites in the cities Shanghai and Malmö, by means of a series of unstructured interviews with IKEA co-workers and consumers, and participant observations at home, the IKEA store and other semi-public places³. Here, I will exemplify with stories from Shanghai and occasionally use the Swedish ones as points of contrast to reinforce the argumentation. Stories of distribution were collected through IKEA's main distribution channels, the store, the website and the IKEA catalogue. These stories are standardised to IKEA's national markets and vary in terms of language but converge in narrative content (i.e. the sequence of events). I should point out that I am adopting a definition of distribution and consumption as practices of diffusing respectively realising modes of ordering. I did, however, not directly observe these practices. I captured them as manifested in talk, written texts and home decoration.

The paper is structured in three parts. First, I describe the realization of the brand at home, then, I attend to a home where the brand cannot be realized but is accomplished by other means. The argument made is that modes of ordering bring forward different types of spaces in which the brand emerge as different objects. Finally, I single out some implications for the cultural circuit approach.

Realizing the brand

About an hours train ride from Shanghai, in Baoshan⁴, Lin picks me up in a silver coloured Lexus. We drive towards the apartment in the outskirts of town in a newly built community. When I last saw Lin he was an exchange student in Sweden. This time, he is back in his hometown Baoshan working for the local government. Even though Lin looks in the same way as I remember him, he is now an official. 'I promised my mum I would never work for them,' he says. 'Why?' I ask. He continues talking without answering the question. 'But then I got married to an old classmate from the area and well...the salary is not bad and I get to travel abroad. I am looking for other jobs with a national or preferably foreign firm.' A guard opens the gate to the area where Lin and his wife Xing live. Before entering into the apartment I mirror myself in a television monitor on which it is possible to see visitors on the outside. Xing is working as a nursery-school teacher and is not home. She will meet us at a Korean restaurant later for dinner. According to Lin it is the best restaurant in town. The hallway forms a passage through the apartment, along which the rooms are displayed.

² When I henceforward speak of IKEA, I refer to the IKEA brand.

³ The collection of material was made as part of my PhD thesis (ongoing) on retail image. The interviews were carried out in Swedish and Mandarin and were subsequently translated into English by me. To translate is to write anew and there are many local expressions, which do not have self-evident equivalences in English. In translation the aim was to grasp the meaning through the sequencing of events.

⁴ Names of people and places have been changed in order to keep the anonymity of the informants.

On the long wall is a ready-to-hang picture with four framed paintings in a row of a woman's silhouette from different angles. On the floor is a blue rectangular cotton runner with white stripes. Lin presents the rooms. 'To the left is the kitchen, to the right the living room, on the other side of the living room is my home office, straight ahead is the guestroom or nursery (laughs), at the very end is our bedroom.' In the bedroom a large wedding photo of Lin and Xing is placed above the double bed. On each side of the bed are two identical bedside tables with two identical table lamps. Another wedding photo in a white frame stands on a nest of tables beside the television. The windows are half covered with curtains in three pieces in red, white and yellow flowery patterns. They are made in a thicker material to protect from sun and light. Closer to the window there is another shorter curtain in translucent white lace. In front of it, on the windowsill is a large cactus in a blue and white porcelain pot. 'My wife made the curtains and put up the wedding photo, I think it looks...hmm...I do not know...too traditional Chinese perhaps. Otherwise, I did all the decorating. It's all from IKEA. I took the car to the store in Shanghai one Saturday and packed it with stuff. I had already selected some things from the IKEA catalogue, so I knew what I wanted. It reminds me of Sweden. I really liked your interior decoration style.' 'Did you assemble all of this by yourself?' I ask. 'Of course I did! It's fun.' We enter a small room behind the bedroom which has been turned into a walk-in closet. I tell Lin that it looks exactly as in the IKEA catalogue. He smiles and nods. He pulls out a drawer revealing several compartments in birch plywood in which rolled up ties are put. Some of the compartments are still empty. Then he pulls out another drawer displaying socks folded in rows beside one another. I sit down on the Molger bench in the middle of the room and look up at the rows of shirts, blouses and trousers that hang on rails in the wooden closet frames. Below is an empty laundry bag in white cotton and beside it is a collection of shoes organised on tilted aluminium racks. One section has been made into a place where towels and bed linen are kept. 'How did you know how to put together all this?' I ask. Lin looks at me with a query face. 'Follow the instructions...'

Even though this is an individual example tied to a particular time and place, the ordering of Lin's home is employed here as a typical example of arrangements that I have regularly observed in both Chinese and Swedish sites.

The most striking about the arrangements is the symmetrical and linear way things are arranged through being put in rows, on top of one another, side by side, in piles and so forth. This is also accomplished through putting identical things close to one another. The bed has two adjacent tables, the pictures come in a set of four, and the table is a nest of four ones. In the wardrobe there are several identical compartments, drawers and clothes rails. The space created through such mode of order is one of predictability and order. This mode of order realises the IKEA brand in the same way as it is done in the in-store showrooms and the IKEA catalogue. He wants it exactly as it is at Ikea. This mode of order enacts a geometric space in which IKEA is made to function and look in the same way as in the in-store displays and the catalogue.

According to the IKEA mode of ordering things are brought together and demarcated from one another by means of wicker and paper boxes, drawers, closets and shelves. It is about a systematisation of the things in the household to make it more predictable and easy to manoeuvre in. It is about dividing the home into units, spaces that are well defined. This also means an ordering of time where things are constantly put away to give room for new things or create more space. It is an order where things have their own place. They are not randomly

put in piles or thrown under the bed. The positions of things – from the keychain to the bed - have been carefully planned. Things are organised in boxes and separated from the rest of the environment. It is about a systematisation of the things in the household to make it more predictable and easy to manoeuvre within. To accomplish this order the home is divided into units, spaces that are well defined and demarcated by boundaries. This corresponds to what Mol and Law (1994) refer to as Euclidean space or a geometric space where objects are clustered and demarcated from other objects by means of boundaries. When objects are ordered in this way, they are also made into stable objects, i.e. we know that it is a sheet because it lies on the bed or we know these are winter clothes because they are in a box on top of a shelf in the wardrobe. The outside of the box prevents the chaos inside from entering into the order. Clothes need to be boxed and ordered, carried by hangers, and folded in rows. The clothes that are not inside the wardrobe become mess. Mess is consequently that which is not surrounded by the boundary of the solution. It is not defined. Things that are not ordered according to this mode seem awkward in comparison because they are less defined.

Arguably, the IKEA brand is not tied to a specific product but a mode of ordering, which requires the adoption of certain decoration practices and a certain enactment of space at home. It is conditioned on particular products, which are made to suit this particular order in being linear in shape. The mode of ordering is not realized by individual products, but by specific combination of products. At IKEA these combinations are called solutions. Solutions are combinations of products in which a certain pattern of action is inscribed. While a chair is not a solution, a chair with a cushion or a chair with a shelf underneath is. The marketing director for China confirmed that IKEA does not sell products; they sell solutions to problems at home (interview with US 20050319). These solutions are made up by elements that need to be related to one another in order to work (cf. Lury above). The walk-in closet is an example of a solution. Although it is referred to as an entity, it is made up by many different small components that work in unison to produce the wardrobe. These parts do not come in a box at IKEA. Setting up a wardrobe from IKEA is construction work. The ideal procedure for this construction is offered at IKEA's website in the form of a narrative consisting of a set of steps that the customer needs to go through before the solution can be put into use. Due to space limitations I provide a condensed version here.

A Day at the Store

- 1) Get inspiration through browsing through the IKEA catalogue.
- 2) Be prepared by making a list of anything you may need for your home. Take measurements of spaces you want to fill with furniture. Make sure there is room in your car.
- 3) Enter here. Everything you need to shop is available at the entrance: pencils, paper, tape, measures, store guides, catalogues, shopping carts, shopping bags and strollers.
- 4) You'll get decorating ideas from our interior room settings in the showroom. Review your options over a Swedish meal in the IKEA restaurant. Then collect your products from the warehouse in flat packages that are easy to take home.
- 7) Make yourself at home. IKEA store are huge home furnishing exhibitions. Stretch out on a bed; see how many people you can fit in a sofa, or let your children choose furniture for their rooms.
- 5) IKEA stores are self serve but there's always someone around to answer your questions. You can bring your bulkier purchases to the Home Delivery desk to arrange delivery, for a fee.
- 8) Talk to our sales staff.

9) Look at the price tag! Our tags have important information about size, colour, craftsmanship, measurements, features and care. Tags on large items tell you where to pick them up in the self-serve furniture area.

10) You pick it up. On your way to the check-out, you'll pass through the self-serve area. This is where you pick up the flat packed furnishing items. Picking up purchases is an important part of IKEA's approach to customer involvement. Specifically, if you can do simple things like pick up your purchases and assemble them at home, we'll keep prices low. Do we have a deal?

11) Flat is good. Another way we keep prices so low is by packing and shipping items in flat packages. This also makes it easy to get items from IKEA stores to your house.

12) Trolleys for everyone. There are plenty of carts available to help you bring your purchases to your car

(http://www.ikea.com/ms/en_CN/about_ikea/store_experience/showroom.html).

In order to realise IKEA's mode of ordering the consumer needs to undertake various types of labours in the store as well as at home. This labour is aided not primarily by staff in the store (e.g. "IKEA stores are self serve") but is delegated to objects like pencils, papers, tape, measures, store guides, catalogues, shopping bags and trolleys. These objects help the customer with everything from translating the home into numbers in order to be able to bring it to the store, offering prescriptions of how to decorate the home, to navigating through the store. They also act as carriers of products and means of transportation. These objects are mobile ones. They can be brought between the home and the store, thus serving as forms of mediations between the space in the store and the one at home. They make it possible to translate the home environment into IKEA's fixed measures and vice versa. The way that the IKEA experience is described through the narrative "A day at the store", above, is a rationalisation of why the mode of ordering at home needs to be realised in a certain way. On the home page the description of the IKEA experience is framed by another story of IKEA concerning its path from a small mail order firm to a global furnishing chain. It tells the story about the hard-working founder Ingvar Kamprad's hardships in his quest to offer people high quality design to an affordable price. In order to do that he invented a cost-efficient way of working together with the customer. By designing for and packaging products in flat packs, the customer was included in the production process. In this way costs were cut and prices lowered. Consequently, the mode of ordering realised in Lin's home may be seen as a story involved in economic rationality.

As pointed out by David Harvey (1990) the chronological ordering of everyday life is closely connected to profitable production where the goal was to reduce spatial barriers and "annihilate space through time". This required a predictable space with demarcated boundaries, in which objects had fixed coordinate facilitating long distance control. The space at home can, for instance, be seen as held together and protected by IKEA's objects and the practices that they presuppose. The knowledge required to carry out these practices is distributed by IKEA in the form of instructions, written on signs and information brochures in the store, but these instructions are also enclosed in the flat packages, the catalogue and the webpage.

Assembling IKEA's products is a technical work. The practices that one should undertake are translated into universal figures like numbers, cartoon figures, and drawings that guide the customer in assembly. In the standardised instruction manual it is first stated how many pieces the package contain and then how to put them together in a series of steps. For

example, in order to assemble the desk Markör, with a small-inbuilt cabinet on the side, the assembler needs to proceed through twenty-seven steps in order to bring about the desk. Without the instruction Markör is not defined as a product. It is merely a flat package consisting of: five boards in stained solid spruce with clear acrylic lacquer, one fibreboard, and two edgings. Moreover, the package contains twenty-two screws, twenty-two barrier nuts, thirty wooden plugs in different sizes, thirty screws in different sizes, a bag of small nails, eight shelf dividers, two hinges and a cabinet door knob comprised by two pieces.

Similar to Lin, many informants did not experience the assembling of IKEA's furniture as labour because they were "following instructions". I believe that it could be due to the feeling that IKEA follows the customer into the home via the instruction. The actual putting together of the furniture is not experienced as labour, as it is carried out following a set of instructions where one's own body is merely a machine for realising IKEA at home. As a result the labour is taken over by the instructions. The instructions work as an extension of the relation with IKEA, which aids in assembling and ensure that the products are pieced together as they are supposed to be. Instructions are particular distribution technologies that help assemble and install IKEA outside the store. The catalogue is another technology that are able to extend into people's lives and practices in different environments. The instructions and the catalogue are embodied forms of knowledge that inform decoration practices. It is also possible that they serve as a warrant for holding together the space enacted by the IKEA mode of ordering. Customers piecing together and installing IKEA's furniture in random ways by themselves would interrupt the standardised knowledge practices that make up the IKEA brand and turn it into something less defined. Another way in which this is order is sought to be stabilised is by means of the knowledge embodied in the products. The products inform the practices that should be undertaken in relation to them. The plywood boxes, for instance, are made to fit rolled ties but not underwear and gloves. Note that this is not about internalising the mode of ordering. It is rather about being restricted by the relations to the products. Due to the particular design of the products it is not feasible to do anything one would like with them since their materiality will not allow it. But also because the relations between them are stabilised by the mode of ordering, which hold the use of them in place.

Nevertheless, in the home this standardised mode of ordering are altered when made to relate to other modes. Relations are connections between elements. These connections are not pre-given or given once and for all but reformed and preformed in the material realizations of the brand. Marilyn Strathern (2004) has used the way in which the Mekeo people in Papua Guinea organise the world to suggest that insides and outsides have their own insides and outsides. The inside is the outside of something other and vice versa. From this perspective the effect that an order creates can be presented as a further order, one order is seen to produce a counter-order (81).

I will take the tension between what I will call the Swedish and the Chinese as an example of such connected ordering and counter-ordering. Lin seems to use IKEA as a reminder of his Swedish experience, perhaps as a way to convert an important event into the home. Lin is happy when I point out that that the closet looks like the one in the IKEA catalogue. People seek to make relations known to others in order to produce a certain response (ibid.). Hence, my comment, from the position of being Swedish, could be seen as recognition that Lin has enacted IKEA as it should be done. The enactment of the Swedish also brings forward the Chinese. The wedding photo and the curtains in the bedroom at the very end of the hallway are part of this mode and Lin regards them as being too traditional Chinese, something that

does not fit the other order that he has constructed there. The Swedish is thus constitutive of Chinese interior decoration practices and vice versa. I want to underscore that this is not a question of what is really Swedish or Chinese but how these come to be articulated and realised in relation to one another in this particular case. While the Chinese relates to Lin's marriage, the Swedish divide the space between the couples in different sections. The wardrobe is divided into fractions where Xing has her clothes and Lin has his. The bed has two beside tables. It is not that these orders are separated from one another; rather one is the extension of the other. One mode of ordering creates another one. The Chinese is not a counter-practice that is in a dialectical relation to the Swedish. It is the inside of the Swedish coming from the outside. Strathern writes:

"Growth, reversal, cutting are all Melanesian metaphors for the way in which one image displaces another. Consequently, one image elicited from another displaces it in the same way as a body may be opened to reveal the other bodies it contains: a bamboo bursts to show the persons within, a boy grows into a man. An act of severance connects what is separated: one 'cuts open' an exchange partnership to make valuable move between donor and recipient. It is relationships that cuts reveal, including the relationships that people carry on their backs" (Strathern 2004: 113).

This means that the well defined also anticipates another mode that extends it into something else. In the extension the relationships between these modes can be discerned. For example, the ordered anticipates the chaotic since the latter exists in the former and is revealed in moments when relationships shift. The relations between the brand, other objects and the environment are dynamic in nature. Therefore, because the brand is inserted into different relationships, it will also differ between sites. This is not to say that the brand is fragmented; it hangs together because the relations between the arrangements of elements are extended to one another (ibid). The one is seen to grow out of the other and one must be cut from the other. An example of a mode of ordering that does not seem to fit within Ikea's ordering is what my next story is about. Yet, even though IKEA cannot be told within that story, it is still part of the brand as a relation that does not simply negate IKEA but as "an inversion that makes as much sense as the order it inverts" (Wagner 1987: 61 in Strathern 2004: 113).

The brand that cannot be told

In Shanghai, not far from the bustling Huaihai Road, Xu waits for me outside the long tang (shikumen) house where he lives with his parents and brother. We sit down at a table facing the door in the drawing room. The house is located in the few centrally located older neighbourhoods that still haven't had to give way for new apartment buildings. According to rumours Xu's house is also about to be torn down. In the surrounding area the reconstruction has already started. But Xu does not worry. 'They said that they were going to demolish the neighbourhood but that was several years ago, then the corporation that was responsible for it ran out of money. Now, we do not know what will happen. Perhaps we will have to move outside the city'. The house lacks facilities like kitchen and bathroom. The public bathroom across the street is used and meals are prepared on a Calor gas stove. The house has a modest range of home made furniture in dark wood. Behind the drawing room is the parents' bedroom and in the room adjacent to it Xu's father shares a cabinet-maker's workshop with his brother's ironing shop. Due to the spatial limitations the workshop is partly extended into the street where the electric saw is kept. The light wooden material he uses is collected during night time from abandoned construction sites. A ladder standing on the floor leads up to the loft where Xu and his brother sleep on two mattresses. Xu is well familiar with IKEA. His father used to keep the IKEA catalogue under the counter from

which the customer could pick out styles and shapes of the furniture. Xu got the catalogue when he worked as a guard in the neighbouring high-rise to where catalogues were distributed. According to Xu IKEA would not fit their house. 'IKEA is more for white-collar workers and foreigners that live in the modern apartments', he says. 'It would not fit here. Perhaps, if the house was bigger...' I ask him if his father copies Ikea's products. Xu waves his hands in a dismissive gesture. 'No, no,' he says in English as if to ensure that the point he is about to make will get through to me. 'My father knows nothing about design, he just a hobby carpenter. IKEA is a professional company that mass produce goods,' Xu smiles. 'My father has no means to do that.'

The story of Xu's home marks the boundaries of Ikea's. It is the story IKEA cannot tell and Xu cannot tell Ikea's. In part their stories are incommensurable to one another. I mean this more in a spatial sense than in a linguistic one. Literally Ikea's furniture does not fit in Xu's house. As he says he would not get a sofa through the door. He could buy small things like sheets and blankets. But that is not what Xu uses on the loft. Since there is no central heating he uses sleeping bags. The house, Xu and his family live in, does not fit into the mode of ordering distributed by IKEA. It cannot be enacted here for the ordering was set up with another house in mind. A house protected from dust and rain, with windows and floors that are easy to keep clean. The house lacks washing facilities and clothes are washed by hand in the brother's ironing shop. The bright colours that IKEA celebrates would get dirty quickly in a house where the door is often kept open and outdoor clothes are kept on inside.

Xu's example underscores Slater's (2005) point that marketing is a process of framing based on cultural knowledges and instrumental rationality. The task of marketers is to attempt to culturally entangle goods in social relations so as to make it meaningful and desirable; culture thus becomes an object of technical rationality (62). In Xu's case Ikea's story is not tangled up with his as it is standardised to involve a certain type of home and inform certain types of practices tied to the home.

The IKEA mode of ordering is decomposed if it is not put into practice. The practices and their extensions in the form of measures, catalogues and products is what hold the relation between the IKEA story and other stories together. In Xu's house, I would argue, there is nothing to tie practices to. Therefore, IKEA becomes neither desired nor disliked. Despite that the house is located on one of the most central addresses in Shanghai and Xu was among those of informants living close IKEA, he felt that it was geographically too far away. IKEA is indifferent to Xu because the relationship between them is cut off. However, as argued above, cutting off relationships could be used as a metaphor for how one order displaces another. In relation to Xu, IKEA emerge as dependent on a way of life tied to material resources such as modern facilities, certain amounts of space and the number of people sharing it. It requires living conditions of a certain standard. It is not a coincidence that IKEA is located in Xujiahui, an area where several large new apartment complexes are being constructed at the moment. Where Xu's housing area is, new high rises will be built, which eventually will entail more apartments in need of decoration. While it seems possible that IKEA will be included in these new environments, Xu will probably not be.

On the other hand, the use of the IKEA catalogue in his father's business reaches into Ikea's story and extends it though in a reversed way. Even if identical, his furniture will not have the same exchange value as Ikea's; yet the IKEA mode of ordering will be distributed

through him. Xu's father is what could be called an externality of Ikea's distribution strategy but he is also an effect of it. With Strathern's terminology, he would be the outside of IKEA, while at the same time inside, as he is an effect of the knowledge that is available for free at IKEA. The transaction of goods is displaced for the distribution of the mode of ordering, which is potentially accessible to all who can enter into the store or get the hands on the catalogue. In this sense Xu's father becomes an inversion of the outside. By means of the replications of Ikea's design, the mode of ordering is distributed, but without the very core of the IKEA story: labour. Labour is fundamental to IKEA as it is built around the deal with the consumer (see above). If people start to hire others to do their IKEA labour for them, whether transporting, assembling or making products, then IKEA becomes more of a provider of knowledge guiding the ordering undertaken at home. I should add that Xu's father is not the only one who has replicated Ikea's products. This is an activity that has grown and been debated in the Chinese media. According the English publication of China Daily it has also reached Ikea's awareness.

IKEA came to understand that their high prices were forcing Chinese consumers to try and make copies of IKEA products; copying was simply a way to get the IKEA product they clearly wanted at a price they could afford (Moller 2006).

If IKEA offers solutions to problems, then it is offering knowledges which are potentially accessible to everyone. Ikea's knowledge was in this case accessed through its major means of distribution, the catalogue, to learn and imitate their decoration practices. What is interesting in this example, for the discussion of the circuit, is that while the IKEA mode of ordering is distributed the products are not. The order is realised by other materials. Still, it is being realised. I would argue that Xu's father marks the limits of the circuit model because his actions are not defined within it. He stretches into the story from neither a consumer nor a distributor's point of view but from the position of more silent and illegitimate kind of production

IKEA has persisted in its ambition to distribute a standardised story to its markets. According to the marketing director for China the challenge in Shanghai is to explain why self assembly is necessary. Most other home furnishing stores in Shanghai include transportation in the price. In order to adjust the boundaries of the market, IKEA have reframed themselves by undertaking a range of measures. I am providing a brief overview of some these here. They should not be seen as countermeasures to the situation just described but as an illustration of attempts to maintain and secure the mode of ordering. In 2006 IKEA stopped handing out catalogues in China and introduced a "multilogue" that can be viewed and ordered online. The multilogue is a slim version of the catalogue, released five times a year. In comparison with the catalogue it contains more pictures of home settings and educational advice on how to decorate. Furthermore, since 2003 the prices in mainland China have been considerable lowered (interview with marketing manager for IKEA China). IKEA has also started to offer free delivery service during certain months (observation 20050406).

Conclusions

In this paper I have sought to add a consideration of space to the circuit of culture approach to brands. I have suggested that the brand emerge through particular modes of ordering that are realised by putting material goods into practice. In relation to IKEA, the specific case in point employed here, these practices concern the organisation of things in the home. In the stories told I have elaborated on what realization involves through providing examples of how and where IKEA is realised. In the realizations of the mode of ordering, IKEA is connected to other stories, which frames it as a qualitatively different object (Lury 2005). This emergence has less to do with different perspectives on IKEA and more to do with spatial relations.

I have also sought to imagine what the relationships between these realizations look like by drawing on Strathern's observations of the Mekeo people in Papua Guinea who believes that insides and outsides have their insides and outsides. Following this way of viewing the world, the IKEA mode of ordering and the geometric space it produces could be seen as a stable order, which contains other spatial orders. The brand, then, moves between these different spaces extending, cutting off, and reversing relations between them (Law 2000; Strathern 2004). The IKEA brand can then not be seen as a stable set of relations that are able to transport it as one piece to different places. Because the brand is inserted into different relationships, it will also differ between sites.

The circuit is unable to capture the brand in this way due to its focus on the reworking of meanings along the chain and not on how the brand is realized by being put into use. When the brand is put into use it produces spaces, which extends the relations across the moments in the circuit. That moments in the circuit intersect with one another has been pointed out by previous research. What is different here is that the brand is seen as constituted by the movement between these spatial relations, which produces it as different objects. It is not just that the brand means or symbolises different things; it is different because it is involved in different practices producing different realities of which the brand is an outcome.

Following Strathern, another way of comprehending the circuit would be to see it as composed by disparate dimensions of outgrowths against one dimension that does not grow itself. In the context of this paper, this inert dimension would be the geometric space produced by Ikea's particular mode of ordering. It is conceivable to imagine that within this ordering there are other orderings, which come forward when relations are transformed. Approaching the brand as constituted in this way would work against the view of the brand as an abstraction, since its relationships and components are made concrete. This seems important for being able to understand the roles played by brands in everyday life. It also seems important for being able to imagine what distribution and consumption (and of course other moments in the circuit) involves. The moments in the circuit tends to draw the boundary too tightly around what is to be considered distribution and consumption. In the story of the carpenter it is not self-evident in which of the moments he belongs. From the perspective of the circuit he would probably be placed outside it, analogous to the way he is regarded to be outside the market. This, however, is only part of the story. The other part is that the carpenter is an effect of the brand. He is its unintended consequence, its monster. In order to include such unintended consequences into the circuit it would be necessary to add more dimensions to it.

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Zooming in the collector's identity

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Long abstract

The museum of Småland, also called the Swedish glass museum, arranged during the 12th of December 2004 to the 30th of January 2005, an exhibition when 24 private collectors of glass were invited to exhibit parts of their collections. The exhibition was called "Unseen", referring to unique glass in private collector's homes which neither the public nor the museum normally have access to. The intention with the exhibition was not only to focus on the unique objects, but also on the collectors, thereby symbolizing the relation between people and artifacts and the reciprocity which exists between them. Artifacts influence people and people influence artifacts. The interviews made for the museum catalogue (Ekström 2004) illustrate strong ties between the collectors and their collections. Collections can become part of the owner's extended self (Belk 1988). Possessions are not only part of the self, but can also be seen as instrumental for development of the self (Belk 1988).

The purpose with this paper is to discuss the collector's identity. Does such an identity exist? How is it formed in relation to the collector himself/herself and other people? When does a collector receive a collector's identity? More specifically, the paper focuses on how the collectors perceive their collections as well as themselves as collectors before, during and after the exhibitions had taken place. 24 in-depth interviews were conducted before the exhibition and two open-ended questionnaires distributed during and after the exhibition had ended, answered by 20 of the collectors. The study is part of a larger study on collecting of glass based on multi-sited ethnography (e.g., Marcus 1995). The persons interviewed, middle aged or older, belonged to a glass society. 23 of them were men and one was a woman who shared her interest with her husband (a few of the men shared their collecting interest with their wives). In five of the interviews, the wives were also interviewed together with the men. The interviews were semi-structured and each interview took approximately 1,5 to 2,5 hours. The interviews have been tape-recorded and transcribed. The analysis is based on reading and systematizing the transcripts and analyzing the questionnaires. Some preliminary findings are presented in this article. The collectors were anonymous during the exhibition. The results are also related to a previous study on a variety of collectors, including the author's reflections on collecting, after exhibiting their collections in another Swedish museum, Gävleborg museum, who

arranged a collector exhibition, "The collector's soul", during the 29th of May to the 17th of November 2002 when 36 collectors participated.

Collections are often highly private and it is of interest to highlight the transfer of the collector's glass objects between private and public spheres of activity. Maybe the collection is transformed after being displayed at a museum viewed and evaluated by collectors or non-collectors and related and compared to other collections? The views from the unknown public may affect the collector's perception of his/her collection as well as the image as a collector. For example, is the collection viewed as more romanticized, sterilized, profane, sacred or legitimized? Also, different rituals (e.g. McCracken 1986) related to acquiring, possession, and divestment may become affected after the collection has been exhibited. The collections in a museum are arranged in different ways than at home. For example, in a more abstract, scientific criteria, in glass cases, and with guards, all of which may mark a distance from the objects (Belk 1995). Collectors viewing their collections in a museum may or may not experience this distance to their objects. The results indicate that the glass objects were considered sacred in the people's homes before the exhibition and even more so after the exhibition. The exhibition reinforced the value of the glass collected as well as the collector's identities as collectors.

It was also found in the glass collecting study that there are collectors who do not consider themselves as collectors, even though their behavior show that they are collectors. It was also confirmed in the study of collecting at Gävleborg museum. It is possible that the word "collector" is perceived as too pretentious and results in that only serious collectors identify themselves as collectors (Ekström 2007a). The study at Gävleborg museum also showed that the exhibition made them feel proud of their collections and seemed to reinforce their identity as collectors.

The degree to which someone identifies him/herself as a collector is also likely to affect how the objects are displayed. The study of glass collectors showed that some of them gave the objects more prominent placement at home after the exhibition. The exhibition seemed to increase the value of the glass objects as well as affecting the perception of being a collector.

Belk and Wallendorf (1994) discuss that even though collecting can not be seen as inherently masculine or feminine, there are certain aspects which are regarded as such historically. They refer to aggressiveness, competitiveness, mastery and seriousness as stereotypical masculine traits and care, creativity, nurturance and preservation as feminine collector traits in western culture. Collecting aspects such as curating and maintaining have historically been considered feminine, while acquisition has been seen as a masculine trait (Belk and Wallendorf 1994). Also, the identity given collectors by other people seem to differ from the identity they give themselves. Collectors are sometimes described by others in terms of masculine traits. At the same time, collectors seem to describe their passion to collect as caring, preserving, nurturing and creative, traits which are commonly seen as feminine traits. The glass collecting study showed that both masculine and feminine images are performed in collecting.

Collectors represent a plurality of personalities, experiences and backgrounds. No single collector's identity exists. A collector's soul can not be captured, but is elusive. The wide-spread stereotypical identity as a collector appearing in fiction and mass media may diverge from how collectors perceive themselves. There is an ambiguity in identity as being developed based on both self-reference and dialogue with the societal context.

Future research needs to consider the difficulties people may have in articulating the meaning of collections. Ethnographic research is likely to contribute to our understanding of how people feel about their collections, their collecting behavior, as well as themselves as collectors.

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Online anti-Christmas communities as sites of consumer resistance

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Extended abstract

”Christmas summons images of family gathered around a decorated tree, of music and light and the comforting smell of a special dinner cooking on a snowy winter day [...] But is this the Christmas we actually experience? How many people standing in the line at the malls would say that their Christmas season is replete with warmth, affection, and neighborliness? In fact, Christmas is experienced by most adults as a time of intensified stress - - The result is often ‘holiday blues’ and even severe depression”. (Tracy, 2001)

Type the words “Christmas resistance” or “Christmas sucks” in the search engine, and you are instantly served with more than a million hits. Every year during the Christmas season, hundreds of people log onto the discussion forums to complain that Christmas has lost its meaning and degenerated into a senseless marketing frenzy. In this paper, we study these online anti-Christmas forums as sites of consumer resistance against the western materialistic consumer culture —and against the culture-ideology of consumerism (Sklair, 1998).

In most western countries, Christmas has arguably lost much of its spiritual import to materialism, hedonism, and commercialism (Belk, Wallendorf, & Sherry Jr., John F., 1989; Belk & Bryce, 1993; McKechnie & Tynan, 2006). Nevertheless, like other festive celebrations, such as Thanksgiving (Wallendorf & Arnould, 1991), Halloween (Belk, 1993) and Valentine's Day (Close, 2006), Christmas is full of meanings that derive from and lend to culture (Fischer & Arnold, 1990). All over the Western world, there are strong socially enforced rules for appropriate ways of celebrating Christmas. Such norms include the obligations of being filled with a “Christmas spirit” (Clarke, 2007), expressing love and affection with suitable gifts (Fischer & Arnold, 1990) and “doing the Christmas right” (Lowrey & Otnes, 2004) for example. These norms not only sanction appropriate behaviors for passing the holiday season but also more generally reflect what is valued in a culture (Dubois, 2002).

In this paper, we study how these cultural norms, values, and moral obligations, or cultural model (Thompson & Arsel, 2004), associated with Christmas, are reproduced, contested and negotiated in virtual ‘anti-Christmas’ communities so as to gain insights into the new forms of consumer agency and resistance that the new (global networks and) computer mediated environments have brought about. We approach cultural models as collective understandings of reality that shape individuals’ actions, conventionalizes certain social practices, and help in the internalization of certain discourses, role expectations and myths (Thompson & Arsel, 2004), some of the most profound of which concern social institutions such as marriage and family.

Based on a netnographic study, we argue that consumer participation in the Internet - based anti-Christmas communities represents a case of resistance against markets’ invasion of the private sphere and private spaces like the home (Kozinets, 2002). Our study illustrates how consumers use online discussion forums, blogs and communities to construct resistant identities, self-proclaimed “scrooges”, who resist the prevailing cultural model of Christmas—the “fake family Christmas” —and the materialistic values that it has been seen as representing.

Our study suggests that online environments provide these critical consumers with a site

not only for venting their frustration about the meaninglessness and falseness of Christmas celebration but also for anonymous and safe breaching of social standards. In the global networks of the Internet, consumers are able to congregate with like-minded people to collectively problematize and even reject the “sacred” but yet over-commercialized family Christmas without running the risk of being positioned as an outcast in their immediate social environments. In these communities, consumers are able to construct and explore new intelligible forms of identity as critics of Christmas.

The anti-Christmas sites of the Internet would thus seem to serve as alternative communities, in which consumers do their identity work to resist the undesirable forms of consumer subjectivity that the increasingly materialistic consumer culture offers them.

In general this research project seeks to gain insights into the new forms of consumer agency and resistance that the computer mediated environments have brought about. Overall we propose that online environments offer individuals a new type of flexibility in their identity projects, enabling them to occupy multiple subject positions simultaneously.

Our research also aims to contribute to the literature seeking to form a more multilayered comprehension of consumer resistance. We find that in order to form this understanding of the phenomena, the analysis of the explicit activism against the marketing techniques must be counterbalanced with an analysis of the techniques or practices of the self, or identity work, through which consumers construct alternative realities and forms of being.

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Ordinary cosmopolitanism as a form of postmodern consumer identity in global marketplace cultures

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Extended abstract

Drawing from cultural consumer research, we study ‘ordinary cosmopolitanism’ as a form of postmodern consumer subjectivity and cultural identity, and virtual consumer communities as sites of cultural production and mediation through which different versions of cosmopolitanism are produced and negotiated in the market. By means of an empirical study that focuses on Internet-based communities of ‘global travelers’, we elaborate on the role of Internet-based discussion forums as cultural intermediaries in the collaborative processes through which meaning is produced and value created in contemporary global and globalized consumer markets. Overall, the paper contributes to a better understanding of the new forms of consumer agency, identity and community that are brought about by the recent cultural and technological transformations in the global marketplace.

In contemporary consumer markets, territorial boundaries are becoming increasingly insignificant and it is ever more difficult to understand local or national consumption phenomena without reference to global forces. Consumers live in a “shrinking world” where transnational relations, networks, activities, and interconnections of all kinds transcend national boundaries (Giddens, 1990; Harvey, 1989). In the global marketplace

and under the conditions of globalization¹, patterns of human interaction, interconnectedness, and awareness are reconstituting the world as a single social space (McGrew, 1997: 65). The Internet and the new digitalized forms of communication, transaction and interaction, such as virtual/online communities, play an important role in these cultural transformations.

In this paper, we focus on this globalization of consumer markets and study virtual communities as sites where both consumers and marketers construct and negotiate particular forms of marketplace culture and consumer subjectivity. More specifically, we elaborate on the ways in which the members of the community draw from a discourse of ordinary cosmopolitanism in their identity work, and the forms/representations of (regimes of truth about) the global (political) society, humanity and identity of the global citizen this discourse sustains and gives rise to.

Cultural cosmopolitanism usually refers to a cultural disposition that involves an intellectual and aesthetic stance of ‘openness’ towards peoples, places, and experiences from different cultures, especially those from different nations (Tomlinson, 1999; Hannertz, 1990). Cosmopolitan consumers are “citizens of the world”. They are globally mobile and thus have broad experience of international environments and multicultural settings. Stereotypically, they feel at home wherever they go, moving comfortably within the standards of several cultures. Since cosmopolites are consumers who seek to broaden their horizons by immersing themselves in a breadth of local cultural experiences (Cannon & Yaparak, 2002) they are usually also assumed to respect and encourage cultural diversity, different lifestyles and cultural practices.

Cultural cosmopolitanism has traditionally been associated with diplomats and artists, or at least upper middle-class travelers, intellectuals and businessmen (Holt, 1998; Kofman, 2005; MacCannell, 1976; Thompson & Tambyah, 1999), i.e. professionals and experts of different sorts who spend extended periods of time living and working abroad. As a cultural category, cosmopolitanism therefore excludes migrant workers and refugees. As

¹ By globalization we refer to the intensification of worldwide social relations and interdependence, which is brought about by economic, political, technological, cultural, and social factors (Giddens, 2001).

a number of critical scholars have pointed out, the identity of the global citizen is a privilege that is reserved for modern, affluent global bourgeoisie and the privilege of those who can take a secure nation-state for granted (Kofman, 2005).

In the context of global virtual markets, however, we argue that cosmopolitanism as a cultural identity becomes accessible to much broader classes of ‘ordinary’, digitally literate consumers. In the virtual worlds and the global marketplace environments, practically anybody can assume the role of the global citizen or the citizen of the world. Based on an empirical case study (Stake, 2003) that focuses on Internet-based communities of ‘global travelers’, and by means of netnographic methods (Kozinets, 2002), we explore what characterizes this sort of “ordinary cosmopolitanism” (Lamont & Aksartova, 2002) in the global marketplace. Our data consists of naturally occurring textual data obtained from global online traveler communities and discussion forums.

Our goal is to analyze how ‘cosmopolitanism’ as a cultural identity and a form of consumer subjectivity, which takes different forms in different social and discursive contexts, is being produced and represented as a specific form of a postmodern consumer, or ‘post-consumer’, subjectivity (Firat & Dholakia, 2006). Drawing from cultural consumer research (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006) and extending Lisa Peñaloza’s theorizing on marketplace cultures (Peñaloza, 2000; 2001; Peñaloza & Gilly, 1999) to global online market environments, we analyze virtual consumer communities as sites of cultural production and mediation through which different versions of cosmopolitanism are produced and negotiated in the market.

Our study contributes to the literature on marketplace cultures (Firat & Dholakia, 2006; McCracken, 1986; Peñaloza, 2000; 2001; Peñaloza & Gilly, 1999) by exploring the intercultural market dynamics in global environments, and by elaborating on the nature of web based market environments and virtual communities as sites of cultural production and mediation in contemporary global and globalized consumer markets. Our study illustrates, in particular, how globalization as a standardizing force (Jameson, 1998) and a culture-ideology of consumption (Sklair, 1998), are being contested and negotiated in the collaborative processes of online networking and virtual communities.

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Appropriation of Western ideologies of beauty in Nordic consumer culture

Work in progress

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Extended abstract

Drawing from cultural consumer studies (Arnould and Thompson 2005; Moisander and Valtonen 2006), this paper focuses on the mass-mediated marketplace ideologies and consumers' culture specific meaning-making processes. Specifically the purpose of this research is to explore how consumers discursively constitute and negotiate the notions and meanings of beauty, and make sense of their selves, using global advertising images as resources, and appropriating them to their own cultural, and sociohistorical contexts and identity projects. The aim of our study is thus to bring a cross-cultural perspective into the discussion previously centered on North American consumers and North American context.

We wish to position ourselves within the stream of consumer research which explores how cultural discourses are produced, maintained and contested within the markets. Some key assumptions of this line of research are that social reality and social order, or culture, are continuously being produced within the market by the marketplace actors (Moisander & Valtonen 2006); and that consumers are actively taking part in culture and markets by appropriating, negotiating and challenging the meanings given to products, everyday practices, and people, including themselves (Arnould & Thompson 2005; Firat and Dholakia 2006). So while marketers and advertisers may seek to “hand down” certain meanings to products and brands, or produce certain type of subject positions, individuals are also constructing their own, personalized meanings and identities drawing from their network of cultural resources such as social settings, mass media images and ethnic traditions (Thompson et al 1994). The individually constructed meanings however draw from, and are to some extent based on, mutual understandings shared in a culture (Kates & Shaw-Garlock 1999).

Culturally oriented consumer research has been interested in various socio-cultural processes related to consumer behavior. Within this paper we will focus¹ on the literature on construction of consumer identities (e.g. Thompson and Haytko 1997; Thompson and Hirschman 1995) and consumer’s meaning making, appropriation, and resistance processes of mass-mediated commercial messages and established cultural discourses or myths that are used as an explanatory framework for the social reality (e.g. Hirschman and Thompson 1997; Thompson 2004; Holt & Thompson 2004). The central constructs whose relationships we are exploring in this research are the cultural production systems, or the systems of representation (Hall 2003), especially through which the mass culture discourse predisposes and prompts consumers towards certain types of identity positions, and the consumers’ construction of their own meanings and identities in the midst of these predominant marketplace ideologies, and mythologies.

The overall goal of the research project is to explore how consumers discursively constitute and negotiate the notions and meanings of beauty from global advertising across cultural contexts. Our key research questions are: (1) *How Nordic consumers*

¹ For an extensive review on cultural consumer research see Arnould & Thompson (2005)

negotiate the notions and meanings of beauty by drawing from the global advertising images? (2) How are these meanings manifested as representations of beauty in the consumers' talk of beauty and consumption practices related to beautification? It is not in our objective to define or set any boundaries for the concept of beauty, but to explore how it is constructed consumer discourses.

In this paper we present a preliminary analysis of how Nordic female consumers contract and negotiate beauty through language by appropriating advertising imagery. Firstly, we would like to point out that the Nordic consumers can be conceptualized as well acculturated to the often Americanized media and popular culture, recognizing and being able to reflect on international advertising campaigns, identifying celebrities and evaluating their public images, and elaborating the advertisers' motives to influence the consumers.

Secondly, while this first round of analysis has not allowed us to fully immerse ourselves into the mythological resources that consumers draw from in their beauty readings, they were clearly informing the consumers' ways of understanding and sense-making of advertising images. The image of the Elovena-girl, for example, can be rooted all the way to the mythical female characters both in literature and in arts, such as Aino in Finnish national epic Kalevala and Akseli Gallen-Kallela's paintings. Therefore we wish to further emphasize the importance of embedding the study of consumers' meaning making processes to their own socially and historically specific contexts.

Thirdly, even this preliminary study illustrates, how a notion as commonplace as 'beauty' can disguise a concept that is very multilayered and fragmented; we are not only exposed to it, but we are 'doing' beauty in our everyday practices and talk. On the level of language beauty can be described simultaneously in multiple, even contradicting ways, which are, however, not mutually exclusive.

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Sweetstuff, Place and Cultures of Consumption. Confectioneries and Sweet Shops in the Urban Landscape of Stockholm, from 1850 to 1915.

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Abstract

This paper deals with the spatial dimensions involved in the consumption of sweet commodities, i.e. rooms and places for the commercial distribution of sweet articles 1850–1915. In a historical perspective places for consumption of sweet products have changed in radical ways. Before the existence of domestic beet sugar production in Sweden, sweet commodities were luxury goods, primarily available at the confectioner's shop. Today there is a widespread infrastructure for the distribution of sweets and sugar in our everyday life through convenience stores, mini-marts, cafés, vending machines, and supermarkets. How did the distribution of sweet substances spread and extend geographically? What social practices, ideas and values were generated in relation to specific places and sites that offered sweet products? A suggested study design will be discussed, and some preliminary results will be presented.

1. Introduction

Sugar on the Mass Market: Sweet Commodities and Cultures of Consumption in Sweden, from 1890 to the Present is the title of a research project recently started at the Nordic Museum/Swedish Institute for Ethnology in Stockholm, Sweden. It aims at exploring and shedding light on the consumption of sugar and sweet commodities connected to the breakthrough of the European and especially the Swedish beet sugar industry. The starting-point of the study is the mid nineteenth century when Sweden emerged as an industrial nation, self-sufficient in sugar in the 1890s, and continues into our times. The growing supplies of beet sugar generated a rising amount of new sweet articles, which in turn generated new

habits and ideas about how they were to be consumed. Gradually, as mass-produced chocolates, confectionary, lemonade, desserts, pastries and fancy cakes became affordable for growing numbers in an emerging consumer society, the use of sweet products took on different forms and functions. Today, they are highly integrated objects used for celebrations and ceremonies, for courting and rewarding, for relief and comfort, or as nourishment and sources of quick energy. Back then, however, the consumption of sugar and sweet products were novelties for the larger majority of the population. During a relatively short period of time the consumption of sugar increased dramatically. It rose from 3.5 kg per person per year in the 1850s to just about 35 kg in the 1910s – i.e. a tenfold increase and a historical increase with no counterpart in any other comestible or food item (Kuuse 1982).

These processes, the integration and assimilation of an emerging amount of mass-fabricated sweet articles into the cultures of everyday life, are of significant interest here, with an emphasis on the shaping of demand: In what forms and for what functions did the repositories of sugar hit the market? How were the sweet objects presented, re-presented? In short, how were these sweet novelties made meaningful to consume – how were they made worth demanding?

The overall purpose of the project is to identify values, meanings and functions that have come to be associated with the consumption of sweet products during the twentieth century. The focus is thus on *the production of meaning around sweet commodities*, which will be investigated from different material types such as artefacts, packaging, the representation of sugar and sweets in commercials, popular culture and more didactic and normative genres, e.g. nutrition books and health-promotion literature. Preliminary analytical themes to be further explored throughout the period under study are for instance ‘sugar as enjoyment and delight’; ‘sugar as comfort and medicine’; ‘sugar as food and nutrition’; ‘sugar as threat’.

This particular paper concerns the spatial dimensions involved in the consumption of sweet commodities, i.e. rooms and places for the commercial distribution of sweet articles. The aim is to consider the significance of ‘place’ in consumer culture and how spatial dimensions of consumption can be taken into account and studied in a fruitful way.

Questions of interest are: How did the distribution of fabricated sweet substances spread and extend geographically in the city over time? What consumption patterns and habits, ideas and

values were generated in relation to specific places and sites that offered sweet products? The relation between place and city function, place and social patterns, place and representation are key issues taken into consideration in this attempt to shed light on how a growing amount of mass-produced sweets was incorporated into the social and spatial realities of the expanding city. In the following, some preliminary results will be discussed, based on a recently started survey, mapping the places and shops offering sweet products in the city of Stockholm between 1850 and 1915.

2. Mapping the consumption of sweet articles in the city

In order to describe and map the commerce in products mainly made of sugar, the directory of trades and professions in the street directory for the city of Stockholm, every fifth year¹ between the 1850s and 1915, has been used (*Stockholms adress-kalender för år 1855*, etc.). Accordingly, the main commercial supplies of sweet articles, such as chocolates, sweets, and all sorts of confectionery, were primarily offered to the citizens by the confectioner. Furthermore, the street directory also lists other relevant professional categories such as ‘chocolate-makers’, ‘pastry-bakers’ and ‘candy-makers’. In addition and most likely, the gradually and ever-growing numbers of shops for groceries and victuals, among other things, also offered mass-produced sweets, candy and chocolates, displayed in glass jars on the counters. In this defined pilot study, however, such places for consumption of sweet substances are not included, other than with reference to numbers or to the general development of the commercial milieus in the city.

The first period, 1855–1885

In the mid nineteenth century some 50 shops producing and offering sweet articles were noted on average in the street directory, a number that would stay relatively stable in the thirty-year period to come. At the same time Stockholm underwent an extraordinary expansion. The residents redoubled and the city itself extended, with a peak in new construction in the 1880s (*Statistisk årsbok 1905*, Gejvall-Seger 1982).

1850s:	40 shops	93,000 inhabitants
1860s:	50 shops	120,000 inhabitants
1870s:	51 shops	150,000 inhabitants
1880s:	51 shops	200,000 inhabitants

Confectioners of Stockholm

The listed sites selling sweet products were mostly (80 per cent) situated in the very centre of the city. The lion's share of these (80 per cent, again) consisted of confectioner's shops, especially at the beginning of the period. Geographically, Stockholm was a relatively divided city throughout the nineteenth century, with five rather isolated districts separated by water. First, the oldest part, henceforth called the Main City (Stadsholmen) was a fully developed and densely populated district. Second, the expanding northern part, Norrmalm, which together with the Main City made up the commercial and administrative city centre with most of the residences for the wealthy bourgeoisie. Third, Södermalm in the south, also an expanding area with a less wealthy population. Finally, the eastern part Ladugårdslandet (later Östermalm) and the western part Kungsholmen, which at the time were relatively untouched, less populated districts with scattered buildings, workshops and military establishments.



Fig 1. Stockholm in the mid 1850's, with the distribution of shops in different town districts

Thus, by location, the supplies of sweet articles were associated with milieus and spaces representing wealth and a prosperous, bourgeois urban way of life. The confectioner's shops are mapped out along the most fashionable commercial streets, like Drottninggatan and

Regeringsgatan, as well as in neighbourhoods in the city centre inhabited and frequented by the well-off and well-born. In 1865, for instance, almost thirty cafés run by recognized confectioners spread over the central lower parts of Norrmalm and the Main City. There were Lutteman, Stenberg, Lindqvist, Sundell, Roffler and Berns in Drottninggatan, and Berg, Sundell, Schmidt and Hagström in Regeringsgatan. Situated in the busy bazaar at Norrbro, bridging the Main City with Norrmalm, was the well-known café ‘Pavillon du Bazaar’, run by the confectioner de la Croix. The café was referred to as a meeting place for the well-known citizens, providing delicacies and foreign newspapers in ‘salons magnificent decorated’ with chandeliers and mirror glass, shiny furniture, marble tables, murals and flower arrangements (Bolin 1944).



Fig 2. Confectioners' shops noted in the street directory situated in the central parts of the city (Norrmalm) 1857

The confectioner's shops were also situated close to parks and areas laid out for promenades, recreation and amusement in the city centre. Popular cafés were located, for example, at Strömparterren, an area for strolling by the waterside in the city centre, in Kungsträdgården and in Berzelii Park in Norrmalm. Davidson's café at Svenska trädgårdsföreningen (Swedish Garden Association) in Drottninggatan offered 'all articles belonging to a confectioner's shop' and entertainment, such as 'Concerts à la Musard'; waxworks with moving figures or the 'Alpine singer Johan Kettel with companions' (Sjögren 1923).

Providing some kind of entertainment or amusement in connection with serving sweet products seem to have been a characteristic feature of the confectioners' shops during the period studied. At Thörnblad's café there was, for instance, a self-playing piano; several others had billiard tables; yet others arranged conjurer's performances, Punch and Judy shows etc. The confectioners held enterprises in the city's theatres and the opera house, but many set up places of amusements of their own which in time became recognized and famous establishments, such as Berns Salonger, de la Croix's Salon at Brunkebergstorg, Brunkeberg's Casino, or Novilla with a popular winter garden and a variety theatre at Djurgården (Bolin 1944, Tjerneld 1996, Magnusson 1937).

Pastry-bakers, female hawkers

Another professional category offering sweet articles in city was the pastry-bakers. They were female hawkers, a traditional profession in pre-industrial Stockholm, and for a long time one of few legal opportunities for women to earn a living. The hawkers either moved around or had a permanent market stall, offering home-made pastries and sausages. According to a study by Bladh (1991), most of them lived in the poorer districts of town. In the directory of trades and professions pastry bakers are noted as a distinct category between the beginning of the 1860s and 1885, referring most likely to the ones with a permanent booth. They were noted in the city centre, although not at the most fashionable addresses, as well as in the poorer neighbourhoods. Contemporary accounts depict them offering 'sweets to the gentlemen, pastries to the ladies, and fruit syrup out of a never-ceasing carafe' from booths located in the main streets and promenades of Stockholm (Carlsson 1912). Their appearance in the 1860s as a special professional group in the street directory was probably a consequence of the new liberal commercial legislation that came into force at the time. Consequently, the numbers of female hawkers offering various goods increased enormously (Bladh 1991). Again, at the turn of the century they decreased in numbers concurrently with the transformation and reconstruction of the city, involving the demolition of old permanent booths in the centre (Carlsson 1912).

Sweetshops and representation

The next step in this study, after having mapped out the sites offering sweet articles and identified the character of the neighbourhoods, would be to carry out a closer and more systematic examination of the shops themselves, as a space and a material basis for consumption. In the 1870s a new type of shop developed in Stockholm as techniques of

construction made it possible to build and rearrange a shop in the ground floor independent of the upper parts of the building. Girders and cast-iron columns were used to erect and enlarge the sales room, in turn making it possible to enlarge the shop windows and design new entrances (Paulsson 1972, Bergman 2003). A new street aesthetic of commercial display was developed in Stockholm as in other European capitals. Elegant luxury shops served as popular meeting places for high society in the urban landscapes of Paris and London. Wolfgang Schivelbusch describes how the new social role of the shop was also reflected in their interior design. Shop owners made their sales rooms look like reception rooms in a palace, using rare woods, marble, glass and mirrors (Schivelbusch 2003). In Stockholm the interiors of the shops developed in the same way, starting in the clothing trade, with shops for fine handicrafts and luxury goods. Thereby, a new type of commercial street came into shape where the growing numbers of new articles and mass-produced commodities were displayed and illuminated on glass and mirrors. Shop interiors for essential goods, however, remained unchanged (Paulsson 1972). Very likely, sales rooms offering and serving sweet articles traditionally belonged to the well-decorated type of shops, considering the location of confectioners' sales rooms and cafés in the commercial main streets of Stockholm at the time. In comparison, when Regent Street was actively designed as a shopping street in London, cake shops, confectioners, and restaurants were allowed to set up in business, since they were 'fairly luxurious': well-decorated fashionable lounging places for the great and titled people (Rendell 1998). Another example from the eighteenth century of luxurious shop-fitting was a London confectioner who spent £300 on furnishing, while the stock was only worth £20 (Schivelbusch 2003).

Representations of these emerging semi-public places and milieus of Stockholm in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, i.e. verbal and visual depictions of social life in and about the cafés, are to be found in various sources and empirical materials such as advertisements, the contemporary press, prose and documents on cultural history. Above all, an inventory will be undertaken of the rather large collections of photographs at the Stockholm City Museum and the Nordic Museum, documenting the city and its urban life. Key issues to deal with in relation to such visual representations are the spatial arrangements and the spatial organization of consumption. What did the rooms and sites offering and serving sweet articles look like? How were they arranged and decorated? How were the goods presented, in combination with what? This involves systematically tracing the material and physical conditions for offering and consuming sweet products, and identifying the social

implications and significance. What associated ideas, functions, norms or values manifested themselves in the spatial dimensions of consumption?



Fig. 3. A Ladies café in Stockholm 1912

One concrete example of spatial organization with such implications of including and excluding is the categorization of cafés for ladies and for gentlemen. Several confectioners' shops in Stockholm were referred to as 'ladies cafés', and some had particular 'ladies rooms', for example Hellbacher's café in one of the main commercial streets in Norrmalm; Oscar Berg in Regeringsgatan; Schütz's and Sundell's cafés in Drottninggatan. In late nineteenth-century cafés and department stores there were examples of spheres where it was socially accepted for bourgeois women to stroll on their own, without chaperones. Socializing in the cafés stretched the limits of their legitimate freedom of movement in public, although it gave rise to moral judgements and conceptions about women gossiping, wasting money and threatening the stability of the family life (Sjöberg 1998).

Yet other cafés were referred to as male spheres, such as Lagerlunden in the Kungsträdgården park, and Strömparterren often frequented by officers and other male homosocial groupings (Tjerneld 1996). Some again had a special 'smoking department' – an area for male companionship, since smoking in public at the time was entirely a male habit: de la Croix's in the Bazaar at Norrebro and Grafström's in Malmskillnadsgatan among others.

According to Sjöberg the gendered milieus in cafés and department stores at the turn of the century differed regarding interior fittings and decorations. Soft, curved forms of neo-rococo style were applied in the female rooms, while the heavier Renaissance style, as well as an oriental design, characterized the male ones (Sjöberg 1998).

A systematic description of the sites for the distribution of sweet goods, including the hawkers' booths, could reveal further exclusions and inclusions related to gender, age and class, in short, reveal the social implications, norms and values associated with the consumption of sweet products in the emerging urban public spheres.

To sum up, between 1850 and 1885 sugar consumption started to rise slowly, on a national average from 3 kg to 8 kg per head per year. Sugar prices fell some 25 per cent, due to the development of the European beet sugar industry (Kuuse 1982). In Stockholm, however, the commercial sites manufacturing and serving sweet articles were relatively constant, both in numbers and in patterns of location. The doubling of inhabitants in this period did not principally affect the urban cultures of consuming sweet products in any significant way. Sweetstuffs were distributed in the fashionable commercial and recreational districts of the city, in places associated with pleasure, leisure time and a bourgeois semi-public social life. In that sense, the consumption of sweet articles was ritual, regularized, excluding large parts of the population in Stockholm living under conditions of chronic undernourishment and starvation throughout the nineteenth century (Hirdman 1983).

The second period, 1890–1915

During the following period, the 1890s to the 1910s, the population doubled again, from 200,000 inhabitants in the 1880s to 400,000 in 1915 (Ahlberg 1958; *Statistisk årsbok* 1916). And now the numbers of shops offering sweet articles doubled as well. An explanation for this development that presents itself immediately is the progress of the Swedish beet sugar industry which had its breakthrough in the 1880s. Sugar prices started to drop, reached the lowest level with a reduction by some 40 percentage points in 1895, after which prices stayed stable till the end of the period under study (Kuuse 1982). At the same time, consumption rose dramatically, from a national average of 13 to 33 kg sugar per person per year (ibid).

1890s:	72 shops	270,000 inhabitants
1900s:	81 shops	320,000 inhabitants
1910s:	98 shops	400,000 inhabitants

The city was continuously reshaped and enlarged. New buildings, blocks, squares, esplanades and districts were built. The eastern part, Ladugårdslandet, was transformed into Östermalm, a fashionable district with luxurious and expensive estates. Norrmalm extended to the north, where the Vasastan district developed. New housing areas were also erected in Södermalm and Kungsholmen (Franzén 1992, Gejvall-Seger 1982). Trade and industry grew and the economic expansion affected the urban topography. The commercial centre was expanding to the east and new main streets stretched from the busy Norrmalm to new crowded parts of lower Östermalm. Trade in food and provisions were the most expansive line of business in Stockholm with the largest number of firms and employees (Gerentz 1999). At the turn of the century new firms ceased to be set up; instead, the already established business grew bigger in terms of size, sales and numbers of employees (ibid.). This trend is also evident in the sweet business. The same confectioners set up several different cafés, especially the ones who had established firms in the city centre, or firms in the new fancy commercial streets.

The principal pattern from the previous period, with the confectioners' shops located in sites associated with the fashionable social and commercial life of the city, remained. In the 1910s almost 30 per cent of all the confectioners' shops and sweet shops in the city were to be found in the new wealthy district of Östermalm. At the end of the period they also spread in numbers in the expanding north parts of the city, the new district of Vasastan.

During the second period studied, the numbers of candy-makers increased, most likely as a consequence of the falling sugar prices. Setting up candy production for local distribution was not a very complicated or expensive enterprise and it was relatively easy to shut it down (Dahmén 1951). Most of the candy-makers' businesses were located in the two districts of Södermalm and Kungsholmen. In other words, cheaper, less elaborate, supplies of sweetness (in the form of fabricated candy) were distributed in the less well-off parts of town.

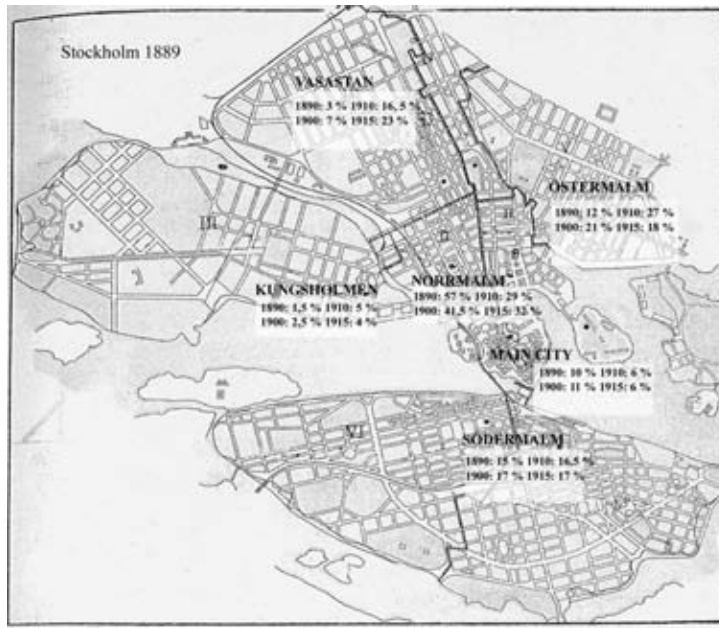


Fig 4. Stockholm in late nineteenth century, with the distribution of shops for sweet commodities in different town districts 1890-1915

3. Conclusion

The main point in this sketch of work in progress has been to discuss the spatial dimensions of an emerging mass consumption of sweet articles in the late nineteenth century. How did the supply of new sweet products spread in the urban landscapes, how was it manifested and integrated in the material and spatial cultures of the growing city? In the volume *Images of the Street: Planning, Identity and Control in Public Space*, Nicholas R. Fyfe and others explore how streets as specific, local landscapes manifest broader social and cultural processes, emphasizing the meaning and significance of urban space in relation to social identities and social practices (Fyfe 1998). Following this perspective the key issues in the study outlined are to explore how conceptions, values and functions associated with sweet articles were shaped in relation to the places where they were offered and served. That means focusing on how social practice and consumer patterns were shaped by the organization of space, by a spatial order.

A preliminary study design has been suggested, where the main professional categories fabricating and offering sweet articles are identified and mapped out in the city; the characters and contemporary qualities associated with the sites and streets are to be noted; the exterior design and interior fittings of the shops and sales rooms are to be scrutinized, as well as how

the localities were represented, visualized and talked about (mainly based on photographs and advertisements). The study will thus chart the sites offering sweet articles in relation to the social, cultural and commercial geography of the city.

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¹ For the mid nineteenth century, the volumes for 1855, 1857, 1862 and 1865 have been used for this paper, due to the defective condition or insufficient contents of some of the annual volumes.

Consumers as citizen – Do consumers value a landscape?

A case study of the importance of cultural landscape in big environmental construction projects

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Abstract

The task of this paper is twofold, first to explore the importance and meaning given to cultural landscape in the big construction projects and second, to study how much landscape matters for the consumer/citizen. Our case study concerns a big artificial ground water system which is intended to be built in Kangasala in Southern Finland, in the village and esker of Vehoniemi by the lake Roine, a village which is famous for its beautiful sceneries and landscape. The results show a gap between the minimal role of landscape in the planning process and the high significance of landscape to the citizen. For citizen, it represents a public, cultural good with which people associate specific memories, stories, history, and cultural artefacts and which therefore becomes important for local and national identity and distinction.

1. Introduction

Consumers' perception of public goods has seldom been studied from the viewpoint of the imaginary and subjective. However, environmental issues and 'places' often include aspects that have a deep cultural meaning for consumers (e.g. Porteous 1986, Jackson 1989, Urry 1990, Lash & Urry 1994, Uusitalo & Jyrämä 2001, Scott 2002). The meaning of places to the consumer has earlier been taken up in the framework of tourist attractions. In contrast, this paper will explore the cultural meaning of a visual 'home' landscape to the citizen-consumer.

Local environmental movements have been active in trying to save natural surroundings for environmental reasons. The rationale used in the reasoning and argumentation is that one has to act for the sake of natural rights, nature preservation or plant and animal variety. It is claimed that nature has intrinsic value, and should be 'altruistically' defended regardless of what the human preferences are. However, many studies on collective and cooperative behaviour show that active participation and commitment to common goals is more likely if the consumer-citizen – in addition to the public good – also receives some private benefits from his/her activity (e.g. Uusitalo 1990).

Therefore, it is interesting to study what kind of emotional, nostalgic or cultural values are involved in the environmental disputes about the destruction of landscapes, and how important are visual and cultural aspects in motivating people to environmental activity. Pollution has been noted a factor influencing people's wellbeing and happiness, but do the proliferating industrial construction and

artificiality in natural environments have any impacts? One can see nature as equal to natural resource, as is often the case in big construction projects, but another way to view it is from the deep-ecological, aesthetic and ethic point of view. In these approaches impacts on environment are defined quite differently (Vilkkä 2007).

The objective of this research paper is twofold: first to explore the importance and meaning of the cultural landscape in the big construction projects and second, to study how much the landscape matters for the consumer-citizen. Our case study concerns a big artificial ground water system project called *Tavase*, which is intended to be built in Kangasala in Southern Finland, in the village and esker of Vehoniemi by the lake Roine, a village which is famous of its beautiful sceneries and landscape.

2. Background theory – the concept of landscape

Landscape as a word was first mentioned in the Bible in the Psalms, where the beauty of Mount Zion, a high hill, was praised as a place where God is (Kontturi 2000, Antturi 2006). As a concept landscape came on the scene actually with the Romantic Movement in the 18th century.

Descriptions of landscape became common in the literature and visual art. In the German sphere "Landschaft" did first mean a special area with borders on the map, but later, for example in the works of Alexander von Humboldt, the word adopted also aesthetic and visual meanings.

Landscape was defined in the terms of the geography by J.G. Granö *as a visual environment of a man, including both a far view and a near view*. This view preserved its position at least in Finland during the first decades of the 20th century (Granö J.G. 1929, Granö, O. 2002).

In the Finnish classification of landscape schools the tradition based on Granö's thinking was called Physiognomy perspective. Later on, in 1960s and 1970s, increasing pollution and misuse of the environment focused the discussion on environmental and ecological issues. Landscape was seen as an entity where land, water, flora, fauna and human activities were effective factors in the ecological system. This school was called Ecological school. Following this development, the ministry of environment was founded in 1983. The Landscape Architecture School was born in 1980s along with the increase of landscape planning in which the structure and form of the landscape was important. In this, ecological balance had more weight than purely aesthetic aspects. Finally, the Humanistic school perceives landscape, region, place and environment as a subjective experience. The beauty and aesthetic aspects are valued highly in this tradition (Kontturi 2000).

Consequently, landscape can be studied from various approaches. It can be studied as objective reality, subjective experience, or cultural representation. The objective approach operates with the land forms, the subjective with the contents of mind, and the representative with the symbolic meanings of language. They all exist in parallel. Therefore several researchers consider it as important to study simultaneously the physical reality of landscapes and the ideological commitments linked to them (e.g. Cosgrove 1985, Jones 1991, Duncan & Ley 1993, Karjalainen 1996, Raivo 1996).

In economic consumer theory landscape can be defined as a public or common good. It can be compared with artworks in the public places. Landscape can also be analyzed in the frame of marketing and product concepts. Landscape's 'product attributes' or benefits for the consumer-citizen are, for example, aesthetic experience, pleasure to different senses, strengthening of identity, and giving social and cultural distinction to the inhabitants. Landscape can be linked with both instrumental and terminal values (Kotler 1991, Jyrämä 1999). The landscape is experienced with many senses, both mentally and bodily. People's relationship to the landscape is continuous and embodied in different activities and narrative experiences (Arnould & Price 1993, Crouch 2000).

In Finland the whole countryside and forest landscapes have traditionally formed mentally a common good already on the basis of the so called everyman's rights. Perhaps therefore also Finnish landscapes are generally perceived as a common good in a more extensive meaning than in the EU on the average (Everyman's rights at <http://www.environment.fi> 2007). Consequently, many well-known natural landscapes in Finland are perceived as everyman's 'own' cultural heritage and property, and destroying them touches citizens and their feelings not only on the local level but also at the national level.-

Cultural approach

The rapid change of landscapes has awoken the need to consider the concept more thoroughly and from several points of view. The so called cultural turn, taken place also in the field of geography and marketing, has emphasized the importance of non-material, symbolic goods, among them landscapes and environments in general. Moreover, along the present view of seeing the consumer as an active part in the production process, the consumer-citizen's right to be heard has been emphasized (Raivo 1997, Uusitalo 2005, Moisander & Valtonen 2006).

Seen from a cultural point of view, landscape is based on a system of signs, it is an output from a process of creating meaning and significance. This process is part of the societal signifying system where cultural reality is produced and reproduced. Representations do not refer only to the physical reality of the landscape; instead landscape is a representation of the observer's interpretations, based on his or her conscious and unconscious values and choices (Jackson 1989, Karjalainen 1996, Raivo 1997).

Landscape is physically spatial and mental at the same time. The experienced landscape is often biographic and narrative in which the subjective history of the observer is present. Landscape has a role in our identity; the "self" is being formed of our memories, including memories and emotions associated with the landscapes.. These cultural elements combined with aesthetic preferences form the basis of our relationships with places or landscapes (Kyrklund 1985, Porteous 1986).

National landscape and national identity formation in Finland

Landscape has a role in forming national identity. What kind of typical features are included in the Finnish national landscape? The often used picture of a national landscape is a landscape seen from a high place over lakes and forests (Häyrynen 2005). In national romantic literature of the 19th century, we find for example Franz Mikael Franzen, Johan Ludvig Runeberg and Zacharias Topelius who described the national landscape and created the image of Finland in their poetry and writings. Through their writings, also the esker and lake landscapes of Kangasala have become elements of the Finnish identity (Topelius 1845). The well-known song *A Summerday in Kangasala*, composed by Gabriel Linsen to the poem of Zacharias Topelius, has made landscapes of Kangasala an icon of the Finnish summer. Of the first authors writing in Finnish, Aleksis Kivi and later, F.E Sillanpää have also strongly contributed to the ways how Finns see the visual landscape and construct the Finnish identity. In visual art and music the Finnish masters of the so called Golden Age had strong impact on the national landscape and Finnish identity e.g. Eero Järnefelt, Akseli Gallen-Kallela and Albert Edelfelt as visual artists, and Jean Sibelius, Fredrik Pacius, Carl Collan, Gabriel Linsén, Oskar Merikanto and P.J. Hannikainen as composers (Tiitta 1994, Nervander 2001).

Landscapes play a role for the identity and image of the nation but also of the local places. In the 1980s the utilization of natural resources and the massive tourism plans threatened some of the most important landscapes in Finland; and some of the valuable landscapes had already been destroyed as result of stone quarry and gravel taking. Therefore it was nationally necessary to develop tools for the protection of most important landscapes and sceneries.

The classification and appointing process of the national landscapes started in 1980 by the Landscape Committee. It defined as nationally valuable all representative and unique landscapes which have significance in the literary descriptions of our country and are part of our common knowledge. Further, also most known tourist sites were included, through which the Finnish landscape had become known abroad. They could be natural or cultural landscapes, and they included our most known sceneries and landscapes such as Aavasaksa, Pallastunturi, Koli, Vuokatti and *Vehoniemi in Kangasala* (Häyrynen 2005, Landscape committee report 1980). This classification and appointing work continued later and was guided by the Ministry of Environment which published lists of nationally valuable landscapes. These lists are still being used in environmental impact assessment of the projects for justifying or objecting changes.

One well-known environmental conflict concerned Koli, a famous iconic hill and lake landscape in Northern Karelia, which during the economic boom in the end of 1980s was planned to become a target for massive tourism housing and ski construction projects. The dispute ended by founding a protected National Park area in 1990. Tourism did not loose in this conflict despite of the protection decision. It only had to take another direction which is more in balance with the landscape. In 2000 a Nature Centre with an exhibition hall displaying the natural values of the area was opened in Koli (Rannikko 2007).

Traditional landscapes, referring to landscapes born as an output of traditional ways of land use, are disappearing along the changes in agriculture. To them belong both traditional biotopes and constructed traditional landscapes. Traditional biotopes can be fields, leas, meadows, beaten lands, paddocks, moors and pastures. To the cultivated and constructed traditional landscapes belong agricultural landscapes and villages as well as historical buildings and constructions with their near surroundings and relics. (Landscape protection and management at www.environment.fi 2007)

Local landscape experience and identity

Relationship to a place is different among inhabitants than among professional planners and politicians. The inhabitants live in a place concretely, and for them the place has emotional and existential dimensions. Experiences have an affect on the relationship to the place. Both individual and collective conceptions have impacts on the image of a place (Karjalainen & Paasi 1994, Karjalainen 1995, Vilkkuna 1997).

Identity of a place is often described with the concept *genius loci* or *spirit of the place*. It refers to experiences and emotions that form a character or personality of a place, which makes it distinct from all the other places. Spirit of a place is linked with the landscape, dialect, people, history, stories, songs, poems, dances, and local food. It can be felt with all senses. Therefore, also the concept *sense of place* is used when describing people's landscape perception, their involvement and commitment to it (Antikainen 1993, Brandenburg & Carrol 1995, Lukkarinen & Waenenberg 2004, Leikola 2002). Moreover, it has been claimed that local places – cities or other local places – could act as an important counterpart to economic globalization (Uusitalo & Jyrämä 2001). Local places provide social and cultural capital needed for a meaningful life, and local identities act as buffers against the worldwide standardization and unification of lifestyles.

Official information about landscapes, for example included in the Geographic Information System, is different from the local tacit knowledge of people. Concerning the cultural dimension of landscape the official information is poor. The local information which is based on traditions and practical experiences is often needed to complete the official public view on landscape planning. Therefore, many land use professionals nowadays consider traditional, local knowledge valuable and welcome in the planning processes (Raivo 1997, Salmi 2001, Puustinen 2004). In contrast to this, citizens active in local environmental construction conflicts are easily still labelled NIMBYs. With this *Not in my back yard*-syndrome is referred to attitudes of local inhabitants defending their

near environment against unwished construction projects, often assuming that it is an expression of self-interest only (Dear 1992). However, this label does not take into account the deep dimensions of inhabitants' experience. Experience of immediate surroundings is a fundamental right linked with the identity of the inhabitant. Thus, the wish to protect the *own* is a stronger issue than mere seeking for *own self-interest*. People can even be ready to offer their economic self-interest, if they can save a common good which they have become to think as their 'own' in the sense of something being a part of their identity (Uusitalo 1989, Nevanlinna 2000, Peltonen 2004).

Future consumerscape and landscape

Economic theory assumed a rational consumer who primarily tries to maximize the economic utility. However, later consumer research sees the role of consumption more broadly. Consumption is a way of self-expression and social communication, and a way to express one's social commitments and ethical values. The farther off consumption has moved from the necessary toward the discretionary spending, the more important individual, social, and cultural meanings have become in consumer theory. Moreover, consumers are more often than before also conceptualized as citizens who consume immaterial and common goods and trade off between private and public goods. In the future, non-material goods such as environment, safety, cultural togetherness and meaningful activities will be emphasized. Consumers are seen also as responsible co-producers of these common goods and general well-being (Uusitalo 2005).

New groups emerge in the field of consumption all the time; not only around the brands such as Nokia, Harley-Davidson, Nike etc. but also around shared ideas, interests, and life cycle stage (hiking, fishing, bird-watching, local pro-environmental activity). In these groups, the commodity 'consumed' consists mainly of non-material ideas rather than material products. Some of these movements can also be interpreted as a wish for a more simple way of life in which the overburden of options is voluntarily reduced (Solomon 2003).

We can conclude that the present-day consumerscape has broadened to include many non-material, imaginary goods and common goods. One of them is landscape and the emotional attachment to it, especially if the landscape is an important part of the consumer-citizen.

3. Empirical case study

Objectives of the case study

Our objective is to explore the importance of the landscape in big public construction projects and study the landscape experience of the inhabitants.

Our case project is a plan for a big artificial ground water system *Tavase* (The artificial ground water project of Tampere and Valkeakoski) which - if being realized - will have a strong impact on the cultural landscape at Vehoniemi village, a nationally valuable esker and lake landscape. According to the plan, a massive pumping plant will be placed in the bay of the lake Roine, from where the water will be pumped up to the esker which is used as a natural cleaning filter, and rained down there with the help of a large plastic pipeline systems. The infiltration areas will cover broad areas of the esker. By going through this esker filter the water will be transformed into artificial ground water, which will again be pumped up from several water reservoirs and sent further through pipelines to Tampere and other municipalities in a large area.

The idea to produce artificial ground water is very old. The system was known already in 19th century. The idea of *Tavase* project was thus born much earlier, but the project started in 1990s with explorative research. Explorations were made for example in Pinsiönkangas northwest of Tampere, and in Pälkäne and Hattula southeast. Finally the decision was made to place the project on

Vehoniemi esker in Kangasala and Isokangas esker in Pälkäne. Vehoniemi esker came latest into the agenda.

In the following, the importance of landscape is first studied by looking what is said about landscape in Finnish law and European convention. Thereafter we will explore the documents of our case, the ground water project in Vehoniemi, especially paying attention to its environmental impact assessment report. Altogether the study was limited into 6 documents: 4 documents were from the EIA procedure, one administrative planning document and the brochure of the Tavase project published after the EIA procedure. (the analyzed documents are listed in Appendix 1).

After reporting the results of the analysis of the documents we report main results of a survey, which was conducted among the local people to find out what the landscape means to ordinary people. We were more interested in studying their relationship with their home landscape in general, not only as connected with the ground water project. This helps us to understand more broadly why inhabitants can be unhappy with any kind of construction projects in their home landscape or well-known landscapes in their home country.

Legal frame of landscape issues

What kind of obligations toward landscapes are there according to the law and common rules? An umbrella covering all regulations is the Constitution of the Republic of Finland, especially its paragraph number 20. In addition, there are many other laws including statutes concerning landscapes. Consequently, the main issue is not the missing of regulations but rather the traditional ways to interpret and apply the laws in practice. The outcome for landscapes depends on the values and attitudes prevailing in society (Ekroos 1995).

The main law for nature and landscape is the Law for nature protection. The protection decisions are mostly made on the basis of this law. The aim of this law is to preserve nature's biodiversity, to take care of nature's aesthetic and landscape values, to support sustainable use of natural resources and nature environment, to disseminate information and knowledge about nature, and to promote nature research. Landscape is also mentioned in other laws; land use and building law, water law, extractable soil resources, archipelago, wilderness, and forests laws, and in the environmental impact assessment law (EIA). The last mentioned law and how it is applied in practice is especially important in large construction projects. The problem from the landscape's and nature's point of view is that the main responsibility of impact assessment is given to the management responsible for the intended projects (EIA, www.finlex.fi/fi, 2006).

According to EIA, the impact assessment procedure concerns projects that may have significant environmental impacts. All alternatives should be evaluated and compared. The procedure is controlled by the contact authority, the regional environmental centre. Everybody concerned with the project or those whose private interests the project can be injured may participate in the procedure.

The process starts with a so called assessment program done by the project responsible and handed to the contact authority, who informs about it publicly. Contact authority gives his statement to the project responsible, who studies the environmental impacts on the basis of the program and authority's advice and writes a report of the environmental impacts. In this report, the impacts of different implementation alternatives should be represented in order to compare the alternatives. Also the way to handle negative impacts should be represented. The contact authority informs about the report, allows a possibility for opinion expressions, and finally gives the statement of the report and a summary of received statements and opinions to the project responsible.

The Ministry of Environment has published rules and checking list to help the impact evaluation. (Guidelines for EIA at www.ymparisto.fi, 2007, Kansalaisen tietokortti at www.ymparisto.fi, 2006) The ministry also strives to increase citizen interest and participation in

impact assessment procedure and encourages citizens to get acquainted with the impact report and to note especially that the alternatives have been examined comprehensively and equally.

European landscape convention

There are several international conventions relevant for the landscape. The most important is the European landscape convention which was signed in 2000 and came into force in Finland 1.4.2006. The convention emphasizes the significance of landscape and the necessity to take it into account in various public projects.

The convention refers to the principles of sustainable development. It states that landscape has an important public interest role in the cultural, ecological, environmental and social fields. The landscape contributes to the formation of local cultures and it is a basic component of the European natural and cultural heritage, contributing to human well-being and consolidation of the European identity. The landscape is important part of the quality of life for people everywhere. The convention also states that developments in different fields are in many cases accelerating the transformation of landscapes, and express the wish that the public could enjoy high quality landscapes and play an active part in the development of landscapes. The signatories agree that the landscape is key element of individual and social well-being and its protection, management and planning entail rights and responsibilities for everyone. The 5th and 6th article give detailed information e.g. on how to integrate landscape in regional planning and various policy fields (European landscape convention at www.finlex.fi, 2006).

4. Landscape's role in the project documents

Tavase was founded as a company in 2002 by nine municipalities around Tampere and Valkeakoski (Kangasalan kunnanvaltuuston päätös, www.kangasala.fi, 2006.) The brochure of the company states that "in years 1994-1999 explorations were made (e.g. exploring ground water, absorption tests) for using the esker area of Vehoniemi-Isokangas to produce artificial ground water. The exploring pointed out that this esker area is suitable for this purpose" (Suunnittelukeskus 2003, Tavase, www.tampere.fi, 2007).

The landscape had no role in the *Tavase* planning process before the environmental impact assessment (Jauhia 2006). Vehoniemi esker was seen merely as a significant ground water cistern. Gravel stories would be suitable for soaking the water. The place of the esker between Tampere and Valkeakoski and on the shore of Roine was good. The bay of Hiedanperä situated well as to the pipelines to Tampere, it was open place without any buildings and on the edge of a wide field area where digging is easy. In all, despite environmental law and the European convention were encouraging to think of environmental and landscape values, the documents show that the project was treated as a technical matter, in other words, whether it was technically feasible or not to use the lake and esker for ground water creation.

The impact assessment documents tried to describe also landscape attributes as exact as the law requires, but from the consumer-citizen point of view, some essential information about Vehoniemi were missing: the fact that it was mentioned in the maps as a valuable landscape scenery area, the Vehoniemi nature protection area was mentioned but not the landscape value of it, the rank of Vehoniemi as one of the national landscapes (in the Landscape committee report in 1980), and the cultural environment program of Kangasala in 2004 were not given any attention. And the European landscape convention was not mentioned.

As stated earlier the EIA law is problematic when giving the main responsibility of impact

assessment to the project. Evaluators are not independent professionals, and the voice or views outside the owners' network are seldom heard. Also in this case, the documents used as references in the evaluation report did not include material concerning landscapes or their history, and among the evaluators there were no experts of landscape, culture or history. The special expertise fields reported were social issues, flora, hydrogeology, groundwater modelling, water supply, water processing and artificial groundwater systems. From outside was requested statements concerning radon contents, marsh and grove flora, subsurface drainage, agriculture etc.

The expressions mentioning landscape impacts give an impression that they are very minor. If the impacts seemed to be significant in absolute measures, a percent measure was used and the per cents were calculated of something big, e.g. of the whole esker. The following expressions were typical: landscape changes a little bit, the impact is minor, or the impact is local. If the evaluator has come to the result that there will be some negative impact, it was added how the impacts are intended to be decreased. The following examples are taken from the report's summary:

Impacts on landscape: Impacts in the esker area remain local. In lake and coastal areas the pumping plant and sign-boards will cause wider but quite small impacts.

Impacts on valuable landscape areas and cultural heritage: Impacts exist mainly during the construction.

Impacts on Vehoniemi Natura2000 area: The esker flora changes or disappears at maximum by 4 % subsequent to the project. The change cannot be considered as significant.

- *Impacts on other protected nature values:* Hiedanperä forest will be somewhat splitted. However the most valuable part of the area will remain. The project has no impact on other protected objects in the area."

Critical readers can also notice that the comparison of placing alternatives is not in balance. The criteria and objects change from one alternative to the other. Landscape does not exist as a criterion in the comparison. The comparison presents the project as the only realistic alternative. This is against the recommendations of the Nordic Guide for Cultural Environment: there should exist also alternatives which favour cultural environments. (Nordic Minister Council 2002). It can be concluded that landscape was neglected altogether in the report, or when mentioned the overall evaluation of landscape impacts was that they were non-significant.

In the other documents studied landscape was not mentioned, although the landscape as it is now was displayed in the cover picture of the project brochure. In the statement of the regional authority, the environment centre, the main attention was paid to the problem whether the system would not function in a way the project owner planned. The authority represents a new alternative for the project, in which it should be divided in two areas. The impacts of pipelines, land use plans, long term impacts on the ecosystems of the esker (e.g. the problem of organic ingredient which gradually reduces the soaking capacity of the esker), and rare plants of the lake are taken up. It is also stated that the project seems to have many impacts on the living conditions of people. The statement says that disadvantages concerning landscape are concentrated on the construction of the pumping plant in Hiedanperä bay. Also feedback from the 14 organisations includes 4 statements paying attention to Hiedanperä and the place of the pumping plant. In the citizen's feedback 7 of 13 statements paid attention to the place of the pumping plant.

The concern of the authority and the citizens about the (unsuitable) placement of the pumping plant may reflect some deep worry about the landscape values. However, in a broader sense landscape is not dealt with directly. For example there is no reference to the image of the region as one of the highly valued national landscapes, or to the loss for village inhabitants if their traditional natural landscape will change radically.

5. The meaning of landscape to local people – A citizen survey

To find out the meaning of landscape to the local people we conducted a survey covering inhabitants in Vehoniemi village, where most of the plant constructions will be placed.

Vehoniemi is an old village situated in a cape by the lake Roine. The old dense village model dates back to the 16th century. The new village housing has been placed along the road to Pälkäne on the southern side of the esker and around the road to the island villages. The bay between Vehoniemi village cape and the esker is called Hiedanperä. It has very low water with fine sand. Hiedanperä coastal forest is protected for homing a very rare bird. The open coast area holds a status of a traditional biotope and is treated by sheeps. Between the coastal area and the esker there are fields serving normal agriculture.

Information was gathered with a questionnaire sent by mail or handed personally. Totally 238 questionnaires were sent out to inhabitants, to summer residents and to the people who regularly visit the village or stay there for holidays. Response percentage was 53,8 %. In individual questions the percentage could be lower. The survey was conducted in May- June 2005. The percentage of response could have been higher if the survey had been timed for June-July; many of the summer residents do not come to their summerhouse before July. On the other hand, the survey answers now represent better the permanent population.

The questionnaire consisted questions concerning landscape in general and landscape preferences, the owning of landscape, experience of and interaction with the Vehoniemi landscapes , and about Vehoniemi as an object of the artificial ground water system. One question was devoted to the image of Kangasala.

Most of the questions were studied with a Likert type scale 1 – 4 (1=not important – 4=very important). Several questions were also open-ended questions to be answered with own words.

Background of the respondents

Both men and women were equally represented (women 58 %, men 42 %). The respondents' age distribution was the following:

Over 65	60 -65	53 -59	38 -52	20 -37
20.5%	19.7 %	18.9 %	20.5 %	20.5 %

A town was the permanent home environment by majority (60 %). One third of the respondents were permanent all-year inhabitants of Vehoniemi. The various employee groups were represented as follows: farmers/entrepreneurs 20,1 %, employees and workers 35,5 %, students and unemployed 12,1%, and retired 32,3%.

The character of interaction with the landscape of Vehoniemi was studied in relation to regularity, duration and quality. The finding was that people have a regular and steady interaction with the village. Inhabitants or former inhabitants were 41 % of the respondents, 54 % characterized themselves as regular visitors.

Results of the citizen survey –The meaning of landscape and landscape preferences

When respondents were asked to think about their own home landscape and rank its importance on a scale 1-4, the home landscape was felt very important among 81 % and quite important among 18 %. Similar results have been received from other studies as well (Scott 2002).

Perception of landscapes in general was studied with a question whether there is any landscape that has especially stayed in mind during the life. Response came from 69 %. People did not only mention one or several landscapes, but they described their landscape often with the expressions of experience. Majority of the landscapes mentioned were Finnish landscapes, but landscapes from abroad were also mentioned. An example:

”Sogndal in Norway in 1974 – seen from the esker perspective, I was embarrassed the whole winter; what impressive mountains, how could they even exist? But Sogndal had the same elements as my favourite landscape in Finland; water, trees and a high place.”

The highest rank was given to Vehoniemi. It was mentioned recognizably in one third of responses. Descriptions were many. The name Vehoniemi or Hiedanperä, lake Roine or any other place in the village or esker was described. An example:

”When coming along the village road until the edge of the forest you may see an utmost fascinating landscape opening over the fields and the lake Roine.”

Also other Finnish esker landscapes were mentioned by name: Punkaharju, Koli and Syrjänharju. Several landscapes in Lapland were represented too. In addition to Roine also other lake landscapes were noticed, Saimaa as an example. Sea, river or field landscapes were also mentioned, they numbered 14 together. Also phenomena in nature like sun rise or sun fall were described as well as the feelings felt in the landscapes.

What elements do people like in a landscape? The 12 elements or types of a landscape were given to be scaled 1 - 4. Lake, forest and esker were evaluated to be the most important elements in the favourite landscape (Table 1). Highly rated were also the untouched natural landscape and an open view. Respondents extended the list with their own elements, and among them, home and nature animals, birds, air, and river were mentioned. Also the balanced entity of a landscape was noticed.

Table 1: Most important elements in a favourite landscape (N=128)

Favourite landscape elements	Very important %	Important %	Somewhat important %	Not important %	Cannot say %	Average	St.D
Lake, shore	82,8	11,7	5,5	-	-	3,773	.53558
Forest, trees	58,6	28,1	11,7	0,8	0,8	3,430	.79053
Untouched natural landscape	50,4	29,3	17,9	1,6	0,8	3,268	.86908
Open view	43,7	32,5	18,3	5,6	-	3,143	.90963
Esker	42,2	32,8	23,4	1,6	-	3,156	.83654
Natural field	39,5	33,9	22,6	3,2	0,8	3,081	.90703
Village road	35,7	33,3	21,4	8,7	0,8	2,944	.99844
Cornfield	34,6	35,4	25,2	3,9	0,8	2,992	.91284
Forest road or path	34,4	30,5	28,1	6,3	0,8	2,914	.97227
Open view from road or autostrada	18,9	36,9	23,0	18,7	2,5	2,508	1.07754
Buildings, church	17,2	24,6	36,1	18,9	3,3	2,336	1.07266
City/town view	2,5	14,0	33,9	46,3	3,3	1,661	.85199
Some other,	28,9	36,8	2,6	2,6	28,9	2,342	1.63205

Relationship to Vehoniemi and Hiedanperä: Landscape with memories

Hiedanperä is well-known, familiar place to the respondents. The interaction has been long-lasting, 81 % say that they know the place since the childhood or for a long time. Hiedanperä bay area landscape does not just mean seeing a view. People go there for different reasons. Most important reason was interaction with nature “observing the nature, just to be in peace of nature” (35 % of the respondents), almost as popular was walking or exercising, swimming and riding. Picking flowers or mushrooms, fishing, enjoying free time, working, swimming a horse, admiring landscape, remembering childhood memories and representing the area to the visitors coming from Finland or abroad were other reasons to go there.

Landscape is culturally constructed. It is seen through one’s own history. In the landscape the old memories live together with today’s experiences. People who have lived in the same environment and have experienced important moments there, can share similar experiences. When respondents were asked whether they have an important memory or a person linked with Hiedanperä in their mind, 63 % of them told one of several memories. Important personal events linked with the landscape. Most of the memories related to excursions and visits to Hiedanperä, and often linked with one’s own childhood where grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles or other children were there. A bridge over generations was typical to the memories. The landscape had been experienced as a child with the grandfather, then with own children and later on with grandchildren. The fine sand of Hiedanperä was often mentioned. The stories and memories of different people show that this landscape includes meaningful personal histories:

“when I rode a bicycle in order to visit maternity clinic in church village there was a wire over the path, because of the horses or cows in the field - I fell down – my son was born at home without midwife” - (researcher’s note: the home of this lady was on an island of the lake Roine from where she had rowed and from the Hiedanperä path to the clinic it was still 10 kilometres left.)

Songs of the landscape

The broader culture-historical content and the identity of a place was studied with a question, whether the Vehoniemi landscape does bring any song or songs to one’s mind. At least one song was reported by the majority (64 %). Most of them mentioned the same song *Summer day in Kangasala* (Topelius, Linsen). Many respondents considered this song to be self-evident, it is about the landscape. Also many other songs were mentioned (15 altogether). They tell about the Finnish nature and express patriotic or spiritual emotions. In these songs Kangasala, Häme (the province) and Finland become living. The closeness to these songs among the Vehoniemi people is understandable because many of these songs or their poems have been created in Kangasala region or they have been inspired by its landscapes. (All the songs that respondents listed are in Appendix 2).

Overall image of Vehoniemi

To form an image profile of Vehoniemi on a semantic scale people were given 13 pairs of characteristics and they were asked to evaluate them on a scale of 1 -7. The resulted profile shows that the beauty of landscape is strongly associated with Vehoniemi. The highest profile values were given to two characterization of landscapes: *beautiful landscapes* and *belongs to the nationally valuable landscapes*. Vehoniemi is also considered to be peaceful, it respects the past and understands aesthetic values, is positively oriented, and protects nature. People consider the village being reasonably well managed, cooperative and paying attention to the future generations, too. It is considered more *traditional* than modern. Comparing the profiles by women and men, the only

statistically indicative difference was in the pair *beautiful – not so beautiful* women giving higher grades to the beauty of the place. Perhaps men pay less attention to the aesthetic aspects. The familiarity with the landscape was found to increase its value. In this case people seem to consider Vehoniemi as a national landscape, exactly in line with the Landscape committee in 1980. (The profile is displayed in Appendix 3).

Perceived changes in Vehoniemi landscapes

Do people notice the changes of the landscape and do they consider them positive or negative? To find out attitudes to landscape changes the people were asked to think about Vehoniemi landscapes from so long time as they remember. They were asked to describe if the landscapes have changed and in what way. The big majority responded that there have so far not been changes or that the changes have been positive because they had been considerate to old village buildings. The landscape damages caused by gravel taking were mentioned. Many changes mentioned were caused by the change in agriculture, its methods, tools and production directions. The plastic balls on the field instead of hay sticks were noticed. The fallen trees had been noticed as changes in village or in near forest. New technology had brought a mast in the landscape and traffic noise had increased.

Concerning specially the shore landscape it was regarded that there has been no change or the changes have been positive. Changes noted were the number of summer houses which had increased. The number of parking places on the shore had been increased, and the water surface had lowered causing changes on the shore landscapes.

We can conclude that Vehoniemi has so far been saved from major changes, and people are very perceptive of all changes in their surroundings and pay attention to them.

Perceived losses and gains from the ground water project

The artificial ground water project has faced local resistance. Therefore we wanted to find out what are the main reasons to the opposition. People were asked which things they feel are weakening if the artificial ground water plant would be realized. 84 % informed different weakening issues. The question gave a possibility to answer with several weakening issues. The 20 in top on the weakening list were 1. beautiful landscape, 2. peaceful little place, 3. beautiful nature, 4. old culture, 5. good outing and boating circumstances, 6. ecosystem of nature, 7. peace in nature, 8. spirit of the place, 9. real country life, 10. occupations, especially agriculture 11. swimming and fishing 12. groundwater, 13. roots in Vehoniemi 14. living 15. human rights 16. attractiveness of the village 17. trust on Kangasala 18. basements of houses 19 nature 20. Hiedanperä .

The question of strengthening impacts (by which the researchers referred to positive consequences) the most common answer was "Nothing would be strengthened". As 'strengthening' factors were also mentioned all kind of negative developments such as noise, disquiet, traffic, cold values, merciless destroying, feeling of beauty disappearing, insecure reactions of nature, landscape destroy, rape of nature, disturbing plants and animals, problems in water quality, weakening of the lake, drying of pits and wells, irresponsibility of the decision makers, unconcern, weakening of agriculture occupation, outsider influence on the village. Some positive consequences were also mentioned such as the possibility to clean groundwater supply and sewerage systems, temporarily the feeling of togetherness (in opposing the project), money and jobs to the village, and better care of the cleanness of the environment.

In trading off between the two public goods, getting good drinking water for inhabitants in Tampere and Valkeakoski and building the pumping station in Hiedanperä, the answer of people in Vehoniemi was clearcut: water supply is not a sufficient reason to build the pumping station in

Hiedanperä., only 6 % considered it sufficient and 7 % could not say.

In all, people in Vehoniemi see the ground water project overwhelmingly as producing merely losses, the most of them connected with the unique landscape, nature and peacefulness of the region. According to the free word given to respondents, there are also deep doubts against the functioning of the water systems. The whole system was felt to be needless and it was felt to be planned in a wrong place.

The respondents also defended their right to decide about the landscape. According to their opinion, the decision making about the landscape belongs to the inhabitants (93 % agree) and to the landowners (86 %). The attitude toward decision making of the municipality or the province was more reserved. More than half of the respondents were of the opinion that in the Tavase decision making the voice of inhabitants was not heard at all. Instead they felt that the best heard voices were Kangasala municipality and the Pirkanmaa province.

The impact of the ground water project on the ‘brand image’ of whole Kangasala municipality

The landscapes of Kangasala have been famous through the centuries of the history (Topelius 1845), and the image of Kangasala is strongly linked to its many eskers and lakes. Kangasala has benefited from this history in its marketing and in increasing its attractiveness for business firms, inhabitants, and tourists.

Respondents were asked to evaluate how well the Tavase plans are in harmony with the launched imago. The results in Table 2 show that especially the visions 1, 3, 6 and 7 are in conflict with the Tavase project. These conflicting visions are very much landscape-focused.

Table 2. The perceived conflict between the Tavase artificial ground water project and the official visions lounghed by the municipality Kangasala. N=128

Artificial water project is in harmony with the following vision	Not at all	Quite badly	Quite well	Very well	Cannot say
1 In Kangasala – on the highest branch! (song)	74,4	14,9	0,8	0,8	9,1
2 People and enterprises possess the newest knowhow	22,3	32,1	21,4	5,4	18,8
3 Clean nature, safe and ejoyable environment offer to inhabitants the best place of the city area and many refreshing possibilities starting from home door	56,4	28,2	5,1	1,7	8,5
4 Fundamental services exist that help in everyday life	32,5	30,7 5	15,8	3,5	17,5
5 Successful enterprises strengthen economical base and offer jobs and services to the inhabitants	31,9	27,6	20,7	4,3	15,5
6 Landscapes famous nationwide, fascinating history and unique cultural life create experiences, bring visitors to the Summer Day Parish	70,6	16,0	3,4	4,2	5,9
7 Summer starts in Kangasala! (The slogan of Kangasala)	57,6	20,3	5,1	6,8	10,2

6. Conclusions

In sum, we can compare the official planning documents with people's own ideas. Based on the analysis of documents we can conclude that, in municipal decision making, the concept landscape and its value to people is still a very rare phenomenon, and it is not used to guide or justify practices.

On the principal level, landscape and its cultural values are officially recognized in environmental law and European conventions and agreements. However, these principles have not yet penetrated the practice of project planning and justification. For example, the Environmental Impact Assessment law has improved the attention paid to the nature diversity and conservation. But it is seldom used to enforce studies on cultural consequences or symbolic consequences to the inhabitants, the region or the state, and their identities. The gap between technology and culture seems to be very deep indeed, and much have to be done to find out how these two worlds could be integrated (e.g. Heiskanen 2004).

The public discussion around the new projects is as technically oriented as before, and the opinions of the inhabitants are often being heard at a too late stage when there is no possibility to change the course of action. Neither have citizens resources to evaluate the alternative options and make economic comparisons. The present planning system does not take advantage of the tacit knowledge and feelings of people concerned. A drawback is also that since the project management is given the main responsibility of exploring the consequences, they tend to downplay the opposing facts and overvalue the positive aspects of the project. Also they choose which alternatives are chosen and to what extent they are analyzed for comparison.

The survey results show that landscapes in general but particularly the home country and local landscapes are important non-material goods for the well-being and identity of the consumer-citizen. The generally most preferred features of the landscape in our data were: lake, forest, esker, untouched natural sights, and open views. The peace, clean water and air, and the well preserved village and roads as well as traditional country views were also associated with the good landscape. An important finding was that one's own experiences, memories and historical stories from earlier years are very closely associated with the landscape. Earlier findings support our idea that landscapes represent a reserve of stories and life histories (Massey 2005, 2006, Rolston 2007, Carrier 2007). People engage in and make sense of their environments. As memories are bound to the landscape, people may fear that they lose something of their identity, if the landscape is radically changed.

But landscapes are important not only for the sake of personal memories and identities. Landscapes also perceived as a common good important for integrating people with a community or nation. In our case the region and the very place of the planned project has also nationwide cultural significance. This is expressed in the many cultural artefacts associated with this specific landscape.

Thus, consumer resistance against radical environmental changes should not only be interpreted as issues of aesthetic taste. Instead, the changes of the landscapes touch deep emotions and adopted cultural identities. This claim is supported by our finding that the landscape is very easily associated with literature and poetry. In our data, surprisingly many different poems and songs were spontaneously cited and associated with the home landscape. Consequently, visual aesthetics, literature, music, nature, and history are all closely intertwined in experiencing a landscape.

On the basis of the results we suggest that the impacts on landscape should be included in the environmental impact assessment of large construction projects. This seems to be essential from the

consumer-citizen point of view. It would also bring a significant local knowledge to benefit the project planning. The implications for consumer policy is that public, non-material goods are indeed becoming increasingly important for the citizen, and new ways of including cultural meanings in the public discourse and decision making are necessary. Moreover, the study shows that consumer culture theory should be broadened from emphasizing not only the importance and study of the symbolic signs of the marketplace, but also include natural and urban landscapes as an essential part of consumer identity in the future consumerscape.

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Appendix 1.

Documents analysed

- 1 Vedenhankinnan yhteistyön järjestäminen Tampereen ja Valkeakosken seudulla, Hallintomallityöryhmän esitys 20.7.2001
- 2 Vehoniemen-Isokankaan tekopohjavesihanke, Ympäristövaikutusten arviointiohjelma 11.4. 2002
- 3 Keski-Suomen ympäristökeskus, Vehoniemen-Isokankaan tekopohjavesihanke, Lausunto ympäristövaikutusten arviointiohjelmasta 12.6.2002
- 4 Tavase Oy: Vehoniemen – Isokankaan harjualueen tekopohjavesilaitos – ympäristövaikutusten arviointi 17.4.2003 (YVA-selostus), Suunnittelukeskus Oy
- 5 Keski-Suomen Ympäristökeskus, Vehoniemen-Isokankaan tekopohjavesihanke, Lausunto ympäristövaikutusten arviointiselostuksesta 9.7.2003
- 6 Tavase Oy:n esite 2003

Appendix 2.

Songs associated with the landscape of Vehoniemi

Kesäpäivä Kangasalla, *Summerday in Kangasala*, writer Zacharias Topelius, composer Gabriel Linsen

Sunnuntai, *Sunday*, writer Aleksis Kivi, composer Martti Turunen

Roineen rannalla, *On the shore of Roine*, writer Zacharias Topelius, composer Carl Collan

Sua katson synnyinseutu, *I look at you my land of birth*, writer Jalmari Finne, composer Toivo Palmroth

Hämäläisten laulu, *Song of Tavastland*, writer J.H. Erkkö, German folk song

Maamme, *Our land*, writer J.L.Runeberg, composer Fredrik Pacius, (Finnish National anthem)

Metsämiehen laulu "Metsän poika tahdon olla...", *Forest man*, writer Aleksis Kivi, composer Yrjö Kilpinen

Jo joutui armas aika (Suvivirsi), *Summer hymn*, writer unknown Swedish, Finnish transl. Israel Kolmodin, Swedish melody in 1697, into hymn book in 1701

"Päivä oli kaunis ja aurinko paistoi kun kävelin mä...", *Elämä on kaunis Life is beautiful*

Kalliolle kukkulalle, *On the rock, on the hill*, Finnish folk song, composer also Kaj Chydenius

Joutsen, *Swan*, writer J.L. Runeberg, composer F. A. Ehrström

"Järjen veit ja minusta orjan teit...", tango Mustasukkaisuutta, *Jealousy* (a tango)

Pyhäaamun rauha, *Peace of the Sunday morning*, writer Herman Råberg, composer and Finnish translation P.J.Hannikainen

Lippulaulu, *Song of the Finnish flag*, writer V.A. Koskenniemi, composer Yrjö Kilpinen

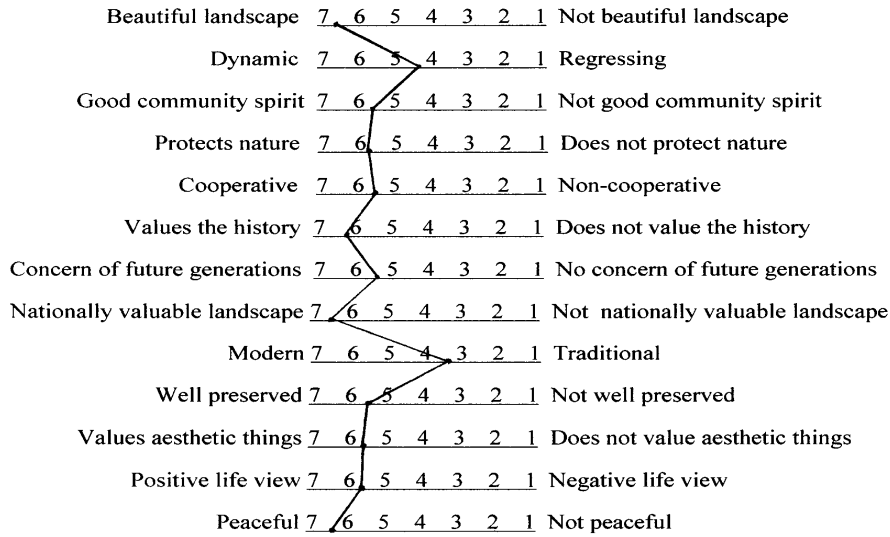
Laps´ Suomen ällös vaihda pois, *Daughter of Hellaa* (opera Princess of Cyprys), writer Zacharias Topelius, composer Fredrik Pacius and also Heikki Klemetti

"Rokki Roineen rannalla remuaa...", *Rock on the shore of Roine...*

general statement: "monia suomalaiskansallisia lauluja", *several Finnish folk songs and province songs*

Appendix 3.

The overall image of Vehoniemi



Senses in Consumer Culture

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The world we inhabit is full of different odours, tastes, textures, sounds and visuals. When we move from one space to another, use different product and brands, meet different people, and engage in different consumption practices, we also engage in using all the five sensory fields. The appropriation of sensory fields – that is culturally patterned and conditioned - play a crucial role in the way cultural meanings and values become produced, sustained and shaped in contemporary consumer culture. As David Howes, a leading scholar of sensual anthropology, points out: “[Sensation] is the most fundamental domain of cultural expression, the medium through which all the values and practices of society are enacted” (Howes 2006: xi). Both anthropological studies and business studies have discussed how sensory fields may be structured and invested with meanings in many different ways across cultures and market contexts. That is, the way people use their senses varies from context to context and market to market both in terms of the sensory priority and in terms of sensory sensitivity. As Edward T. Hall has pointed out “people from different cultures not only speak different languages, but, what is possibly more important, *inhabit different sensory worlds*” (1966: 2). Hence, in the advent of globalisation and mobility – and the increased number of different sensory worlds people encounter - the topic of senses and sensory environment becomes more and more important in many regards.

Despite this, in the emerging research tradition on consumer culture, little theoretical and empirical attention has been paid to the richness of sensory elements in contemporary consumer culture, except in the context of “experience economy”. Large majority of cultural consumer scholars have followed the dominant audio-visual model in their investigations, and the Western hegemony of vision, in particular, prevails in the body of research. Although audio-visual elements are obviously crucial and striking in contemporary consumer culture, to focus merely on them in is to ignore other vital sensory fields of cultural elaboration. We argue in this paper that the dominant audio-visual model comes to offer a rather limited view of the ways in which the world is inhabited, enacted, and made meaningful. Our wish is to bring all the senses into the academic discourse of cultural consumer research and in so doing to develop a better understanding of the ways in which senses play a part in the creation of particular social realities. We maintain that it is only when a form of sensory equilibrium has been recovered, that we may begin to fully understand how cultural meanings and social order becomes enacted and mediated in the marketplace.

Extended Abstract

To meet this aim, this paper works towards a cultural approach to senses. To get a better grasp of sensory elements in consumer culture we draw on, and bring together, the theoretical and empirical contributions of (sensual) anthropologists, and experience economy scholars, who have brought the topic of senses at the fore of academic investigations. Moreover, we lean on the increasing research on servicescape for theorizing the interaction between the consumer and consumption environment. At the core of our theoretical perspective is the notion of *sensescape* that offers insights to the dynamic interaction between consumers and their sensory environment comprising of visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile, and gustatory domains. The notion of *sensescape* refers, in other words, to the constellation of sensory domains with which consumers interact when they move and inhabit the scape in question.

This perspective, we suggest, can give us a distinctive understanding of how senses play a part in the production of meanings in particular consumer settings and how this is shaped and enabled by available cultural discourses and practices. We are hence not interested merely in the sensuous features of a consumption context, the sounds, and savours of a café for instance, but we wish to work towards an in-depth examination of the social and cultural significance of the sensory fields. That is, we aim to explore how each sensory domain functions also an arena for structuring social roles and interactions, expressing self, creating and enacting temporality and spatiality, and negotiating a particular social order.

To empirically investigate *sensescape*, we take up the task of developing methods, techniques and practices through which sensual aspects may be fruitfully explored, documented, and analysed. Drawing on, and advancing, recent ethnographic developments in marketing and consumer research, and the developments of new ethnographic varieties such as *nethnography*, *videography* and *visual ethnography*, we develop a methodology called *sensual ethnography*. It leans on the basic ethnographic principles and methods, but accords a particular *focus on all the senses* in the site under study. It is, in particular, interested in the *interplay* of the senses. While a major part of earlier studies on senses have considered each of the five senses in turn, as though sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch each constituted a completely independent domain, we are interested in the entire mixture of the sensory fields, and what kinds of mixtures are available in different consumption settings.

In concrete, we conduct a systematic empirical exploration of one particular *sensescape*: an outdoor environment, or wilderness *sensescape*, and the activity we focus is sports fishing, troll fishing more specifically. We suggest that this environment and this activity are rich of examples of how the interaction with the sensual environment can be at the core of the consumption process. With the help of this empirical work, we address the general question of how *sensual ethnography* can be developed and how it can be useful in advancing investigations on consumer culture.

This article first briefly presents an overview of previous studies on senses in various disciplines. The overview brings to light the historical development – and the limits of – the audio-visual model of cultural analysis and of the psycho-physiological research tradition often applied in studies on senses. Then, the article turns to elaborate on more detail the theoretical and methodological perspective of the study at hand, that is, the *sensescape* and *sensual ethnography*. The paper also offers a sensory narrative that is based on the empirical fieldwork. In the concluding part, the article discusses how the insights gained through this perspective might enable to rework and advance current understandings of consumer culture. It focuses, in particular, on elaborating consumer policy implications that are manifold due to the wide range of ethical and political issues involved in the design, management, and

Extended Abstract

consumption of sensescapes. The nature and quality of everyday sensual environment is arguably crucial for the wellbeing of people, and therefore, if we combine the task of exploring sensescapes with an effort toward its improvement, we are engaging to a rather stimulating intellectual, aesthetic, and socio-political adventure. One particular domain that would benefit from a more thorough understanding of the role of senses is the nature-based recreation; a domain that is growing fast worldwide.

Consumer Policy and Consumer Society: The Need for a Cultural Turn

A work in progress

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Introduction

Theories of consumer behaviour have changed over the past decades. A development that moved from the frivolous and defiant motivational research in the 1950's (e.g., Dichter 1960) to the rigid and formalistic behaviourism in the beginning of the 1960's (e.g., Kotler 1965) and ended with the information processing perspective in the late 1960's (e.g., Howard & Sheth 1969). In the 1970's information processing and cognitive psychology became the dominant theoretical framework in consumer research (e.g., Bettman 1979). In the beginning of the 1980's information processing and cognitive psychology was more or less synonymous with consumer research. Several consumer researchers began to see the limitations of a theoretical framework mainly based on information processing and cognitive psychology (Hirschman & Holbrook 1981). Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) were the first to publish an article questioning the information processing paradigm as dominant basis for consumer research.

“The information processing model regards the consumer as a logical thinker who solves problems to make purchasing decisions. The information processing perspective has become so ubiquitous in consumer research that, like fish in the water, many researchers may be relatively unaware of its pervasiveness (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982, 132).”

Here we see what a paradigm does to a research community: The theoretical basis is no longer seen as something which was chosen at a certain point in time, but instead it is perceived as the only way to study a phenomenon. Holbrook and Hirschman and later a handful of other researchers then questioned information processing and cognitive psychology as the only framework for the study of consumption. This movement was later labelled “the interpretive turn” by Sherry (1991), because it looked like it was the interpretations which connected this kind of research. Today, the same

movement is labelled Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) by Arnould and Thompson (2005), since it is now obvious that it is not the interpretive methodology which is the connecting theme, but instead the common interest in developing theories about consumer culture.

Consumer policy is in many ways connected to consumer research, but there has not been a similar development in consumer policy. Over the last decade there has been an opening towards the use of qualitative methods. Nevertheless, the theoretical framework is still the same, and the consumer is perceived as an information processing and utility maximizing individual who values the functional aspects of the products. For a long time it has been obvious that consumers subscribed to other attributes than function when they consume a product. Already Sidney Levy opened his classical article: “Symbols for Sale” (Levy 1959) with the vignette “The consumer is not as functionally oriented as he used to be – if he ever really was” and he stated later: “People buy things not only for what they can do, but also for what they mean ... The things people buy are seen to have personal and social meanings in addition to their function” (Levy 1959, 118-119). Since then, but especially from the mid 1980’s on, a growing number of consumer researchers have recognized the symbolic and aesthetic aspects of consumption. In sociology and the humanities this has been common knowledge for a long time (e.g., Veblen 1899/1970, Simmel 1901/1957, Boorstin 1962, Baudrillard 1970/1998). Today this classical knowledge of consumption is integrated into consumer culture theory, but it does not seem to be a part of the common knowledge in consumer policy. Hence, it is the objective of this paper to analyse the theoretical framework of CCT and show how this frame of knowledge could be integrated into consumer policy. We think consumer policy will have to add these new insights to the common curriculum if consumer policy wants to have a role to play in the future consumer society. We will not give direct advice to what consumer policy should do, but instead deconstruct the present knowledge in consumer policy and attempt to show how the field

could gain new insights from consumer culture theory. This should enable consumer policy to take on its important role in a society where consumers need more help than ever.

Theories of the Consumer Society

Outside the fields of marketing, consumer research and consumer policy there is a long tradition in understanding the rationale for consumption as much more than the functional aspects of the commodity. Marx talked about the fetish character of the commodity and the commodity as social hieroglyph (Marx 1867). These conditions were seen as a result of alienation. Marx recognized the non-economic aspects of the commodity and consumption. However, he thought that these conditions were only a temporary state connected to the capitalist system and he believed it would perish in the communist society.

Veblen (1899/1970) was also very critical towards the non-economic aspects of consumption, although not from a Marxian point of view. Whereas classical economics define humans as rational, utility-seeking people who try to maximize their pleasure, Veblen described them as completely irrational creatures that chase after social status. He saw the strive for social status as the dominant driver in society. It was Veblen's idea that people consume goods only to show their status. Veblen perceived this kind of consumption as lavish and irrational, coining the term "conspicuous consumption". Despite his critique of this wasteful consumption, Veblen recognized this kind of behaviour as a part of the society of his time. He criticized the classical economists because they could not understand this kind of consumption due to their narrow theoretical foundation. Veblen's ideas later inspired the common term "keeping up with the Joneses".

Simmel (1901/1957) wrote about fashion which is one of the main phenomena in consumer society. Simmel recognized the strive for social status as a reason for consuming fashion. Simmel did not think fashion and thereby consumer society will fade away. Fashion and the behaviour behind this phenomenon are seen as result of the fundamental changes in Western societies. In this upcoming society human beings are no longer directed by the church and life in the village, but are individuals living independently in cities. For Simmel fashion and thereby the consumer society have to be understood as something which is filling out the gap left by the diminishing importance of the church and the life in the village. By consuming fashion human beings can at the same time be individuals and member of a group who have the same aesthetic preferences. Simmel did not see any route back to a society where human beings are governed by the church or an economic rationality where man is utility maximizing. Therefore, Simmel was not critical towards fashion and the society where this kind of irrational behaviour is taking place, but he commented on this development with a heavy load of irony. Simmel was among the first to acknowledge the new cultural conditions where consumer society is taking over the vacant institutions from former cultural conditions.

Adorno and Horkheimer (1947/1982) were among the first ones to see the emerging consumer society created by a culture industry. They conducted a critical analysis of the impact of the development of consumer society and they perceived it as a very negative development of society. Years later, Boorstin (1962) made a similar, but more conservative, analysis of consumer society and the culture industry. Like Adorno and Horkheimer, Boorstin saw the culture industry as something that produces pseudo events and alienation. Baudrillard (1970/) went a step further and described the so called pseudo events as the real thing. Later on Baudrillard (1976/1993) developed

the concept of hyper-reality for this kind of phenomenon. Since then most theorists have given up the idea that phenomena created by the culture industry are only pseudo phenomena.

Today the consumer society is analysed from different perspectives. For instance from a sociological point of view by George Ritzer (1999) in *Enchanting a Disenchanted World: Revolutionizing the Means of Consumption* where it is described how consumer culture has an impact on all institutions in society. Ritzer draws some of the same conclusions as Simmel when he analyses the enchanting character of consumption. The modern world as seen by, e.g., Marx and the classical economists is from Ritzer's point of view a disenchanted rationalized society and consumption is a tool by which this culture is altered and enchanted. According to Ritzer (1999) we have left behind the rational utility maximizing consumer.

Kenneth J. Gergen (1991) analyses the same idea from the individual level in his book *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life*. He argues that people living under today's cultural conditions are in a constant process of constructing and re-constructing the self by consuming. Gergen is showing how the self no longer can be understood solely by using a cognitive psychological perspective. Instead, the individual is in a permanent process of re-constructing an identity often based on consuming different objects.

There were no reasons for the individual to put all the effort in constructing and re-constructing the self, if it was only for his or her own sake. It has to be communicated to the others and the individual consume the images constructed by the other members for the society. Stuart Ewen (1988) analyses this in his book *All Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture*. For Ewen (1988) we are living in a world of images and the main reason for consumption

is the creation of a certain image, both for the sake of one's own and of others. These images are not constructed accidentally, but are produced by companies to create an aura around their product – with branding and story telling being the most common forms. The rational utility maximizing consumer has vanished and even the functional aspects of the products have disappeared in favour of the image a commodity can create for the consumer.

In Mike Featherstone's (1991) book *Consumer Culture & Postmodernism* all these different aspects of consumption and consumers beyond the economic man are accumulated into a framework where the consumer society is transformed into a consumer culture to show that consumption has become the foundation for our culture. Featherstone (1991) tries to develop a sociology of the postmodern culture and he concludes that consumption is the most important tool when people try to create a meaningful life. Due to the importance of consumption both at the individual level and at a cultural level the meaning and the image become the dominant features when it comes to evaluating the reasons for buying and consuming a commodity. It is here essential to get beyond the consumption of the single commodity and perceive the commodity at the cultural level, since it is here that the single commodity gains its meaning in the interplay with the other commodities. At the cultural level it is even more obvious that the most important attributes connected to the commodity are the aesthetic dimensions. Featherstone defines this as the aestheticization of everyday life. It is the core idea of the consumer culture. It is the reality when most the objects we are surrounded by are branded and designed. In a Western European context we are in the middle of this. For Featherstone this leads to new ways of separating groups in society. It is no longer sufficient to focus on either class, demography or psychographics. The new parameter is taste and here we are dealing with aesthetics. In a way this new cultural condition creates the opportunities for real life *style* groups where it is the aesthetic dimensions that separate them from each other. To be able to understand

these cultural conditions in our society we have to add new theories to the traditional ones of economy and cognitive psychology.

Consumer Society Reflected in Consumer Research

It can be argued when cultural conditions of the consumer society were reflected in marketing and consumer research for the first time. One perspective on this is the work of Dichter (1947, 1949). His work can be critiqued from different angles, but clearly Dichter focused on dimensions in the consumption process neglected by the majority of marketing researchers of his time. Dichter's motivational research was mainly based on Freudian psychology and was rather narrow in its theoretical perspective. Nevertheless, Dichter tried to study and understand the non-economic dimensions of consumption. By relying primarily on Freudian psychology the single individual was the focus of this research.

It was not all the motivational researchers who were relying on Freudian psychology and the single individual when they tried to understand the non-economic dimension of consumption. Sidney Levy was among those who had another focus. Although Levy was aware of the psychological dimensions of consumption, he perceived the single individual as a part of a group and thereby introduced a more sociological understanding of consumption. In Levy's work (e.g., Levy 1959) there are also insights from structural anthropology, and consumption is seen as one way of representing the universal structures in a culture. He therefore studied consumption as a cultural manifestation of life in the 1950's. At the methodological level Levy was inspired by symbolic interactionism, where commodities are seen as symbols by which people do communicate with each other. Levy's work in the 1950's (e.g., Levy 1959) was in many way ahead of its own time and it still gives insights to understanding our present consumer culture. These insights from motivational

research in the 1950's were nevertheless forgotten in academic marketing and consumer research for many years due to the development in field during the 1960's.

In the late 1950's there was a urge in the field of academic marketing research to have a much stronger quantitative foundation or discipline, since the ability to use mainframe computers gave the opportunity to conduct big market surveys. To do this researchers need skills in mathematics and quantitative methodology. Post doc classes at Harvard gave a big group of professors these skills, but there was a side effect to this. The focus of marketing and consumer research shifted from an open mindedness towards different methodologies to a narrow focus on quantitative methods.

Kotler explains it like this:

“I spent the 1959-60 at Harvard in a special one-year long Ford Foundation-sponsored program designed to train professors in higher mathematics. (...) All of us became convinced that the future of marketing lay partly in model building and statistical analysis (in Bartel 1988, 225).”

There is no doubt about the influence coming out this event: “The program gave me a ‘quantitative view’ of the world that I’ll never lose” (Buzzell in Bartels 1988, 259).

To conduct research with the methodological foundation given in this program, researchers had to limit the research questions they could study. The theoretical foundation for marketing and consumer research in the 1960's became experimental psychology based on behaviourism and studies based on cognitive psychology and an information-processing approach. These theoretical

approaches though are not suitable for a study of consumption as it is happening in today's consumer culture.

Marketing and consumer research were not aware of the macro perspectives in consumption in the early 1960's. By the end of the decade Kotler and Levy (1969) called attention to a more macro-based approach when they argued for a broader marketing concept where non-profit institutions and organisations were included. Bagozzi (1975) argued later for marketing as exchange, where more or less everything was of importance for marketing. These new approaches can be interpreted as an emerging awareness of marketing and consumption as a phenomenon which covers much more than selling soap and soft drinks. These changes in the approach although fertilized the ground for a broader approach to consumption. It happened when marketing and consumer research due to the broadened concept of marketing began to study and research phenomena like museums, theatres and concert halls, since it is not possible to adequately understand these consumption arenas by using the traditional theoretical approaches and quantitative methods.

Hirschman and Holbrook raised this issue by arranging the conference on consumer aesthetics and symbolic consumption in New York City in May 1980. This was the first event when marketing and consumer researchers recognized that a certain amount of consumption could not be studied and understood by the traditional theoretical foundation and methodology. These aspects were also reflected in Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) article on "the experiential aspects of consumption":

“Consumption has begun to be seen as involving a steady flow of fantasies, feelings, and fun encompassed by what we call the ‘experiential view’. This experiential perspective is phenomenological in spirit and regards consumption as a primary subjective state of

consciousness with a variety of symbolic meanings, hedonic responses, and aesthetic criteria. Recognition of these important aspects of consumption is strengthened by contrasting the information processing and the experiential view (Holbrook & Hirschman 1982, 132)”

They then conclude in a way which was impossible for the traditional approach:

“One cannot reduce the explanation of human behaviour to any narrowly circumscribed and simplistic model, whether that model be behaviouristic or psychoanalytic, ethological or anthropological, cognitive or motivational: the behaviour of people in general and consumers in particular is the fascinating and endlessly complex result of multifaceted interaction between organism and environment (Holbrook & Hirschman 1982, 139).”

This statement is comparable to the spirit in Arnould and Thompson’s (2005) seminal article on Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) many years later. Over the years the approaches advocated by Holbrook and Hirschman have gained a significant position in the field of consumer research and many groundbreaking studies have been published (e.g., McCracken 1986, Belk 1988, Belk, Wallendorf & Sherry 1989, Firat & Venkatesh 1995, Thompson & Haytko 1997), in which it was shown how the classical knowledge from sociology and anthropology is now an integrated part of consumer research.

Today, CCT research in consumer research is pursued by four research programs: Consumer identity projects; Marketplace cultures; The sociohistorical patterning of consumption; and Mass-mediated Marketplace ideologies consumers’ Interpretive strategies.

Consumer Society Reflected in Consumer Policy Research

Consumer behaviour theories and models of consumer decision-making have traditionally been developed within a positivistic paradigm, and have therefore been tested using quantitative methods. The rigorous requirements of quantitative methods though imply a certain simplification of theories and models, which then in turn have difficulties with reflecting the complexity of consumer behaviour. Moreover, markets and consumers have changed rather dramatically in the past few decades.

For years, many companies have grown their consumer business by mergers, acquisitions and price-cuttings while relying on traditional mass media to build the positioning of the brand. Whereas these tactics may be right in emerging and growing markets, continuing the use of these short-termed revenue drivers in times of highly competitive and declining markets seriously risks eroding the long-term profits of the company; thus the need for finding new ways of connecting with and ultimately bonding with consumers is a highly prioritized and urgent task of many companies operating in the age of what has been referred to as the post-mass media age. The challenges that companies in most consumer markets are facing these days cannot be ascribed to a passing trend; they are primarily brought about what can be claimed to be a core idea of the post modernistic perspective, namely the end of the notion of “mass” in the sense of “mass consumer markets”, “mass media”, and “mass culture”. Moreover, the challenges are initiated by a declining effectiveness of traditional communication, which is mainly due to both media- and marketing-savvy consumers often gathering in “tribes” (e.g., Cluetrain Manifesto; Wipperfurth, 2005) and communication clutter, paving the way for understanding marketing as a tool for cultivating lasting and deep relationships with consumers (cf. Beckmann, 2002; Fournier, 1998; Gummesson, 2002).

Cultivating consumer relationships, easy and compelling as it sounds, is anything but, and companies as well as academia are struggling with how to initiate and maintain these relationships. And consumer policy organizations are also lagging behind!

We argue that we are witnessing today a growing gap between how consumers actually consume and how consumer policy perceives consumers and consumption. Consumer policy is usually operating in three domains: education, information, and legal assistance for instance in complaint circumstances. The underlying rationale - admittedly simplified - is that of the “homo oeconomicus” who rationally decides among alternatives to maximise utility. A considerable part of consumer policy thus consists of providing information about labelling schemes (for instance: need-to-know about frozen food) and product tests that commonly present the “winner” as the product that guarantees the best quality-price ration.

But imagine the following situation: A consumer buys a new car not least because this car’s brand image fits her/his perception of her/himself and her/his life style. After a few months the carmaker decides on a new strategic marketing plan resulting in a campaign that aims at changing the brand image of the car and thereby should reach a new segment. The consumer sees this campaign and the new brand image of her/his car do not any longer fit his/her self-identity and life style. Even worse, s/he does not want to be associated with the segment the campaign tries to appeal to. The consumer is no longer satisfied with her/his new car and s/he would like to complain. But how? And to whom?

This fictitious example is meant to illustrate that tangible product attributes have increasingly been supplemented - not substituted! - by intangible attributes in consumers’ decision-making processes.

Yet, consumer policy to a very large degree still focuses on facilitating purchase decisions based on functional criteria, including price. Although “objective” quality criteria, together with the most favourable price-quality ration, are still relevant, they are no longer the core of the decision but rather the foundation. This goes especially for SMCGs that entail a number of risks - as Bauer already in 1960 pointed out: from financial to psychosocial.

But how can consumer policy cope with this situation? One possibility is of course to continue along the same lines, i.e., providing the foundation for informed decisions on tangible features of the product or service in question and “hoping for the best”. In other words, refraining from giving advice on life style and leaving it to the consumer to decide whether a product fits her/his identity, self-concept and image, or not. The only exception to this are the recommendations for environmentally responsible products that cater to those few who wish to leave a smaller ecological footprint (for instance, energy saving household appliances).

The alternative is to take a stance and develop consumer guidance according to the many life styles that a tribalized (Maffesoli 1996) consumer culture entails. We have found one example where such an approach has been chosen, namely the French dietary guidelines (Ministère, 2005). Besides presenting general recommendations on healthy eating, the guidelines present 24 different eating styles - the fast food freak, the bio consumer, the pregnant woman, the busy professional, and so forth - and then to adapt the general recommendations to ensure that healthy eating is possible no matter what other preferences a person might have (Beckmann, Reisch & Bendixen, 2007).

Finally, we would like to point out that we are aware of the difference between consumer policy and research relating to consumer policy. What we hope to have made clear here is that research relating

to consumer policy has not yet taken up the challenge of understanding and explaining the many facets of consumer culture in order to translate it into recommendations for a consumer policy that is able to meet the diversified needs of today's consumers.

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The 5. Consumers and new technology

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Broadband Internet Access – Product or Service?

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Abstract

There is a mismatch between product providers' market strategies and consumers' demands and concerns related to broadband in Norway. Providers of broadband internet access focus heavily on price and technical descriptions, like bandwidth, in their market communication, while consumers have great expectations to time efficiency and content availability. One might suggest that they view the purchase differently, where the consumer consider broadband internet access to be foremost a "service" as opposed to the provider who consider it a "commodity". This discrepancy causes frustration – probably on both parties. This paper focuses on the consumer side of this issue, and argues that the mismatch can be fruitfully understood in light of two factors: *competence* and *time*. Required technological competence can be seen as an important factor related to the domestication of broadband internet access, and as time is scarce in modern households it is subordinated to the moral economy of the households (hence the focus on functionality).

1 Introduction

In Norway broadband Internet access prices are constantly dropping while bandwidth increases. Access supplies refer to this decrease in price and the increase of bandwidth as important arguments for marketing their products. By accentuating these arguments in the marketing strategy suppliers rely on an idea of "perfect customers" - that is; consumers who act and react according to the model of rational choice. In this line of thinking people are expected to make their choices in the market based on a qualified calculus of price, quality of product and level of personal competence, hence the need for support would be small as fully informed consumers would make choices that match their education about the product. The consumers in the broadband market appear not, however, to act and react as such "perfect customers". Data suggest they have product expectations concerning time efficiency and content availability with strong demands and concerns regarding support related to installation and use after the act of purchase. Suppliers and consumers thus seem to view the purchase differently; - suppliers present broadband internet access as a product mainly consisting of the access service and the necessary devices – whereas consumers need seem dependent on considerable support included in the product to enjoy functional use. This discrepancy causes frustration – probably on both parties. Focussing on the consumer side of this issue, this paper

presents data that point to this discrepancy and argue that the mismatch can be fruitfully understood in light of two factors: *competence* and *time*. Required technological competence can be seen as an important factor related to the domestication of broadband internet access, and as time is scarce in modern households it is subordinated to the moral economy of the households (hence the focus on functionality).

1.1 Background, data and definitions of terms

The discussion in this paper build on data from the SIFO survey 2007¹, reports from the Consumer Ombudsman and the Consumer Council, figures from Statistics Norway² and elements that has been highlighted in the public debate in Norway.

The term “broadband” is in this paper understood as a to-way-communication of high capacity for digital transmission of information (e.g. television, phone, radio, pictures, video and music). In Norway it is common to categorise all kinds of access with higher capacity than ISDN as broadband (ADSL, cable, wireless or fibre)³. Some suppliers use their own infrastructure and networks to access the households, while others rely on existing phone lines or TV cables. As a product, broadband is highly complex with strong interdependency between component parts that include material commodities and immaterial services, relying heavily on a complex and varied infrastructure.

When speaking of “suppliers” we think of the telecommunication companies which market and sell broadband to consumers. In the case of Norway more than 150 companies supply broadband. The biggest companies are Telenor, NextGenTel, Ventelo, Tele2 og UPC⁴.

The concept of “consumers”, is a name often used on the persons or actors that ‘consume’. In the 1990s one often spoke about the consumer as a role. In a definition of consumption restricted to acts of purchases (Campbell 1987), a person could be placed in a role as a consumer when he or she bought products and services instead of producing them. In a modern society this definition would define most of us as consumers some of the time. Yet none of us would in this definition be consumers all of the time. At present this situation-specific definition of being a consumer becomes more problematic and unclear as most consumer theories tend to construct consumption as something that also involves “use” (after purchase). Consumption is seen as a cultural phenomenon where influences (use, experience etc) on the consumer and the product before and after the purchase are considered important (Campbell 1987; McCracken 1988; Simmel 1990). The consumer then is constructed in terms of “types” or “profiles” with specific characteristics: i.e. the victim (the manipulated or need driven), the stratege (the rational/use maximizer who want to stand out) or the stagesetter (the meaning seeking communicator, the adaptive, the enjoyer or identity seeker (Lien 1994). With this in mind we use the term “consumers” to imply a person that can be or is constructed as one, in some respects by others, i.e. in the market or as a complaining customer or as a person

¹ The 2007 SIFO survey focuses on consumers orientations in the market and on what their choices are based upon. Questions have elaborated on consumer competence, consumer economy, political consumption, advertising, consumption of families with children, climate problems and telephone sales. This paper focuses on data from the consumer competence section of the survey. The data material was conducted through CATI survey methods, and this section consists of 1000 respondents, aged 18-80. The data was collected within the period of 5th to 16th of February 2007 by Norstat. The results are weighted by sex, age and region.

² Mainly drawing on the annual Mediabarometer of 2006, available at <http://www.ssb.no/emner/07/02/30/medie/>

³ Definition by <http://www.telepriser.no/forbrukerinfo>, downloaded August 10th 2007.

⁴ http://www.bredbandsguiden.no/privat/bredband/verd_a_vite

who has purchased something that does or does not work. The point being that any person in question, as he or she struggle to make a purchase useable within the home, might not necessarily see him or herself that way,- i.e. as a consumer. This open analytical conception of the consumer allow us to acknowledge that what we refer to as “consumers” not only are constructed differently in different situations by different people, but also refer to actual people who might act and think differently from our preconceptions of them.

1.2 Broadband in Norway

Norwegian households’ access to broadband has developed rapidly since 2000, the point in time when distribution started to increase. The Norwegian government has set out a national goal of reaching 100% broadband access ability, by the end of 2007. This goal now seems within reach. According to a recent research report⁵, broadband coverage is currently up to 98.3 % and is expected to reach an acceptable 99 % by the end of the year. These figures include mobile broadband ability, while 95.3 % currently can access broadband by some kind of wire.

Results from the 2007 SIFO consumer survey shows that 72 percent of Norwegian households subscribe some kind of broadband Internet access. This is an increase from 63% in 2006 and 51% in 2005, according to figures from Statistics Norway. When combining these data materials, the rapid growth of broadband in Norwegian households is evident. The number has more than doubled over the last three years. Households with children are more likely to have broadband (ca. 75%) than are households without (ca. 50%), according to Statistics Norway.

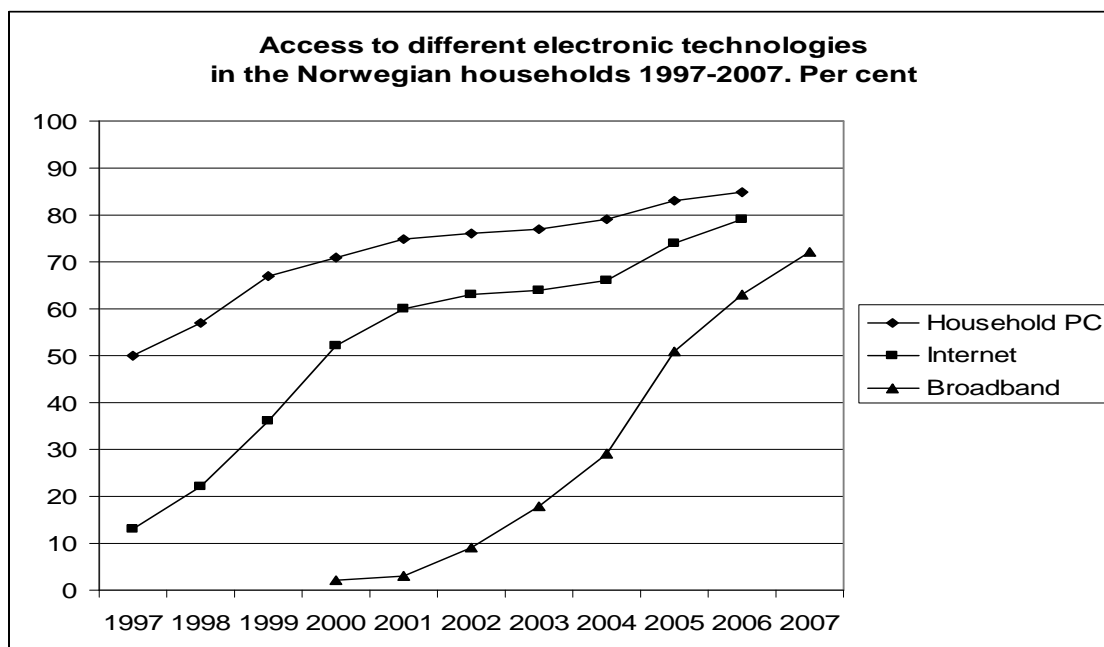


Figure 1 Access to different electronic technologies in the Norwegian households. 1997-2006 figures by Norwegian Statistics, 2007 figure of broadband access by SIFO. Per cent.

⁵ Bredbånd – Dekningsanalyse 2007

http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/FAD/Vedlegg/IKT-politikk/Bredband_2007_Teleplan.pdf

Usage of the Internet is still increasing. The portion of daily users, aged 9-79 years, increased from 55 % in 2005 to 60 % in 2006. The rapid growth of broadband access in the households might explain the heavy use of the Internet, and vice versa the expectations to be online might explain the growth in broadband access in the homes.

The government's national goal of 100 % availability of broadband access is a clear indicator of how important it is considered that everyone is connected to the internet. It has become a national goal due to many reasons. It is an important part of the government's rural politics of course, but it has also been argued that everyone need to be connected in order to fulfil expectations related to work, school and other parts of life. Many companies expect their employees to be available at "all times" through home office solutions, most schools expect parents to log on to the schools portal in order to be up to date on all kinds off school related issues regarding their children. Indeed, the government's vision is *digital competence for everyone*, and education is intended to lift everyone to a certain level of basic competence. Digital competence is considered an important skill in line with reading and writing, regarding challenges met by adults in both the role of employment and citizenship. The governmental national goal of 100% coverage could also be seen as action taken to avoid further digital divide in the population.

The *Digital Divide* refers to; different ability to compete amongst companies and nations; to different quality of educational offers; to individual, local, national and global differences related to access and use of ICT's. In Norway digital divides most commonly are related to new forms of social, economic or regional differences⁶. In discussions of ICTs one often refer to the risk of "the creation of a two-tier society of have and have-nots, in which only a part of the population has access to the new technology" (Group of Prominent Persons 1994:8 i Mansell 1996:39). One could perhaps in this phase of implementing broadband ask whether the relevant question concerns not those who have and those who have-nots, as more and more households gain broadband internet access, but rather a society with a divide between those households who have a stable functional broadband and those who don't.

2 Broadband – product, service and support

The broadband market in Norway has been described as unclear, rapidly changing and complex in ways that make it difficult for consumers to retain full information regarding possible choices. The expanding market of Internet access in the early years of 2000 introduced concepts and products of broadband new to consumers. The suppliers themselves were also new and inexperienced actors in the market. This, and the many misleading marketing campaigns targeting consumers in the private market, made the surveillance of different broadband subscriptions available in the market a top priority for the Consumer ombudsman (Slettemeås og Helle-Valle 2003).

The considerable infrastructural differences as to which broadband products are attainable in city and rural regions restrain and complicate broadband choices and possibilities (Slettemeås and Helle-Valle 2003:10). There is a multitude of different infrastructural variants of broadband internet access: optical fiber for the few, telephone line for the many, cable TV for some and mobile broadband for the very urban or the very rural. What considerations consumers have to make when purchasing broadband, can in practice imply a variety of

⁶ Definition by Statistics Norway. Information downloaded August 29th 2007 from <http://www.ssb.no/ikt/>

elements ranging from infrastructural factors to the many different technological components – both material and immaterial.

First of all, in order to make use of broadband as Internet access, you need to have an up to date computer with network card. In addition, you have to have a modem and some kind of cable or wireless connection through which the internet can access your home. If you also would like IP telephone you might need an adapter and if you'd like to use your computer throughout your home you will also need a router to distribute the signal. Also, you need a certain level of technical competence in order to read, understand and successfully install all necessary parts, cables and codes.

From the SIFO survey it is evident that 62 % of the broadband subscribers also have IP phone included in their broadband subscription, which again implies the need for at least an adapter in order to make it work (additional equipment if you'd like to make phone calls directly over the internet).

Support is an important and natural part of any purchase or use of a product or service to most consumers; this is especially the case the more complex the product becomes. New media technologies, such as broadband, are good examples of such complex products/services. According to Slette-meås (2007), one can say that the support component of purchases is constrained, within the information- and self-service society. Self-service does not match very well with complex error tracking within technical equipment or abstract networks. Consumers have great expectations to the technical support related to both the purchase and use of complex technology, whereas the companies might consider customer support mainly an extra cost or at best a means of attaining loyal customers (ibid.). In addition, the complexity of the technology implies a bundling of sub-suppliers which opens up for confusion regarding support responsibilities – both on the supplier side and the consumer side. This confusion might, and have, indeed result in a myriad of phone calls on the consumers' part, trying to trace down the responsible part.

According to statistics from the Consumer Council, number of complaints regarding broadband suppliers increased immensely up to 2007. They received 1.600 complaints under the first half of 2006, and the newly established *Brukerklagenemnda*, User-complaint-committee,⁷ received 379 cases (63% of all cases). The latest statistics for the first time reveals a reduction in complaints regarding broadband given to the Consumer Council, by 40%⁸.

3 Some reported consumer problems

The SIFO report, *Consumers and development of broadband in Norway – from citizen to customer?* (Slette-meås and Helle-Valle 2003:31), point out different consumer relevant problem areas related to broadband. These are:

- “Too narrow bandwidth (lower speed than promised)
- Price and service bundling (complex contracts and long term bindings)

⁷ The User-complaint-committee, *Brukerklagenemnda*, only deals with cases regarding concrete complaints on electronic communication services – such as quality, lacking service and compensation.

⁸ Statistics and information downloaded from the Consumer Council

http://forbrukerportalen.no/Artikler/2007/forbrukerstatistikken_mindre_pepper_for_darlig_bredband

- Installation and use (difficult installation and unclear support-contacts)
- Problems related to switching supplier (poor cooperation and routines for handling)
- Extensive need for firewalls (continuously online mode makes the consumer more vulnerable to hacking)”

According to the SIFO survey statistics 72% of all broadband subscribers experienced problems regarding installation of their broadband. In addition 45% of the Norwegian broadband subscribers had problems related to their internet connection, during the past twelve months. The survey further shows that 20% have experienced problems related to service/support regarding their broadband subscription.

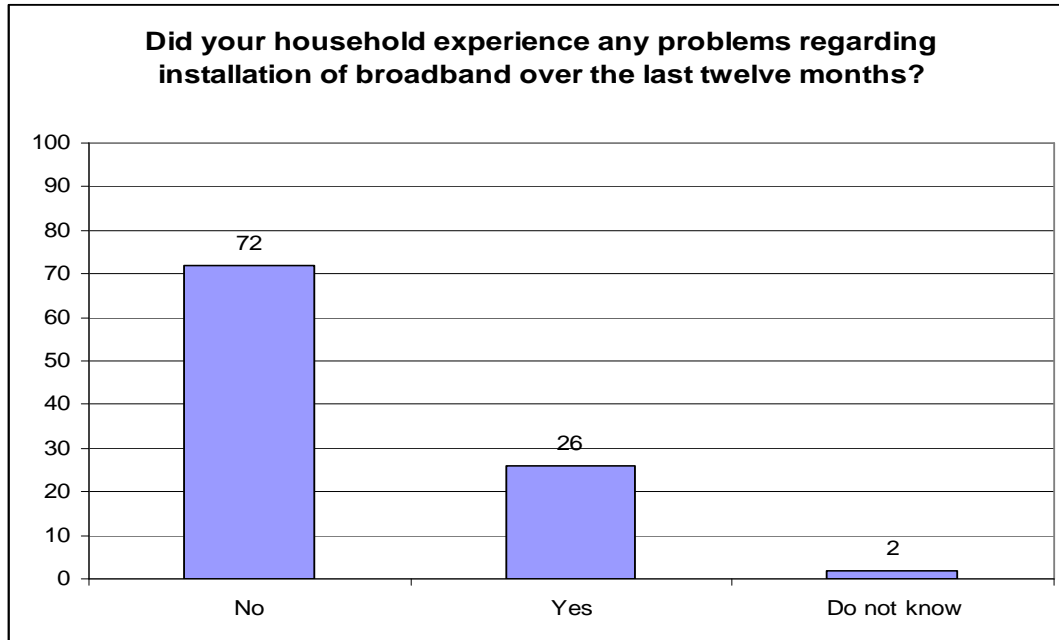


Figure 2 Did your household experience any problems regarding installation of broadband over the last twelve months? Per cent, among those who subscribe (N 724).

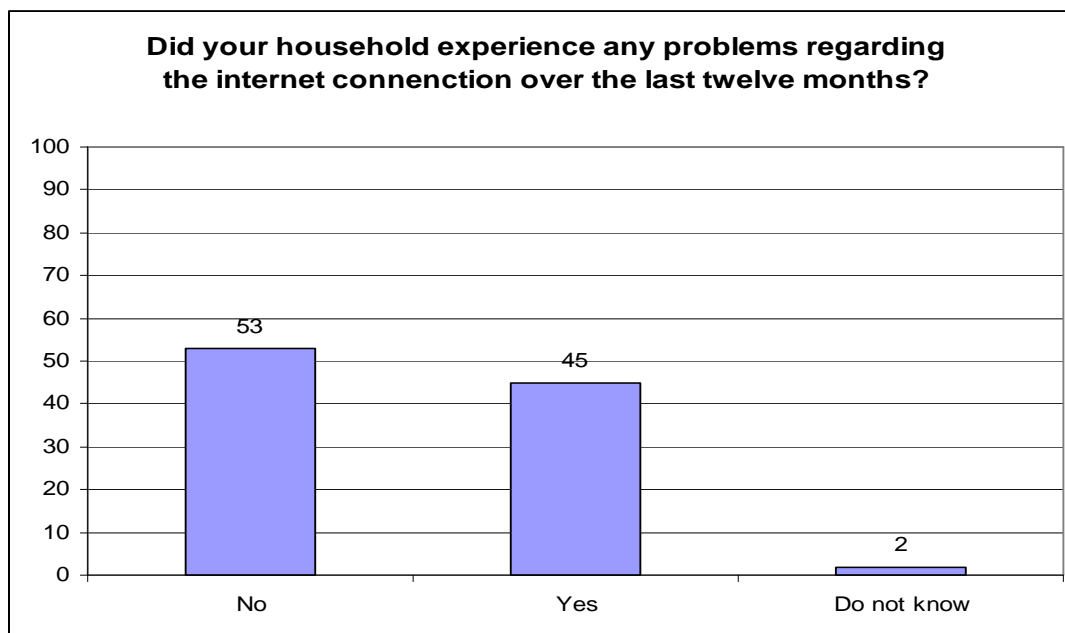


Figure 3 Did your household experience any problems regarding the internet connection over the last twelve months? Per cent, among those who subscribe (N 724).

3.1 What consumers do when they encounter problems

“Three times I tried to get online with the equipment from NextGenTel without any luck. I almost sent it back right away, but figured I should try some more. I didn’t know I would receive a do-it-yourself building set. They didn’t tell me that. They just said thanks for the order. After three weeks I returned the equipment to NextGenTel, along with a letter explaining that I would like to cancel the purchase due to violation of the contract”... Half a year later and after hours waiting and trying to get in contact with their customer support, the woman was still trying to get out of the contract – and online.⁹

Only ten per cent of the broadband subscribers switched Internet access supplier during the last twelve months, according to the SIFO survey. Two third of these subscribers switched in order to achieve a better price and/or higher bandwidth, while an additional reason for changing supplier were poor service and support (reported by 42 per cent of those who switched). This indicates that switching supplier might not be the obvious answer to consumers experiencing problems with their broadband access, they might consider the switching costs too high. One reason why this is a plausible explanation is the amount of effort already put into the relation with the supplier and acquisition of necessary equipment to gain access. Consumers might consider it even more troublesome switching supplier than trying to sort out the problems with their current (although not fulfilling) supplier, as switching supplier in itself could turn out to be a lot of work and trouble, due to e.g. long term complex (might include supply of phone line, cable TV, e-mail address, homepages etc.) and binding contracts, new technological equipment and so on.

⁹ Marianne Aas interviewed in Aftenposten 15.11.2005. Article retrieved 09.08.2007 at: <http://forbruker.no/pengenedine/dinerettigheter/article1157402.ece?service=print>

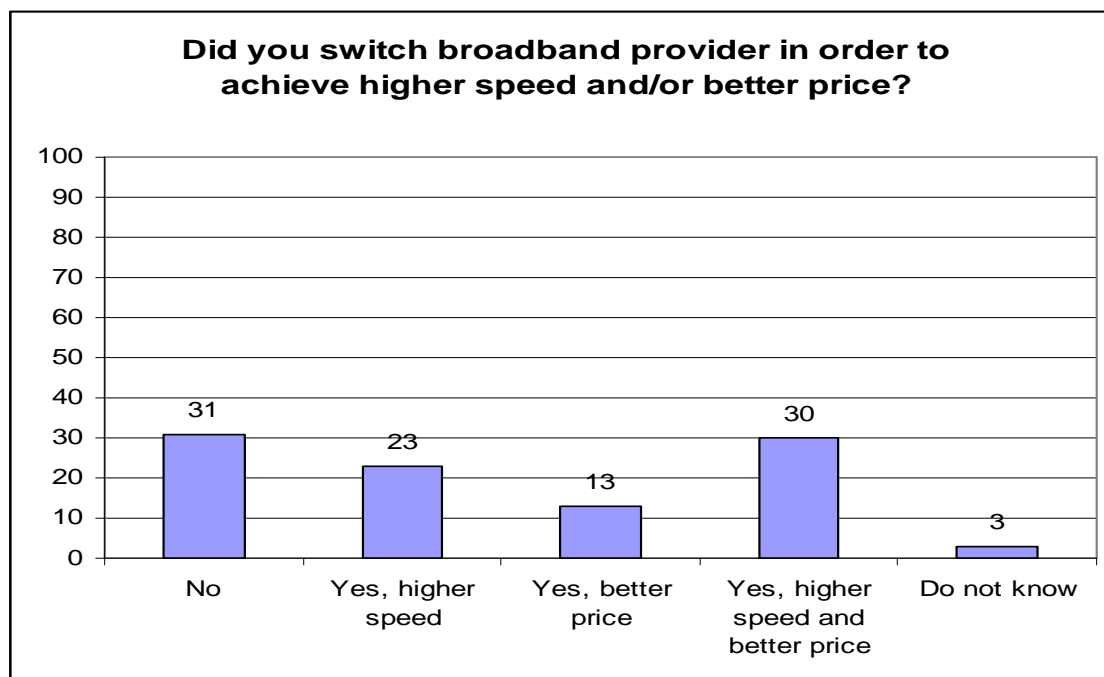


Figure 4 Did you switch to achieve higher speed and/or better price? Per cent, among those who did switch broadband supplier (N 81).

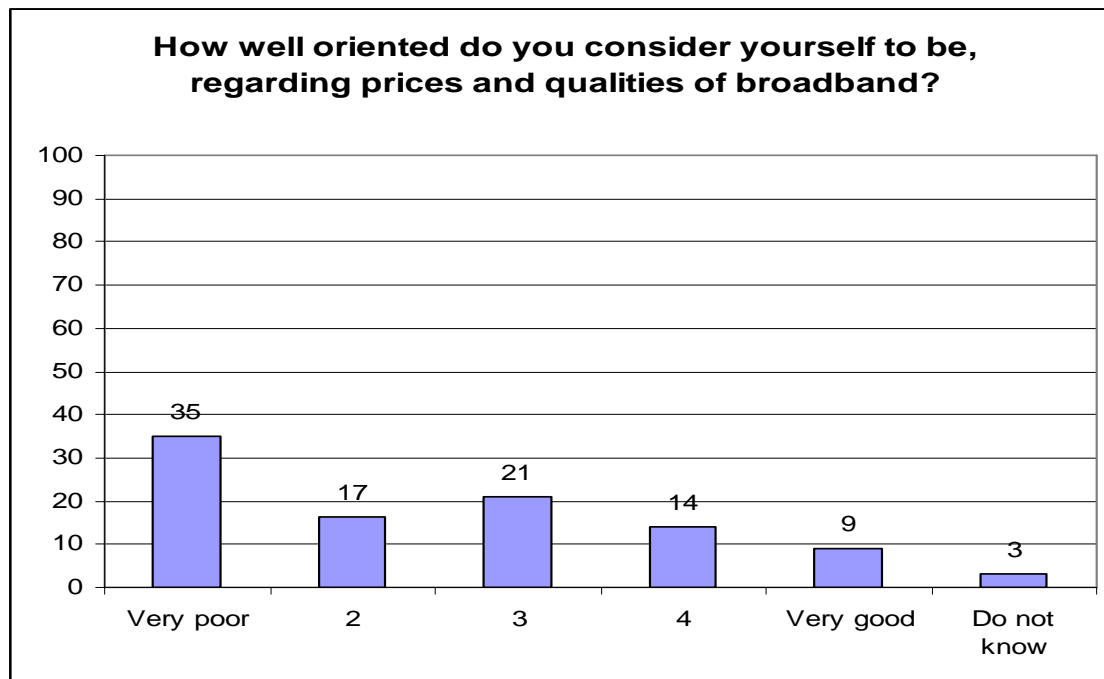
Great bandwidth should secure fast loading of pages, online broadcastings and films. The problem of attaining these advantages of broadband is the dependency of closeness to the suppliers signal central, which is often not accounted for in the suppliers marketing. According to Ole Asbjørn Lie, at the Norwegian Consumer Council, the suppliers are well aware of this problem – but the consumers are not. Their contract often says speed “up-to”, but many consumers don’t receive the expected maximum broadband capacity. The biggest broadband supplier in Norway, Telenor, use the term “up-to” in their marketing of broadband speed according to CMO Arild Johannessen. He underlines that many factors influence the speed of each clients Internet access; the capacity of the computer, modems, the wireless routers and general online traffic/use¹⁰

4 Supplier - consumer discrepancy; explaining the what and why of problems

One could argue that reasons for the problems consumers report are related to consumers lacking knowledge and/or it being due to the complexities in the product and the market being under communicated in the marketing of these products.

Are consumers to blame for lacking knowledge? The SIFO survey suggests that a very low percentage consider themselves to be well oriented regarding prices and qualities of broadband (9%). At the other end of the scale we find that a whole 35% considers themselves to be very poorly oriented. Although men in general rate their own orientation to prices and qualities of broadband a little higher than women, they overall state to be not that well oriented.

¹⁰ Downloaded from <http://nrk.no/nyheter/okonomi/1.1035189>, August 10th 2007.



Figur 5 How well oriented do you consider yourself to be, regarding prices and qualities of broadband? Per cent (N 1000).

It is not unusual to find that consumers report to be not well informed on various consumer areas and that men report to be a little more oriented on the economical aspects than women (Berg 2005: 10). Why then do consumers consider themselves to be poorly oriented? It was suggested above that discrepancy concerning conceptions of the product *broadband* could be due to considerable complexity concerning the product, infrastructure and the marketing of the product because they make it hard for consumers to orient themselves.

The advantages of broadband are marketed as; being online at all times, achieving high speed connections and hence “painless” surfing and non-stop video streaming, predictable costs and new services such as; video-on-demand, video telephone, virtual shopping malls etc.

According to the Norwegian Consumer Ombudsman, poor customer service is an increasing problem within the telecom business. Many consumers experience considerable problems when trying to get support either through telephone or e-mail, expensive service lines, extensive phone queues or inconvenient opening hours. These problems relates to the fact that the products and services offered get increasingly more complicated, both to install and use. Consumers are expected to be technological competent, regarding both hardware and software, and preferably able to detect and correct errors themselves.

“I had problems with my e-mail account and searched for help correcting it. A window on my screen told me to contact my supplier. But which supplier? The supplier of my account? Of my software? Of the computer? I first tried Telenor (supplier of account), who acknowledged lack on necessary competence to correct the error. I was asked to contact another part of the companies support system at a 820-number costing 25.50 NOK per minute. They told me to contact Microsoft. At Microsoft they really wasn’t interested, and asked my to contact Compaq who had produced the computer. They told me to contact Elkjøp, who had distributed the computer to me. They were kind, but suggested that I’d contact the specific

store who sold me the machine. Was really a small retailer in a rural district at the west coast supposed to fix this? Actually, a pleasant man in this store solved my problem smooth and easy within a couple of minutes. For free”¹¹.

As this case illustrates many broadband suppliers does not offer the amount of support consumers need, and expect to receive. The Consumer Council often receive complaints from frustrated consumers who have spent hours in phone queues. The Consumer Council find the situation little satisfying, although number of complaints now seem to be dropping. Ole Asbjørn Lie at the Consumer Council points to the need for consumers to consider the level of support included in the product before signing the contract, and underlines that price differences might be of less interest if the product does not work. Due to all the complaints the Council started working in this area some time ago, aiming at suppliers obligations to illuminate the level of support included in their marketing and in the contracts¹². The Consumer Council recommend all consumers to use their check list before signing contracts of broadband access, focussing on; consumers rights if delivery is delayed or not complete or disrupted; specific demands to quality of support; long term binding should give the consumers corresponding advantages; the supplier should alarm the consumer if unusual high costs occur; you should agree on a certain maximum level of costs.

In addition to these advices the Consumer Council, the Consumer Ombudsman and the suppliers (through their supplier organisation IKT Norway) agreed upon a *Good Conduct* list. Main points on this list are¹³:

- Price: The customer is not supposed to pay more than local fee to contact the suppliers support service.
- Price information regulations: Supplier should give the customer specific information on what the support service costs.
- Complaint cases: If the customer is given support/approval, the supplier should refund direct and necessary costs laid on the consumer in order to contact the support service.
- Time limits: The customer should on an average get in contact with support within maximum 5 minutes waiting on telephone. E-mails should be answered within 3 working days. Regular mail should be answered within 7 workdays.
- Competence: The supplier should secure that the one giving support is competent and able to give relevant advice to the customer.

5 Supplier and consumer conceptions of product, service and support

The “good conduct” rules, survey data and reported cases point to a striking mismatch between broadband providers’ market strategies and conceptions of consumers and consumers’ demands, concerns and conceptions of the service. Providers of broadband internet access focus heavily on price and technical descriptions, like bandwidth, in their market communication. Many private households and consumers have expectations to time efficiency and content availability when purchasing broadband to their private household, but end up experiencing problems related to installation and use of internet broadband products. One might suggest that suppliers and consumers view the purchase of broadband differently. The consumers consider broadband internet access to be a “service” as opposed to the

¹¹ VG, October 31th 2006, p.38. “An inconvenient e-mail!”

¹² Downloaded from <http://forbrukerportalen.no/Artikler/2006/1147696225.81>, August 10th 2007.

¹³ <http://www.ikt-norge.no/upload/God%20skikk%20reglene%20-%20endelig%20versjon.pdf>

provider who considers it a “product”. This discrepancy causes frustration – probably on both parties. The “good practice” rules may have helped suppliers and consumers solve some of the problems related to “support”. Through the “good practice” rules suppliers, in the present market, seem to have acknowledged the need to take some aspects of the support part of broadband product and services seriously.

The market has unquestionably changed dramatically since the introduction of broadband in the early 2000. In the first phase of introducing this new technology, the market was characterized by lack of experience both on the supplier and consumer side. There was no leading market actor, competition between suppliers in order to capture customers was harsh (e.g. through long-term binding subscriptions up to three years), and both suppliers and consumers experienced and reported severe problems. In the next phase governmental actions in terms of surveillance, regulation and control ensured some rights on behalf of consumers and how the market could compete and tie customers to their products (e.g. through restricting binding subscriptions to no longer than 12 months). At present, the market seem to have moved into yet another phase as dominant market suppliers now acknowledge that support is vital in keeping customers loyal to their broadband product and service. This does not, however, necessarily imply that suppliers support to consumers has improved much. Whether the decrease in complaints is due to suppliers’ course of action through the introduction of “good practice” rules is questionable. The decline might not be a result of better service and/or promises to provide security on the customer side. One alternative explanation is that the support has not become better but that customers competition has. An increasing percentage of the consumers, that is those who have purchased broadband products and services over the last seven years, has gained experience in this period and with that probably increased their competence. Once they have managed to reach a functional level in everyday use of broadband they do not care much to change supplier in order to gain better technical quality. That is at least what our data indicates. On the supplier side in the market, offering broadband support may present a possible challenge in terms of costs connected to keeping old and reaching new customers. In the previous market phase, seen from the suppliers point of view, reaching new customers may have been more expensive than to keep old ones. In the present market situation this might be changing. This might also explain why at present time several broadband suppliers have launched market strategies in which they offer concrete services in terms of installation to new costumers. By this they are making it easier for customers not only to buy broadband services for the first time but also for experienced customers, who have achieved functionality, to change supplier. As long as the content and quality in the support remains undefined one might expect that the decline in complaints from consumers may thus only illustrate a decline with respect to certain aspects of the problem.

The “good practice” rules illustrate that suppliers do not yet see service to be an integrated part of the product they are providing; e.g. consumers must pay to receive support. We need further more qualitative research to addresses the content of suppliers and consumers conceptions of “customer service”. The data we have discussed here point at the diversity and complexities involved both on the product side and the consumer side. With respect to the latter one must acknowledge that consumers differ, as do the products they have purchased. The problems consumers experience are therefore manifold, their actions to handle them likewise. Their conceptions and needs for “support” are consequently also diverse. In terms of future developments one needs to pay attention to some common feature in logics and processes that might be involved at the consumer side.

6 Domestication of broadband internet access in homes

In order to shed light on logics and process involved in the consumer side we must consider how broadband is domesticated by consumers in different settings. Our argument is that the mismatch between product providers' market strategies and consumers' demands and concerns can be fruitfully understood in light of *competence* and *time*. These two factors point to how the domestication of broadband in homes and families are different from the domestication of broadband in work environments, and to what might be vital in consumer conceptions of "customer service."

Basic to the domestication research perspective is the idea that technologies must be 'tamed' in order to be accepted in a given setting (Silverstone og Hirsch 1992). The perspective directs our attention to the importance of context in understanding the ways ICTs are used, and the significance of the home as one such important context. The basic argument is that in order to understand the various how and whys of ICT-use it is necessary to assume not a simple subject-object relationship but to include a significant third factor, namely the social setting in which the subject relates to the object. The home – as a phenomenological reality – affects the way people relate to and use ICTs. Social practices surrounding broadband technology thus has to be contextualised. From the consumer side, home and family is the important setting for broadband use.

'Home', 'family', 'the moral economy of the household' and 'domestication' are central terms in the domestication perspective (Silverstone, Hirsch og Morley 1992). The home is posed as a contrast to the public sphere in the sense that it constitutes a different social and cultural context – i.e. containing specific values and perspectives – than what surrounds it, i.e. the public sphere, hence the centrality of the terms 'home', 'family' and 'the moral economy of the household'. Therefore technologies that are potentially 'useful' to the household are produced in, and associated with, the public sphere the acquisition of such commodities requires a 'translation'; they need to undergo a transformation that implies that they are given a meaningful place in the home and become morally acceptable.

"This engagement involves the appropriation of these commodities into domestic culture – they are domesticated – and through that appropriation they are incorporated and redefined in different terms, in accordance with the household's own values and interests" (ibid: 16).

According to the authors, this process of domestication involves four phases, or aspects. First, the *appropriation* of an ICT refers to the actual purchase of the object. *Objectification* points to the actual usage and physical positioning of the object within the household while *incorporation* denotes the ways the ICT is given a place in the cultural framework of the home. *Conversion* points to the ways the ICT is displayed vis a vis the world (ibid: 20ff). In relation to broadband appropriation and objectification are vital. Besides from describing these phases, the Domestication perspective helps us tune attention to morality and the values inherent in homes (Silverstone 2006). Though it is important not to essentialize homes it is reasonable to start with the fact that 'home' is the central 'significant other' of the public sphere, hence it should be possible to identify a set of values that constitute the prototypical home. In short, in contrast to the public sphere, being dominated by the mentality of bureaucracy and market economy, the home is that which harbours the family, and the romantic ideology that the family is built on. This celebrates the intimate and emotional – that which is said to concern our selves and essential qualities as individuals (Shorter 1975; Luhmann 1986; Giddens 1992; Borchgrevink og Holter 1995). The family – as the prototypical framework for, and result of intimate feelings – stands forth as every action's

reason; it is what gives, at least discursively, life meaning (Sørhaug 1996). In popular conceptions the home – representing trust and security – is the haven in which the individual can find refuge from the cold hostility and mercilessness of the public arena.

In a potential contrast to the romantic ideology of familism; the demand for thinking and acting as a collective, stands individualism, the strong ideological force associated with Western modernity which emphasises not only the right to be unique and special but in fact demands that we all have to search for the uniqueness in ourselves, also has a harbour in homes.¹⁴ On the other hand we might regard familism and individualism as complementary; it is with the advent of individualism – with its focus on the right and obligation to create a meaningful life-trajectory, combined with the perennial meaninglessness of the modern public sphere – that the family stand forth ideologically as a major setting for a meaningful life. Be that as it may, we contend that familism and individualism are two strong ideological forces that affect the uses of broadband in Norwegian homes.

ICTs, as objects and media, bring public life into the domestic sphere and hence threaten to break down the moral borders that surround, and thus help to define, the family. This makes them ‘dangerous things’ (Douglas 1966). On the other hand, ICTs can promote family sociality by functioning as objects/media that gather the family. If of a ‘good’, or at least acceptable, kind, broadband use can be instrumental in generating family sociality of the right kind by giving its members time together and providing them with a focus, hence building the family as a unit. However, if the daily experience is more one of concern and worry – that the broadband does not function, or requires too much time and competence, it may constitute a threat to the ideal of spending ‘quality time’ together. Likewise, media content might be of the wrong type, mediating or promoting attitudes, mores or information of types that fit badly with what is considered appropriate within the family context. The potential both for ‘good’ family sociality, time-saving, entertainment and rest, as well as family fragmentation, time-consumption and frustration due to lack of competence and qualified help, illustrates the ambivalence that is commonly found among consumers who give voice on problems with broadband. Required technological competence can be seen as an important factor related to the domestication of broadband internet access, and as time is scarce in modern households it is subordinated to the moral economy of the households they might have high demands to support and functionality. Whereas free time for one or several members of the family to seek higher technical competence in order to install and seek for failures on the broadband will conflict with familism, the actual heightening of technical and other competences of one or more members in usage of broadband might fit well the ideology of individualism. It could nevertheless be argued that broadband as a highly complex product requires higher levels of technical competence than the ordinary private households might be expected to hold. If this is so, is it then reasonable to sell broadband products directly to single households by current standards?

7 Competence and time in households

The assumption that consumer competence, that is consumers familiarity and knowledge of products and overview and insight in the markets, has significance on how well they choose and purchase is commonplace and often grounded empirically on survey data (Berg 2005:

¹⁴ The home can with regard to individualism provide a moral room for being on one’s own, pursuing self-realisation and personal goals (Giddens 1991; Hall 1992; Williams 2000).

9).¹⁵ Two aspects of this are worth consideration. Firstly that the assumption often follows a model of the consumer as an economic man performing rational choices; that is, the more informed a consumer is the better choices they will do. Secondly, that the empirical grounding for such claims draws heavily on data from surveys. Surveys often base their measurement of consumer competence on respondents' linguistic evaluations of themselves as to how well they are oriented on prices and products and the extent to which they base their motivations and choices on economical self containment and/or the concern for others (e.g. Example above). The finding is often that this competence then has some bearing on how consumers linguistically report on their practices in the market. One problem is obviously that forces choice answers restricts answers that are more relevant to the respondent than those offered. Another more serious that one makes a comparison between a linguistic based measurement of consumer competencies to a linguistic based measurement of consumer practices and assumes this can tell us about consumers practical actions concerning the products and markets in question. Although such linguistic competence in self-evaluation obviously has some bearing on practical activities involved in solving actual problems consumers encounter with their purchased broadband product (reading product descriptions, making telephone calls, reading manuals etc) it is of another sort than the technological and communicative competence that this solving often will require (finding out what technical procedures has to be done and doing them). One thus has to be careful in concluding from such survey data to the practical knowledge and competence of consumers. Also because the act of consumption is seen as a cultural phenomenon in which the symbolic use it taken to be as important as its use-value (McCracken 1987). From this follows that we argue from a more context based line of thinking than what is commonplace on consumer competence and practices. The idea is that the context of the home, eg in comparison with the work-place, has material and social aspects that influence on individual competences understood as a practical competence, i.e the being able to carrying out the relevant action, getting things done and problems solved.¹⁶

One aspect that frames competence in this respect is obviously the material realities of the home. 'Private' domestication of broadband is partly determined by the spatiality, normativity and sociality of the local context (Sletteå 2007: 38). That is material structure, local policies, rules and norms play into the domestication process. Where you live can for instance determine what products are available and possible to purchase/install. In some instances the computer that is supposed to process the service may be too old or weak, -something the consumer might find out when trying to installing and getting the product to work after having purchased it. It is in these circumstances perfectly possible to encounter problems although one possesses competence that has made one do seemingly rational choices judged from aspects of price and width of broadband.

A rewarding way of using the domestication concept is to understand it as the various ways people make media integral parts of the language-games they engage in (Helle-Valle 2008). The "term 'language-game' brings into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life" (Wittgenstein 1968: §23, emphases in the original). The language-games are formed by forms of life (practice). This means that if we want to study meaning we need to study language within a form of life. As people perform their practices with broadband in different places they also move in and out of different language-games and communicative contexts. Thus, people might not only act differently, but also

¹⁵ Consumer competence is seen as a resource comparable to economic resources, that is a resource that gives possibilities and frames the extent to how good choices the consumers are able to make (Berg 2005:19)

¹⁶ Consumer competence is a term that has been used, not only on the level of the individual both also on group and institutional levels such as the household (Berg 2005: 18).

think differently, in different language-games (Helle-valle 2008). Questions of consumer competence with broadband might illustrate how. Most people work in places where broadband is a part of the infrastructure related to production, with support people around to make sure it works. They might thus have user knowledge with broadband but lack the relevant installation and support knowledge. They also lack the social network of people, -that is the knowledge of who the relevant person is that can give support. More importantly they might give meaning to the broadband product within the language-game this product has at their work; a service. When they apply this to the broadband product at home, this causes frustration because private subscriptions are given meaning within another language-game; sellers see it as a simple product that consumers are supposed to handle much on their own.

Mansell (1996) argues (with reference to Wendt 1987), that capabilities, capacities, competencies necessarily are related to a social structural context and inseparable from human sociality.

“In periods of rapid technical innovation and instability that are characteristic of changes in techno-economic paradigms, there often are severe discontinuities between the capabilities of human actors in all walks of life and those they are expected to acquire. The requisite knowledge sets are not freely given. In fact, on the contrary, capabilities arise from diverse experiences and they are the result of substantial investment of time and other resources” (ibid 1996: 28).¹⁷

Mansells discussion is directed at firms and the commercial sphere but related to this and relevant to the focus of this paper is obviously the social realities of the home, - the relations and expectations, obligations and practices people in the household are part of. This brings us to the aspect of time and to how factors of competence and time intertwine in households.

Leisure time, the time household members are off from work and school and potentially can spend time together, is increasing (Frønes 2002). Time is nevertheless a scarce resource in many modern households where the moral economy focuses on reducing time spent on housework and domestic chores through useful technology. Conceptions of time are however full of complexities. “While the public sphere is dominated by instrumental relations (zweckrational; ibid.) and hence clock-time, the home is – or rather should be – dominated by event-time; time that is ideally not measured in quantities but is tied directly to the task it is involved in because they are considered to be existentially important” (Helle-valle 2007: 53). As time is subordinated to the moral economy of the households and households differ the time scarcity might take different forms. Whereas time-squeeze is a common theme among households with children it might not be so in households without (Helle-Valle 2007).

One argument for households purchasing broadband is often related to time-saving goals connected to ideals of familism; e.g. paying invoices on the internet, a quicker way to achieving the relevant information one needs be it phone numbers, the latest news of the best buy of products etc. it is not accepted within this moral economy to spend time on installation

¹⁷ Mansell speaks of design and capabilities (competencies) as axial principles in the matrix of human action. Design is a concept used to draw attention to the importance of human action and its complexities, whereas capabilities is used to focus on the dynamics of the communication process and the formation of human capabilities through the process of technical and institutional change (Mansely 1996: 21). “Capabilities, in the sense of power to act, can be expressed as a result of action embodied in institutions (as organizations as well as by the actions of individual agents (...)). Power then can be conceived as a capability that varies as a result of the accumulation of knowledge as well as the constraints and opportunities in an actor’s environment” (Mansell 1996: 28).

and the like. The expectation to broadband is to have functionality; that the thing works when you need it. Hence the frustration and complaints from private consumers when it doesn't, that they can't make it work when it should be working. Although consumers in households might not spend too much clock-time sorting this out (waiting in line on the phone to report the problem and finding someone to help, quarrelling about who is to pay the cost of the installation they didn't manage themselves), the time spent is conceptualized as long as expectations were that broadband should save time paying bills so they could spend more time doing family relations. It is in this respect that individual consumer competence over time might play into the conceptions of households experience and practices with broadband. First and foremost because the domestication of broadband, gaining access and using it, is different in comparison to that of other ICT's in the family; such as. tv, computers, phones. Although all family members might be users of broadband technology in households (when installed and functioning, it is a service available, accessible and usable to all), the competence required to make this technology work is usually tied to one person. The competence requirements this person meets are often great and demanding with respect to using family time in early phases of broadband history in the household. However, as the person involves him (or her) self with the technology over time, the persons' individual competence with broadband technology is likely to increase. Although one effect is that individual competences with respect to the broadband technology will vary considerably between family members and enforce individualism, another effect is that households ideals of familism are ensured as the increased competence of individual family members over time stabilises the functionality of the households broadband internet access. Hence the reduction of complaints to the consumer Ombudsman.

8 Summary and suggestions

Broadband internet access is a complex product intertwined in a complicated structure of services and support systems. This is partly due to complexities in the infrastructure and technology that broadband functionality depends on. Partly to unclear lines of responsibility on the supplier side vis a vis consumers (ref. the earlier referred letter to VG by a complaining consumer). The supplier wants to sell a service, but not to be responsible for the technical products that are necessary in order for the consumer to make use of their service. The consumers wish to buy broadband as a service that will enable them to enjoy surfing on the internet, but their experience is that they are given a package of several technical devices (a bag containing wires, a manual and no one to help them make it work), - thus of having purchased a commodity product. Neither suppliers nor consumers want to have responsibility for the technical devices, the material/commodity-based side of the service. The result being frustration on both parts.

The reduction in complaints to the Consumer Ombudsmann can be interpreted in several ways. Either as a result of more relevant information given to the customer prior to purchase as well as support services having improved, partly because Consumer Ombudsmann and the Consumer Council has taken action with the suppliers in order to solve the problems. Or as a result of the time consumers have had to gain competence and to establish themselves as customers of a functional broadband. It could be that current actions taken by the Consumer Ombudsmann and the Consumer Council together with suppliers really have reduced certain problems consumers encounter with broadband. The principle that all expenditures and information of relevance to the consumer should be given in the marketing of product and services is essential and now better regulated. As these initiatives are focussed on improving

customer support at the first line contact (e.g. the “good practice” rules enhancing better support through a customer service telephone line) they do not however attend to the core aspect of problems as these prevail on the consumer side as family members and citizens. In concluding this paper we suggest three aspects in need of attention in relation to understanding how consumers in households relate and react to the various aspects of broadband internet access as a product and service.

Firstly, broadband consumers in Norway seem to be thrown between the many sub-suppliers of broadband when facing problems (ref mentioned consumer complaint in VG). The enforcement of a law that could ensure some clear principles concerning a point of consumer contact not only for advice but also for technical support in combination with clearer divisions of responsibility (as is the case in England) seems to be necessary in order to ensure that the customer/consumer gets what she or he thought they bought- so that they in fact do achieve the functionality of the product.

Our argument has been, secondly, that conceptions of support services are varied, especially those of suppliers and consumers. Further research on the issue should therefore focus consumer conceptions of support. A qualitatively based approach seems necessary in order to trace the different language-games peoples concerns and conceptions of support are a part of in relation to broadband. We have argued that the domestication perspective offers a way to understand and explain the range of adaptations of broadband that can be found as it reveals the complexity and subtlety of dynamics and mechanisms that together constitute processes of domestication. Moreover that the various consumer logics can be fruitfully understood in light of competence and time as two factors in the domestication of broadband in households. At the core one might say that consumers want broadband functionality without having to take responsibility for the technical products and devices needed.

Aside from this a third political question needs to be resolved. Seen in connection to the national goal of supplying full coverage of broadband to Norwegian citizens the question of support and consumer competence is brought to another level: to the level of citizen – consumer questions (Slettemås og Helle-Valle 2003). What competencies are reasonable to expect consumers to have? What competencies are required on behalf of the consumer for instance in order to obtain a certain price? Is it for example reasonable to expect of consumers to solve their technical problems on their own or to voice their technical competence in first line contact with customer support (phone)? If yes, who are to pay for the average consumers to achieve these competencies, not only the specialized person in the household? It is widely acknowledged that elementary ICT practices are learned by doing it with people who already know how to perform these tasks. A task the state has gone to several actions to support its citizens in achieving in other areas (e.g. Datakortet). The more complex the practice the more this is true (e.g. installation of broadband products). Should such heightening of consumer competence be included as a part of the broadband service or should it not?

The case of broadband sheds light on issues with relevance to more general problems surrounding products and services that are complex; the marketing of these products and the competence and processes involved in consumers domesticating of these products.

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Insights from Self Regulation for Consumer Policy

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Abstract

Information and communication technologies continue to present challenges to consumer policy. International electronic commerce serves as a particularly telling example of such challenges. At the same time it offers opportunities to find new regulatory insights with a postmodern catch in terms of interaction, actors and goals.

We have looked at two specific cases that touch the issue of the regulation of international electronic commerce. Trust marks and consumer generated information systems which we call Consumer 2.0 both exemplify alternative and self regulative solutions to the issue. On the basis of our analysis, we recommend that policy makers consider decentralizing consumer policy, welcoming new actors and integrating policy closer to services.

1. Introduction

New potential conflicts emerge through the increasing use of information and communication technologies (ICT). Amongst other issues, consumer use of ICTs challenge the Nordic model of consumer protection. Particularly in international electronic commerce, consumers cannot rely on governmental patronage in protection as they are used to in domestic markets.

International electronic commerce exemplifies particularly well the regulatory dilemma between international consumer markets in a world of predominantly national regulation. Self regulation is often seen by regulators as one possible solution to this dilemma and there have been self regulatory initiatives to this aim. Self regulation is often attributed benefits such as expertise and efficiency over regulation (Baldwin & Cave, 1999).

We analyse two particular types of self regulatory initiatives for international electronic commerce. The first type involves trust marks that promote electronic commerce. It has now become evident that successful trust marks focus more on service mindedness, flexibility and relevance than on the rigidity of the regulatory framework (Repo & Nordquist, 2005).

The second type involves the growing use of knowledge-based support systems for consumption purposes which we call Consumer 2.0. These systems aggregate and distribute peer produced information on consumption in real time (Repo et al., 2006). Practical examples of Consumer 2.0 include consumer-generated reviews on global sites such as Amazon.com, product testing carried out by amateurs on hobbyist sites such as Videohelp.com, and consumer blogs.

We argue that the regulatory challenge concerning international electronic commerce is greater than merely a technical question. Instead, we see it as an example of a regulatory challenge between modern national ideals and customs versus postmodern international modes and practices. We believe that fragments of postmodern consumer policy will develop alongside conventional forms of consumer policy. This development takes place independently of the actions of conventional institutions for consumer policy. Governmental institutions promoting consumer policy will in other words face competition from other actors and forms of consumer policy. Self regulation will prosper in many innovative forms.

We start off from outlining features of postmodern and modern politics in the context of electronic commerce. Then we provide two self regulatory cases that challenge the regulatory framework of international electronic commerce. We proceed by sketching a typography of the self regulatory cases and concludingly aim to provide insights in future challenges of consumer policy.

2. Postmodern vs. Modern Politics and the ICTs

There are a number of theoretical definitions of postmodern society. We attempt to bring up three issues in these definitions which are relevant for self regulation of international electronic commerce: interaction, actors and goals. We do this by contrasting postmodern with the modern specifically in this context.

A large majority of the definitions found in the literature is, by contrast, used in a very general context that has to be transferred into a political setting, implying that the terms have been elaborated, transformed, and specified into the listed characteristics of modern vs. postmodern politics. As characteristics of politics are described, the impact of ICTs are considered in each area of politics in order to provide the basic queues to distinguishing the political role of ICTs. The features or areas of politics are naturally intertwined, and in a similar vein it is important to emphasize that the dichotomized characteristics of each side of the column in no way are mutually exclusive nor absolute. The idea is rather that most units of political activity float in-between the two columns of characteristics, and include various aspects and combinations of these.

In other words, we see change as the equation of the dialectic between the modern and postmodern, rather than as the specific developmental process to the postmodern society (cf. Gibbins & Reimer 1995) leaving the modern and pre-modern behind, which plagues e.g. Gibbin's and Reimer's more absolute view. We argue that the modern will remain with us

just as some aspects of pre-modern politics such as hereditary rule and leadership do; in fact, many of these pre-modern aspects are still with us even in most advanced forms of informational organizations with for instance Rupert Murdoch's media empire and his son inheriting his throne as an ironic case in point. The change, rather than development, takes place in the configurations in-between the modern and postmodern, whereas the actual pillars of the modern/postmodern temples remain intact – it is the movement between the pillars that is significant. There is not any assurance either that change moves towards the postmodern pole as in development – it might also turn the other way as in the case of Bill Gates' monopolized corporate empire. Another example of this change in the opposite direction is the re-centralization of Russia under the increasingly authoritarian and hierarchic rule of President Putin.

Our general purpose is here to be able to establish which characteristics can be considered modern or postmodern from a theoretical point of view. Then we can pinpoint the challenges that postmodern politics pose to the study of any current political, economic or social phenomena as in everything from reinventing formats of political communication to creating trust in E-commerce. Accordingly, we agree with Gibbins and Reimer “that the concept of postmodernism can operationalized and put to empirical use” (Gibbins & Reimer, 1995, 301), despite of the warnings of Kaase and Newton that “... it is difficult to encapsulate the theory of postmodern politics. Writing on the subject tends to be loose, ambivalent, fragmentary, fluid, and illusive – like postmodern society and politics, in fact.” (Kaase & Newton, 1995, 28). The reservations regarding the “kaleidoscopic array of notions” that postmodernism consists of (ibid, 28), are at least partly a reaction against the free-floating, utterly unconstrained relativism of some of the most extreme postmodern theorists (e.g. Baudrillard, 1988; Lyotard, 1984; Inglehart, 1997; cf. Thompson, Grendstad & Selle, 1999; Castells, 2000; Frissen, 1999). In fact, this reservation provides the challenge we are taking on when attempting to bring down the concept even closer to earth and provide some improved clarity in its application in the context of the political analysis of modern vs. postmodern politics.

We have summarized features of modern and postmodern politics in Table 1. Special attention has been given to interaction, actors and goals. These are all issues that are relevant and diverging in the context of ICTs and international electronic commerce.

The old clear-cut dividing lines for instance between the political left and the political right have been blurred. New patterns of political interaction have driven the old homogenous political camps into a multitude of intertwined liaisons and networks of mutual interest. The new diverse and diffusive networks increasingly consist of heterogeneous cliques temporarily united in a particular issue. At the very general level of political, economic and social interaction, the state-empowered legislation machinery and its rules based on absolute conformity, are losing their situational relevance as new realities are produced at an accelerating rate by means of the new ICTs. As previously separated realities collide, intertwine, and lose their specific normative contexts, the actors are left to situational ethics and individual reflection in coping with new combinations of medialized realities.

A more wholesome definition of politics obviously implies that the political scene has been enlarged from the national to the global scene, and from the local to the regional level with new economic and political blocks such as the EU. In a similar vein there has been much talk of so-called glocalisation, which involves the combination of the local and the global scene, as the national scene in-between them is reduced. As for the impact of new information

technology on the political scene, Internet has had a very obvious effect in bringing in the global element.

Table 1. Modern and postmodern features of politics.

Features	Modern politics	Postmodern politics
Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Uniform relations · Clear-cut dividing lines · Homogeneous camps · Absolute rules · Conformity by law · Formal · Authentic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Diverse contacts · Diffusive configurations · Heterogeneous cliques · Situational ethics · Reflection by values · Popularised · Virtual/medialized
Actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · National governments · Political parties · Established interest organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Transnational organizations · New social movements · Business corporations · Temporary issue networks
Goals		
<i>Ends</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Maximal security · Social/economic responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Maximal creativity · Self-actualisation
<i>Basis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Stable conditions · Static equilibrium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Constant flux · Dynamic dissonance
<i>Focus</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Internal control · Self-sufficiency · Material welfare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · External integration · Interdependence · Cultural choice
<i>Means</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Bureaucratic power · Expert supervision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Individual autonomy · Self-regulation

As already mentioned, the main actors on the political scene have shifted from national governments to transnational organisations, and of course increasing tensions between them. An increasing proportion of major political conflicts are taking place between new social movements and business corporations – for instance between Greenpeace and Shell – instead of between the political parties, which to a large degree have been reduced to general election machines rather than playing their traditional role of mobilising people around specific issues and interests. With regards to the impact of ICTs in this regard, the new actors have been much more efficient than the governments and parties at applying new information technology in gathering public support for their political cause.

The main goals of the modern state include the maintenance of security for the population and the spreading of a sense of responsibility among the population directed at keeping up the social and economic norms maintaining continuity. These ends are attained on the basis of stable conditions in an environment of political and economic equilibrium. Creativity and change being the engine of the postmodern world, the aim is to allow for a maximum of creativity and self-actualisation. This implies an in-built basis of constant flux releasing the required ‘dynamic’ energy, as in e.g. the non-stop pulse of the stock exchange, in an environment of motivating dissonance as in “creation is messy” (Steve Jobs in Freiburger & Swaine, 1999). Whereas the goal in focus of the modern state used to be the control of internal affairs, economic as well as political self-sufficiency, and the provision of material welfare for the main part of its population as in the welfare state, the postmodern focus has shifted outwards. The postmodern goals involve a higher degree of external integration as in e.g. joining economic/political unions and agreements of various kinds, and the achievement of interdependence rather than strict independence. The means to achieve these goals are in

the modern era determined by the machinery of bureaucratic power and the supervision of various experts of the authorities. In the postmodern era these means have been complemented by extended properties of individual autonomy for both citizens/consumers and organisations in combination with self-regulating practices beyond the direct control of the authorities' experts.

3. Two Postmodern Challengers in E-Commerce

The ICTs have challenged regulation based on the modern notion of politics. Next we look at two specific cases of self regulation in greater detail. The first case involves trust marks set up typically by commercial actors. The second case depicts active user involvement in market monitoring, which we call Consumer 2.0. Together, the cases indicate that electronic commerce has indeed attracted new, postmodern forms of regulatory interest.

3.1 Trust marks

In 2001, we looked at how trust mark schemes were organized and what they offered to consumers (Repo 2001a). Of the at least 60 trust mark initiatives (Rantonen, 2001) which existed we observed those considered of most relevance for Scandinavian consumers (Table 2). These initiatives were returned to in 2003 to follow up on their successes (Repo & Nordquist, 2005).

In retrospect it is hard to assess which and what kinds of initiatives have been successful as there might have been strategic reasons for setting them up. Sometimes it might not be as important to make the system effective as it is simply to have it set up. For example, self-regulation is one way of responding to political pressure from governmental regulators (Baldwin & Cave, 1999). Similarly, some initiatives were set up to explore possibilities of new markets. Commercial success was not considered as important as experimenting.

In any case, merchant and membership base can be considered indicators of success for self-regulatory initiatives in electronic commerce. To be effective, self-regulative initiatives need to become commonplace. Then they begin developing institutional trust in addition to rational trust (cf. Seligman, 1997; Misztal, 1996). Mere existence is also one, albeit small, measure of success.

The studied European trust mark initiatives had not yet been able to succeed in the trust mark business. Growth in merchant base had been remarkably small with the exceptions of the German Trusted Shops and the Danish E-handelsmarkedet. Some initiatives had receded and others been brought to an end. There seemed to be a tendency to reorganize national initiatives under European umbrella initiatives. For example, Euro-Label consisted of national initiatives from Austria, France, Germany, Norway, Italy and Spain.

Table 2. Examples of trust marks (Adapted from Repo & Nordquist 2005)

Trust mark	Origin	Scope	Services	Organization	Merchants 2001/3
E-handelsmarked	Denmark	National	-	Organizations	25/94
Nsafe	Norway	National, Scandinavian	ADR	Organizations	60/33
SafeShop	Finland	National	Insurance	Insurance company	A few/ Dismantled
Which? Web Trader	UK	European	ADR	Consumer organization	1600/ Dismantled
Trusted Shops	Germany	European	Insurance	Insurance, consulting company	150/700
L@belsite	France	European	-	Federation	15/29
TrustUK	UK	National	-	Organizations	3/2
e-com trust	Switzerland	European	-	Federation	Pilot/?
Euro-Label	Europe	European	-	Federation, Organizations	0/221
CPA Webtrust	USA	Transatlantic	-	Private	NA/36
Clicksure	UK	International	-	Private	NA/ Dismantled
Square Trade	USA	International	ADR	Private	50.000/ 1.000.000
Web Assured	USA	International	Insurance, ADR	Private	NA/8.000
BBBOnLine, FEDMA & Eurochambres	USA, Europe	Transatlantic	ADR	Federation	14.260.650/ In process

The development of two trust mark initiatives stood out in terms of merchants. SquareTrade had acquired merchants largely due to the success it has had at eBay.com, and Web Assured also had a substantial number of merchants. Two features were common for these initiatives. First, they were both of American origin. Secondly, they both offered alternative dispute resolution as a service.

3.2 Consumer 2.0

The Internet and its online communities are an increasingly significant part of consumers' everyday life. In particular we see the evolution of knowledge-based support systems to promote the new consumer, which we call Consumer 2.0.

Consumer 2.0 is a vital element of the production system instead of a black box end user. Professional consumerism has born similar manifestations as Consumer 2.0 (cf. Mayer, 1989), but never before has the input of individual consumers into information systems or their use of these systems been as widespread as today. Consumer 2.0 mediates individual consumer expertise to a collective level through the use of knowledge-based support systems.

Consumer 2.0 relies on two kinds of expertise. Firstly, there are the professional amateurs, who provide the depth of knowledge. Secondly, masses of "ordinary" consumers provide the

breadth of knowledge by having their input aggregated. The interplay between these two kinds of expertise is fundamental for the success of Consumer 2.0.

Consumer-generated information is produced, firstly, in real time and, secondly, by peers. These two features are the distinctive building blocks of Consumer 2.0. The third building block is the aggregation of information on consumption. Although there is nothing new in this, the very idea of feedbacking aggregated information to consumers to promote self-realization bears a new twist in business settings. *Real time* means here that the information is available at the time of purchase or preparations for purchase. Conventional consumer education and research typically cannot give situated information for consumers and so they have to rely on general guidelines. *Peers* are other consumers in a similar situation, i.e. in a similar position in relation to the seller. They represent the masses of consumers involved in the democratization of the production of information. Information shared by peers usually stems from their own individual experience. *Aggregation* is the abstract summation of individually produced information, and its outcome is a knowledge-based support system. All or parts of the aggregation can be automatically updated. This lifts Consumer 2.0 to a social level by enabling consumers to see themselves as a collective.

There are a number of examples of Consumer 2.0 services (Table 3). Some of these are run by businesses and others by professional amateurs. In all cases one party functions as the facilitator and obviously needs to be considered reliable by others.

Table 3. Examples of Consumer 2.0 services (Repo et al. 2006)

Type of service	Example	Real time	Peer to peer	Aggregation
Price comparison	Polttoaine.net reports on retail prices of fuel.	Supplies average price for the day before.	Users report prices.	Variation of daily price and variation of monthly average price are shown.
Product review	VideoHelp.com is a website for video enthusiasts. One section of the website reports functionalities of different DVD players and compatibility issues.	New players are presented first.	Users test their own DVD players.	Two kinds of averages representing functionality are calculated for each DVD player.
Content review	Mikseri.net distributes free music.	A top40 list is created each week.	Music is rated through listening practices and user reviews.	An algorithm calculates popularity based on downloads, online listening, comments, reviews, reviews of comments and weeks on the top40 list.
Preference review	Liveplasma (beta) is a discovery engine. It visualizes buyers' music and movie maps according to data from Amazon.com sales.	Information is updated automatically.	Consumers may make use of others' preferences.	The relations of preferences are visualized as a self organizing map.
Seller review	Huuto.net is an online auction site, where buyers rate sellers in order to build trust.	Seller ratings are dependent on time.	Buyers rate sellers.	Positive, neutral and negative ratings are calculated as a rating.
Reviewing reviews	Amazon.com allows users to rate the helpfulness of other users' reviews.	Information is updated automatically.	Users rate the helpfulness of each other's reviews.	The number of positive ratings is compared with the overall number of ratings.

All of the Consumer 2.0 services shown in Table 3 have developed ways to provide participatory elements in web services. They achieve real time, peer-generated information, and aggregation through different methods. These services are less formal and more decentralized than they would be if produced conventionally.

The reviewed Consumer 2.0 services offer information generated by individual consumers to be used by a wider consumer audience. Actually, this is the ultimate test for any Consumer 2.0 service. Although it is difficult to evaluate the relevance of such information for consumer purchases, there is definitely a connection. For example, as much as 84% of Finnish web surfers looked for information on products and services on the Internet in 2004. This figure is remarkably high, as only the use of e-mail surpassed it with a corresponding figure of 88% (Sirkiä et al., 2004). Consumer advocates can barely dream of such masses of visitors to their websites. It is also highly unlikely that consumers would look for this kind of information in a similar scale on conservative corporate web sites (cf. Yared, 2006). In this respect, Consumer 2.0 has established itself.

4. Discussing Types of Regulation

The conservative way of dealing with regulatory issues is to implement legislation. The effectiveness of such measures varies, but in the field of international electronic commerce it definitely is questionable. It seems that regulatory harmonization is a highly challenging task even in an integrated set of countries such as the European Union. Consumer authorities have recognized this and set up complementary systems such as clearing houses which support consumer protection without essentially solving the regulatory dilemma.

Non-governmental actors have addressed the regulatory dilemma in international electronic commerce. In this article, we have taken up two such cases: trust marks and Consumer 2.0. In addition to having different goals, being run by different kinds of actors and having a different approach to hierarchy (direction of interaction), these two cases show that regulation is possible to enforce without a completely comprehensive regulatory framework nor a strict focus on sanctions. In other words, there is a case for postmodern regulation at least in the context of international electronic commerce. In table 4 we sketch a typography of different ways of regulation.

Table 4. Typography of regulatory solutions

	Regulation	Trust marks	Consumer 2.0
Direction of Interaction	Top down	Top down, less strict	Between peers
Actors	Government	Business organizations	Consumers, facilitators
Goal	Legal position	Trust	Contextual information

The trust mark case bears resemblance to governmental regulation as trust marks are often operated by organizations that demand a great number of other organizations to follow rules. The overall goal of trust marks is also similar to that of governmental regulation as both aim at eliminating risks on the market. Of course, the structure of the trust mark system is weaker than that of regulation.

Consumer 2.0, on the other hand, challenges both regulation and business oriented self regulation. Facilitation is needed, but this can well be carried out by any service provider

which attracts an online community. The distinct feature of Consumer 2.0 is a knowledge support system that aggregates information provided by peers in real time.

Trust marks and Consumer 2.0 may be perceived by government as created by market actors, but this is not to say that they are provided by market mechanisms. They rather conform to a political approach to correcting market failure (cf. Hirschman, 1970).

Obviously the self regulatory solutions also have other similarities. In addition to involving peers as organizations or individuals, both are closely knit to the service they regulate. Trust marks are essentially a supporting service and Consumer 2.0 confirms the notion that consumers participate in the production of a service (cf. von Hippel, 2005). They also express some level of expertise of the parties involved.

5. Concluding insights

The regulation of international business-to-consumer electronic commerce has for long been a problematic issue for governments. Self-regulatory solutions have addressed parts of the dilemma. In this respect, international electronic commerce serves as a telling example of the regulatory challenges postmodern politics poses. Of course, not all self regulatory initiatives solutions have been successful. Nevertheless, there may be something to learn from them or at least a need to look them over.

Rather than looking at regulatory challenges as technical issues or issues of a division of labor between regulatory players, we propose to look at the tensions between modern national ideals and customs versus postmodern international modes and practices for ideas. In this context it appears that fragments of postmodern consumer policy are developing alongside conventional forms of consumer policy. This development takes place independently of the actions of conventional institutions for consumer policy. If so happens, governmental advocates will face increasing competition from other actors and forms of consumer policy.

The development of consumer policy is a highly relevant issue because modern Western societies are increasingly defined by consumption. Over the past decade, growth in the EU and North America has been driven largely by consumer demand. The consumer is at the heart of political thinking in the EU and policy makers assert that consumer participation enhances the economy. This argument is supported by marketing and business gurus, who argue that modern demanding consumers force markets to become more competitive (Inglehart, 1997; Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Porter, 1990). Moreover, consumers – i.e., amateurs and grassroots activists – have been recognized as a source of many economically and socially significant innovations (Leadbeater & Miller, 2004). Within consumer research, as well, interest has grown in the role of consumers as initiators, drivers, and shapers of innovation. Similar discussions have also been conducted in consumer research (Firat & Dholakia, 1998; Wikström, 1996).

It is in this context that consumers and consumer policy once again become important. One target in innovation policy has been to create new ways to achieve greater public involvement in decision-making (European Commission, 2002; Hagendijk & Kallerud, 2003). Consumer participation is needed at early stages of the innovation process. For example the UK Government has emphasized the need to involve consumer bodies more in policy making and to empower consumers by improving consumer education to create ‘demanding customers’.

But at the same time most academic and policy experts interviewed for this purpose (Bush, 2004) complained that, in fact, consumer bodies had not been linked in the innovation process in any meaningful way. There is a clear need to take consumer concerns into account more seriously and anticipatorily.

What could a governmental approach to postmodern consumer policy then be like? If we consider the two types of self regulation we have looked at in this article then we can at least point at challenges and propositions to solutions. Postmodern regulatory issues come well forth in them.

It would then appear that postmodern governmental consumer policy should take into consideration possibilities of being less nationally centralized and top down administered. It should welcome new actors in the development of consumer policy and its production. Especially consumers themselves may provide resources for consumer policy if they are given appropriate means and for a for this. Policy may also learn lessons from the close integration of regulation and service provision. Persuasion is not necessarily a weak tool alongside sanctions. Essentially, the postmodern challenge seems to call for an active approach towards the development of consumer policy.

Critics may claim that consumer policy is already tightly integrated with market actors and that many different kinds of measures are being used. This is of course true but does not challenge the notion that issues related to international commerce and practices related to ICTs continue to challenge consumer policy. Maybe the success of consumer policy has led to a narrowing of its vision (cf. Hilton, 2007), which is already being challenged by developments in special legislation. In this article we have sought new ideas from new forms of acting on the market including a new form of consumerism. We challenge policy makers to do likewise.

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Structural Disparities of Media Consumption in the Nordic countries

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Abstract

The paper examines the current media use inequalities from the perspective of Nordic welfare societies. The countries selected consist of Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland locating near to each other in the northern part of the European continent. It is asked to what extent the Nordic countries, which have also been characterised as the world's leading information societies, show similar and different patterns of media consumption with each other. At the same time, the interest is to estimate these similarities and differences at the population level. The data consists of the Danish, Swedish, Norwegian and Finnish sections of the European Social Survey 2004 (N=7211). In general, the findings suggest that there are some recognisable national characteristics attached to contemporary media consumption patterns.

1. Introduction

An interpretation often given by social researchers is that the Nordic societies are relatively weakly structured in terms of gender, income and social class. A constant observation is that the Nordic countries show relative equality compared to other European nations, particularly in terms of poverty and other forms of economic inequality (e.g. Esping-Andersen 1990; Ferrera 1996; Norlund 2003). Also the key social institutions, such as the educational system, the labour market and income distribution systems, are considered to be by and large identical across the Nordic societies. In general, the countries are often seen as the welfare societies with universal rights of social benefits. Regarding these kinds of notions, the structural differences in the patterns of consumption and lifestyle are also expected to be small in comparison with many other countries (e.g. Katz-Gerro 2002; Räsänen 2006; Virtanen 2006).

In this paper, I examine the patterns of media consumption in the Nordic countries. I ask to what extent the Nordic countries, which have been characterised as the world's leading information societies, show similar patterns of media use with each other. My purpose is also to estimate the strength of the differences in the population level. Research interest is in television watching, radio listening, newspaper reading, and the use of the internet. The data consists of the Danish, Swedish, Norwegian and Finnish sections of the European Social Survey 2004 (ESS 2005).

The paper is structured as follows. First, research findings regarding socio-demographic and economic features of media consumption will be shortly reviewed. Research questions are

dealt next. This is followed by the presentation of data, variables, and methods of analysis. The empirical part of the paper is divided into descriptive and explanatory sections. In conclusions, it is discussed whether the consumption of the new information and communication technology (ICT) is developing a similar mark of higher social status as in consumption connected with reading and other cultural activities. The results also suggest that there are some recognisable national characteristics attached to contemporary media consumption patterns.

2. Structural characteristics of media use

Preceding research literature indicates that media use patterns connect with the differences by population groups. These differences are naturally affected by a number of factors. However, the key socio-demographic variables included in the empirical analyses of mass media and communication technology use are gender and age. In addition, there are important socio-economic factors associated with all types of media and consumer technology use. Income and education can be regarded as the most significant variables.

Gender constructs the elementary framework for many consumer practices. In most studies, men are found to spend more time and money on consumer technologies than women (e.g. Henderson et al. 2002; Rice & Katz 2003; Wilska 2003). Following this, the use of technological appliances has been regarded as a 'masculine' rather than a 'feminine' activity. Similarly, the typical course of an individual's life is built to a large extent around age. A number of studies have shown that the mass media and various other consumer technologies are used differently by people of varying ages (e.g. Hargittai 1999; Cummings & Kraut 2002; Vihalemm 2006). For example, older people spend more time watching television than younger people (e.g. Gershuny 2000; Niemi & Pääkkönen 2002). Young people, on the other hand, are often potential early adopters of new technologies (e.g. Wilska 2003; Räsänen & Kouvo 2007).

Income is a relevant explanatory factor because using different technologies costs money. One constant finding in earlier studies has been that a high income is related to more frequent ICT use and a preference for more diverse media content (e.g. Chan & Goldthorpe 2007; Hendriks Vettehen et al. 2004). Education is relevant on similar grounds; better-educated individuals are often better equipped to consume various media contents than those with less education (e.g. Attewell 2001; Parayil 2005; Räsänen 2006). A high level of education has also been associated with frequent use of various technological devices such as computers and mobile phones (e.g. Henderson et al. 2002; Robinson et al. 2002).

3. Research questions

The Nordic countries share relatively similar infrastructures in terms of print and electronic media. Particularly the recent development of the ICT infrastructures has been identical across the countries. For instance whereas before the early 1990s there were either monopolies or only a few operators in each country, ten years later there were already many players within telecommunications, several network operators and internet service providers (Nordic Information Society Statistics 2002; 2005). Together with the vigorous economic growth during the late 1990s these changes have resulted a rapid increase in the supply of mobile phone and internet services. Moreover, the Nordic countries also started the

establishment of digital television services in the late 1990s and early 2000, a way before most of the European countries.

First, it is feasible to ask to what degree the countries show similar profiles in the use of different media.

In addition to relatively similar ICT and media infrastructures, the Nordic countries are often seen as the welfare societies of social and economic equality. In comparison with the other European countries, a common feature for the Nordic countries is the strong interplay of state policies and other social institutions, such as the labour market and income distribution system. In this way the effective protective measures against poverty, universal social benefits and the prevalence of public over private welfare provisions are considered as their distinct features (e.g. Esping-Andersen 1990; Ferrera 1996). Following the principle of universalism, also economic and social inequalities within the societies are believed to be relatively small.

Second, it is motivating to evaluate whether the countries show weak structural inequalities, measured as economic and socio-demographic differences in the media use patterns.

According to many, one of the most important consequences of the diffusion of the new ICTs is that traditional forms of the mass media are at least partly being replaced by more advanced and more 'personalised' systems, designed to meet the needs of individual consumers (e.g. Fidler 1997; Cummings & Kraut 2002). In other words, newspaper and television for example can no longer be considered the primary sources of information and entertainment. Particularly the internet has become an important medium in these respects. It is not surprising that in recent time diary studies, a decline in watching television and other traditional mass media activities has been found among frequent internet users (e.g. Robinson et al. 2002; Gershuny 2003). As a main activity, also radio listening is continually losing its share compared to time spent on other media. At least in some population groups this is due to the increasing consumption of music via hand-held music players, mobile phones, and computers.

Third, it is interesting to address how differentiated the media consumption patterns are between the economic and socio-demographic groups, and between the countries.

The remaining sections of this paper deal with the effects of economic and socio-demographic factors on frequency of television watching, radio listening, newspaper reading, and the use of the internet. In order to examine how the patterns vary across the four countries, both cross-country and population-level differences have to be taken into consideration.

4. Data and methods

This study focuses on comparing the differences in media use between population groups in Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland. The data employed in this study are the ESS survey data, collected by face-to-face interviews in 2004 (N=7211). The data represent the residential populations of these countries aged 15 and older. The total number of cases ranges from approximately two thousand cases from each country (see ESS 2005).

The frequencies of media use are used as the dependent variables. These variables include measures on a total of four different media: television, radio, newspaper, and the internet. Along with the respondents' country of residence, age, gender, education, and income are used as the independent variables. A detailed description of the original measures and the coding procedure is given in Appendix.

Age and gender are measured as respondent's year of birth and sex. Age is categorised into four groups reflecting a broad classification of phases distinguished in adult lives. In this way, the variable enables us to observe a possible non-linear impact of age cohorts or generations.

Education is measured as the duration of education in years. Despite the fact that this variable does not report degree earned or level of education, it provides a congruent measure since educational systems differ slightly from one Nordic country to another. The variable was categorized into four groups.

Income is measured as the income of household and it is based on subjective estimates of all wages and salaries. A discrete variable of twelve income brackets is included in the data. However, a variable that divides the respondents into households earning less or more than a thousand Euro a month is used in the analyses.

The methods of analysis include cross-tabulations (descriptive analysis) and the logistic regression models (explanatory analysis). Throughout the analysis, the multinomial logistic regression (MLR) procedure is utilised (e.g. Tabachnick and Fidell 2001, 521-523). The effects of the independent variables in the models are presented with the odd ratios ($Exp\beta$). The odds ratio is the probability of being in one group divided by the probability of being in the other group. It indicates the increase (or decrease if the ratio is less than one) in the odds of being in the examined outcome category when the value of the independent increases by one unit. The statistical significances of the models are indicated in the tables by chi-square statistics (χ^2). Also the pseudo-coefficients of the determination, or explanation proportions, of the models are reported (Nagelkerke Pseudo R^2).

As the ESS authorities suggest, the 'design' weights that correct the sampling differences between the countries are applied in each analysis (see ESS 2007 for details).

5. Descriptive analysis

My first task in the analysis was to distinguish different types of media users from each other. Different user groups were approached with the use of three categories: 'non-users', 'infrequent users', and 'frequent users'. The first group consists of those respondents, who do not report using the given medium at all. The second consist of those who use the certain medium relatively seldom or who use it only for a short period at a time. Eventually, there are those who use the given medium often or who spend much time with it.

In general, it is known that varying amounts of time are devoted to different types of media. For example, people spend more than two hours a day watching television across Europe and US, while time spent on newspaper and magazine reading is less than one hour (e.g. Gershuny 2000; Niemi & Pääkkönen 2002; Robinson et al. 2002). In addition, the original measures in ESS data are not identical with each other. This is why infrequent and frequent

media users were classified by using slightly different criteria, depending on the medium in question (see Appendix).

Table 1 shows the proportions of media users by country. At first glance, we can observe that the overall patterns of television and radio use are similar across the countries. There is a small proportion of non-users in each country, but most respondents can be classified into the categories infrequent or frequent users. Concerning both media types, the proportion of frequent users is highest in Denmark. The Swedish respondents report the lowest proportion of frequent television watching and radio listening. On the other hand, newspaper reading and the internet use display somewhat different profiles. The share of those who do not read newspapers is highest in Denmark. The proportion of the internet non-users is highest in Finland. Norway has the highest share of frequent newspaper readers, Denmark the highest of frequent internet users.

Table 1 Proportions of media users by country

	All (N)	Country (N)			
		Denmark	Sweden	Norway	Finland
Non-users					
Television	2,1% (148)	2,0% (29)	1,6% (31)	1,4% (25)	3,1% (63)
Radio	16,8% (1208)	12,0% (178)	20,5% (389)	13,1% (230)	19,9% (402)
Newspaper	10,0% (723)	23,1% (343)	8,3% (161)	4,6% (81)	6,8% (138)
Internet	32,2% (2319)	30,2% (447)	30,2% (558)	29,4% (517)	37,9% (767)
Infrequent users					
Television	60,6% (4370)	52,4% (779)	66,9% (1303)	66,4% (1080)	59,8% (1208)
Radio	40,7% (2938)	35,1% (521)	42,4% (862)	44,5% (784)	39,9% (807)
Newspaper	74,4% (5365)	63,9% (949)	78,7% (1533)	75,8% (1334)	76,6% (1549)
Internet	16,9% (1217)	12,6% (186)	19,7% (384)	14,8% (260)	19,1% (387)
Frequent users					
Television	37,4% (2698)	45,7% (679)	31,5% (614)	37,2% (655)	37,1% (750)
Radio	42,5% (3065)	52,9% (784)	37,1% (722)	42,4% (746)	40,2% (813)
Newspaper	15,6% (1126)	13,0% (193)	13,0% (253)	19,6% (345)	16,6% (335)
Internet	51,0% (3675)	57,3% (849)	50,1% (976)	55,8% (982)	42,9% (868)

Source: European Social Survey (ESS 2005).

The findings indicate that there are certain cross-country differences in media use, which should be taken into account in the further analyses. The proportion of the frequent internet users is over 50 percent in each country, except for Finland. It thus seems that Finland represents a slightly less developed environment compared to other Nordic countries when it comes to internet use. In principle, this observation is consistent with the official statistics (e.g. Nordic Information Society Statistics 2005; Eurostat 2005). It is also interesting to address in more detail the structure of newspaper reading particularly in Denmark and Norway.

The differences in media use patterns among population groups were examined next. Table 2 shows variations by gender, age, education and income in all countries. The first observation

is that the differences by gender are small in general. However, the use of the internet provides an exception. Male respondents appear to be considerably more often frequent internet users compared to females, and less often non-users. This finding is consistent with numerous studies examining the interplay between gender and ICT-use (Dutta-Bergman 2005, 104-105; Räsänen 2006; Wilska 2003). The fact that there is more internet material targeted at male users, such as pornography or sports, may partly explain the observed gender disparities.

Table 2 Proportions of media users by different population groups

	Gender (N)		Age (N)				Education (N)				Income (N)	
	Men	Women	<30	30-44	45-60	>60	>15	13-15	9-12	<9	<1000	>1000
Non-users												
Television	2,1 (76)	2,0 (72)	2,9 (44)	1,8 (35)	1,7 (33)	2,0 (36)	2,8 (45)	1,6 (31)	1,7 (46)	2,5 (25)	4,6 (33)	1,6 (97)
Radio	15,3 (544)	18,2 (664)	23,2 (351)	16,3 (312)	13,6 (264)	15,2 (281)	15,8 (255)	14,9 (283)	18,3 (486)	17,3 (173)	23,2 (167)	15,5 (920)
Newspaper	9,1 (326)	10,9 (397)	17,3 (262)	11,3 (216)	6,6 (129)	6,3 (116)	7,7 (124)	10,2 (195)	10,7 (285)	10,9 (109)	15,6 (112)	8,6 (511)
Internet	29,2 (1040)	35,1 (1279)	8,2 (124)	14,1 (268)	29,6 (576)	73,3 (1350)	8,9 (144)	19,4 (370)	36,6 (973)	80,9 (811)	51,9 (374)	29,2 (1732)
Infrequent users												
Television	60,4 (2153)	60,7 (2217)	62,7 (950)	69,1 (1320)	66,4 (1292)	43,8 (808)	74,0 (1179)	64,6 (1230)	57,5 (1531)	39,6 (397)	46,1 (332)	62,7 (3720)
Radio	41,9 (1491)	39,7 (1447)	41,5 (628)	44,4 (849)	41,3 (803)	35,7 (658)	50,6 (818)	41,7 (794)	36,9 (982)	33,6 (337)	35,6 (256)	41,7 (2472)
Newspaper	73,3 (2611)	75,5 (2754)	78,5 (1187)	81,2 (1551)	78,4 (1527)	59,7 (1100)	76,0 (1229)	76,2 (1450)	75,6 (2013)	65,9 (662)	64,9 (467)	76,0 (4507)
Internet	15,0 (533)	18,8 (684)	16,9 (256)	18,6 (356)	21,1 (410)	10,6 (195)	14,4 (233)	19,5 (372)	19,7 (524)	8,5 (85)	14,9 (107)	17,3 (1024)
Frequent users												
Television	37,5 (1335)	37,3 (1363)	34,3 (520)	29,1 (556)	31,9 (622)	54,2 (1000)	23,2 (376)	33,8 (643)	40,8 (1085)	57,9 (581)	49,3 (355)	35,7 (2116)
Radio	42,9 (1572)	42,1 (1538)	35,3 (533)	39,2 (750)	45,1 (878)	49,1 (904)	33,6 (544)	43,4 (826)	44,8 (1193)	49,1 (492)	41,3 (297)	42,8 (2537)
Newspaper	17,6 (627)	13,7 (499)	4,2 (64)	7,5 (144)	14,9 (291)	34,0 (627)	16,4 (265)	13,6 (258)	13,6 (363)	23,2 (233)	19,6 (141)	15,4 (914)
Internet	55,9 (3463)	46,2 (3648)	74,9 (1133)	67,3 (1286)	49,3 (960)	16,1 (296)	76,7 (1241)	61,0 (1162)	43,7 (1161)	10,7 (107)	33,2 (239)	53,5 (3175)

Source: European Social Survey (ESS 2005).

Differences by age indicate that particularly the proportions of frequent media use vary considerably between age groups. Newspaper reading and the internet use reveal the strongest differences. Older people are more likely to be frequent newspaper readers and, at the same time, much less likely to be frequent internet users, compared to younger people. The difference in television watching is considerable particularly between over 60-years-olds and other respondents. Radio listening does not show strong variation between age categories. Otherwise, the findings show that the patterns of media use are built to a large extent around age. A number of preceding studies have found that young and old people use the mass media and ICTs differently (Hendriks Vettehen et. al 2004, 421; Vihalemm 2006). As expected, older people are watching television more frequently than younger people. Young people, on the other hand, are often the most likely to be regular internet users.

Also educational attainment has considerable impact on media use. The strongest impact can be observed in the use of the internet. Those with many years of full-time education completed are less likely to be non-users than others, and more likely to be frequent users. Regarding other media use variables, differences appear to be more ambiguous. Those with less educational attainment are watching television and listening to radio more frequently

than others. Newspaper reading is not influenced strongly by education. Still, those who spend much time on newspaper reading are more likely to have completed less than nine years of education. At the same time, however, those who do not read newspapers at all are the least likely to be found among the most educated respondents.

Finally, income differences show that both non-use and frequent use patterns vary between income groups. Income has the strongest effect on the internet use, and the weakest on radio listening. Internet is less often used among those who live in households that earn less than one thousand euro a month. Television and newspaper shows the opposite; respondents from households that earn less spend time more time on these media. However, the effects of most of the other dependent variables are clearly stronger in this respect. Despite this, the findings point out that media use displays differences between the poor and well-off individuals.

Overall, the observed differences in the internet use and newspaper reading pattern provide interesting information, but otherwise findings can be held fairly predictable. This means that the results are consistent with the existing research literature.

The selected socio-demographic and economic factors are connected with the media use patterns in most instances. Given the results, media use is a relevant social issue especially when it connects to the varying use frequencies. With the exception of the internet use, there are few respondents in the non-user categories. It is also likely that the variation indicated by Table 2 can be explained more sufficiently by utilising several independent variables at a time. Next, the distribution of frequent use patterns among the Nordic consumers will be examined in more detail.

6. Explanatory analysis

In the further analysis, I employed logistic regression models on the combined data that included all cases from each country. Models were used to predict an outcome of being a 'frequent user' from a set of independent variables. In order to do so, categories 'non-users' and 'infrequent users' were combined. This resulted in dichotomous dependent variables.

Table 3 shows the adjusted models for frequent television, radio, newspaper, and the internet consumption. Regarding television watching, all independents appear to be significant, except for gender. It is clear that education and age provide strong predictors, while income has somewhat weaker effect. The odds ratios by age indicate that over 60-years-old respondents are twice as likely to watch television frequently compared with other age groups. Differences between educational categories point out that those who have completed less than nine years of full-time education are the most likely to watch television frequently. The most educated respondents are nearly three times less likely of being among that user group. Respondents with low household income are also more likely to watch television more frequently than others (with the odds of 1.4). The model explains only nine percent of total variance though.

Table 3 Frequent media use in Nordic countries, logistic regression models

Main effects	Television, Exp β	Radio, Exp β	Newspaper, Exp β	Internet, Exp β
Gender, χ^2	0,0 (ns)	1,1 (ns)	27,2***	78,6***
Male	(ns)	(ns)	1,45	1,68
Female (a)	1	1	1	1
Age, χ^2	116,1***	49,8***	626,5***	770,4***
<30 years	0,52	0,58	0,07	12,38
30-44 years	0,48	0,73	0,12	5,86
45-60 years	0,49	(ns)	0,28	3,37
>60 years (a)	1	1	1	1
Education, χ^2	142,9***	57,1***	47,4***	651,5***
>15 years	0,36	0,62	2,21	14,04
13-15 years	0,59	(ns)	1,71	5,85
9-12 years	0,76	(ns)	1,32	2,90
<9 years (a)	1	1	1	1
Income, χ^2	13,0***	2,0 (ns)	7,0**	46,4***
<1000 Euro/month	1,36	(ns)	1,35	0,49
>1000 Euro/month (a)	1	1	1	1
χ^2 (b)	458,7***	132,9***	704,0***	2189,9***
df	8	8	8	8
Pseudo R²	.09	.03	.17	.38

Note: *** = $p < 0.001$; ** = $p < 0.01$; * = $p < 0.05$; (ns) = $p > 0.05$; (a) = reference category; (b) = indicates the difference between the final model and a reduced model.

Source: European Social Survey (ESS 2005).

Radio listening, on the other hand, is not strongly affected by any of the independents. Only age and education remain statistically significant. Respondents in the youngest and the second youngest age group are less likely to listen radio frequently when compared with the older respondents. The effect of education is significant only between the most and the least educated respondents. The respondents in the former category are about 1.7 times as likely to listen to the radio frequently compared to the latter. Despite the differences by age and educational categories, this model has practically non-existent explanatory power (three percent).

Newspaper reading shows more interesting differences. In fact, all independent variables remain significant in the model. Effect of income, however, is relatively weak indicating that respondents with low income are likely to spend more time on newspaper reading than others. The effect of gender shows that males are almost 1.5 times more likely to read newspapers frequently than females. Educational differences appear to be systematic since the likelihood of frequent newspaper reading ascends gradually from the lowest income category to the second lowest, and so on. In this sense, newspaper reading shows an opposite ‘cultural pattern’ of consumption compared with television watching. In spite of that, it is evident that age has clearly the strongest impact here. Under 30-years-old respondents are 14 times less likely to read newspapers frequently when compared with over 60-years-olds. The second youngest age group has approximately eight times smaller odds of belonging to frequent category compared to the oldest. The model results with a satisfactory explanatory share of total variance (17 percent).

The last model shows the effects of independent variables on frequent internet use. Obviously, the strongest differences can be attributed to age and income. Under 30-years-olds are about twelve times more likely than over 60-years-olds to be frequent users. The most educated respondents, on the other hand, are 14 times more likely to belong to that category

compared with the least educated. Results by gender indicate that men are 1.7 times more likely to be frequent internet users than women. Income difference is also interesting; respondents in the lowest income category are twice as less likely to be frequent users. The model explains as much as 38 percent of total variance.

The main-effect models were applied in order to compare the effects of economic and socio-demographic variables. On the basis of these results, we can conclude that the frequency of media use can be explained by the variables selected. In addition, the effects of independent variables appear to be different when different types of media are compared with each other. In general, age and education can be held as strong sources of variance.

However, the cross-country differences observed in Table 1 were not taken into account. In Table 4, two-way interactions between independent variables and country are displayed. The models are adjusted for the main-effects of economic and socio-demographic variables. The table reports the significances based on chi square statistics only.

Table 4 Interactions between frequent media use and country, logistic regression models

Main effects + interactions	Television × country	Radio × country	Newspaper × country	Internet × country
Gender, χ^2	4,8 (ns)	1,4 (ns)	0,62 (ns)	12,4**
Age, χ^2	8,6 (ns)	12,7 (ns)	21,9**	7,6 (ns)
Education, χ^2	11,6 (ns)	5,7 (ns)	10,8 (ns)	16,0*
Income, χ^2	9,9*	3,9 (ns)	1,2 (ns)	1,7 (ns)
χ^2 (a)	608,6***	264,5***	792,2***	2279,6***
df	35	35	35	35
Pseudo R ²	.12	.05	.19	.39

Note: ** = $p < 0.01$; * = $p < 0.05$; (ns) = $p > 0.05$; (a) = indicates the difference between the final model and a reduced model.

Source: European Social Survey (ESS 2005).

As the statistics show, the country interacts with income when explaining television watching. Age has an interaction with newspaper reading, and gender and education with the internet use. Investigation of radio shows that there are not any significant interactions. This means that regarding radio listening, there are no differences in the effects of economic and socio-economic variables between the countries.

A closer investigation of the parameters (not shown in Table 4) revealed that respondents earning less than a thousand Euro a month were in fact slightly more to watch television frequently in Finland when compared with other countries. However, the effect is barely significant (at $p < 0.05$ level). Regarding newspaper reading, it was found that 30-44-years-old Finnish respondents are less likely than other 30-44-years-olds to be frequent newspaper readers. Despite the fact that the effect is not very strong, the finding is rather interesting in the context of Nordic societies. The analysis of internet use revealed two significant interactions. The interaction between gender and country revealed that in Finland male users are less likely to be frequent users compared to other countries. This finding shows that while the proportion of users is lowest in Finland, the gender difference is not as strong as it is elsewhere.

The interaction between education and country, on the other hand, revealed that the Danish respondents with less than 9 years of education are more likely to be frequent internet users compared to same group in other countries. This indicates that education is weaker determinant of internet use in Denmark. It is thus reasonable to notice that there are certain

cross-country differences in the strengths of some of the socio-demographic variables. Some of these interactions require special attention in conclusions.

7. Conclusions

When trying to define and understand consumption patterns, sociologists refer to such factors as individuals' age, education, income level, and so on. It is believed that these kinds of variables can predict consumption behaviour more effectively than various situational, psychological or need-based factors. Naturally, at the most abstract level, there are certain collective social norms and fashions that may lead consumers to consume in particular ways. But in order to understand the explanatory mechanisms behind consumption patterns, we typically draw to the more basic views on classes, social stratification, and structural effects.

The differences of cultural 'appreciation' or 'knowledge' adopted by certain educational or occupational classes are normally held as effect-mechanisms explaining the findings. Similar interpretations stressing some sort of boundary conditions may also be given in relation to age and gender. The consumption patterns of men and women and of people of different ages can reflect certain role expectations, for instance. In comparison, the effect-mechanisms related to income are somewhat more straightforward; the available economic resources simply control one's expenditure and the planning of future expenditure.

This paper focused on the differences in the media use patterns in the Nordic countries. My aim was to examine to what degree the basic social structures and the inequalities based on media use were interrelated. One of the key finding was that income strongly affects internet use frequencies in all countries. It is also clear that the patterns of internet use are strongly connected with youth. Older age groups are less likely to access the internet frequently. Television watching and newspaper reading, on the other hand, show the opposite trend: older people spend clearly more time on these media types compared to younger people. Radio listening appeared to be the only variable that was not explained effectively by any of the background variables.

In general, the disparities by population groups are important in the light of prevailing socio-demographic structures in the Nordic societies. The results suggest that certain media use patterns are introducing new types of structural inequalities. Particularly the role of the internet can be emphasised here. The analyses showed that the educational disparities in the internet use are similar with the disparities attached with newspaper reading. However, the effect of education on the internet use is clearly stronger. Newspaper reading is explained sufficiently by age. In this sense the new ICTs can be thought to reflect the identical structural conditions that are reflected by the more traditional forms of cultural consumption. Broadly speaking, it appears that assumptions, according to which the structural inequalities between population groups can be smoothed when more extensive media infrastructures will be provided for consumers, are too simplistic.

The results also indicated that the Nordic countries show differences in the examined media use patterns. In addition, variation was found in some of the socio-demographic effects between the countries. From the comparative perspective, the results thus suggest that the Nordic countries are not necessarily as homogenous with each other as many social researchers believe.

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APPENDIX

Measures, original questions presented in the questionnaires, and the coding of variables

	Original question	Coding	
DEPENDENT MEASURES	Television watching	On an average weekday, how much time, in total, do you spend watching television?	1=No time at all, 2=Less than ½ hour; ½ hour to 1 hour; Up to 1½ hour; Up to 2 hours; 3=Up to 2½ hours; Up to 3 hours; More than 3 hours.
	Radio listening	On an average weekday, how much time, in total, do you spend listening to the radio?	1=No time at all, 2=Less than ½ hour; ½ hour to 1 hour; 3=Up to 1½ hour; Up to 2 hours; Up to 2½ hours; Up to 3 hours; More than 3 hours.
	Newspaper reading	On an average weekday, how much time, in total, do you spend reading the newspapers?	1=No time at all, 2=Less than ½ hour; ½ hour to 1 hour; 3=Up to 1½ hour; Up to 2 hours; Up to 2½ hours; Up to 3 hours; More than 3 hours.
	Internet use	How often do you use the Internet, the World Wide Web or e-mail – whether at home or at work – for your personal use?	1=Never; No access at home or at work, 2=Once a week; Several times a month; Once a month; Less than once a month, 3=Every day; Several times a week.
INDEPENDENT MEASURES	Country	Are you citizen of [country]?	Yes: 1=Denmark, 2 =Sweden, 3=Norway, 4=Finland.
	Education	How many years of full-time education have you completed (including compulsory/mandatory years of schooling)?	1=0-8 years, 2=9-12 years, 3=13-15 years, 4=Over 15 years.
	Age	Respondent's year of birth	Calculated from the year of birth: 1=15-29 years, 2=30-44 years, 3=45-60 years, 4=Over 60 years.
	Gender	Sex of respondent	1=Male, 2=Female.
	Income	If you add up the income from all sources, which of the following describes your household's total net income (if you don't know the exact figure, please give an estimate)?	Dichotomized from a twelve-point ordinal scale: 1=Less than 1000 Euro a month, 2=Over 1000 Euro a month.

Source: European Social Survey (ESS 2005).

Households' ICT use in an energy perspective

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Abstract

The starting point for this paper is the lack of linkage between two of the prominent social agendas of the time – the development of the information society and the question of how to prevent man-made climate change. The paper is intended as a contribution to integrate the two agendas by considering ICT in an energy perspective. In particular, the paper focuses on the integration of ICT in households and the energy impacts related to changing everyday practices. As this has not received much attention in previous research, the paper has an explorative character. Firstly, the paper reviews some of the previous studies on ICT and energy and the consumption perspective is introduced. Secondly, the integration of ICT in everyday practices and the dynamics behind the changes are outlined, inspired by a historical perspective. Thirdly, a figure of the relationships between changing everyday practices and the related energy impacts is presented, followed by descriptions of direct energy consumption related to household ICT, indirect energy consumption outside households, and derived impacts both within and outside households. The paper concludes with some remarks on political implications and questions for further research.

Introduction

The development of the information society has been and still is accompanied by enthusiasm and a strong sense of necessity where the challenge for political and administrative institutions at all levels is to increase the pace of the development and remove all hindrances – take care of security problems, increase the competencies of the population, supply new services, support the provision of infrastructure. The necessity springs from the drive for competitiveness and the emergence of new business opportunities in the so-called “experience economy”. At the same time, other parts of the political and administrative system are concerned with environmental issues, not the least with the prospects of global warming. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) offer both potentials for energy savings and increasing demand for energy use so there are good reasons to bring together these two agendas. In the early 1990s the first studies on the positive environmental prospects of ICT emerged (Freeman 1992), and the first steps were taken towards regulating ICT energy use. As we will return to below, the importance of ICT in relation to energy consumption has carried some interest since then, but still the two agendas tend to develop in relative isolation. As Alakeson and Wilsdon wrote in 2001: “Most European policies for the information society and for the environment have developed in separate silos, but it is fair to say that the potential environmental impact of digital technologies is increasingly acknowledged by EU policy makers” (Alakeson and Wilsdon 2003, p. 10). In spite of this increasing acknowledgement, there is still a long way to go before the two agendas of the

information society and global warming are really brought together. As a small illustrative example, it is still possible to write a nearly 200-page status on the Danish information society (Statistics Denmark and National IT and Telecom Agency 2006) without mentioning energy (or any other environmental concerns) at all.

This paper is intended as a contribution to considering ICT in an energy perspective. ICTs have many other environmental impacts than those related to energy – for instance, the use of toxic materials, brominated flame retardants, heavy metals – but these are only included in so far as they influence the energy impacts. The point of departure is taken in the integration of ICTs in households, and the energy impacts of changing household practices are discussed. Most studies of ICT and energy have concentrated on macro scenarios or the prospects seen from the production side, so households have not received much attention (there are exceptions, such as (Aebischer and Huser 2000)). On this background the paper has an explorative character, and it is based on a combination of literature studies, discussions with experts, and a visit to the “digital home” in Taastrup, Denmark. The data used in this paper mainly refer to Denmark. The main interest is to provide a basis for further in-depth studies of households and for more proactive political approaches dealing with the energy impacts of ICT, whereas there is no intention to quantify the complex relations between household ICT use and the related energy impacts, to outline scenarios for future developments or to assess whether ICT development in households is good or bad in an energy perspective. The integration of ICT in household practices is a fact, so it is less important whether the net energy impact is positive or negative than it is to find ways to avoid the negative impacts and encourage the positive.

In the following, some of the previous studies on ICT and energy are briefly mentioned and the consumption approach is related to these. Secondly, the integration of ICT in everyday practices and the dynamics behind the changes are outlined, inspired by a historical perspective. Thirdly, a figure of the relationships between everyday practices and the related energy impacts is presented, followed by descriptions of energy impacts directly related to ICT in households, indirect impacts outside households, and derived impacts both within and outside households. The paper concludes with some remarks on political implications and questions for further research.

Previous studies and the consumption perspective

Early studies on the emergence of the information society tended to emphasize the positive potentials related to ICTs. The most immediate positive impacts relate to the possibilities for increased production efficiency in most sectors: more accurate monitoring and control of processes, quality, and inventory, miniaturizing resulting in substantial reduction in the number and weight of components, and increased transportation efficiency (Freeman 1992) – and these issues are still central for more recent studies (Berkhout and Hertin 2001; Jørgensen et al. 2006). Furthermore, it is emphasized that the Internet opens up opportunities for information sharing in business and academia regarding environmental issues (Richards et al. 2001) (see also a European series of conferences under the heading Informatics for Environmental Protection), and corresponding positive effects are identified in relation to consumers and environmental NGOs (Reisch 2001).

Gradually, the enthusiasm was supplemented with more discussion on the problematic environmental impacts of ICT. Before the entry of ICTs, offices were usually considered less important when energy requirements were calculated, but from the late 1980s offices appeared as energy consuming places. Both for economic reasons and in consideration of the

environment, more attention turned towards energy savings (e.g. the U.S. EPA introduced the Energy Star labelling in 1992 for office equipment). In the late 1990s and early 2000s, a heated discussion took place in the U.S. in the wake of some provocative statements concerning the high electricity consumption of ICT equipment, titled *Dig more coal – the PCs are coming* (Huber and Mills 1999), based on (Mills 1999). The statements were repudiated by many other researchers, as can be seen from the summary of the debate at <http://enduse.lbl.gov/projects/infotech.html> where links can be found to the many contributions; short summaries can be found in (Laitner 2003) and (Cole 2003). In one of the contributions (Baer, Hassell, and Vollaard 2002), it is concluded that even large growth in deployment and use of digital technologies will only modestly increase U.S. electricity use over the next two decades, however, Huber and Mills stuck to their ideas (Huber and Mills 2003).

Other studies go beyond electricity and include both direct and indirect environmental effects of ICT use, including various categories of rebound effects, for instance (Plepys 2002; Erdmann et al. 2004). In Berkhout and Hertin's study for the OECD on the environmental impacts of ICT (Berkhout and Hertin 2001), summarized in (Berkhout and Hertin 2004), they distinguish between direct effects, indirect effects, and structural and behavioural effects of ICT. Direct effects stem from the production, use and disposal of hardware, indirect effects concern efficiency improvements in production processes and in design and operation of products and services, whereas structural and behavioural effects are a mixture of rebound effects and effects related to increased consumer information. Berkhout and Hertin argue that the direct effects are mostly negative, whereas the indirect efficiency effects are largely positive, and the structural effects (including rebound effects) are highly contested. Related categorizations are used in other studies, e.g. in the foresight study by Jørgensen et al. (2006) who, inspired by Berkhout and Hertin as well as others, consider first, second and third order relationships. First order relationships refer to the direct environmental impact from the ICT equipment and ICT infrastructure, second order relationships arise from the use of ICT in different applications and the influence on processes and products, and third order relationships concern the changing structural composition of business and product areas as well as broader social and structural changes.

In most macro studies on ICT and environment, consumers play a very minor role. This role is mostly related to the indirect, structural level where the positive potential related to behavioural change is emphasized. In particular, teleshopping and teleworking are pointed out as having a potential for energy savings related to transport (just as business travel is expected to decrease because of videoconferencing). However, in studies focusing on electricity consumers are becoming more visible. Concluding a study on energy consumption of PCs Cole writes: "While this chapter places greater emphasis on PCs in the commercial sector, the impact of PCs in the residential sector must not be overlooked. The proliferation of PCs in the home, due to expanded use of the Internet, means that the residential sector may be responsible for a much greater proportion of energy consumed by office equipment than previous estimates" (Cole 2003, p. 156-7). A direct focus on consumers appear in some Swiss and German works (Aebischer and Huser 2000; Cremer and et al. 2003; Aebischer and Varone 2001), and small sections on ICT emerge in reports on consumption and environment (European Environment Agency 2005).

Consumers have been most visible in relation to the discussion of standby electricity use. The first mentioning of standby consumption of home equipment was in the beginning of the 1990s (Sandberg 1993). Since then, the American energy efficiency conference ACEEE

(www.aceee.org) and the European conference organized by the sister organisation, ECEEE, (www.eceee.org) have had workshop sessions on standby consumption, as has the International Conference on Energy Efficiency in Domestic Appliances and Lighting, EEDAL (see <http://re.jrc.ec.europa.eu/energyefficiency/events/eedal2006.htm>). Papers have, on the one hand, focused on measurements of the size of ICT-related energy consumption in households (Roth 2006; Harrington, Jones, and Harrison 2006), and on the other hand, discussed how to agree on standards which can be useful for energy labelling and other types of product regulation (Jones 2006; Murakoshi et al. 2005). However, standby consumption has increased steadily, and one of the leading experts on standby consumption, Alan Meier, concludes that internationally the standby consumption in households represents 4-11% of the total electricity consumption (Meier 2005). There are two ways to reduce standby consumption, either to encourage producers to develop appliances using less energy or to make users turn off the appliances instead of leaving them on standby. Internationally, the former has received far most attention, and this would also be the most efficient if it was successful. In 2005, however, only Japan had compulsory programmes concerning standby, whereas both Europe and USA worked with voluntary agreements (Meier 2005). Much of the research and development presented at the ACEEE, ECEEE and EEDAL conferences is closely related to these political efforts to reduce standby consumption, and even though progress is seen, one of the problems with the regulation and standardization is that fast technology development resulting in new types of appliances and new types and levels of standby are appearing continuously (IEA 2001).

Nationally, however, there have also been campaigns targeting consumer behaviour. A Danish study focused on households' interest in and possibilities to reduce their standby consumption (Gram-Hanssen and Gudbjerg 2006). Results here indicate that some households quite easily change routines and are able to eliminate the majority of their standby consumption. Other families, however, having expectations of being online all the time, and having many of their appliances connected to each other found it much more difficult and inconvenient. Thus both the producer and the consumer approaches relating to standby consumption indicate that standby consumption is a problem continuously to be dealt with.

In this paper the intention is to go beyond the relatively narrow roles assigned to consumers in studies on ICT and energy. There is a need for paying more attention to consumers when dealing with the energy impacts of ICT, first of all because ICT is increasingly integrated in everyday life. Furthermore, a consumption perspective can highlight aspects that complement the aspects brought forth when focusing mainly on production, thus also opening up new opportunities for managing the energy impacts. In general, when a production perspective is the point of departure in environmental studies, technological changes tend to be perceived in terms of solutions, because technology can contribute to efficiency improvements. In spite of the increasing awareness of rebound effects, the perspective tends to be mostly optimistic. This differs from the consumption perspective where new technologies are only in exceptional cases introduced to improve, for instance, the energy efficiency of household activities. New technologies serve as drivers behind consumption growth and will as such contribute to increasing environmental impacts (Røpke 2001; Røpke 2003). From this perspective efficiency improvements become a modification to the main effect. The consumption perspective thus tends to bring the more problematic aspects of technological change more directly into focus – not being relegated to the position of rebound effects.

The organization of the paper is inspired by the studies mentioned above considering different levels of effects (Berkhout and Hertin 2004; Jørgensen et al. 2006). As the

perspective of this paper is more narrow than in these studies, the same categories are not directly applicable, but a related way of thinking is reflected in a three level categorization of the energy impacts related to ICT use in households. The impacts are thus grouped in

- *Direct energy consumption* (mostly electricity) related to the use of ICT equipment in household practices, both in the dwelling and on the move.
- *Indirect energy consumption* related to the provision of households' electricity consumption, the production and disposal of ICT equipment for household use, and the running of the infrastructure such as sending masts and servers. The term "indirect" is thus used here in the same way as usual in the energy literature rather than in the way used in ICT studies.
- *Derived energy impacts* relate to changes in the composition of consumption and in behavioural patterns influencing households' energy consumption as well as systemic energy consumption.

The two first categories of energy consumption tend to increase when the amount of equipment is increased, although this can be counteracted by increased efficiency of new equipment. In the third category more positive impacts can be expected to dominate, such as, for instance, those related to equipment installed to manage heating and lighting in the dwelling in an energy-saving way – however, the outcomes in this category will be highly contested. This category also covers the effects of teleshopping and teleworking for energy consumption of both households and the wider system. The term rebound effects is not used in this categorization, because the term is attached to the indirect effects of a change which is motivated by environmental concerns (rebound effects in consumption is discussed by (Hertwich 2005)). In a few cases it could be relevant here to talk about rebound effects – for instance, in the case of energy-saving heat regulation which might save money that can be used for more energy-consuming purposes – but few of the ICT acquisitions are motivated by environmental concerns so this will be left out.

The integration of ICT in everyday life

As a basis for dealing with the energy impacts of household ICT use, this section focuses on the ongoing process in which ICTs gain access to everyday life. The process will be seen in the perspective of the history of technology as this indicates the sweeping character of the changes.

In some respects, the integration of the computer in everyday life can be compared to the integration of the small electromotor. When the electromotor was introduced, it became integrated in a wide range of domestic appliances and tools – vacuum cleaner, mixer, refrigerator, washing machine, dishwasher, airconditioning, drilling machine, toothbrush. The electromotor could replace muscular strength and transmit energy for heating and cooling, and innovators searched for all conceivable possibilities for developing devices applying this new technology (including some of the more absurd applications, e.g. the electric tie holder). The motor became part of the thorough transformation of household work, the near disappearance of domestic servants, and the increasing participation of women in the labour force (Cowan 1983; Olesen and Thorndahl 2004). The point is not that the electromotor was driving all these changes, but it became integrated in the ongoing social processes and put to uses formed by the social dynamics. Thus Cowan emphasizes how the technology could have been used in other ways with different social outcomes, such as collective solutions to household chores, if the social and cultural dynamics had been different. The computer has a general applicability comparable to the electromotor and can be integrated in practically all everyday activities. The computer replaces or enhances brain capacity – the ability to calculate, manage, communicate, and regulate – a quality that can be used everywhere.

Presently, innovators are searching all conceivable possibilities for applying this new technology in appliances, tools, and devices that can be tempting for consumers and fit into their topical concerns and desires.

The computer is not only connected to the electricity net (directly or indirectly through batteries) as the electromotor, but can also be connected to networks of communication, including the Internet, the so-called motorway of information. The Internet introduces a new infrastructure that calls for comparisons with the introduction of electricity, telecommunication, broadcasting, and even the water supply system and the sewerage system. When these large technological systems are developed, many actors and interests are involved and contribute to the coevolution of technologies and use patterns. When such a system is stabilized, it becomes an unacknowledged basis of everyday life – one more system that we are served by and serve in our everyday life (Otnes 1988). The Internet has not yet acquired this status of unacknowledged basis of everyday life, but the new possibilities for acquiring information and entertainment and for communication are increasingly integrated in all conceivable activities, driven by both commercial and political-administrative interests and by users themselves.

The present coevolution of technologies and everyday life is, furthermore, characterized by the increasing mobility. This trend can be seen as a continuation of previous efforts to make all sorts of equipment available for activities on the move, such as the portable gramophone, the portable typewriter, the transistor radio and all sorts of equipment for the car and the camping trip. The mobile phone is probably the much successful innovation ever in this line of mobile appliances, and Levinson (Levinson 2004) argues that this follows from basic human desires: “It is a need as old as the human species – the need to talk and walk, to communicate and move, at the same time. It is a need that even defines the human species, as an organism that makes symbolically meaningful sounds with voice boxes and tongues, and goes from place to place upright, on hind legs” (p. 13). When the mobile phone is combined with wireless access to the Internet in large geographical areas, the mobile encyclopedia, the mobile library, and the mobile entertainment center are available as well. The development of wireless connections and better batteries permit that ever more activities can be carried out on the move, gradually reducing the difference between what can be done at home and on the move, respectively.

These general observations are reflected in the ongoing integration of computer, Internet, and mobile phones in numerous everyday practices. The pervasiveness of these technologies can be illustrated with examples from the different spheres of everyday life. The use of computer and Internet is increasingly integrated in:

Work and education: Telework, e-learning, ordinary school work, well equipped home offices, video conferences.

Reproductive work: Shopping, banking, public services, health monitoring, the intelligent home (regulation of heating, lighting, security systems), security, child care (entertainment, monitoring), cooking (find the recipe), do-it-yourself (exchange experiences, find information). Computer and Internet also add a new task to the list of reproductive activities, namely ICT maintenance, just as the car once added the task of car wash.

Leisure: Social communication, entertainment, games, creativity, documentation, hobbies, gambling, sex.

Civil society: Organizations, political activities.

Theories concerning the formation of practices in everyday life point out three constituent aspects of a social practice: The competences needed to carry out the practice, the material devices used for the activity, and the meaning attached to it (Shove and Pantzar 2005; Warde 2005). This theoretical framework has been used to discuss the formation and change of specific practices, but it can also be used to illustrate more general dynamics cutting across many practices. ICT is an example of generic technological change – a change of basic technologies influencing all sorts of applied technologies – which provides a supply of renewed material devices for many different practices. Simultaneously, these practices are influenced by changes in the other two constituent aspects, as technological change codevelops with changing discourses offering new meanings to various practices and with the development of training in the use of the new technologies. In Fig. 1 (next page) the three constituent aspects are illustrated in the top part of the figure, surrounding everyday practices. For all three aspects, government regulation, subsidies, campaigns, and other activities play a decisive role alongside the governance enacted by the firms and organizations involved – for instance, in the provision of safety, standards, business models, and training, as well as in influencing the discourses through reports on the need for keeping up in the competitive race, the prospects of the experience economy, and the potential for using ICT in various sectors.

In the formation of everyday practices, the ICT-related dynamics meet with other social dynamics related to dominant social concerns and trends of the time. Examples are the long-term trend towards individualization and personal independence, the discourse on busyness, stress and the balance between work and family life, and the preoccupation with body and health. In Fig. 1 these cross-cutting trends are mentioned within the box of everyday practices. In relation to each specific practice, many other, more detailed concerns will be important.

Direct energy consumption

The most immediate energy impacts of the integration of ICT in everyday practices are visible in household electricity consumption. Still this impact is not large compared to other categories of energy consumption in households, but it is increasing. Denmark has been particularly successful with regard to decoupling household energy consumption from economic growth. From 1990 to 2005 household energy consumption increased only 4.4%, but electricity consumption for light and appliances increased 18% (Energistyrelsen 2006). Most electricity is used for white goods, but the importance of media technologies, including TV, video, computers and related equipment, increases. Presently, approximately 20% of electricity consumption is used for media equipment, and about half of this is used for standby (Gram-Hanssen 2005).

As illustrated in Figure 1, energy consumption related to the use of ICT depends on the quantity of ICT equipment, the energy efficiency of this equipment, and the patterns of use, that is, the number use hours, the time on standby, and the intensity of use (the energy consumption of some appliances depends on the kind of use). In the following, some of the present trends influencing electricity consumption will be highlighted.

Presently, television and video weigh more heavily than computers, and in the near future, a particular burst of energy consumption can be expected in relation to the digitization of television and to the diffusion of HDTV, High Definition TeleVision. The increasing energy consumption is related to the need for set-top boxes that can be combined with existing TV sets or are integrated in new sets. In spite of increasing interest in keeping down energy consumption of TV sets, little interest has been directed towards set-top boxes, and many

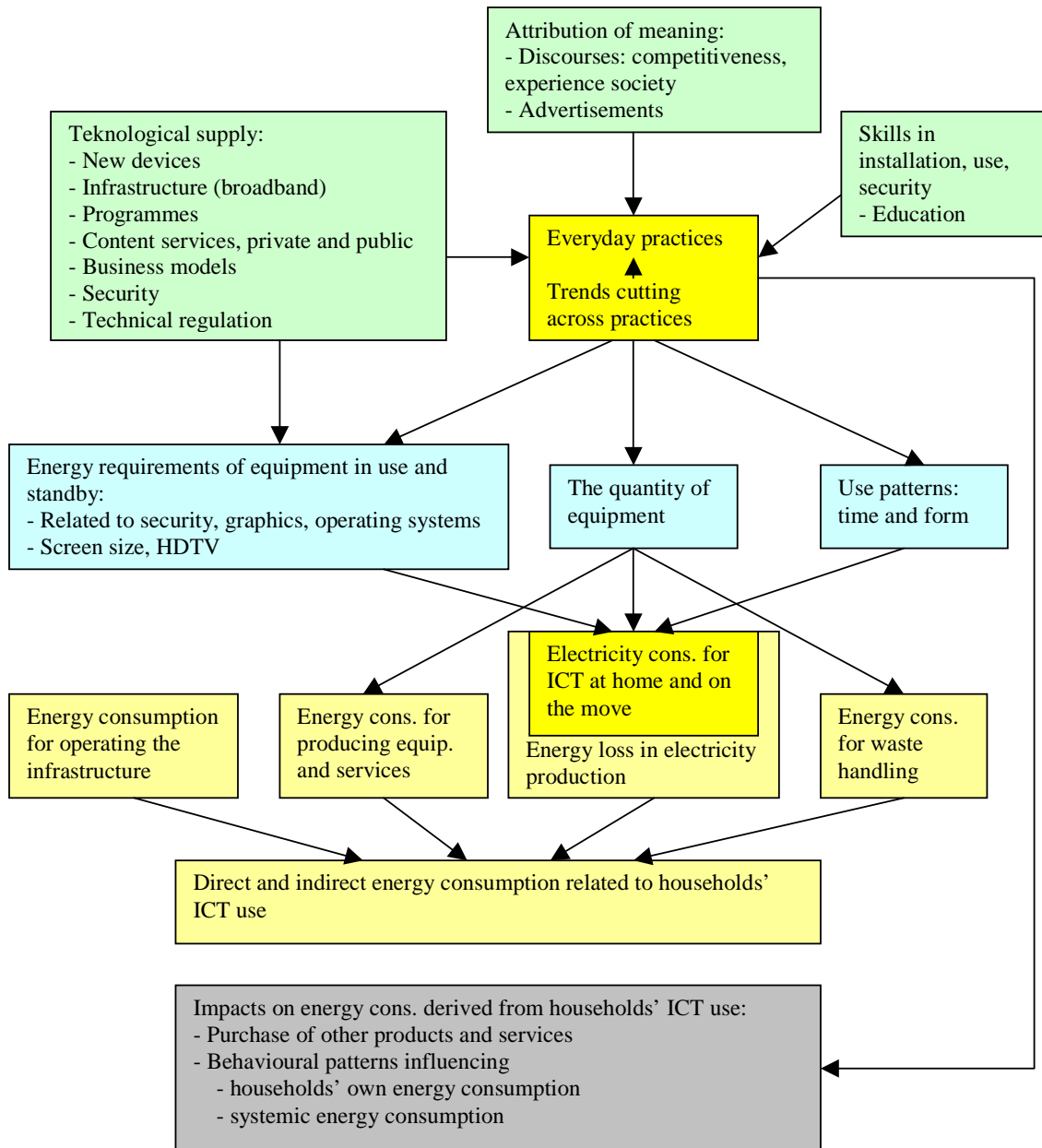


Fig. 1. Relations between ICT-related changes of everyday practices and the ensuing impacts on energy consumption.

models are rather ineffective. As the stock of TV sets is large, nearly one set per person (Energistyrelsen 2006), and as many people have to follow suit if they want to watch television (excepted are a large group connected to cable TV who can carry on as usual), the impact can be expected to be considerable. Of course, digitization can be an opportunity to replace older energy-consuming models with newer and more energy-effective models (LCD (Liquid Crystal Display) flat screens are more efficient than the old CRT (Cathode Ray Tube) screens), however, replacements are often combined with increasing screen size, counterbalancing the efficiency improvements. The interest in so-called home cinema equipment has increased, including acquirement of plasma screens which are particularly energy-consuming. TV sets prepared for receiving HDTV are also more energy-consuming because of the higher resolution. Instead of following the trend towards increasing average efficiency exhibited by white goods, the average efficiency of TV sets has been relatively stable and even decreased a little (Energistyrelsen 2006). As mentioned, the number of TV sets is already very high, but the diffusion of flat screens might increase the number further, as these screens are easy to place everywhere, bringing TV into kitchen and bathroom and adding to the use of TV as a kind of “back cloth” for other activities.

Digitization of television does not directly seem to be part of any profound changes in the practice of watching television. The quality of the picture improves, and it is possible to turn on subtitles in various languages. When digitization is combined with the use of media centres / harddisk recorders, the opportunities for flexibility are increased as programmes can be shifted in time more easily than with the use of video and DVD. Visions regarding interactive television are discussed (Jensen & Toscan 1999), but it still remains to be seen whether practices change more profoundly.

While television is bound to a particular practice (which is very time-consuming), computers and Internet are integrated in a wide variety of practices. The increasing energy consumption related to computer and Internet springs from the integration in an increasing number of practices and the ensuing increase in time use and amounts of equipment. When time use at the computer increases, household members increasingly demand their own computer so they do not have to wait for their turn. The demand for individual independence that is well-known from the acquisition of TV sets now makes itself felt for computers – each person his or her computer seems obvious for the younger generations. A less developed trend – which might become more important in the future – is the emergence of activity or room specific computers, for instance, specially equipped computers for use in the kitchen, the bathroom or in the garage where conditions may be tough.

Due to rapid technological change and ever more advanced applications, there is not only a demand for more computers, but also for ever more powerful computers and other ICT equipment. Demand thus increases for

- higher quality, such as larger screens with better resolution
- more processing power needed for, for instance, running the latest versions of operating and security systems and for the advanced graphics of games
- more data storage capacity, needed for the increasing amount of photos, videos, sound files, mails
- larger bandwidth, needed for video-streaming and for upstream P2P (peer to peer) file-sharing of videos and music.

These changes constitute a strong force counterbalancing improvements of energy efficiency.

Seen over a long period, various factors have influenced the energy efficiency of computers (based on (Cole 2003)). To increase the processing power of computers without increasing the size, heat reduction was necessary and this stimulated efficiency improvements. With the introduction of laptop computers energy-saving was encouraged because of the desire to increase battery life, and the advances for laptops were later brought into desktop computers. For instance, this was the case for built-in power management which was brought from laptops to desktop computers in the early 1990s. The U.S. conservation programme, Energy Star, strongly encouraged further improvements so from the mid-1990s standby consumption decreased drastically, and impressive savings were achieved in business offices in the U.S. However, the power levels in operation did not change much, because the efficiency improvements codeveloped with more powerful microprocessors, more memory, and more disk storage. The monitor part of the computer became more energy-intensive in the 1990s because of the almost universal shift to colour screens and larger screens with higher resolution. However, over a more extended period of time the shift from CRTs to LCDs saves energy.

As modern computers are very diverse due to consumer-specified features, the power requirements vary so much that it can be difficult to assess the general trend (Cole 2003, p. 138). Danish data indicates that the average new desktop computer is not requiring less energy in operation than computers a few generations older (T. Fjordbak Larsen, pers. comm.). However, an increasing number of new computers are laptops, and they are more energy-effective than desktop computers. In 2006, for the first time the number of laptops sold in Denmark exceeded the number of desktop computers. This can be an energy-saving trend if the laptops replace the desktop computers, but it is difficult to assess to which extent the laptops are additions rather than replacements. Desktop computers are still cheaper in terms of processing power per dollar, so a person interested in playing games or carrying out other demanding graphical activities will often prefer a desktop. Furthermore, it is easier to extend a desktop computer with supplementary graphics cards or other peripherals.

The power management functions offer good opportunities for energy-savings, but they have to be activated. This is not always done, either because of lack of knowledge or because of technical difficulties, for instance, related to network connections and the coupling to other equipment.

The question of complementarity versus substitution in the case of laptops and desktops can be raised as a more general question. In many cases, ICT equipment incorporate a variety of functions and can, in principle, replace other, more specialized appliances. An example is the camera phone which can render the camera superfluous. However, the camera in the mobile cannot provide the same quality and capacity as the dedicated camera so the camera phone may become part of a diversification process rather than part of a rationalization of the number of appliances. Another example is the combined printer-scanner-copy machine which can reduce the number of appliances attached to the computer. However, it is expensive to run a scanner because of the need for colour cartridges, so it can be cheaper to invest in a supplementary laserprinter for printing texts.

The trend towards diversification of equipment seems to be strong, as it is reflected in the wide variety of available devices advertised in magazines. Not the least for mobile devices is the supply widening as more functions become available on the move. Rapid technological change implies that multiple generations of equipment co-exist, for instance, taperecorders – CD players – MP3 players, and video – DVD – harddisk recorders. Consumers thus tend to

have an increasing number of small and/or supplementary devices, often in various ways related to the core products – the computer and the TV set. The direct energy consumption of each of these devices in the use phase is usually not large (except for standby consumption that can be high for some products), but the sum of the small contributions may be significant. Adding to this is the phenomenon that less attention is focused on the energy consumption of the peripheral devices than on the energy-efficiency of the computer and the TV set. One reason may be the quick renewal rate which does not allow producers to pay much attention to optimizing energy-efficiency, and another reason may be the lack of regulatory attention, partly due to the difficulties related to regulating products that are changing so quickly.

A particular trend adding to the ICT-related energy consumption emerges from the phenomenon of multi-tasking. Especially, young people are able to manage computer, television, music centre, mobile phone, and the electric guitar – all at the same time. A Danish study thus demonstrates the high electricity consumption of teenagers (Gram-Hanssen, Kofod, and Nærvig Petersen 2004). Older generations may be less able to multi-task, but they are able to install systems that use electricity without anybody being present, such as surveillance cameras and other security systems. One of the visions related to the “intelligent home” is the possibility of communicating with the security systems at a distance, for instance, opening the door for the postman bringing a parcel or the plumber coming to repair an installation in the house.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the search for new ways of using ICT has resulted in more functions using energy in the use phase – functions which were previously carried out without energy consumption in the use phase. Examples are the electronic diary and shopping list, maps for navigation, photo frames showing digital pictures, and surveillance.

Summing up, the increasing direct energy consumption related to ICT equipment has many sources. The effect of increasing quantities of equipment and of more time spent on activities using ICT is difficult to counterbalance with efficiency improvements, in particular, because the equipment in itself becomes more powerful, and because in some cases, the attention to energy-efficiency is limited.

Indirect energy consumption

Presently, we have few available data for elucidating the indirect energy consumption related to household use of ICT, so this section will only include some preliminary reflections. The indirect energy consumption arise from the production of electricity and from the other phases in the life cycle of the ICT equipment, apart from the use phase. Furthermore, the importance of the supporting infrastructure is considered.

The first component of the indirect energy consumption relates to the provision of the electricity used for operating the household equipment. This component differs between countries in accordance with the efficiency achieved in electricity production. Due to a high degree of combined power and heat supply, this efficiency is relatively high in Denmark. This component of the indirect energy consumption is thus only about the same size as the direct electricity consumption.

The second component relates to the energy used for the production of the ICT equipment. Kuehr, Velasquez, and Williams provide data for the environmental impacts related to the production of computers, and they emphasize that a significant share of these impacts are

incurred in the production phase: “For a desktop computer used at home, for example, the energy needed to produce the machine is four times more than that needed to power it during the use phase. The energy consumed to produce a refrigerator is only about one-eighth the electricity used to run it” (Kuehr, Velasquez, and Williams 2003, p. 4). For mobile phones the economic life is very short and this makes the relative importance of the energy consumption in the production phase even larger (Legarth, Willum, and Gregersen 2002). In other words, the rapid rate of renewal for ICT equipment implies that energy use for production is a very important category.

The third component relates to waste handling. The high-tech parts of computers and other electronic equipment are difficult to recycle, while the bulk materials like steel and aluminium are easier to handle. Klatt (Klatt 2003) outlines the many technical difficulties that recycling of computers meet with and explains why it is quite costly, however, he gives no information on the energy costs of the process.

Finally, the fourth component relates to the operation of the ICT-infrastructure (a brief discussion on this can be found in (Hille, Aall, and Klepp 2007)). A recent report from IDC illustrates the enormous growth of digital information and the need for storage capacity not only at user level, but also for service providers such as Google (Gantz et al. 2007). Some service providers run large parks of servers, so services that appear to be virtual – immaterial – from a user perspective can be based on quite extensive material investments. The virtual world of “Second life” thus has a material basis in the servers of Linden Lab.

Derived energy impacts

While both direct and indirect energy consumption tend to increase when the number of appliances and the time spent using them are increased, the derived energy impacts are more likely to be positive. Most obviously, ICT can be used directly for energy savings. Thus ICT can be used for managing heating and lighting in the dwelling (lowering of the temperature at night, sensors turning off the light when nobody is in the room), and ICT can also make it easier for households to monitor their energy consumption and thus encourage savings. The Danish Electricity Saving Trust estimates a potential for electricity savings from 10 to 30% in households by using intelligent building systems to control the electric equipment. For instance, in summer cottages, heated by electricity and only used occasionally, there is a large potential for reducing the consumption by using such systems. However, the existing systems are too expensive today, due to a lack of competition, and also the standards are closed, meaning that they cannot communicate with the electronic equipment of existing systems (Ingeniøren newsletter, 21.04.2006).

Also, the Internet can be used for making available relevant information on energy savings, as can be seen, for instance, at the homepage of The Danish Electricity Saving Trust <http://www.elsparefonden.org/> and the recently initiated public campaign encouraging people to save 1 ton of CO₂. While these impacts are positive in an energy perspective, it should not be overlooked that the Internet, in an analogous way, can encourage energy-intensive consumption – for instance, by making available new options for booking cheap flights and finding exotic travel destinations (Reisch 2001).

While it is relatively simple to see that ICT can be used for energy-saving purposes, it is far more complex to consider what happens to the various practices in which the use of ICT becomes integrated. In some cases the use of ICT is just an “add on” where more equipment is added to well-known activities that are not much changed. An example can be the use of a

“running computer” for monitoring one’s training efforts; such an addition does not change the practice of running in ways which have derived impacts on energy consumption. The same goes for quality improvements, such as larger screens, HDTV, and better graphics in game consoles.

In other cases the practices are changed more profoundly by the integration of ICT. Environmental improvements, including energy-savings, have been expected from such changes, in particular, in relation to teleshopping, teleworking, and the replacement of material products such as newspapers and CDs by Internet-based services. Jørgensen et al. (2006) summarize a number of studies on telework and transport. Whereas some of the early studies were very optimistic with regard to the potential for energy savings, more recent studies emphasize that a substantial part of the transport savings are counterbalanced by increased transport for other purposes and increased transport by other family members. In general, the results regarding structural impacts are highly sensitive to system boundaries and dependent on behavioural assumptions. Studies are often inconclusive because it is difficult to know, for instance, whether people will continue to go shopping although they buy some things via the Internet, and whether they will move further away from their workplace to take advantage of lower property prices when they work at home part of the week.

Supplementary to the discussion on derived impacts in relation to individual practices, it is possible to raise the issue from a more general perspective: If consumers tie their money and their time to the acquirement and use of ICT, then less money and time are free for other purposes – and the question is whether these other purposes are more or less energy-intensive per monetary unit and/or per unit of time. It may seem surprising that the question is raised in terms of both money and time, as one of the two perspectives could appear to be sufficient, in particular, if an economic maximization model is applied (Linder 1970). However, in practice both time and money constitute limitations on consumption, and institutional constraints imply that the two factors cannot be reduced to one another. To start with the monetary perspective, the acquirement of ICT equipment and services takes up an increasing part of consumers’ income. In general, competition on hardware keeps prices down and energy-intensities high. In some cases, service providers have succeeded in keeping high prices due to monopolistic or oligopolistic market conditions which implies a relatively low energy-intensity per monetary unit (examples are charges for phoning, Internet access, and packages of television programmes). However, public regulation is quite active with regard to breaking the monopolistic tendencies, not only because of the general wish to promote competition, but also because of the particular interest in developing the information society. A recent project thus demonstrates that the energy intensity of ICT-based leisure activities is relatively high (Hille, Aall, and Klepp 2007, p. 166-67).

From the perspective of time, it is worth considering whether the integration of ICT tends to take up time that could have been used for other purposes or whether, on the contrary, time is freed for other purposes. If, for instance, reproductive activities such as paying the bills, shopping, and contacting the taxing authorities, can be carried out in a shorter time by using the Internet, then time is freed for either working more (and earning more money) or having more leisure time (where money can be spent). Also activities usually considered to be leisure, such as planning holiday travelling, can be done more effectively, thus freeing time. Multi-tasking and accomplishing tasks on the move can add to the productivity increase. On the other hand, the Internet is known to be time-consuming as one can become absorbed in surfing and sidetracks, reducing the time for other activities and related consumption.

It is difficult to conclude anything regarding the consequences of the changing composition of time use and consumption in the wake of ICT integration in various practices. But it can be argued with more certainty that the supply of ever changing ICT and the integration of ICT in a wide variety of products and practices serve as part of the motor driving consumption growth. It is difficult to imagine the achievement of any kind of satiety in this dynamic setting.

Concluding remarks

As emphasized in the introduction, the intention of this paper is not to assess whether the integration of ICT in household practices is good or bad in an energy perspective. Anyway, the issue is so complex that even very elaborate studies could hardly lead to any decisive conclusions. It is more important to find ways to avoid the negative energy impacts of ICT development and to encourage the positive impacts. The issues dealt with in this paper suggest various ways in which the net result can be improved:

- The indirect energy consumption, in particular, related to the production of ICT equipment carries great weight. Therefore, “The simplest and most effective way to reduce environmental burden may be to ensure that users need fewer new PCs in the first place”, as Kuehr, Velasquez and Williams argue (p. 14). In chapters 8, 10 and 13 in their anthology it is discussed how the lifespan of computers can be extended through more effective used-computer markets, smooth transfer of software licenses to secondary users, and easier ways to upgrade computers. The issue of lifespan extension is highly relevant also for other ICT equipment, not the least for mobile phones.
- Power management functions are important for electricity consumption in the use phase, and it is still highly relevant to focus on the reduction of standby consumption, both by technical means and through changed patterns of behaviour.
- Digitization of television should be complemented with intense campaigns for the choice of energy-efficient replacements.
- The focus on the energy use of the core products, the computer and the television, should be broadened to include also the wider variety of ICT equipment.
- Economic considerations have not been the focus of this paper, but it should be mentioned that the net energy impact of ICT use is influenced by the price of energy. For instance, there is a potential for using ICT for energy savings, and the realization of this potential depend, at least partly, on energy prices. The price of energy for transport is also decisive with regard to the derived impacts, for instance, whether people decide to move further away from their workplace when they get the chance to telework part of the week. In short, price incentives, as well as other incentives not directly related to the technology, influence the net energy impact of ICT use.

The above suggestions relate to direct and indirect energy consumption, whereas it is much more difficult to consider how positive energy impacts can be encouraged and negative impacts prevented when focus is turned to the derived impacts. To improve the basis for elaborating suggestions for a proactive approach to ICT-related energy consumption, further in-depth studies of household ICT use could be useful. Such studies could deal with questions such as:

- In which practices are ICT becoming integrated? For which household members?
- In which cases does the ICT integration serve as an add-on to previous ways of carrying out the activities, and in which cases do the activities change more profoundly?

- Does the use of ICT save time, for instance, in relation to shopping, banking transactions, and enquiries to public authorities?
- Does the use of ICT save transport in relation to the same activities?
- What does social communication via ICT imply for the wish to meet?
- Is ICT applied with the purpose of saving energy?
- How often are various appliances replaced?
- Do several generations of appliances co-exist?
- Which functions are served by diversified equipment?
- Which functions are merged in rationalized equipment?
- What do households do with equipment they want to discard?

Hopefully, such studies on households' ICT use in an energy perspective can encourage that the agendas related to the information society and to climate change, respectively, can increasingly be brought together.

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Consuming to present the self - Social networking and commercial influence

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Abstract

Do new media make young people empowered or more vulnerable as consumers? The paper approaches this question by exploring the ways commercial interests influence the self presentations of a group of classmates aged 11-12 on a social networking site called Piczo. On social networking sites the users link their pages to the pages of their friends. In this way a social network is established online. The users must consume space, text and tools to produce their self presentations on Piczo pages. Observations and interviews reveal the preferences and choices to the pupils in this study. None of them can separate participation in the global, commercial Piczo network from participation in their local, non-commercial network. Nor can they separate consumption of commercial and non-commercial resources in the production of their self presentations. Still, their modes of consumption show great variation. Broadly they can be classified as either "collectors" or "elaborators". The similarities and differences between them inform the subsequent discussion. It is argued that through presenting themselves on Piczo pages the pupils in this study are empowered as consumers but at the same time made more vulnerable as producers.

Introduction

During the past few years, use of so-called social network sites has been a rapidly growing trend in young people's communication on the Internet. This paper presents a study of how the self presentations of a group of 11-12 year olds on one of these network sites are related to commercial consumption.

The Internet can be viewed as a place where communicational technologies are "remediated" (Bolter,2001) into "convergence" (Jenkins,2006). In light of this, social network sites can be described as a homepage with enforced interactive possibilities. In recent years remediation, meaning that a newer medium takes the place of an older one, has brought different types of interactive media online. On social network sites chat boxes, polls and comment boards complement the traditional guestbook. The convergence of a rich variety of channels for communication on social network sites makes the communication closer to the one we use face to face. The recently invented notion "social software" reflects this development, which distinguishes social network sites from the personal homepages of the 90's.

As the term indicates, a social network site allows social life to take place in a network established on a website. Websites like Friendster, Myspace, Facebook and a number of others all have a structure that allows people to search and be searched in a network based on shared social or professional interests. Some of these network sites, like Tagworld, Bebo, Mixi, Faceparty and Piczo, are directed towards children and young people.

The one explored in this paper, Piczo, started out in 2004, as a place where young people could share pictures and photographs. Today Piczo offers young people the chance to create "fully customizable personal websites that do not require any understanding of html code. Users share their life stories with friends by designing their sites with multiple pages featuring photos, graphics, guest books, comment boards, music, and more." Social connections are made explicit and social networking emerges, when the users subsequently link their pages to their friends' Piczo pages. Piczo has taken a commercial interest in making this kind of social life dependent upon consumption.

When compared to young people's consumption of commodities and other kinds of media, consumption on Piczo pages can be specified by its relation to the users' own production. In the Piczo network the users not only consume, they consume to produce. To analyse the specific features of this kind of consumption among the pupils in this study a specific part of their production will be analysed, namely their self presentations. To socialize in the network the users produce presentations of themselves. To explore how consumption relates to the production of these self presentations both identity and mediation must be theorised. In this study this is done by combining Erving Goffman's perspectives on identity formation (Goffman,1959) with perspectives on mediation developed in the tradition of social semiotic (Kress, 2003; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001;Lemke,2002).

Within this theoretical framework the pupils' consumption on the Piczo website will be related to a central debate in the research literature on children as consumers. David Buckingham describes this debate as a polarization between "on the one hand, the critical view of children as passive victims of consumer culture; and on the other, the views of marketers themselves, who define children as much more active, competent and powerful." (Buckingham, 2007). Claiming that this polarization is a simplification, Buckingham suggests that researchers for one thing look more closely at "newer commercial strategies" such as "product placement, peer-to-peer marketing, cross-promotion and viral and online marketing".

The Piczo website is based on these kinds of marketing strategies, which influence the users' consumption in the way they socialize with their friends. The commercial pervasion of young people's social interaction gives them a more productive role than they are given as consumers of more traditional media. The question raised in this paper is how this productive role is to be understood. Some researchers have worded this question aptly and concisely by asking whether young peoples' consumption of new media makes them "Frontrunners or copycats" (Tuft et al., 2005). This study approaches the question by examining how commercial interests influence a small group of users' production of self presentations on a specific social networking site. As Piczo users, how freely do the pupils in the study perform their self presentations? Are their agencies empowered or made more vulnerable in this commercial setting?

Young people's consumption and identity

The link between young people's consumption and their identity building has been acknowledged in the research literature ever since "teenagers" as a specific consumer group was established (Abrams, 1959). In recent years the age group 8-12, now often referred to as "tweens" (Tuft & Rasmussen, 2005), has been included in this market. The extension down the age range has contributed substantially to the increased estimate of the market's worth every year. Young people have become an evermore important market group and today "few consumer industries don't target kids" (McNeal, 1992, p.13).

Young people need to find out who they are, and the market of clothes and other commodities can be understood as one arena for this identity work. A marketer is successful whenever able to produce a brand that e.g. satisfies young people's urge to be "cool" (Lindstrom & Seybold, 2003). Such needs cannot be satisfied permanently because consumption is tied to the young people's identity work precisely through the act of choice:

"Choice becomes the ultimate, inescapable fate: who are you if you can't choose? Brands can be said to have appeal because what they signal is the *exercise* of choice." (Lee & Munro, 2001, p.5).

The research literature reflects the fact that marketers regard young people as active consumers who use much energy in making their own choices, and also as an invaluable

marketing resource in their ability to influence the choices of their peers and their parents (McNeal, 1999, Gunter & Furnham, 1998; Hansen & Hansen, 2005). Critics within marketing research emphasise the manipulative strategies children are exposed to when their urge to choose is brought to an ever-expanding market (Linn,2004;Schor,2005; Seiter,2005).

Young people's consumption and identity on social networking sites

Media consumption is both an important part of, and commercially intertwined with, young people's consumption in general. Surveys confirm that young people spend more and more of their time as media consumers (Livingstone,2002, Drotner ,2000). As mass media audiences they are involved in a double exchange that gives them value both as consumers of commodities and as media audiences:

“As Sut Jhally (1990) points out, commercial media play a twofold role in consumer culture. The media is used by producers to sell products to consumers and, equally, media audiences have become commodities sold by media organizations to producers – hence we have a process of double exchange; that is, the media acts as a two-way delivery system.”(Kenway and Bullen,2001 p.31)

New media, together with new technologies, can also be said to structure young people's identity building in new ways (Langager,2004). Young people's use of the Internet, and more specifically of social network sites, is part of this picture:

“Utilizing the unique features of the Internet, companies can integrate advertising and Web site content to promote “brand awareness” and “brand loyalty” among children beginning at a very early age, in ways never previously imagined”.(Montgomery, 2000, p.156)

The interactive features of the Internet not only blur the boundaries between Piczo users' consumption and production, but also the boundaries between their public and private spheres. Piczo users are at the same time audiences in their local networks of friends, and mass audiences in the Piczo network of marketing. In “Consumer citizens online: Structure, agency and gender in online participation” Kate Willett approaches this kind of consumption from a sociological viewpoint. Referring to Gidden's distinction between structure and agency, she claims that “young people's online identities must be viewed not only in terms of active engagement, but also in relation to the structures which frame those activities.” She also refers to an understanding of these structures as “cultural resources”:

“For example, social-networking sites which combine blogs, profiles, and photo and video-sharing can be viewed as cultural resources which are used by young people as a way of performing and perhaps playing with their identity”.(Willett, forthcoming)

A combination of a sociological and social semiotic framework allows a further theorization of both “performing and playing with identities” and “cultural resources”. Erving Goffman’s notion of self presentation has already been found appropriate in the analysis of peoples’ consumption on personal web space (Schau & Gilly, 2003). While this notion specifies the meaning of “performing and playing with identities”, a social semiotic approach to “cultural resources” opens up for a more specific description of how the pupils in this study actually consume on the Piczo website. This allows the question raised in the introduction of the paper to be answered by relating the pupils’ self presentations to the semiotic resources they consume in order to produce them.

Theory

Presentation of the self

By analogical use of theatrical terms Erving Goffman describes “the presentation of self in everyday life” (1959) as a perpetual process of social performances. With adoption of his framework the Piczo website can be understood as one of the stages where young people are invited in to perform, and thereby also to explore who they are. Goffman emphasizes that he uses the theatrical analogy as a scaffold to illuminate the social basis for our structuring of the self. In his thinking the self is not grasped as an autonomous entity, but as a function of roles performed in everyday interaction. Normally it is in our interest to avoid choosing the wrong role, or to experience that our performance of the role is turned down. To be able to interact we must (at least seemingly) reach a mutual understanding of how the situation is to be defined, or else we will not know how to relate to the other participants, and they will not know how to relate to us:

“...when an individual appears before others his actions will influence the definition of the situation which they come to have. (...) The others (...) may be suitably impressed by the individual’s efforts to convey something, or may misunderstand the situation and come to conclusions that are warranted neither by the individual’s intent nor by the facts. In any case, in so far the others act *as if* the individual had conveyed a particular impression, we may take a functional or pragmatic view and say that the individual has “effectively” projected a given definition of the situation and “effectively” fostered the understanding that a given state of affairs obtains.” (Goffman, 1959, p.6)

Consuming to present the self

The presentation of the self online is not performed under the same conditions as in the face to face encounters used by Goffman to explain the dynamic aspects of social interaction. Our face and body are not literally present on the Internet, which deprives us of a rich array of possibilities for presenting ourselves. On the other hand the digital mediation of the self online also opens new possibilities for what Goffman calls impression management. For example, net based mediation can influence our moral judgement of self presentations. Sherry Turkle was among the first to proclaim the liberating effect of using Internet to play out parts not available to us in real life, e.g. a man pretending to be a woman (Turkle, 1995). In opposition to this, the philosopher Hubert Dreyfus has stated that the reduction of social risk on the Internet equally reduces

the value of the performed roles (Dreyfus,2001). The focus of this paper is how net based mediation also opens new possibilities for commercialization of the users' performances of roles.

Goffman describes the performance of roles as dependent on a front, which he further distinguishes as setting, appearance and manners (Goffman, 1959, p.22). For example, the office, the stethoscope around the neck and the attentive look while we describe our symptoms all confirm that the person in front of us is playing out the role of a doctor. In her dramatic realization the doctor also tells us how she relates to the part, e.g. whether she is absorbed in the role as doctor or performs the part with an ironical distance (Goffman, 1959, p.30) On the Piczo website performance of any role requires resources that allow not only not the front, but also the dramatic realization to be commercialized.

In a social semiotic perspective our self presentations are dependent on "what is to hand" (Kress,1997, p.13). On the Piczo website commercially manufactured resources are to hand. Some are intrinsic to the users' production of self presentations, other are optional. In "literacy in the new media age" Günther Kress refers to the "stuff of writing" and "the stuff of speech" while explaining that his interest as a social semiotician lies in "the materiality of the resources, and in how humans work with them in the demands of their lives." (Kress,2003, p.13). Adopting this material approach the resources offered to Piczo users can be categorised as space, texts and tools. The Piczo website is a structure where space, text and tools are offered for free, because in the consumption of these resources the users make brands, promotion and advertises part of their own self presentations.

Commercial influence through consumption of space

Piczo pages can be read in sequences that are not linear. They are hypertexts which make multiple choices of reading paths available. One can argue that all texts have a multi-sequential potential, regardless of whether they are displayed in the hypertext transfer protocol of the Internet or not (Karlsson & Ledin,2000). For example, we also consume in a hypertextual manner while reading papers and magazines. Still, when consumption is considered in a commercial perspective the specific features of net based mediation become essential. It is the unlimited potential of hypertextual dispersion on the Internet that allows Piczo to take a commercial interest in providing their users with the resources required to produce their presentations of themselves.

Piczo users' consumption of space defines the "frames" for their self presentations. Kress & van Leuween explain frames as semiotic means for demarcation of textual meaning on page or screen. In their conception "frames" confine the different textual elements on a page, and are thereby also means for relating these elements to each other. Ervind Goffman gives the same notion a sociological significance, suggesting that frames relate the situations we define in social interactions to the surrounding social world. Self presentations on Piczo pages are brought under commercial influence in both senses. Firstly, the demarcation of textual meaning relates consumption and production of self presentations to the surrounding banner ads in a concrete, material sense. Secondly, these

concrete and material frames include commercially produced self presentations, e.g. the models exposed in advertisements, which inevitably become points of references, frames, when the users' own self presentations are related to the surrounding world.

Commercial influence through consumption of texts

Piczo offers multimodal texts for the production of self presentations which supplement or replace the presence of faces and bodies in real life encounters. A multimodal text is expressed through the simultaneous use of various modes of expression (e.g. writing, pictures, music, animations and video clips). (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). The multimodal texts offered for consumption and use on Piczo pages are, or include elements from, brands, promotion and adverts. Brands, promotion and adverts are made for the consumers to identify with, and subsequently purchase, products. Piczo users become consumers of mediated advertisements not in the role of passive audience, but in the role of active producers of self presentations. Consequently, in the production of self presentations they also become advertisers for commercial products.

Commercial influence through consumption of tools

Piczo offers tools for its users to integrate the collected texts on their own pages. The basic offer is "prescripts", programs which make html-code superfluous (Fagerjord, 2005). Piczo has already pre-scripted the coding process through the offer of a rich array of ready-made texts or textual elements (see Skaar, 2007). According to Roman Jakobson (1952), language use at the same time requires choices from the paradigmatic (the choice of words) and syntactic axis (the combination of words). In contrast to this, the use of textual (and ready-made) elements in the design Piczo pages only requires paradigmatic choices (because, unlike words in a sentence, the syntactic combination of ready-made elements on Piczo pages is not restricted by code). Manovich calls this the "logic of selection" claiming that "although software does not directly prevent its users from creating from scratch, its design on every level makes it 'natural' to follow a different logic – that of selection" (Manovich, 2001). For example, users do not have to spell out "Welcome" on their pages, instead they can choose a "Welcome-sign" from the "textual elements" menu. The coding of the word is done, and at the same time thirty different choices of colours, backgrounds etc. are added. In other words, Piczo offers tools that allow its users "shortcuts" in the coding process, while simultaneously expanding the possible choices of ready-made signs. By the choice of these shortcuts the users attach their self presentations to brands, promotion and adverts.

Method

According to their own figures, Piczo have "roughly 12 million monthly unique visitors" (<http://pic6.piczo.com/public/corporate/index.jsp> [retrieved May 2007]). In "Literacy on a social networking" (Skaar, forthcoming), I present an ethnographic study of 11 of them. The study is based on observations and interviews with pupils and teachers in a 6th grade primary school class in Oslo. The class had 23 (later 22) pupils, 9 girls and 14

boys, most typically from middleclass and lower middleclass homes. Around one half of the pupils are ethnic Norwegians, the other half have mixed or immigrant backgrounds. The first period of observation took place at the end of the 5th grade, the second half a year later. I observed the pupils' activities, once a week, during a three-month period.

All but one of the 22 pupils in the class had Internet access at home, although with a variable degree of personal access. Through the research project in which I myself am a participant, the class were connected online by the use of a school-based blog called eLogg (see Østerud et.al.,2006). During observations of their use of eLogg, I soon became aware of some of the pupils' visits to the Piczo website. I charted 11 Piczo users in the class and interviewed them about their Piczo use. Their use of Piczo pages was also documented consecutively on the net. This made their peer interaction out of school, which is often hidden from parents and teachers, accessible for close observation over time. After the first round of interviews I downloaded the pupils' Piczo pages weekly for a period of 6 months in order to track the changes they made. The observations showed that the correctness of the answers already given in the interviews often was questionable. This generated additional interviews. To fill in the picture I also interviewed one of the class teachers about the pupils' Piczo use. The interviews varied in length from 2-3 to 25 minutes.

In "Literacy on a networking site" I used the data collected to compare the pupils' literacy on Piczo pages with their school based literacy. The study also made me aware of the need for further investigation of the commercial aspects of the pupils' use of websites like Piczo. For this reason I kept on observing the pupils' Piczo pages for a year after my initial data collection and analysis. New social constellations naturally emerged during this period. The typology established in my initial study still serves as a distinguishing categorization of the pupils' literacy on their Piczo pages, but two of the pupils have moved from one category to another. Three of the pupils left the class, but kept on as Piczo users. Two newcomers raised the total number of users to 13.

In the period of prolonged data collection I have focused on the research question raised in this paper. The presentation of the findings is not exhaustive, but structured in accordance to this question.

Findings

Similarities:

Consumption and production of fun and coolness

In interviews the pupils give two reasons for their production of Piczo pages, either because it is "fun" or because it is "cool". In comparison the pupils describe their production of school-based eLogg pages in more moderate terms, most typically as "ok".

The pupils list their interests in a similar profile on eLogg and Piczo pages. Nearly all of the pupils list "friends" as an interest on both websites. On their Piczo pages most of the pupils also add pictures of their friends. Apart from "friends", "girls" or "boys" the most

commonly listed interests are football, film, TV, music, foods and clothing. On eLogg the pupils present these interests in writing, only complemented with a single picture and a selection of one out of nine backgrounds (e.g. hearts or footballs). On Piczo pages the pupils express these interests not only through writing, but also by the use of commercially provided space, texts and tools. Although some of the pupils present pictures and additional written texts about special interests like reptiles or puppies, most of them tend to elaborate on interests consistent with the fun and coolness produced by Piczo and other marketers. Football, music, fashion and film/TV-productions are the interests most heavily supported by commercially provided textual resources within the Piczo network.

In the pupils' rating of each other as persons and as creators of Piczo pages, "cool" is one of the most frequently used epithets. Similarly, in the promotion of its own site Piczo Inc. also uses the terms "fun" and "cool" to describe the activities conducted by its users. Advertisers using Piczo space to advertise and promote their products follow up with use of the same terms:



“His homepage is a bit cheap because he is more interested in checking out your cool Piczo page”

Figure 1-2

The merge of local and global consumption and production

The pupils' production of self presentations requires a minimum consumption of Piczo-provided resources. The consumption of these resources simultaneously makes the pupils participants in a local and a global network. Within these two networks the pupils in the study combine the consumption of resources manufactured by Piczo with the consumption of commercial and non-commercial resources provided by themselves or other Piczo users.

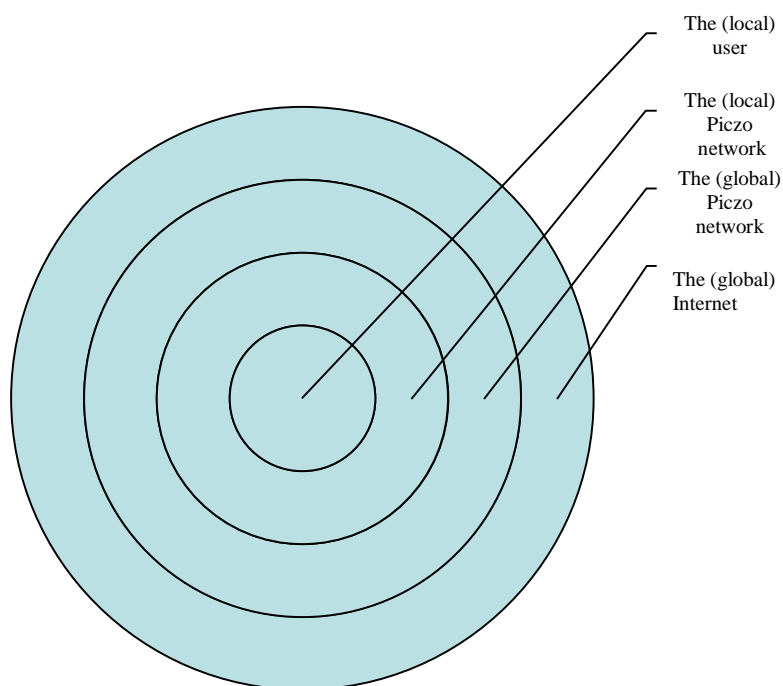
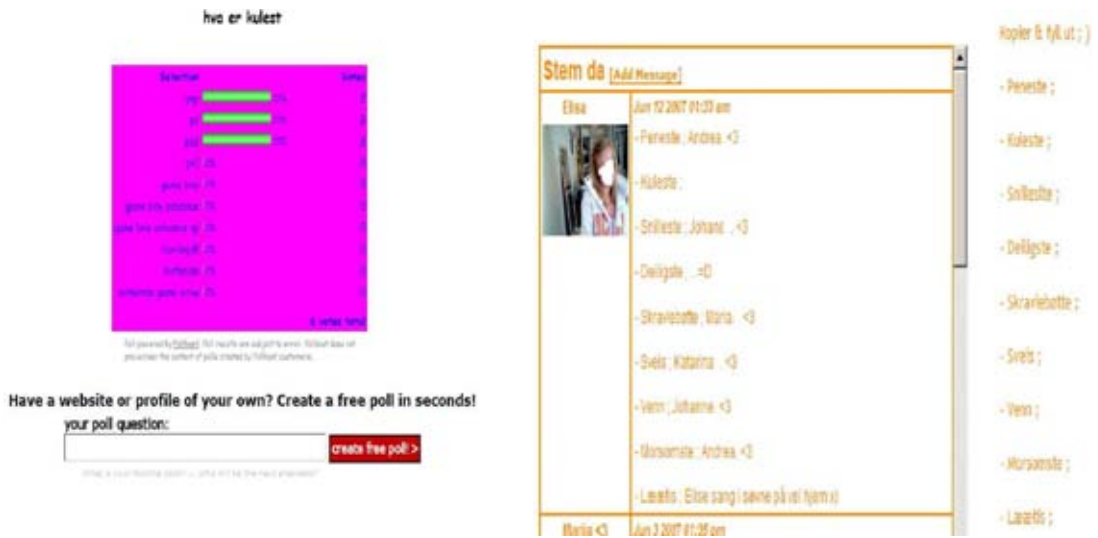


Figure 3

The pupils consume resources from their own files, from their local Piczo network, from the global Piczo network and from other Internet pages. Consequently the texts and tools consumed can either be self-made or ready-made. The self-made textual resources used by the pupils in the study are restricted to written texts and pictures, while the ready-made resources, containing written text, pictures, graphics, animations and videos, show a much greater variation and complexity.

The tools offered by Piczo, or other commercial providers, are also much more sophisticated than the tools produced by the pupils themselves. None of the pupils have programming skills sufficient to make their own tools. All the same, some of them combine the tools offered by Piczo, or other commercial tool providers, with texts that give the ready-made tools new functions defined by the pupils themselves. For example, Pollhost is a ready-made tool used by the pupils to rate both commodities and friends (see Skaar, forthcoming). Piczo offers its users so-called shout boxes as tools for comments and chats. By combining the shout box with a self-made text in which the visitors are invited to fill in the gaps, a “self-made” tool to rate the site holder’s popularity is produced:



Ready-made poll

“Self-made” poll

Figure 4-5

The pupils’ consumption within and outside the Piczo network blurs the distinction between commercial and non-commercial providers of texts and tools. For example, by copying the commercially manufactured and ready-made background from her friend Eva’s page, Ann is expressing her friendship with Eva. This privileged relation becomes apparent not only to Eva but to all the members of her local Piczo network:



Eva’s opening page

Ann’s opening page

Figure 6-7

By the subsequent use of the background on her own pages, Ann herself is likewise becoming a local provider of commercially manufactured resources to others in her local network.

Differences

The volume of consumption

Some of the pupils set up their websites on their own; some with classmates or friends, and some, among them the most active producers of web pages in the class, do both. Nevertheless, the sharing of pages with classmates does not correlate systematically with productivity. The number of pages produced by the 13 pupils in the study varies from five to more than 100. Five of the pupils have produced fewer than 10 Piczo pages, while eight of them have produced more than 10 Piczo pages. Those with the highest number of sites set up were also those producing most pages. Nine of the pupils have set up one site alone, while three have set up more than one site alone. All but one of the pupils sharing pages with friends have also set up sites by themselves.

Piczo pages produced:			Piczo sites set up:		
Fewer than 10 pages:	More than 10 pages:		Alone :	With friend(s):	
Amina	X		Amina		X
Nadia	X		Nadia	X	X
Safdar	X		Safdar	X	
Kent	X		Kent.	X	
Ann	X		Ann	X	
Hilda		X	Hilda	X	X
Tobias		X	Tobias	X	
Peter		X	Peter	X	
Freddy		X	Freddy	X	
Benny		X	Benny	X	
Dorthe		X	Dorthe	X	X
Jenny		X	Jenny	X	X
Henry		X	Henry	X	X
13	5	8	13	12	6

Figure 8

The modes of consumption: collectors and elaborators

When the pupils' modes of consumption are compared they can be divided in two groups. One group of pupils can be labelled as "collectors", the other as "elaborators". Both groups consume space, tools and texts to produce their self presentations on Piczo. The collectors do not relate these commercially manufactured resources to their self

presentations in ways that allow them to define the situation (see Goffman,1959) in their local Piczo network. Conversely, the elaborators do. In their production the commercial resources consumed are merged with their own texts and tools in a way that breaks down the difference between the two, and makes the agency involved in the elaboration of the commercially provided resources visible and significant.

Generally, the consumption of commercially provided resources is proportional to the volume of pages produced. The most eager consumers are also the most eager producers. Elaboration of consumed resources requires skills that can only be acquired through production, and most of the pupils in the group producing more than ten Piczo pages (six out of eight) are elaborators. Conversely, in the group producing fewer than ten Piczo pages all of the pupils are collectors.

Collectors with low productivity

Kent and Ann are examples of collectors with low productivity. They are the latest adopters of Piczo in the group, and in the period of observation Kent gives up his site without creating a new one.



Kent's opening page

A kitten branded "Obaketsu" as background for Ann's collection of friends.

Figure 9-10

On his opening page Kent uses the brand "Surf Naked" to present himself. On his three additional pages Kent presents a profile and some pictures of his friends. From a classmate he has copied a fill-in text combined with a shout box, which he uses to rate his own popularity.

Ann uses the lipstick copied from her friend's opening page as background. She has produced nine Piczo pages, some of which she has not yet filled with content. Among the ones produced are a profile page, a page with brief written descriptions of her friends, and a page showing a collection of pictures of cats and kittens. On some of these commercially provided resources, brands (e.g. "Obakesu") are exposed.

Neither Kent nor Ann makes any explicit reference to the brands appearing on their pages, and neither of them uses the commercially provided resources to establish an interactive relation to the visitors of their pages.

Collectors with high productivity

Freddy and Tobias have both produced more than 10 pages, and they have also been relatively persistent in their Piczo use. The texts and tools collected are partly categorized, partly randomly displayed on their pages. When Tobias abandoned his site to make a new one, he tells the visitors this is because "my previous site sucked". His new site focuses on his own cool appearance in a technically more sophisticated way, but he still primarily uses his self presentation on Piczo as a reference when he is chatting on MSN. Freddy keeps on exposing his various interests through collections of pictures throughout the period of observation, and some of his collections are slightly more cleverly arranged by the end of the period.

Over time, both Freddy and Tobias show a gradually improved capability to produce Piczo pages, but their mode of consumption does not change. They are still collectors.



Tobias's collection of brands and funny pictures.

Freddy' collection of Eminem pictures

Figure 11-12

Elaborators

All the elaborators in the group have a high production of Piczo pages. Henry and Jenny are typical elaborators.

Henry was among the early adopters of Piczo in the group. From the start he shows a very self-conceited attitude towards his own consumption of commercially provided resources. On all of the sites he set up, Henry collects and elaborates resources in a way that allow him to play out a role as fashion model and trendsetter in the local network. Brands are rated and given specific social significance, along with all kinds of merchandise that can influence social appearance, e.g. make up and sun glasses:



Example of elaborator's pages: taking the role as trendsetter
Figure 13-14

On a shared site, Henry and one of his friends proclaim their aspirations for a future as fashion designers and models. In the local network they consume commercial tools and resources to produce these roles for themselves:

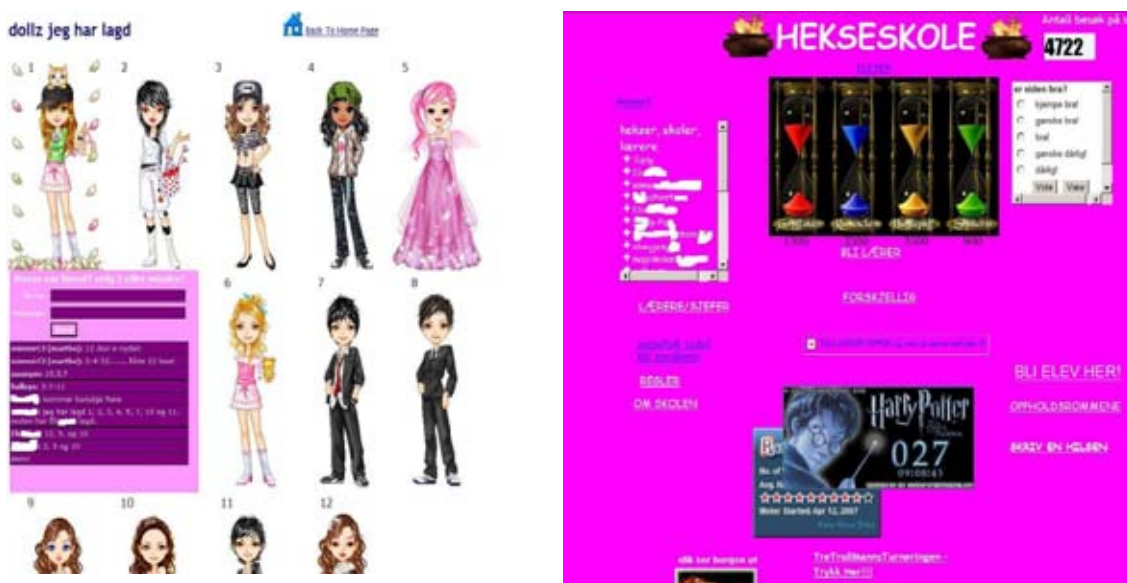


Example of elaborator's pages: taking the role as fashion model

Figure 15-16

Jenny was not one of the early adopters, but once started she soon had produced more pages than any other in the group. Initially she primarily presented personal texts she had written before she became a Piczo user, e.g. an fictional interview with herself, a diary and various fictional stories, but gradually she went on producing pages based on commercial resources. Adding pages and making new sites at a very rapid pace, she soon asked for help and assistance from others in the local network: a network partly underpinned by other children's interests in the production on her various sites. Some of her pages are copied "as is" from the local Piczo network or elsewhere on the web, but generally her consumption of commercially provided resources results in a production that gives her a role as creator of fun in the local network. Basically, these roles are based on her ability to show the others how to be inventive in their engagement with commercially provided resources on the net. She is also generous in her role as playmaker. For example, after having produced a fan site for a young female actor, she finally gives it away to another girl in the network.

Jenny engages the others by taking on the role as editor of her own magazine, or as headmaster of her own Harry Potter inspired "Witch school". But she also gets negative comments for these initiatives. For example, one anonymous commenter tells her to stop her silly games and "get yourself a life". Another tells her that her pages are full of girlish silliness.



Example of elaborator's page: taking the role as creator and facilitator
Figure 17-18

Discussion

Do the self presentations produced by the pupils in this study indicate that they are passive victims of consumer culture or active, powerful and competent consumers? Does their commercial consumption on Piczo pages turn them into frontrunners or copycats? To answer these questions, one must account for the power and influence of the commercial resources available to Piczo users while at the same time recognising how the pupils actively engage with these resources.

The pupils in this study cannot present themselves to a handful of friends in their local network without being counted among the millions of users in the global Piczo network. Through consumption of commercial space, texts and tools they allow the public to penetrate their private sphere. At the same time their own production of pages is replicated by marketers in their production of brands, promotion and adverts (see figure 1-2). This not only implies that the private is made public (see Chandler, 2005; Boyd, 2007), but also that the public is made private.

On Piczo pages the users generally try to match the marketers' production while the marketers try to match the users' production. In their production of self presentations all the pupils in the study mix their self-made texts and tools with commercially manufactured texts and tools offered by Piczo, by other commercial providers or elsewhere on the Internet. In the pupils' simultaneous consumption of space, texts and tools the commercial influence on their self presentations is strengthened by asserting itself on these three levels at the same time. The consumption's range covers the entire self presentation, not only the front but also the dramatization (see Goffman, 1959, p.30)

of the performance. Consumption becomes integrated in the pupils' production of self presentations in ways that makes it difficult and sometimes practically impossible to distinguish between global and local, commercial and non-commercial providers of resources.

When pupils provide others in their local network with commercially manufactured resources, the closer and more personal relationship between the provider and consumer also makes the identification with the taste and judgement involved in the resource stronger (see figure 6-7). Being participants in global and local networks at the same time can also mislead the users' perception of their actual audience on Piczo pages. The pupils' self presentations appear in a spatial surrounding that make them compete for attention with the professional eye-catching strategies of professional marketers. For example, marketers' use of sex, seduction, shock tactics and teasing to engage mass audiences can appear relevant in the development of personal presentations aimed at, and certainly actually reaching, a much more familiar and restricted audience.

The pupils express a number of interests on their Piczo pages, but commercial resources are mainly used to support two interests that they all share: having fun and being cool. In accepting Piczo's offer of hypertextual space, multimodal texts and pre-scripted tools in order to produce fun and coolness, the pupils tie the presentations of themselves to brands, promotion and adverts. The pupils are free to choose their own self-made texts and tools instead of the ready-made texts and tools offered on the website. But if this was their preference they would hardly find Piczo an interesting place to be. As confirmed on their pages and in the interviews, the pupils are Piczo users precisely because they appreciate the freedom to make their self presentations fun and cool in an easy way by consumption of the space, texts and tools they are offered. Consequently, through their presentations of themselves they are also presenting commercial products, and thus taking the role as advertisers in the Piczo network.

Investigating the so-called exposure effect Fang et al. (2007) present findings that consumers are more positive to commercials when a fluent exposure of banner ads on the Internet makes them unaware of the commercial intentions. At the Piczo website brands, promotion and adverts are exposed fluently to the users and at the same time made part of their own production. The pupils are free to collect resources both within and outside of the Piczo network, and some of them rely more on self-made resources than others. Still, their status as Piczo users sustains any individual choice. As participants in the global Piczo network the pupils in the study, like all Piczo users, inevitably support Piczo's own "brand management" which "exploits the productivity of consumers." (Arvidsson, 2006,p.70):

"(Brand managers') work consists in managing the autonomous production process that consumers engage in: to make sure that the common social world that they produce by means of the brand (a new street style, an experience of family bonding at McDonald's, an experience of empowerment with Nike) adds to the brand by either innovating or reproducing its desired set of qualities.(...) It is about ensuring that the means of

consumption effectively become means of production; that the ethical surplus that consumers produce also becomes a source of surplus value” (Arvidsson, 2006, p. 82)

Based on their different modes of consumption the pupils in the study can be categorized as elaborators and collectors. Both categories consume resources to have fun and be cool, but the freedom, attraction, and easiness available on Piczo pages influence their self presentations in different ways. The collectors are copycats in the sense that their consumption is not related to their production of self presentations in ways that allow them to define the social situation in their local network. The elaborators, on the other hand, are frontrunners in the sense that they consume to produce self presentations that allow them to try out their aspirations as playmakers, models, designers and trendsetters. These roles give them power to define the social situation in their local network. Does this give us reason for concluding that the pupils are partly empowered, partly made more vulnerable by their exposure to and dispersion of brands, promotions and adverts on the Piczo pages? The findings show a more complex picture. To give an answer, not only the pupils’ agencies but also the double structure of the Piczo network must be considered.

As described above the social situation on the Piczo website is structured with a local and global level of interaction. Although collectors and elaborators position themselves differently according to this double structure, none of them can escape it. But Piczo’s “brand management” is intertwined with the pupils’ “impression management” in different ways. According to Goffman “impression management” brings participants’ performances in accordance with a given social situation:

“Each participant is expected to suppress his immediate heartfelt feelings, conveying a view of the situation which he feels the others will be able to find at least temporarily acceptable” (Goffman, 1959, p.9)

By their simple dispersion of ready-made commercial resources, the collectors make their own creativity less visible than the elaborators do. They also make themselves less vulnerable to criticism from other participants in the Piczo network, not revealing their own voice but instead letting the commercial resources talk on their behalf. It is the pupils’ own, self-made texts that are degraded and made fun of by other Piczo users, not the commercial, ready-made texts they use to present themselves. One might say that being an elaborator raises the risk of being insulted online and that elaborators must be self confident enough to sustain this pressure. The study reveals that Jenny, highly aware of her own creativity and starting off with a large volume of self-made texts, gradually consumes more and more ready-made texts and tools to make her pages. Generally, the merge of global and local structure makes it both safer and easier to be a copycat than a frontrunner, and this gives the marketers an opportunity to present the Piczo users in the study with “an offer they can’t refuse”.

Both collectors and elaborators show a tendency to adopt global strategies in local interaction. For example, the collectors simply copy a ready-made poll, while some of the elaborators use their creativity to design a self-made poll by assemblage and reuse of resources initially intended for other purposes. Still, in the use of the polls both

elaborators and collectors replicate the commercial culture of rating persons the same way as they rate commercial products, similar to what is done in reality shows designed to entertain mass audiences (see figure 4-5).

The merge of the local and global gives Piczo Inc. the opportunity to offer its users resources that makes their “impression management” work for Piczo’s “brand management”. The study reveals that both collectors and elaborators are held up to ridicule for their self-made texts, but not for their choice of ready-made texts. In other words, it is easier to obtain fun and coolness in a socially impregnable way through the use of ready-made texts and tools. This makes it reasonable to assume that the merge of the global and local structure generally makes it more tempting to be a copycat than a frontrunner. Being fun and cool in a universe defined by adolescents and professional marketers seems like a difficult task for the 11- and 12- year-olds in this study. In their production the paradoxical nature of coolness becomes apparent:

“As in the case of the appropriation of style, capturing cool is a matter of incorporating and profiting from the resistance that consumers spontaneously produce. (Indeed, the antithesis of cool is understood to be commodification: one ceases to be cool at the moment in which one’s style becomes appropriated as part of mainstream. Conversely, continued coolness builds on a continuous capacity for stylistic resistance.” (Arvidsson, 2006, p.73)

In other words; the “cool” self is a sovereign self, which turns into a paradox when it is embraced and appropriated by the masses. Once everybody wears the most popular jeans or looks like the most popular artist, the coolness vanishes. Still, in the global network the self with the highest value is the self that calls for attention and identification among the highest number of consumers. This self typically belongs to the athletes, models and artists from sports, music and TV series. Just as the most popular jeans and jackets are the bestselling jeans and jackets, the most popular selves (often wearing those jeans and jackets) are the best selling selves. Consequently these self presentations are allowed to define the situation in the global Piczo network. The pupils in the study relate to these self presentations as collectors or elaborators, but none of them are powerful enough to abandon the globally defined fun and coolness and at the same time define the social situation in their local networks.

By getting their presence in a commercialized setting paid off by easy access to fun and coolness the pupils are cooperating closely with the market while at the same time relating to their peers. Does this make them vulnerable? Being in need of advice and guidance from parents, teachers and other adults, young people are always vulnerable. Not yet mature enough to protect themselves, they are “victims” for their preferences and desires in the sense that they cannot as easily as an adult see through and evaluate the costs attached to their fulfillment. The question is how the surroundings should be allowed to influence these preferences and desires. Presumably their inability to define the social situation on Piczo pages makes the collectors more vulnerable than elaborators to a feeling of powerlessness in their production of self presentations. On the other hand, the collectors do not generally involve themselves as much with the commercial

resources as the elaborators do. Spending less time on the Piczo website, they are less exposed to brands, promotion and adverts. This, on the other hand, also means that they do not become sufficiently experienced consumers to use commercial resources in the production of powerful self presentations on the Internet.

Arguing for a positive correlation between “good video games” and learning, Gee (2003) emphasizes that gamers not only consume but also produce. On Piczo pages the users consume to produce. If the production of playing “good videogames” is a positive thing, can the production of Piczo pages be understood in a similar way? Regardless of the learning effect it must matter whether gamers learn to shoot or beat people to death or to make clever dispositions in order to build up a city or an empire. Most of us presume that only the latter have a positive value capable of being transferred to real life. Similarly, the valuation of learning on Piczo pages depends on our valuation of the space, texts and tools the users consume in order produce their self presentations. Are the resources offered on Piczo pages “good”? What is good for young people, and what is harmful for them? If a commercial offer can be good or harmful, then Piczo can be good or harmful. To what extent do we want marketers to produce the premises for the socialization of young people? To what extent do we want young people and marketers to collaborate? Presumably most people do not see a problem if the marketers are working to combat famine in the third world or save the global system, but what if their products are unwanted, harmful or damaging? On the Piczo website the young users are left with the responsibility of understanding and discerning the difference themselves.

Conclusion and implications for future research

Piczo pages give the marketers access to a part of young people’s life realm previously out of their reach. Making young people mediate their self presentations through the use of e.g. a Cola Cola slogan is a deeper dive into their identity work than making them wear the same slogan on their T-shirt. Through their production the young consumers are made marketers themselves. On the other hand, when they consume the Cola Cola slogan in the production of their self presentations they also acquire skills that don’t follow mere consumption (see Skaar, forthcoming). As participants in a network that is global and local at the same time all the pupils in the study merge commercial and non-commercial, readymade and self made resources to produce their self presentations. They can be divided in elaborators, who use the commercially provided space, texts and tools to empower their position in their local network, and collectors, who do not. But regardless of their mode of consumption none of them are powerful enough to abandon the globally defined fun and coolness and at the same time define the social situation in their local network. This makes the question of whether the commercial influence empowers or makes the pupils in this study more vulnerable an ambiguous one.

In the final end the answer depends on our own value based assessment of young people’s exposure to the market on Piczo pages. One might emphasize their empowerment as consumers in the sense that their preferences for fun and coolness can be commercialized and provided ready-made for them at a more rapid pace. In other words celebrate the fact that they are made more powerful in the *global* network, as a

mass audience of *consumers*. Conversely one might contend that in the *local* network, the pupils in this study, although more or less self-assertive, are made more vulnerable as a local audience of *producers* precisely because they are forced to relate directly to the competition from the marketers in their efforts to produce fun and coolness by themselves.

In this study theories of identity and mediation are used to define a relatively small group of pupils' communication on a specific social networking site. Consumption of space, texts and tools is tied to their production of self presentations. The commercial influence on this production is explained by the pupils' simultaneous participation in a global and a local network. Based on the differences between their consumption the pupils are furthermore categorized as collectors and elaborators. The value of the study depends on whether "What I have found true of people in this study is likely to be true of any people placed in this situation" (Judd et al. 1991, s.317). Thus, future research should examine whether my constructs and categorizations catch the essential features of young peoples' consumption on social networking sites in particular, and also to what extent they might help us define and understand young people's consumption on the Internet in general. The validity of the study can be tried out on other groups or samples of young people, and on other social networking or commercial websites.

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RFID - the ‘next step’ in consumer-product relations or Orwellian nightmare?

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Abstract

RFID has over the last few years been successfully implemented in supply chain management, for inventory control, and in automated toll-collection. The next implementation is expected to come in retail, with RFID being embedded in products, shelves and check-out points for value-added sales and post-purchase services. This vision of a pervasive and omnipresent technology has spurred a lot of controversy due to privacy concerns and fear of an Orwellian-like surveillance society. At the moment, consumer-oriented RFID research is scarce and there is little empirical material to base sound policies and guidelines for RFID development on. This paper seeks to chart the RFID territory, address the research that is already available, and conclude with a call for more encompassing research done on RFID in context to support policy and industry in RFID-related initiatives.

1. Introduction

Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) is a generic term for technologies that use radio waves to identify commercial products. An RFID system normally consists of an RFID tag (transponder), a reader (transceiver) and a database. The RFID tag consists of a tiny silicon chip (microchip) for data storage and an antenna that transmits information about the tagged product to an RFID reader. Information can further be transmitted to central databases linking the RFID code to consumer information. The transmission of data goes through electromagnetic waves in the radio frequency spectrum – *the far field*, or through inductive (magnet) coupling, in which case the tag must be within the reader’s magnetic field – the *near field region* (Gragg, 2003; Langheinrich, 2006). The tags normally allow for functionality such as writable storage, environmental sensors, access, control and encryption (Sarma, Weis & Engels, 2003).

RFID can uniquely identify specific objects and help “classifying, counting, and organizing anything” (Boriello, 2005). This is also perceived to be the main idea behind RFID – to provide items or products with a unique identity, so they can be counted and traced. The core of this identification is the Electronic Product Code (EPC) that follows the RFID-tag. In a way it is the successor to the barcode, but RFID has a much wider application potential due to the unique code that make products individually identifiable.

In today’s knowledge or information society, technology optimism permeates policy and technology circles and the use of technology such as RFID seems both promising and future-

oriented. This makes it easy to justify extensive RFID usage, beyond tracking items in the supply chain. The manufacturing industry and retail businesses have voiced interest in implementing RFID “closer to the consumer” in order to extract the benefits of a closer relationship between products and consumers. At the same time consumer and privacy groups have voiced concern for a developing Orwellian society, in terms of private sector consumer surveillance. It is expected that low-cost RFID chips will behave like “smart-labels” on every commercial product, and hence RFID may become one of “the most pervasive computing technologies in human history” (Sarma, Weis & Engels, 2003). The ability of the technology to collect data about a person from various sources, to track a person in public places, to create enhanced profiles by monitoring consumer behaviour in stores, to remotely read data from a persons clothes, accessories or the person herself – are all scenarios that should raise privacy concerns according to the EU-initiated *Article 29 Data Protection Working Party* (2005).

So far the technology has been implemented to achieve cost savings and to improve efficiency and visibility into the supply chain of goods and processes. But the technology seems to have unlimited potential in terms of acquiring, storing, tracing and transmitting data. It has been proposed by the scientific community that RFID technology could be the “embodiment of the paradigm shift towards low-cost ubiquitous computing” (Rieback et al, 2006) and that the technology will blur the physical and online worlds by allowing individuals to manage a plethora of wirelessly interconnected commercial products – and even animals and people. Tracking dogs through RFID has become common practice to many pet owners, while patients in hospitals have already had RFID chips implanted to monitor health and medication needs. A bar in Barcelona offers its VIP members subdermal RFID chips for identification, access and transaction, while a bar in Glasgow offers subdermal RFID tags containing credit card information.

Consumer awareness of the technology primarily stems from mass media’s focus on questionable RFID pilots conducted by large supermarket chains, primarily in the US, Germany and the UK. Retailers and the tech industry advocate counter-strategies to these mass mediated scares in order to “educate the consumer” about the potential benefits of the technology. These advocates also feel a need to debunk the myths that swirl around RFID. Consumer advocacy groups on the other hand address the issues of privacy, covert tracking and behavioural profiling as key concerns, and are stern opponents of the RFID technology.

This paper will discuss current RFID deployment and pilots, address the potential benefits and risks for consumers, as well as the expected omnipresence and “invisibility” of RFID and related systems, making RFID intrusive and potentially evading consumer consciousness in the future. We also look at regulations and initiatives from private actors and consumer organisations as first attempts to provide guidelines for a “healthy” RFID development. Concerning consumers’ present perception of RFID there are very few consumer studies available. In this paper we refer to two studies conducted by Capgemini, a consultancy, as well as to a few other consumer-related studies. We conclude the paper by reviewing the relevant research, media coverage, tests and applications, and the potential pros and cons of the technology. On the basis of this we suggest more research as well as collaboration between industry and the consumer sector to pave way for a sound RFID deployment in the Nordic countries.

2. Background

RFID as a technological concept is not new. RFID was already used in World War II to identify friendly aircrafts in air battles. In the 1980s it was mostly used to tag livestock in order to track and monitor the wellbeing of animals (Gragg, 2003). The first commercial implementation of RFID came in 1984 as General Motors attached RFID tags to car frames to make sure that the right equipment was put on each frame (Juban & Wyld, 2004). In the 1990s RFID entered the supply chain for managing production and distribution systems.

Hence, RFID has moved from the labs and niche uses into a broader range of applications such as supply chain management, asset management, access control, wireless transactions, etc. (Evans, 2004). The brief “public” history of the technology has been myth-spun and polarised between advocates and antagonists of the technology. The public debates have focussed on the future potential of the technology and not so much on existing applications. Roussos (2006) claims that we over the past two years have “witnessed an explosion of interest in radio-frequency identification and supporting technologies”. The main driver of this development, according to Roussos, is the expanding supply-chain tracking of groceries. Tracing food has also become forced on the European food industry by EU legislation due to recent food scandals. The current use in retail is in essence to monitor store-keeping units (SKUs) and not individual goods – although this is the controversial topic that has created privacy fears. Item-level tagging is however in many ways impractical according to Roussos due to the high costs of RFID deployment and the low profit margin of most supermarket products. However, for high-values products RFID could yield benefits and added-value.

In terms of a *consumer perspective* on RFID the most interesting aspect is tied to the retail business’ use of such applications – both in-store and out-of-store as consumers bring home RFID-tagged items that are “live”. There is still a long way to go concerning item-level tagging but large retailers worldwide, such as *Wal-Mart*, *Tesco*, *Marks & Spencer* and *Metro*, have already conducted pilot-tests to see how RFID systems work in practice.

It is claimed that even though the RFID technology occupy a range of great capabilities for both consumers and businesses, the technology and its perceived uses are considered sensitive from ethical and legal standpoints, including many controversies and issues that need to be resolved – mostly because consumers are not aware of the technology, how it might be used, and they do not grasp how the technology itself works (Lee, 2005). As Taghaboni-Dutta & Velthouse (2006) states, many consumers have already had hands-on experience with RFID technology without being aware of it. Juban & Wyld (2004) follows up on this claiming that most consumers are unaware of RFID *as a term*, how RFID will *affect how products are sold*, and what *benefits and risks* are involved at the consumer level.

3. RFID and its potential

EPC Global is the joint venture organisation that has set out to develop industry-driven standards¹ for the Electronic Product Code (EPC) that is used in RFID. The predecessor to the EPC is the Universal Product Code (UPC), also known as the barcode system. The UPC only identifies a *product type* and not *individual products*. It is expected that RFID will succeed the well-established barcode as an identifier of products. Today it is reckoned that more than 5

¹ In close cooperation with the International Standards Organization (ISO).

billion barcodes are scanned on a daily basis worldwide (Garfinkel, 2002). Garfinkel compares the optically scanned barcodes with the new RFID tags and claims that the latter represent a lot of advantages:

- 1) Optical barcodes need line-of-sight to be read, while RFID tags can be read through most materials, although there are drawbacks when it comes to liquids and metals.
- 2) Barcodes have 13 digits of information while RFID tags can store hundreds or thousands of bytes of information.
- 3) Only one barcode can be read at a time, while dozens of RFID tags can be read simultaneously by a single reader.
- 4) Barcodes are read-only, while RFID tags can both store and process a limited amount of information.
- 5) Barcodes are promiscuous, since any compatible reader within range can read the tagged object's data. RFID tags on the other hand can be encrypted for enhanced security.
- 6) Barcodes must be physically destroyed or discarded while RFID tags can be electronically deactivated; meaning either "killed" or "put asleep".

Over the past few years, businesses and industry have invested large sums in researching RFID and seek for quick implementation of these systems to get ROI² (Boslau & Ritke, 2006). Manufacturers and retailers desire transparency throughout the supply chain, and the individual tagging and identification of each item through RFID supports that vision. But an added value is the real-time market research that retailers can perform through surveillance of in-store shopping habits (Perakslis & Wolk, 2006), as well as finding new ways to gather, analyse and communicate information in order to achieve more targeted marketing, less excess production inventory and address consumer demands for better and more correct service. Even though the anticipated benefits seem high, it must be realised that replacing the barcode system will come at immense costs.

RFID-tags or transponders can be attached to, or implanted into, objects, animals or people. There are in essence two kinds of RFID-tags in operation, referred to as *passive* and *active*:

- *Active tags*: The active RFID chip continually radiates information for any receiver to pick up (unless its message is coded). These chips have a local power source and are consequently larger and more costly to produce than the passive tags. They are also prone to be disabled if the power source fails. Still the signal that is sent out is a lot stronger than for the passive tag and can reach up to, and even beyond, 100 meters. The size and cost of the active tag renders it less useful as a potentially all-encompassing tool for pervasive and ubiquitous computing and commerce.

- *Passive tags*: The passive tag on the other hand is small, now down to the size of a grain of sand (the Hitachi Mu-chip is 0.3 mm²). The passive tag is powered by incoming electromagnetic or inductive signals from the RFID reading device. It uses this energy to activate and to send information (the EPC and/or other information) back to the reader. The reading distance is however very short, from a few centimetres up to a meter. The advantage is long life-span due to the lacking power source, less maintenance, and the chip only sends information when activated by a reader (Gragg, 2003). The production costs keep falling for the passive tag, and the hope is that each chip will fall below 5 dollar cents to reach mass-

² Return on investment

implementation into consumer goods. It is only the passive tag that could potentially replace the barcode.

RFID-applications can be differentiated into two product groups; 1) products with RFID being a *central feature* of the object itself, and 2) objects that are *tagged with RFID*. The first category can be exemplified by access control systems, vehicle immobilization systems and automated toll collection system. The second group can be exemplified by any product group having RFID-tags attached to them, but where RFID is not a central feature of the product itself (Boslau & Ritke, 2006). The authors claim that a fundamental difference of the two groups is that in group 1) RFID provides a core value to the consumer, while this is not the case in product group 2) where the added value is basically for producers and businesses. In the future there will potentially be more hybrid versions of these two groups as RFID is being implemented into traditional consumer products and not only attached onto them or onto their packaging.

The assumed advantages that RFID brings to the marketplace are increased automation, unique identification, improved visibility, real-time information, enhanced information about products such as ingredients/ potential uses/ ethics, improved efficiency, reduced costs for asset tracking and management (Evans 2004), lower prices, greater product selection, higher product availability, faster check-out at the counter, location of products involved in recall, as well as mail-tracking and luggage-tracing. Furthermore, enhanced working standards, reduced medical risks, protection of personal assets (e.g. easy and quick recovery of high-cost stolen items) and overall ease-of-living are seen as benefits (Perakslis & Wolk, 2006). According to Juels (2006) *unique identification* and *automation* stand out as main advantages over the optical barcode.

Some proponents of barcodes purport that these are sufficient for keeping track of specific items and for data maintenance, while for certain products, in particular high-value or sensitive assets, RFID can add value through asset tracking, precision location, anti-theft, and updating tags with critical product information or maintenance information (Evans, 2004). Further, RFID can protect against the counterfeit industry, which has increased drastically over the past years (Taghaboni-Dutta & Velthouse, 2006). It is assumed that consumers have an interest in verifying products. Hence, RFID becomes a mechanism *for increasing trust in a product*, while this is also in the interest of producers and retailers. For the pharmaceutical industry in particular this feature is critical. The focus in this case is not on improved efficiency in the supply chain, but on protecting consumers against potentially harmful counterfeit products.

For the retailers and manufacturers in general “user profiling” appears as one of the most tempting and valuable benefits of item-level RFID deployments. Such profiling enables price discrimination. Price discrimination can thus be an incentive for many market actors to violate the privacy of customers, while consumers might be outraged at the price discrimination practice itself (Stajano, 2005). The loyalty of customers is invaluable to retailers and new ways to attract and retain customers are always sought. Thus the trend towards more individual marketing/service and targeting/mass customization is increasing, although fully individualized marketing is still not a reality (Roussos, 2006). But the cost to the businesses of being “too easy” with consumer data could prove to be fatal.

RFID on an item-level can yield new information and insights into shopping habits and RFID also leaves an “information trail” (Roussos, 2006) involving recordings about location, how

and when consumers and products have engaged, and how the products travel through the value chain. It is expected that retailers, in their hunger for information about consumers, will want to follow this trail to gain knowledge of how the product is used in everyday life – combined with a deep profile of the specific user. Thus, more individualized offers and promotions can be displayed to the consumers as they return to the store, by connecting the consumer's profile, interests and lifestyle choices to available products. Stajano (2005) claims that the assumed benefits are mostly for manufacturers and retailers and not so much for the consumers, even though these are the ones that need to be convinced. Eckfelt (2005) follows Stajano's logic and claims that consumers calculate perceived values against their risk exposure, referring to RFID in security systems as the best value for consumers. Automated toll collection also provides great convenience for the consumer, while RFID in stores is more difficult to legitimate. Consumers must be convinced of the benefit from real-time and extended information, as well as the reward of after-sales services, in order for the RFID to be welcomed. The impending danger is that consumers start feeling they're being "spied on" and tracked for the purpose of marketing or clandestine profiling. The privacy-related issues will be addressed in chapter 4.

3.1 RFID applications

There are already a range of services where RFID has been implemented, also in the Nordic countries, where automated toll collection and RFID in libraries are the most prominent, in addition to supply-chain management. On a general level there are various sectors that could enjoy RFID. In the *transportation industry* RFID can be used for tracking physical goods. Today this can only be done by manually scanning individual barcodes, requiring manpower and line-of-sight. RFID-enhanced *museum exhibits* can be realised through reader packages being mounted on museum exhibits, while RFID tags can be carried by visitors on cards or necklaces. User profiles can be registered in museum kiosks, and web-pages for post-exhibit involvement can be included in the service. A key concern has been the conceptual part; making customers understand how the technology works. Hsi & Fait (2005) claim that visitors have an underdeveloped mental model of what RFID technologies are and how they work.

In *libraries* RFID has been implemented for easy checkout of books and inventory control. The monitoring of peoples book selections have spurred some concerns, in particular in the US where the government may be interested in peoples reading habits for national security reasons. In *manufacturing* the German manufacturer *Gardeur AG* has deployed an RFID system for better visibility in the supply chain, to reduce shrinkage (theft or loss) and to generally increase efficiency and reduce costs³. Further, in *clothing* small passive chips/tags can be put into clothes to protect the integrity and prevent counterfeit products as well as reduce theft. Accenture, a consultancy, has developed a prototype where a person can access information about another person's clothes, via embedded RFID technology in the clothes. The relevant item can then be ordered immediately over the internet using a PDA. Also, RFID tags in clothes could potentially "talk" to a washing machine that automatically chooses the appropriate wash cycle to avoid damaging the fabric (Juels, 2006).

In *retail*, automatic purchasing has been tested⁴ but not implemented on a large scale. This implementation means no more check-out lines. Consumers in retail stores will in this case be

³ RFID Journal, Aug. 2006: "Clothing Manufacturer Invests Its ROI in RFID".

⁴ See the reference to the *Metro Future Store Initiative* in the next chapter.

equipped with RFID in key chains, credit cards or mobile devices. Sensors detect the products as the consumer leaves the store and bills the users account. However, pilot studies have shown that one can end up paying for other customers products that accidentally have been read by RFID readers at the counter (Taghaboni-Dutta & Velthouse, 2006). In *homes*, we have already mentioned intelligent washing machines, while sensors in refrigerators can detect expiry dates, keep up stock, reorder food over the Internet, and could potentially provide relevant recipes for certain foods. These are services that are still on the test bed.

A more established application is RFID used in *security keys*. RFID-enabled keys are used for access control, such as car-keys, automatic opening of car gates and doors at home. This application provides hands-free authentication and can also record the specific time a person enters a certain room/area. RFID keys are also difficult to reproduce and reverse engineer (Gragg, 2003). *Automated toll-payment* for automatic cost deduction has already been mentioned as a huge success, where RFID-tagged devices are attached to car wind shields. In *hospitals* and for *medication*, Accenture, the consultancy, has tested an “intelligent” online medical cabinet, in the sense that it can monitor a persons health and give reminders on medication and pending refills, and even order refills. *Tracking* of pets, children and patients by using active RFID tags are also applications that are in operation. Parents can for example track where their children move in a confined area. This service has been implemented in several amusement parks, such as *Legoland* in Denmark and *Dolly’s Splash Country* in the US. Tracking patients (autists and dementia patients) and preventing abduction of babies from hospitals have also become practical applications.

3.2 RFID tests and implementations by businesses

Large retailers and supermarket chains are in the forefront when it comes to experimenting with new technology for improved efficiency and cost reductions. German-based *Metro Group*, one of the world’s largest retailers, has initiated *The Future Store Initiative* (www.future-store.org) that gathers more than forty companies from retailing, consumer goods and information technology to explore solutions for future retailing. RFID is a central technology in this initiative. The initiative has tried out RFID applications for households, supermarkets, department stores, warehouse management and order picking.

US-based *Wal-Mart*, the worlds largest retailer, actually forced the implementation of barcodes in 1984 by pushing its suppliers to implement the technology, just as the retailer now demands its top suppliers to implement RFID for inventory tracking. That is RFID on pallets, not on individual items (Gragg, 2003). *Wal-Mart* and *Gillette* also tested a “smart shelf” in 2003 where the smart shelf system detected information from RFID-enabled Gillette products (low stock, stolen items). Privacy advocates criticised the two for violating consumer privacy. There are even websites dedicated to boycotting Gillette for their privacy-invading use of RFID (www.boycottgillette.com). *Wal-Mart* also equipped shelves in a store in Oklahoma with RFID in 2003, tracking a brand of lipstick, while *Proctor & Gamble* researchers detected when consumers removed the lipstick from the shelves – in Cincinnati. The removal of lipsticks triggered a video monitor where researchers could watch consumers (Hildner, 2006). *Wal-Mart* has also tested the use of robots with RFID technology embedded that can help handicapped consumers navigate through the aisles to find relevant products (Taghaboni-Dutta & Velthouse, 2006).

Other RFID tests have been conducted by the large retailer *Tesco*, that attempted a similar system to that of *Wal-Mart* in 2003 – on Gillette products and DVDs. But this system took photos of the consumer taking the product from the shelf, then comparing it to pictures of people actually purchasing the product (Gragg, 2003). This was considered highly privacy-invasive by consumer groups. *Marks & Spencer* use wireless transponders to ensure that their perishable foods reach the consumers faster.

In the clothing industry *Prada*, the upscale clothier, has implemented RFID in its New York store. In this case the sales representatives can provide enhanced information about the products to the customers by scanning the RFID-tagged clothes with a portable reader. The dressing rooms are also RFID-enabled giving customers video displays of runway shows, or matching clothes and accessories to the items tagged.

ExxonMobil, one of the worlds larges oil companies, has used RFID its “SpeedPass”⁵, a service for automatic gas fuelling. This system links the customers RFID key to a database containing consumer credit card information. No signature or pin-code is needed. In the near future *Exxon* envisions fixing RFID-tags to cars so gas pumps can load customer data instantaneously as the customer arrives at the gas station. Customers can further purchase other products than gasoline and *Exxon* has partnered up with *McDonalds* so consumers can purchase burgers with their “SpeedPass”.

There are plans for using RFID in bank notes and credit cards. *The European Central Bank* wish to embed RFID-chips into Euro notes as an anti-counterfeiting measure, to reveal money laundering attempts, and for counting and sorting money. As one article mentions, the tags in bank notes allows the money to “carry its own history by recording information about where it has been”. This provides government and law enforcement with means to “follow the money”. The anonymity of cash will consequently disappear (Albrecht, 2002). *Visa*, *MasterCard* and *American Express* plan to simplify payment processes through a “contact-less” credit card system for consumers, by utilizing RFID. The new card need to be in close proximity of the reader to complete a purchase, and no signature or pin is required for smaller purchases (Perakslis & Wolk, 2006).

4. Privacy and consumer concerns

The “Big Brother” scenario surrounding RFID has spurred some public concern; the vision of a future comprehensive surveillance society, with a seamless network of millions of RFID readers and billions of RFID tags placed everywhere that constantly read, process and evaluate consumer behaviour and purchases (Langheinrich, 2006). Stajano (2005) follows up on this common fear, that objects will radiate unique IDs and that each tagged consumer item can be tracked by others. This provides for an “inescapable, Orwellian surveillance” (Stajano, 2005).

It is argued that the US, and other western countries, are becoming surveillance societies nevertheless, with new high-tech ways of invading people’s privacy. New technologies pave way for this development with microchips, computers, cameras, sensors, wireless communication, GPS and biometrics that constantly reduce the technical barriers to establishing a private sector Orwellian regime. With RFID introduced in this scenario people

⁵ 10 000 users in 1997 – 7 million worldwide in 2003.

can become identifiable through their possessions, and the stealth nature of RFID is what distinguishes it from other technologies that can intrude upon consumer privacy⁶ (Hildner, 2006). The disintegration of consumer privacy, as well as the reduction in consumer awareness, consent and consciousness is what is at stake.

However, historically heated debates have always occurred when new ground-breaking technologies have been introduced. In the 1970s there were fiery discussions when the first printed barcodes were introduced on the American market, as the comprehensive numbering of items “fuelled fears of a dawning apocalypse” (Langheinrich, 2006). Traditionally businesses have been portrayed as the potential abusers of commercially initiated technology. RFID on the contrary, even though implemented by businesses, enables misuse and encroachments by manufacturers and retailers, as well as by governments and law enforcement, and finally by crooks and scoundrels.

It is the idea of ubiquitous tracking of people, which RFID as a component enables, that has spurred most controversy regarding privacy and which has fuelled demands for policies and ethical guidelines. *The U.S. Privacy Protection Commission* noted already in 1997 that “the real danger is the gradual erosion of individual liberties, through the automation, integration, and interconnection of many small, separate record keeping systems, each of which alone may seem innocuous, even benevolent, and wholly justifiable (Perakslis & Wolk, 2006). These functions, that can prove to be privacy invading, are also the alleged advantages of RFID and related technologies, and the key to a pervasive, ubiquitous computing society.

The main concerns that surface in the debate over RFID are *clandestine tracking and inventorying* (Juels, 2006). If there is no encryption, RFID tags attached to items or people will respond to relevant readers *without notifying* the owners or bearers of the tags. This lack of control is probably what scares people and privacy organisations; that others can point a reader at them and engage in clandestine scanning of items that the person possesses. If this information is connected with the person's profile or a larger database of information, a potential “surveillance” aspect is introduced. The other concern is that items one is carrying or wearing will give away position data about a person's whereabouts. This is the tracking concern. Boriello (2005) states that: “No consumers would want anyone else to be able to follow their every move by tracking the objects they carry or wear.”

The fear generated by the tracking and predictive capabilities of RFID systems will potentially scare consumers more than provide them a feeling of efficiency and closer information and bonds to the product. This awareness can make some consumers demand that all links are cut between themselves and the product, preventing new services, upgrades and recalls to work efficiently. In addition, access and visibility into how one's data are handled will be a related demand, including controlling the RFID tags in terms of deciding whether they should be “alive” or if they should be “killed”.

The problem is that consumers have no practical way to *actually verify* that tag functionality has been shut off, killed, or disabled in other ways. In trials at the before-mentioned *Metro* stores in Germany, tags were not disabled while consumers were given notification that this had been done (Roussos, 2006). Roussos states that most consumers do not trust retailers to comply with the *EU Data Protection Directive*, and he believes that even though low-level mechanisms and technical tools (such as tag-killers or blockers-tags) can ensure some

⁶ E.g. supermarket loyalty programs and cards.

compliance with relevant EU directives, “they are unlikely to conclusively address consumer concerns because the users interact with RFID systems at a much higher conceptual level”. Another *Metro* initiative that led to public outcry took place in Germany in 2004 when the *Metro Future Store* was opened. As people learned that the company had distributed 10 000 loyalty cards with implanted RFID to customers without notifying them, activists teamed up outside the store and protested. The *Metro* response was that it had done this to prevent children from watching adult movie clips at store kiosks (Lee, 2005).

The advantages of RFID are the technology’s biggest drawbacks, as it was postulated earlier. According to Langheinrich (2006) the key attributes of RFID (automation, identification, integration and authentication) can threaten two classes of individual privacy; *data privacy* and *location privacy*. Location privacy is threatened if a tag ID is associated with a given person spotted at a particular reader location. If a tag contains more data than the unique ID, or can be connected to a database with a person’s profile information, violations of data privacy might occur. A problem that arises from consumer responses to business invitations is that the individual does not see the reach of single actions, and is as such *willing to give away personal data* or *accepting “tagging”* for various purposes, without realising the consequences. A related problem stems from the unwilling compromising of personal data through insufficiently secured tags, access controls, payments systems or passports. The true danger of RFID lies at this latter point; that automated data collection of personal information and an increasing amount of data traces available on all levels of our lives, *accidentally will be disclosed*.

*CASPIAN*⁷ (*Consumers Against Supermarket Privacy Invasion an Numbering*) has been highly visible in the RFID debate in the US, constantly pointing at actual and potential abuses by the retail sector – and the government – and consistently referring to RFID-chips as “spy chips”⁸ (Taghaboni-Dutta & Velthouse, 2006). The organisation uses the press as a channel to voice its concern over privacy breaches (potential and real) and to call for boycott actions. Due to the one-sided portrayal of RFID as a negative privacy-breaching system, industry consultants and advocates have felt the need to dispel certain myths that have been created about RFID. This verbal fight has to some extent led to a polarisation of the RFID debate, in particular in the US.

The RFID Position Statement of *The Consumer Privacy and Civil Liberties Organizations*, issued by a range of organisations concerned with individual privacy, lists several threats to privacy and civil liberties when, or if, RFID is implemented on a large scale. The assumed threats are: 1) Hidden placement of tags, as these can be embedded onto/into objects and humans/animals and radio waves travels silently, 2) Unique identifiers for all objects worldwide, through the EPC, could lead to a global item registration system, 3) Massive data aggregation in large databases can be linked to personal identifying data, 4) Hidden readers make tags readable from a distance. Thus a person can neither detect the reader nor the act of being read covertly, 5) Individual tracking and profiling, which is basically a sum of the concerns/threats listed above.

Langheinrich (2006) claim that popular and media articles tend to quote capabilities of *active tags* when discussing the possible implications for RFID deployment, leading to surveillance

⁷ CASPIAN, a US-based consumer group, was formed in the US in 1999 to address issues related to supermarket and retailers’ collection and potential abuse of consumer information. RFID is by the groups seen as a “Big Brother” technology that will monitor consumer purchases and habits.

⁸ See: www.spsychips.org. The psychips webpage is a CASPIAN project.

scenarios that to some extent are out of touch with reality. The active tags have higher read ranges and can store more data, but cannot be implemented on an item-level as they require large batteries to function and are expensive. But these tags form the basis for the most common myth of the intrusiveness of the technology. In addition orientation problems and radio interferences will render the RFID systems impractical as a general surveillances system.

4.1 Potential barriers to RFID deployment

Critical to the success of RFID is the ability to develop proper *standards*, to provide an environment for *interoperability* among tags and scanners, and also to secure that RFID is embedded seamlessly in larger systems. As of now, most of these aspects are inadequate and existing systems rely primarily on smaller proprietary solutions. Mokoff (2004) writes that integration issues are key concerns in RFID development and must involve tag creators, reader manufacturers, software middleware developers and system integrators. EPC Global, the organisation guiding the development of RFID standards is a step in the direction of proper cooperation and standards in the RFID field, and Microsoft has initiated the Microsoft RFID Council, which is set out to join EPC Global on standardisation issues (Sullivan, 2004).

The *costs* of implementing RFID systems are also high, and provide a potential barrier. There are investments in tags, readers, networks/interfaces, middleware/software, integration costs, installation costs and training costs involved (Juban & Wyld, 2004). Even though the cost of for example passive tags should fall below the “demand” of 5 dollar cents per tag, there are still steep costs associated with implementing the RFID system in industry and retail. To reap the full benefits of i.e. lower inventory, theft reduction, product tracking, etc., tags have to be introduced in a very early stage of the process – *throughout the whole supply chain*. The problem so far has to a certain extent been that some market actors believe that you only need a few readers and tags that are attached to pallets, cases or items, and that this will give you real-time supply-chain visibility⁹.

Other barriers are *effective read ranges*, operations in environments where *water or metal* are present, *good software* for analysis, the fact that inexpensive tags are *read-only* so additional information cannot be applied to the tag as it goes through the supply chain, and finally that there is a “*Big Brother*” label connected with RFID, which is die hard and not easy to get rid of.

Another barrier is the potential for *information overload*. RFID can generate enormous amounts of data that need to be collected, stored, handled and interpreted to produce knowledge and value to its users. Thus new tools for intelligent analysis must be developed. In addition to effective tools, actors in the value-chain must show a willingness to *share information* and decide on relevant access levels. Nguyen & Kobsa (2006) argue that tagged products will change ownership as they travel through the value chain, from manufacturer to distributor to retailer to consumer. At each stage, or in overlapping stages, the “owners” will want to control the tags for various needs.

Security is also a relevant issue, and a potential inhibitor for RFID deployment. The lack of cryptography in RFID applications (in particular passive ones, due to the cost issue) is an

⁹ IEEE distributed systems online, 2007: “RFID: Not Your Father’s Bar Code”.

impediment to proper security design. It is hard to guarantee confidentiality and integrity of consumer data in a wireless, non-encrypted network environment (Lee, Park & Yoon, 2007). In such environments data transfers are more vulnerable to interceptions and eavesdropping than in wired environments.

Another aspect, slightly different from the control and privacy concern, is the concern for a *digital divide between* those who can access RFID communicated information and those who can't. The former are expected to make well-founded choices, and are hence also more accountable for their actions as they have access to "deep information" about a product and its life-cycle.

Those concerned with privacy issues have proposed *blocking technology* as a measure for consumers to avoid being tracked through their products. These blocker tags prevent unauthorised readers, either retailers or "spies", to access information about a consumer's possessions. However, such technology increases the burden on the consumer who must manually disable the tag or assure that deactivation is done in the check-out process. Consumer groups and privacy proponents advocate a permanent deactivation of RFID tags already at the check-out counter to avoid surveillance. This means no added benefits or post-sales services, such as easier return of products, notices of default and hence activating warranties for repair or replacement of products. As such, blocking technology can be a barrier to effective post-sale functions.

4.2 Regulations and statements relevant for RFID

On a European level there are a few directives that address or impact new technology uses such as RFID. These are (Roussos, 2006): *The Data Protection Directive* (1995), *The Electronic Commerce Directive* (2000), and *The Privacy and Electronic Communications Directive* (2002). The DPD directly addresses the fair use of personal data and how privacy should be maintained, the ECD points out contractual terms and conditions and call for explicit consumer consent at all stages in a commercial relation, while the PECD takes care of the recording and use of location data. Apart from these directives the EU at this stage has no immediate plans for either forcing industry implementation of RFID, nor issuing specific rules and regulations for privacy protection in RFID applications. This position will be re-evaluated in 2008. The Nordic countries are to a large extent bound by these directives, either through their EU membership or through the EEA agreement.

The US does not have protection of personal privacy in its Constitution, although certain aspects such as "breach of confidence" etc. are put into the law. The State of California has gone further than federal law by addressing RFID specifically in its state laws, due to the complexity of RFID and privacy-related issues. A 2004 bill prohibits "a private entity from using an electronic product code system that uses radio frequency identification (RFID) tags attached to consumer products or an RFID reader to gather, store, use or share information that could be used to identify an individual unless the entity complies with certain conditions". These conditions are that the data are collected only to the extent of the law, that the information has been provided by the customer for purchase or rental purposes, and that information must not be collected prior to the customer initiating the purchase or rental, or after a completed transaction (Taghaboni-Dutta & Velthouse, 2006).

In addition to government regulations, there are several initiatives by industry and consumer groups that aim to provide guidelines for RFID development and deployment. One such initiative is headed by EPC Global, the organisation leading the development of industry-driven standards for the Electronic Product Code (EPC) to support the use of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID). EPC Global has issued the following guidelines for RFID deployment: 1) Consumer notice – clear notice to consumers of the presence of RFID tags on products and packaging, through a logo or identifier, 2) Consumer choice – consumers must be informed of their choice in discarding, removing or disabling the RFID tags from acquired products, 3) Consumer education – consumers must easily obtain accurate information about RFID and its applications and about advances in the technology, 4) Record use, retention and security – companies must publish information on their policies regarding retention, use and protection of consumer-specific data generated through their operations.

Regarding Nordic initiatives, the Danish Technology Council has established a group that provide principles and recommendations regarding the coming RFID developments. The group has presented 5 principles that they claim should be consulted as new RFID initiatives develop (Teknologirådet, 2006): 1) The principle that the user should control the technology, 2) The principle of personal integrity, 3) The principle of interoperability, 4) The principle of user-friendliness, and 5) The principle of sustainability.

In addition the RFID-group suggests several means to promote security and privacy related to RFID development (Teknologirådet, 2006): 1) Support and incentives for developing privacy solutions, 2) Privacy must be incorporated in the early design process, 3) Consumer control, through an opt-in model for registration of data, in marketing, and for controlling the tag to be activated or not, 4) Privacy can become a parameter for competition, and 5) Study existing regulations to see if these can be applied to address the challenges posed by RFID.

These principles correspond to the EU work initiated on privacy protection related to RFID, through the *Article 29 Data Protection Working Party* (2005).

5. Media coverage of RFID-related issues

It has been claimed that 2004 was the year that RFID became a hot topic as new applications and tests were commented in the press. The technology itself, as we have already learnt, has existed since World War II but has somehow not caught the public interest until recently. RFID was mainly tested out and introduced into supply chain management, but the various pilots and tests performed by the above-mentioned retailers (chapter 3.2) have resulted in RFID reaching the public audience through the mass media's critical assessments of the tests and RFID's potential in the future.

BBC News has covered RFID on several occasions and one article claims that the roll-out of RFID faces the danger of being derailed before it takes off, due to the public's perception of it. Most media articles focus on the potential privacy breaches that can materialise in the future if the technology is allowed to develop freely, with no privacy fetters to hold it back. A book published in the US by a Christian author even claims that RFID will evolve into the "mark of the beast"¹⁰, while another 2006 book is titled "*Spychips: How major corporations and government plan to track your every purchase and watch your every move*". A popular

¹⁰ BBC News, February 2005: "Alarm over shopping radio tags".

scare factor is that the products we buy will somehow be linked to us forever, that we cannot escape the products we buy.

Some media articles have referred to the Hollywood movie “Minority Report” in addition to George Orwell’s book “1984”¹¹. Others have referred to Aldous Huxley’s “Brave New World”, claiming that developers seek to create order and balance in a chaotic world by introducing RFID and related technological systems (Albrecht, 2002). The analogue to these movies and books is that RFID-tags in clothes can be linked to a person’s profile, which is detected the next time the consumer enters a store. Furthermore, ads can flash up in front of you in stores and on the streets, based on your spending patterns or profiled interests. In addition the police can access the core databases to do deep surveillance, or spies can covertly read information from you or your items from a distance. These media portrayals of the technology impact and form public opinion on the issue. Even though some of these scenarios seem far fetched and more suited for Sci-Fi writers, the technological potential for realising these visions is probably not a barrier.

The Capgemini surveys from the United States and Europe (Capgemini, 2004, 2005) indicate that consumer awareness of the technology is fairly low, and that for Europe people who were aware attained information about the technology through printed media (37%), internet (29%), television (16%) and word of mouth (16%). Some of those who had heard of RFID from television actually referred to “Sci-Fi” series or movies where RFID had been mentioned. The RFID-survey conducted in Europe (Capgemini 2005) also states that the internet has become a main vehicle for consumer groups to post their anti-RFID messages and run their boycott campaigns¹².

6. Consumer-related research on RFID

There is a scarcity of RFID-related research with a consumer focus available. Most articles refer to the 2004 and 2005 study performed by Capgemini, in the US and Europe respectively.

The US study reveals that 23% of respondents have heard of RFID technology. 42% of these have a favourable perception of RFID, while 10% have an unfavourable opinion. 31% have no opinion at all, while 17% don’t know. Consumer awareness of existing RFID applications proved to be low and most respondents did not make a connection between listed applications and the RFID technology itself.

When it came to potential benefits of RFID the top five responses where:¹³ Faster recovery of stolen items (71%), improved car anti-theft capabilities (70%), consumer savings due to decreased costs (66%), improved security of prescription drugs (65%), and faster and more reliable product recalls/ and improved food safety and quality (62%). At the bottom of the benefits list came, what retailers have visioned as a future scenario, the in-aisle companion product suggestions (28%), instant recognition of preferences (41%), and increased access to products (44%).

In a pre-programmed list of potential RFID-related concerns 69% of Americans rated consumer data used by a third party as something they were “extremely concerned” about.

¹¹ ZDNet, January 2003: “Are spy chips set to go commercial?”

¹² E.g. www.nocards.org, www.spychips.com, www.boycottgillette.com, etc.

¹³ Respondents finding the benefits of RFID to be “extremely important”

67% were concerned about more targeted and direct marketing, while 65% did not enjoy the idea of tracking consumers through product purchases.

The European study reveals that 18% of consumers have heard of RFID, with 24% in the UK and only 12% in the Netherlands. The perception of RFID in Europe proved to be “more positive” than in the US, with 52% regarding it as favourable. When it came to the potential benefits of RFID the list is nearly identical to the US-based list:¹⁴ Improved car anti-theft capabilities (70%), faster recovery of stolen items (69%), improved security of prescription drugs (63%), improved food safety and quality (58%), and providing potential savings to consumers (55%). Also here, the lowest scores came for in-aisle companion product suggestions (19%), instant recognition of preferences (28%) and increased access to products (36%).

The concerns of the Europeans respondents were, as in the US, related to consumer data being used by a third party (59%), tracking of consumers via products purchases (55%), targeted and direct marketing/ and that tags could be read from a distance (52%).

Several scholars (i.e. Boslau & Ritke, 2006) agree with our perception of a lacking consumer emphasis in RFID-related research. This could be the result of RFID being a dawning technology that still needs to develop, and that studying it “to death” before it has even been implemented to a certain extent might seem futile. Still, as the technology is young and developing fast into a full scale “consumer-relevant technology”, it seems pertinent to study the “human” and societal aspects of the development from its early stages. The chapter on media coverage related to RFID indicate how polarised and myth-spun public discourse on such a technology can become – even with very few applications in active operation – and this calls for more well-grounded research on RFID-technology in various contexts – including the consumer context.

One attempt at “investigating the mindset of consumers when it comes to RFID” comes from Boslau & Ritke (2006). The authors refer to the investigative and descriptive research conducted by Capgemini (2004, 2005), and that these studies chart out consumer awareness and perception of RFID technology. The authors further introduce a behavioural science perspective in the study of RFID. The research done by Boslau and Ritke seeks to investigate how consumers’ attitudes towards the RFID technology relate to their actual behaviour. The authors state that: “By knowing what consumers’ attitudes are, we should be able to understand whether RFID technology is beneficial or not and improve the marketing mix to improve consumer attitudes” (Boslau & Ritke, 2006). We find this assumption to some degree naïve, based on the assumption that it is difficult to infer such a relationship when the technology is so new and diffuse, yet extremely complex, and with few practical applications as reference points.

The model of consumer behaviour that the authors apply, investigate the relationship between stimuli, organism and response (SOR). On *consumer attitude* a subdivision is made of the attitude construct into *attitude towards new technologies* (ICT) in general, *attitude towards RFID-technology* in particular and *attitude towards products with RFID-tags*, with an expected positive correlation between the attitude constructs. Then, using the *attitude-behaviour relation* it was assumed that attitude towards the technology directly influences behavioural *intentions* and indirectly influences *behaviour*, with assumed positive

¹⁴ Respondents finding the benefits of RFID to be “important” or “extremely important”

correlations. The positive correlations were confirmed in the analysis. The authors acknowledge that the context of the study is fairly general and that an emphasis on specific products potentially would have revealed differences in attitude depending on product or product group. Still, the new insight the authors claim to have brought to the table is that attitude towards RFID is driven by emotions and not cognitions, possibly explained by the novelty of the technology.

The authors conclude that consumers are interested in learning more about RFID, and that educating consumers about the *advantages of the technology* is critical as well as *evoking positive attitudes* in advertising and information campaigns, as their study has revealed that consumers form attitudes towards RFID based on emotions. Again, we would claim that a more balanced information strategy, to supplement the media hypes, myths and polarised accounts, and bringing to the fore the disadvantages as well would somehow seem more credible and trustworthy to the consumer. In addition we find “evoking positive attitudes”, due to the finding that RFID attitudes are based on “emotions”, a bit far fetched. The RFID-consumer relationship and related contextual aspects are more complex than that and consequently require a more encompassing research strategy and methodology.

Taghaboni-Dutta & Velthouse (2006) refer to a 2005 US-based study that show that consumers are not only concerned about unauthorized people or businesses accessing private information, but there is also a mistrust in government intentions related to exploiting the RFID potential. This conclusion could prove different if applied to the Nordic countries, as trust in government is comparatively higher. In the survey the respondents revealed their awareness of RFID and they were presented with a “neutral” overview of the technology so all respondents had a basic knowledge for later questions. This differs from the Capgemini study where only those who had previously heard about RFID were asked RFID-relevant questions. In this survey as many as 47% (N=155) claimed to have heard of RFID while 53% (N=176) had not heard of the technology. In the Capgemini-study only 18% of European and 23% of American respondents had heard of RFID.

The authors acknowledge that consumers learn more about RFID as time passes, especially after 2004, when news coverage accelerated. However they claim that mass-mediated information is diffuse and not clear on content and context, and not based “on today’s facts”, but mixed with the authors/journalists “visions of the future”. As a consequence Taghaboni-Dutta and Velthouse emphasise that “objective coverage” is necessary to educate consumers. However, they also call for a balanced media education by focusing both on functions and limitations of RFID. Common views and critiques related to privacy and data protection must be discussed rather than be ignored, according to the authors.

Roussos (2006) and colleagues have carried out both qualitative and quantitative research on a prototype item-level RFID retail system. Any type of recording or personalized communication via RFID should not be activated in consumer homes as a post-sale service, was the unanimous conclusion of the test persons. Such acts were regarded as privacy infringing, and consumer control proved to be more important than potential commercial benefits. The consumers were fully informed of the trade-off between privacy protection and advanced post-sale functionality. The majority did not want to give away personal data without guarantees that the data would only be used in relation to a *particular service*. Such permission should not result in a *carte blanche* for general product-related communication, which would rather violate their trust relation with the retailer. In general the prediction of

user habits, interests and “needs” were found to more intrusive than helpful to the participants of the study.

Günther & Spiekermann (2005) did research on Metro’s *The Future Store* in Düsseldorf, Germany¹⁵, focussing in particular on consumers’ privacy fears. A 2005 study of 129 consumers’ perceptions of privacy-enhancing technologies (PETs) revealed that the dominant consumer perception is a *deep-seated distrust in RFID-based environments*. 73% wanted the RFID functionality deactivated at check-out time, even though the advantages of potential after-sales benefits were well understood. The participants were shown a film on future shopping in RFID-embedded environments, while the technology itself was explained in an unbiased way. Two services were focussed; *an intelligent refrigerator* and *product return without receipt including relevant after-sales benefits*. The analysis revealed a higher degree of helplessness when facing an intelligent environment, even with various PETs available to the consumer, while the feeling of control and being informed was not dominant at all.

These research contributions give some insights into consumer-product relations in information-intensive, interactive and intelligent environments, as well as an idea of the level of consumer awareness of RFID. Still, more consumer related research is demanded to provide developers and policy-makers with well-founded insights into a complex, ground-breaking technology such as RFID and related systems.

7. Conclusion and suggestions

It must be acknowledged that even though RFID is discussed and referred to in the media and in academic literature, RFID in itself is only a small communication element in a larger system for location awareness and enhanced product knowledge. It is the scale and configuration of such RFID-enabled systems that opens for the opportunity for monitoring and following the object and its interactions with other objects, processes and human beings. Juels (2006) comments that it is astonishing how a apparently modest device such as the RFID tag, which he refers to as a “licence plate”, gives rise to such a complex security and privacy melange, and consequently such a heated consumer-related debate as we have seen in the wake of the dawning RFID development. With this realisation it seems pertinent that RFID as a technology is not regulated *per se*, but that a technology neutral legislation is implemented that encompasses the whole range of issues and problems related to the pervasiveness of intelligent and invisible technologies and systems.

On another account, it might be just as relevant to discuss RFID in connection with developments such as *u-commerce*. The growth of Internet, mobile access, broadband-connections, as well as related advances in e-commerce and m-commerce, has resulted in a focus on the potentials for ubiquitous commerce, or *u-commerce*. U-commerce is said to overcome the time-space limitations seen in other commerce. Watson et al (2002) in (Lee, Park & Yoon, 2007) define u-commerce as “the use of ubiquitous networks to support personalised and uninterrupted communications and transactions between an organization and its various stakeholders to provide a level of value over, above, and beyond traditional commerce”.

¹⁵ The first large-scale rollout of RFID in a retail context worldwide

It is predicted that in future u-commerce environments RFID tags will be attached to products, services, animals and humans in various ways and for various purposes, but all with the same aim of more efficient commercial operations. Such a seamless commercial environment has also been referred to as “silent commerce”, a term that in itself can spark fears of covertness, spying and surveillance.

The Danish Technology Council (Teknologirådet, 2006) believes that RFID potentially can empower the consumers, if they are given control and are educated about the opportunities, so that consumer preferences can be addressed more directly, in depth and in time. The key benefit is that RFID can assist consumers in providing wider and deeper insights about the products they consume (origin, content, ethical and environmental matters, etc). In theory this is the optimal situation – a fully informed and updated consumer acting in a market environment with no information asymmetry. The reality is harder to foresee. As Lee (2005) states; “the possibilities of RFID technology are limitless, as are the opportunities for the technology to be misused”.

To conclude; from the academic literature, empirical research, and the media discourse presented in this paper, there is now doubt that RFID represents a huge potential for change in consumer-product relations. It will change how we interact with, purchase, store, access, and utilize products and relevant information. The greatest potential still seems to be in supply chain management and inventory control, but RFID implemented in consumer products on a large scale can not be written off.

Most concerns that are addressed in this paper are related to an American context, and are hence not as relevant in a European or Nordic context, as the legislation protecting individual privacy and freedom is strong in these countries. However, the pervasiveness, omnipresence, invisibility and interconnectedness that RFID and ubiquitous computing systems represent, make it harder to disclose security breaches and privacy infringements.

This acknowledgement calls for a triangulation of perspectives in addressing the coming development of RFID. The polarised media debates in the US and in some European countries firstly indicate a need to address consumer awareness when testing RFID in a Nordic setting. RFID pilots in “real life” environments, where consumers interact with RFID-enabled items, should seek to involve the consumer in the functionality and consequences of RFID usage. Furthermore, the lacking empirical research in the field calls for in-depth studies of RFID in context, to secure deeper insights into the motivations and perceptions of consumers related to RFID-enabled systems. This is particularly relevant in light of the experiences from the US where a polarised debate proves to be more destructive than healthy for sound RFID development. Finally, even though the Nordic countries have implemented relevant privacy and data directives into national law, there is a need for alliances between the industry, consumer, data protection and research organisations, in order to provide balanced and consumer-sensitive guidelines as a support mechanism for RFID developers.

A conscious, coordinated and well-founded approach relative to RFID, ubiquitous and pervasive computing, is the key to preventing anything even resembling an Orwellian-like nightmare from materialising.

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Governance issues for emerging technologies: The GM food – NANO discourses

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Abstract

In the discourse on nanotechnology a rather controversial parallel is often drawn to the GM discourse. In this paper we explore some major governance issues related to GM food and compare them with those emerging for nanotechnology. Nanotechnology has received comparatively little attention in the public sphere. We relate this to different awareness on the regulation of science and the regulation of markets and to different types of conflicts. Nanotechnologies are still viewed as taking place within the realm of science, whereas GM foods have been viewed as products in the market, where the relevance for consumer politics is clearer. At the same time, GM food is about living organisms, more easily raising ethical and environment questions. New, deliberative types of governance seem well suited to handle some of these conflicts, while others are much more problematic.

1. Introduction

Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the author of things, everything degenerates in the hands of man. He forces one soil to nourish the products of another, one tree to bear the fruits of another. He mixes and confuses the climates, the elements, and the seasons. He mutilates his dog, his horse, his slave. He turns everything upside down, he disfigures everything, he loves deformities, monsters. He wants nothing as nature made it, not even man himself. (Rousseau, 1762).

The main theme in this paper is the governance of emerging technologies relevant for the consumer market. More specifically, we compare the GM food-discourse with the corresponding discourse on nanotechnology. Thus, our main research question can be formulated in the following way:

What are the similarities and differences between GM food and nanotechnology in terms of regulatory issues brought up in public discourse, types of actors involved, conflict alignments, and modes of governance?

The paper is based on a review of research within in these two areas, and on a Norwegian project on the precautionary principle in nanotechnology. Quite early in this project we noticed that parallels were drawn between developments in nanotechnologies and the developments that took and take place in the case of genetically modified organisms used for food (GM foods). In qualitative interviews with representatives from the scientific community, NGOs, businesses and political authorities, a large number expressed the opinion that it is an important goal to avoid the confrontation that destroyed the GM food-discourse. These parallels, which are contested, form a point of departure for this paper and we will frame them in a governance perspective along six dimensions. These dimensions are developed after a discussion of relevant topics within concepts of new governance and deliberative processes, presented below.

The main dimensions are:

- What are the main topics in the discourse?
- Who were the main actors involved?
- What was the role of science in the discourse?
- What kind of deliberative processes were conducted?
- Is it possible to identify consensus or contradiction in this discourse
- What have been the proposed regulations of these technologies? (Private/Public)

That the development of nanotechnologies takes place in a similar sociopolitical context as GM foods did, is seen as one of the reasons why analogy between the two is often made. The difference is of course that one started after the other: first GM foods, then nano discourse. By “started” we mean the emergence of a public debate and societal focus on the issue that is when they became framed as issues of governance. Both technologies have a history that goes some decades back, but it was the GM food issue that first made to the headlines and spurred a considerable societal debate.

Both genetically modified food (GM foods) and nanotechnologies are emerging technologies. Their proponents consider them to have enormous potential to alleviate environmental problems and human suffering, while their sceptics have equally radical visions about their potential to accelerate these challenges.

2. New governance, the regulatory state and deliberative processes

The classical democracy builds upon the ideal of one man/one vote, and that political decisions within this numerical democracy are based upon the power of the majority. New forms of governance within the frames of the regulatory state and deliberative processes offer an alternative to the constitutional processes by introducing lobbying, negotiations and consensus driven ideals and processes. At the same time, the modes of regulation have shifted.

Regulatory reforms have been observed around the globe, accompanied by new institutions and instruments of regulation. These reforms have had huge impact on the social and economic fabric of modern capitalism. The era of neo-liberalism is also the golden era of regulation. Levi-Faur talks about ‘regulatory capitalism’ or even ‘regulocracy’ (Levi-Faur and Jordana 2005). An enormous literature has been produced on this subject, using a variety of theoretical approaches and illustrated by a large number of empirical cases. At the heart are processes of Europeanization and globalisation of regulation as well as changing relationships between state and market and new foundations for legitimacy (see e.g. Ansell and Vogel

2005; Majone 1999; Scott 2004; Jordana and Levi-Faur 2004; Kooiman 2003). Increasingly, regulation and governance are studied as decentred processes, attempting to capture variations in the locus of control (central state bodies, more autonomous agencies, independent or commercial bodies, etc.) as well as the multiplicity of administrative levels, ranging from the international to the local.

The shift from *Government to Governance* and the new regulatory state, presents a substantial development in legislation, regulation and public policy in Europe (Lindblom 1977; Majone 1996; 1999). To some degree it represents a deregulation of public policy; in other areas we have witnessed a re-regulation. This may, however, vary from one country to another because of traditions and the fact that the welfare state was developed along different paradigms in the 1960s and 70s. In the White Paper on European Governance for the EU (COM (2001) 428 final) the document defines the main principles of governance as: *openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence*. In a report from the Commission (2003), the discussion on European governance has also included *democratic legitimacy and subsidiary* as other important principles.

Public-private partnerships are important with the new “stakeholderism”, where the state, market actors, civil society actors, and consumers meet as more or less equal “concerned parties”, as stakeholders, where influence is negotiated relatively openly and quite different from traditional forms of corporative governance.

In recent literature we have seen that *governance and the new regulatory state* are concepts that are used in very similar ways. The literature on the regulatory state/new governance often presents a more realistic description of what regulation is and how it works, a realization of the regulatory limits of state authority, and the corresponding potential of private actors to block and restrain public policies. It also includes an awareness of the possible positive contributions of private firms, organisations and associations to enhance public goals and policies, and, more controversially, a new normative model of how regulation is supposed to work, emphasizing the interactive and interdependent nature of regulation. However, Olsen argues (2002) that formal processes of reform of governance may not always produce a precise and stable policy outcome. One of the reasons for this instability is the fact that not all types of actors involved as ‘stakeholders’ have resources to play the expected part in the political process. For nanotechnology this might be the case for almost all types of actors.

New forms of governance include, as already indicated, new ways to develop regulation, with considerable emphasis on deliberative processes. The roots of deliberative democracy, or discursive democracy, are not old as a specific concept. It was originally coined by Bessete in his book *Deliberative Democracy* (1980); however, it is easy to link the concept to the work of Habermas (1989). According to Cohen (1989) there are four criteria for an ideal deliberation:

- It is a free discourse; participants regard themselves as bound solely by the results and preconditions of the deliberation process.
- It is reasoned; parties are required to state reasons for proposals
- Participants in the deliberative process are equal
- Deliberation aims at rational motivated consensus.

For a decision to be called deliberative Renn (1999) emphasises that it is essential that it relies on mutual exchange of arguments and reflections rather than on decision-making based upon

the status of the participants, power or political pressure. In addition, deliberative processes should be governed by established rules of rational discourse (Elster, 1998).

It is easy to understand that it is difficult to reach these goals and ideals in praxis; the political discourse uses many arguments that don't meet these ideals. One major issue is the question of imbalances power (Flyvbjerg 1998). However, this is not a strong argument against deliberative processes. Collective decisions reached by arguing may be considered as reasonable solutions to given problems, because they are based upon convincing reasons.

Thus, Renn argues that deliberative processes are better suited to deal with environmental challenges than the representative democracy, based upon majority votes, because deliberation can produce common understanding of the problem and of the positions of various groups of stakeholders (1999). Furthermore, deliberation can produce new options and new solutions, and has the potential to document the full scope ambiguity associated with the problem.

The concept of deliberative processes is complicated along two dimensions. The first is related to the degree of consensus, the second to the degree of institutionalisation. It is a misunderstanding that deliberative processes are synonymous with consensus. Consensus is a possible solution, but more common is tolerated consensus solution, - an agreement of the position of the stakeholders involved in the process. A compromise is a product of bargaining, and belongs more to the concept of new governance. The degree of formal institutionalisation is another important dimension. The concept is used to describe citizens' panels, public forums, deliberative opinion polls and consensus conferences with relatively low levels of institutionalisation. However, it is also possible to include more institutionalised praxis such as formal hearings and advisory committees within the concept of deliberative processes.

There is a lot of attention towards market driven reforms. But this does hardly represent responses to specific consumer demands. At the same time, people, as consumers, have less and less control over and insight into the consumer items that they buy, but they are at the same time being attributed more responsibility and agency in the form of "consumer choice". The question of social distribution of responsibility is much more complex (and open) than agencies' relationships to politics and markets or market self-regulation (Halkier and Holm 2006). This type of question can be addressed using classical as well as more recent contributions on regulation, supplemented by theories of individual self-governance (governmentality) that can help us to understand the growing emphasis on individual responsibility.

Legitimacy and trust have received a lot of attention in relation to the deliberative processes. Regarding popular trust, it has been argued that one-way information to deal with a knowledge deficit will not work, mainly because knowledge is not the main problem (Hansen et al. 2003). Some believe that these processes can and will produce consensus, provided that all arguments are well presented and all 'stakeholders', that is all concerned parties, are represented. Others have suggested that considering the diverging interests and positions, consensus cannot be expected. The aim should rather be to create for a where all voices can be heard. This will by itself produce legitimacy for the decisions that are made. As already indicated, however, deliberative institutions reproduce well-known problems of corporative systems (see e.g. March and Olsen 1989), namely that arguments from various representatives will be strongly influenced by their resources in terms of knowledge, organisational resources, economic and political power. Cooptation is also a major risk. Consumers represent a typically very weak party, representing what may be characterised as common interests, but

with few resources to back their arguments and vulnerable to co-optation. Closed forums are therefore not necessarily legitimate, even though many voices have been heard.

In relation to the establishment of new regulatory structures, however, much less attention has been paid to trust and legitimacy problems of changing forms of governance. Some, like Ulrich Beck, have announced expectations of major problems of declining trust linked to individual uncertainty (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002), while others believe that new organisational structures will make trust redundant (Cook et al. 2005). Our studies indicate that new types of relationships and new foundations for legitimacy are interesting and important. Trust is crucial, but new structures and processes are perhaps associated with less controversy and distrust than is often anticipated in discourses on new technologies (Kjærnes et al. 2007).

Both genetically modified organism (GMO) and nanotechnologies are emerging technologies. The debate on GM FOODS is often used as a reference point when discussing the ethical, legal and social aspects (ELSA) of the nanotechnologies (Sandler & Kay, 2006; Rip, 2006; Einsiedel & Goldenberg, 2004). What is the relevance of this? What could be the implications for governance and the new regulatory state? In this paper we are particularly interested in the relevance for consumer politics. In what ways are consumers brought into the process, what is their influence, and what kind of role do they play in the establishment of regulatory frameworks? We will therefore concentrate on the deliberative processes that dominate decision-making, on the one hand, and the types of public-private partnerships that develop to regulate the areas, on the other, where labelling schemes and consumer choice play a significant role.

3. The GM foods debate

In trying to give an overview of this debate, it is easy to think of it in rather simplistic terms, how this story is widely recognized as a contrast between the promise of the GM foods in the 1970s, with the backlash of the 1980s and 90s. This is what (Rip, 2006) calls the folk theory about GM foods, insisting that the story is more complex and that it ought to be checked. It is seems hard to avoid, as this version is rather ubiquitous. That the debate on GM foods was rather heated at times is at least something that all actors agree upon – “The debate is an unholy mess” (The Economist, 2003)

What are the main topics in the discourse on GM foods?

In trying to define what genetically modifications really is, you soon realise that terms used in the debate on food biotechnology not always have a clear, unequivocal meaning. This fact has sometimes been used intentionally by one side or the other in the debate. For our purpose here genetic engineering, genetic modification and biotechnology will be used as fully synonymous terms. We understand the these terms as “ (...) referring exclusively to the direct transfer or modification of genetic material using recombinant DNA techniques” (RSC, 2001). As all living organisms have genetically material, the genes can in principle be moved between all organisms: genes from soil bacteria transferred to corn, genes from flatfish to potatoes.

Further, will we in this paper only address GMOs that are used for food – “GM foods”, and not Non-food GMOs, which is more widespread than you might think (GM cotton is widespread, GM oilseed rape, GM pharma). These non-food GMs have gone largely unnoticed, unlike the GM foods.

GM foods were first commercially cultivated in the early 1990s. One was a practically “everlasting” tomato developed in the United States; it aroused a dislike among Norwegian and European consumers. The first GM food in the UK actually sold quite well. It was a tomato puree sold at Sainsbury’s made from GM tomatoes that ripen slowly, compared to the conventional ones. The result was lower prices due to reduced waste, and in addition better flavour. However, as the adverse publicity around other GM crops grew in the late 90s, it too was pulled off the shelves. At that time (1999) the EU imposed a moratorium on any new GMO approvals (The Economist, 2005) over growing public concern of supposed environmental and health risks.

Rather than breeding modified plants that were resistant to diseases, variants that were resistant to herbicides and/or insects were the focus of attention. The idea was that these approaches significantly would reduce the need of herbicides and insecticides. As the plants were resistant to the herbicide it could be applied later in the growing season where the weeds would be more venerable. Monsanto was the company that came to represent this line of research. Crosspollination with wild weeds, creating herbicide resistant weeds and problems for insect-eating birds. The so-called Terminator-seeds were another case where Monsanto was involved which produced much furor. These were plants that produced sterile seeds, creating what some saw as imposing an unacceptable dependency between the farmers and the seed producer. Monsanto announced later that this technology would not be realised into products in the market (RSC, 2001).

Issues like these came to produce an image among European consumers especially of the GM foods as products that were “all risk, no benefit” (Murray, 2003; Einsiedel & Goldenberg, 2004). The only likely beneficiaries seemed to be multinationals. The public’s issues of concern have been grouped into 3 (RSC, 2001:3): Health and Environmental Risks, Socio-Economic Risks, Philosophical/Metaphysical Risks.

Who were the main stakeholders involved?

Where Burke (2004) sees the public as a victim of a hype created by the media and NGOs, Mayer and Stirling (2004) note that there is a full range of public values, priorities and concerns, and that studies have shown that the public attitude in Europe appreciated NGOs’ role but saw them as biased, like any other actors, and the public also held nuanced views to the media’s role. On the other hand it is becoming increasingly clear that the obtained results from “science-based” risk-assessment are sensitive to what questions are asked, how they are posed and the underlying assumptions (Mayer and Stirling, 2004).

What was the role of science in the discourse?

One of the main reasons for the disagreement among scientists and for the heated public debate is scientific uncertainty. This is often quite narrowly defined as a lack of knowledge that can be reduced by further research. A rather more complete definition would include acknowledgement of uncertainty may be irreducible, the existence of ignorance and that underlying assumptions and framing of hypotheses in themselves might create uncertainty (Myhr, 2002).

The question of safety:” ..there is no robust evidence to prove that GM foods are unsafe” (BMA, 2004 cited by Burke, 2004). Inherent in this is the definition of safety, in (RSC,2001) the authors equate safety with “acceptability of risks”. If this is used as a starting point, it is quite clear that judging something to be safe (or unsafe), can involve a value judgment and not necessarily (just) a “pure” scientific evaluation. This is especially the case when cost-

benefit approach is the method applied. In principle that approach will permit any level of risk, as long as the benefits are considered to offset them (RSC, 2001).

What kind of deliberative processes were conducted?

Although concerns over environmental and health consequences are questions that call for scientific answers, they cannot be treated in full without reference to broader ethical, social and political aspects and assumptions (RSC, 2001).

According to (Sandler & Kay, 2006) the “standard reconstruction” of what happened to GM foods was of communicational nature: there was a lack of information from the scientific, business and regulatory agencies to the public from the start on. When worries started to emerge in the public, it was ignored or dismissed. This lack of disclosure and acknowledgement gave an atmosphere of suspicion and misunderstandings that the opponents of the technology took advantage of. This gave a severe blow to the development and dissemination of GM foods, which could and would have given helped those in most need.

This is the so-called “deficit model”, referring to a top-down view of the public being ignorant of the scientific “truth” on risk and probability. Research on ELSA and public engagement apparently stems out of a concern to avoid public resistance, rather than exploring potential problems and ways of solving them that could inform the development of nanotechnology (Sandler & Kay, 2006).

Is it possible to identify consensus or contradiction in this discourse?

Provision of information and education would increase consumer acceptance (Scholderer & Frewer, 2003). Testing this idea in a large-scale experimental study on GM foods resulted in “The biotechnology communication paradox” (ibid.): Neither a balanced information strategy or a hard sell approach resulted in attitude change, but interestingly consumer product choices appeared sensitive to the provision of information: all information material significantly decreased the probability of consumers choosing the GM food products!

What have been the proposed regulations of these technologies? (Private/Public)

Some called the EU moratorium in 1999 a “quasi-moratorium on GMO foods” (Scholderer & Frewer, 2003). The moratorium put the EU under intense pressure from biotech firms and the countries growing GM foods, America first and foremost but also Brazil, Canada and Argentina. The EU agreed to lift its moratorium and replace it with a label-and-trace scheme in which all products containing GM foods ingredients had to be labelled as such, and that the ingredients should be traceable (The Economist, 2004).

Assessing the safety of novel foods in Canada was based on “ the product and not the process used to develop it” (Health Canada, 1994, p4 cited in Metha, 2006). The new Canadian regulations have different wording, but the same message: “This flexibility is needed to allow novel foods and food products to be assessed on a case-by-case basis and to take into consideration future scientific advances.” (Health Canada, 2006, p5). This consideration runs parallel to the one we see in the nanotechnologies: it is the applications that should be regulated or restricted, and not the technologies themselves.

“In general, those who are responsible for the regulation of new technologies should not presume its safety unless there is a reliable scientific basis for considering it safe” (RSC, 2001: 206).

New governance of food is strongly influenced by changes in the food market. The introduction of new technologies and logistics has influenced and is part of a general process of integration and concentration. This has, in turn, led to new power relations, especially regarding retailer led integration along the food chain. We also see that new relations and forms of governance in the food chain is associated with processes of differentiation and segmentation, what may be characterised as “quality modernisation”. Self-regulation constitutes a significant element. More market based regulation is reflected in standardisation processes and contractual formalisation as part of organising and regulating global trade, but significantly also as part of the ongoing “supermarketisation” of the European food distribution system. But we also find such processes of codification and standardisation contribute to an opening up the issue, with reconsideration of established norms and expectations related to the handling of farm animals in modern food production (re Busch). This is in line with regulation developing in less hierarchical forms, with new forms of sanctioning. Animal welfare may also develop as a case of “trading up” (re Vogel).

4. Nanotechnology

What are the main topics in the discourse?

As with GM foods we start with explaining what we understand by nanotechnology. It is to utilize the novel properties that materials get in the nano-scale: “It is the ability to do things – measure, see, predict and make – on the scale of atoms and molecules and exploit the novel properties found at that scale. The nano-scale is not just another step towards miniaturization, but a qualitative new scale. Many current theories of matter at the micro-scale have critical lengths of nanometer dimensions. These theories will be inadequate to describe the new phenomena at the nano-scale. The new behaviour is dominated by quantum mechanics, material confinement in small structures, large interfacial volume fractions and other unique properties, phenomena and processes.” (Throne-Holst & Stø, 2008).

The Nanosciences and nanotechnologies were first visioned by Richard Feynman in 1959, in his famous lecture “There’s Plenty of Room at the Bottom” (Feynman, 1959). He starts here by asking why we cannot write the entire Encyclopaedia Britannica on the head of a pin? And he goes on to examine what would be needed to achieve that.

Another rather early publication in this field was Eric Drexler’s book *Engines of Creation* in 1986. He envisions applications of nanotechnology in wide variety of fields from power generation to medicine. But he also have some dystopian visions of what could go wrong that would haunt the debate on nanotechnologies: How self-replicating molecular assemblers could evolve into thinking machine that would pose basic threats to people and life on Earth, what later would be called “grey goo”. (He later downplayed the possibility for such accidents in a paper in 2004 (Phoenix & Drexler, 2004)).

The Prince of Wales made a media furore following comments he made on nanotechnology in April 2003 where he warned of the potentially “enormous environmental and social risks” from the nanotechnologies (The Guardian, 2003), (probably partly inspired by such dystopian visions, which had been voiced again by the etc-group). This prompted the British government to commission a report from the Royal Society and Royal Academy of Engineering. It became an important and authoritative report on the issue and was published in July 2004: “Nanoscience and nanotechnologies: opportunities and uncertainties” Their main conclusion was that the nanotechnologies offer many opportunities, but public consultation and debate is needed on their development.

Over the years since Drexler's book, that debate has turned from applications to the material technology needed and specific materials. What is much in focus regarding this, is to assess the toxicological potential of nanoparticles, and how to regulate them. A landmark decision on this was reached by the US EPA in November 2006 published plans to regulate products marketed as anti-microbial because they contain nano-sized particles of silver (Campbell, 2006).

Who were the main stakeholders involved?

And this time, regarding the nanotechnologies, interest and research on the ELSA is happening relatively early in the development phase, resulting at least in the possibility of influencing the trajectories of technology development. For the GM foods these aspects were addressed at a later stage, when the stage was set and the "trenches" were manned. The etc-group which was highly successful in getting the public's attention to the problematic issues and aspects of GM foods, have not had the same repercussions with the nanotechnologies, despite rather drastic suggestions like moratorium on all research (etc-group, 2003). Up to now there has been little or no public concern (Rip, 2006: 358) As researchers and society we have the possibility to make it right, this time. As (Rip, 2006: 362) concludes, as social scientists now are taken onboard contribute to a more reflexive co-evolution of nanosciences/technologies and society.

What was the role of science in the discourse?

One of the conclusions of the project this paper is based upon, is that key stakeholders in Norway with regard to who should be precautionary, place this on the individual researcher and the scientific community. The stakeholders do not know much on the subject, and are under the impression that both the knowledge of the nanotechnologies as such, but in addition the ability to politicise the problematic aspects, both are in the scientific community (Throne-Holst & Stø, 2008)

What kind of deliberative processes were conducted?

Interest and actual research on the societal and ethical aspects are happening more in parallel with the technology development than what was the case for GM foods, even though there were some critical voices there too from the start on (Rip, 2006: 362)

Deliberative processes get rather a lot attention in the case of the nanotechnologies, there is even a specific point addressing this in a recent call of the 7FP of the EU.

The Research Council of Norway were quite early in addressing the ELSA of the nanotechnologies and early in 2005 they published a report on the national needs for research and competence on these aspects (RCN, 2005). Here they stress the need to involve lay people in the assessment and deliberation of the nanotechnologies. Not only to enlighten them, make them reflect on the issues and start a democratic debate on technological choices in the interest of technologists as such, but also because the lay people will contribute with other perspectives than the experts themselves. An EU-funded project, Nanologue, concluded on the same note: "The future of nanotechnology: We need to talk".

The Danish Board of Technology (Teknologirådet) has developed the "consensus conference" concept which takes the form of a hearing where a lay panel composed of individuals from different fields of society assess expert evidence on the issue under consideration. This model has been adjusted and developed further both in the US (Madison area Citizen consensus group in 2005), in Germany ("Consumer Conference on the perception of nanotechnology in the areas of foodstuffs, cosmetics and textiles") and the UK(Nano-jury in 2005). Stimulating

upstream dialogue between scientists and citizens was at the core of the DEMOS study (DEMOS 2006). Based on a number of group discussions and a workshop the project revealed that besides possible health risks consumers feared increasing opportunities for industry to control everyday life and doubt government capabilities to steer technology development.

Other deliberative studies have been more focused on key stakeholders, like project we report from in this paper. In a collaborative project in Norway between SIFO and DNV research stakeholders from 4 different sectors were individually interviewed on their views on technological development in general and nanotechnology in particular and on the suitability and possibility to use the precautionary principle on this emerging field. The 4 stakeholder groups were politicians, businesses, NGOs and researchers.

Standardisation is a tool within the concept of governance, addressing stakeholders. Standards are being developed at three levels; global, European and national level. At the global level ISO plays an important part as the international independent organisation for standardisation. The European standardisation organisations are CEN, CENELEC and ETSI. Standards are voluntary documents developed under open and transparent procedures and are consensus based. The development of standards is organised in technical committees and working groups with representatives from business, government, universities, NGOs and consumers. European consumer organisations have established their own organisation – ANEC – to influence the standardisation processes. The CEN have recently established a separate Technical Committee (TC 352) on nanotechnologies.

One could mention here the numerous activities launched by civil society organisations (CSOs) such as the Woodrow Wilson Centre, which is funded by a private foundation, or the International Risk Governance Council, Geneva, which is financed by national governments and international organisations. Both organisations can be regarded pro-active in the sense that they initiate dialogue and deliberate processes much earlier than national governments (can) do.

Is it possible to identify consensus or contradiction in this discourse?

One analysis of why consumers rejected the following waves of GM foods is that they were seen as “all risk, no benefit”. Can the same thing happen to the nanotechnologies? We see a similar “all benefit, no risk” as in the start of the GM foods introduction. Can there be a backlash for the nanotechnologies as well? Reducing the comparison between the two technologies to concern only how to avoid a consumer backlash, would be to miss the point (Einsiedel & Goldenberg, 2004; Sandler & Kay, 2006).

What have been the proposed regulations of these technologies? (Private/Public)

There has been a debate on this issue. One position would say that silver is silver – whether in batch-size or as nanoparticles, and subsequently there is no need for new regulations on exposure and toxicology. Opposed to this would be to point out that the reason why so much money is invested in nanotechnologies is the novel properties found there, it appears rather naïve to believe that just nice, useful properties emerge in the nanorange – some nasty side effects might come up as well.

A landmark decision on this was reached by the US EPA in November 2006 published plans to regulate products marketed as anti-microbial because they contain nano-sized particles of silver (Campbell, 2006). A popular view is to say that it is not the nanotechnologies themselves that should be regulated or restricted, but rather the specific applications that should be addressed.

5. Conclusions: comparing GM foods and Nanotechnology

The main objective of this paper is to describe and analyse similarities and differences between the GM food and nanotechnology discourse within the concept on new governance. This is done for six dimensions, and an overview of the result is presented in figure 1 below.

Table 1. The main dimensions in the GM food and nano-discourse

	GM foods	NANO
Main topics?	Safety of health and environment What are the benefits for consumers? Strong ethical and religious dimensions	Grey goo Toxicity of nanoparticles and regulatory issues What are the risks for consumers? Mainly “technical” topics
Main stakeholders involved?	NGOs Multinational companies (Monsanto) Religious groups Governments	“Public” organisations like Danish Board of Technology, Research Councils. Ethicists
Role of science	Scientists on both sides of the debate	Positive driven discourse by scientists. Calls for a moratorium on research has received little support.
Deliberative processes	Gained momentum over this process	Much focussed, but more in the function of legitimating rather than real influence?
Consensus/contradiction	After initial consensus, a heated debate on GM foods (but not on non-GM-foods or GM pharma)	Consensus that there a great positive potential application and research are needed on these. NGOs has hesitated to call for moratorium
Regulation: private/public	Quasi moratorium Labels	A debate on the need for new regulations

The technologies we have discussed in this paper are not just emerging but transformative as well, solving and interacting with problems on a broad front touching virtually all technology frontiers (manufacturing, agriculture, medicine, biology, chemistry, physics) as well as a range of ethical, social and socio-economic issues. Some have called them strategic

technologies as well, on their ability to transform entire industrial sectors as well as creating new ones (Einsiedel & Goldenberg, 2004).

This point in it self, calls for parallels to be drawn between the two. On the other hand, there are some differences as well. GM foods entered the public domain prior to nanotechnologies, so some lessons have probably been learned. First among these seems to be the need to involve the public at different levels, as one of the more dominant views on what went wrong with GM foods was a “deficit model”: the authorities thought the public to be ignorant of the scientific “truth” on risk and probability. Public involvement would solve this. If you agree on this view or not: deliberative processes can hardly be regarded as something negative. The challenge is that it may appear as a top-down initiative, which really does not have the purpose to include the public’s views and worries. It should have a specific place in the political process on these issues.

Apart from this, there is an interesting argument that has appeared in both of the debates, and that is the degree of naturalness: throughout the history of life on Earth organisms have evolved. This has happened through changes or mutation of the genes, and accordingly changes in the genome of organisms are a natural process. It can even be said to be necessary for organisms to survive as environmental conditions do change. Along the same lines the proponents of GM foods argued that they did nothing else than what nature does herself. The proponents of nanotechnologies would also argue that we have been surrounded by nanoparticles since humankind learned to control fire: soot consist of very fine particles, some in the nanorange. Possibly even earlier than that: volcanic ashes (Clift, 2006.) And, later, during the last century, we have been exposed to particles from traffic. So nothing is new, some would claim. GM foods concerns only living, organic matter, whereas nanotechnology concerns non-food and inorganic matter as well. And the issues and products that have been marketed so far concerns development within the material sciences (eg. Carbon nano-tubes; silicon-oxide, titanium oxide).

It is interesting to witness the role the 3rd World play in debates on both GM foods and nanotechnologies. The proponents highlight how they can solve paramount problems in these countries of food security and clean water, while those who are sceptical to these technologies point to the possible dependency peasants in the 3rd World would have of multi-international companies (like the case with Terminator-seeds) and that the high expenses of nanoproducts will pull the development of such products to solve issues in the West (“The nano-divide”). Others would claim that there is enough food in the world today, but that it is unevenly distributed due to economic and political causes. In that case there is no need for GM crops/foods - these new technologies should be used to solve “real” problems. On the other hand this may be just like saying that there need not be any poverty in the world, because there is enough money already.

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Theme 6. Consumers in financial markets

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Papers

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Garðarsdóttir, Ragna B., Helga Dittmar & Vala Jónsdóttir: Psychological predictors of personal debt in Iceland

Järvinen, Raija & Uolevi Lehtinen: Innovative Consumer e-Services in the Financial Sector

Järvinen, Raija & Liisa Peura-Kapanen: Consumers as Private Investors in Financial Markets

Lehtinen, Anna-Riitta: Choice, freedom and responsibility - young consumers in credit markets

Nyhus, Ellen K. & Paul Webley: The relationship between parenting style and adolescents' future orientation and spending preferences

Tufte, Per Arne & Mary-Ann Stamsø: The demand for private insurance in the Norwegian welfare state - how do people adapt in a typical social-democratic welfare state system?

The emotional impact of severe debts on the individual

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Abstract

Objective: The aim of this study was to describe, analyze and evaluate the presence of negative emotions among overindebted individuals, and this as a first step to deepen our understanding of the importance of negative emotions and its links to health during different kinds of economic pressure. **Methods:** A specially designed questionnaire (i.e., the IMPdebt scale) was designed to assess negative emotions among a sample (n=220) of overindebted Swedes. **Results:** Factor analysis (maximum likelihood with oblique rotation) of the questionnaire ratings resulted in a six-factor solution. The first dominant factor was interpreted as Mental trauma, the other factors were labelled; Desire of vengeance, Flight, Shame-guilt, Infringement, and External attribution. **Conclusions:** The particular pattern of negative emotions here found, suggest extreme mental hardship during overindebtedness.

1. Introduction

Most people would probably agree, that a good personal economy, or at least a private economy in balance, is one prerequisite for quality of life, even happiness. According to many health researchers and practitioners an individual, who is having a life, where there is an abundance of positive emotions like happiness and joy, tend to make the life both longer and healthier for that particular individual. The reverse also seems to hold truth. Negative emotions like anger, sadness, worries and fears, especially if they are frequent and long lasting, easily bring about stress reactions that in turn might lead to illness (Lewis and Haviland, 1993).

The most common response to a stressor is anxiety. People who live through events that are beyond the normal range of human suffering (e.g., natural disasters, rape, kidnapping) often develop a severe set of anxiety-related symptoms known as post-traumatic stress disorder – PTSD (Barlow & Durand, 2002; Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Post-traumatic stress disorder may develop immediately after the trauma, or it may be brought on by a minor stress experienced weeks, months, or even years later. Traumas caused by humans, such as sexual or physical assault, terrorist attacks, and war, may even be more likely to cause PTSD than natural disasters, for at least two reasons. First, such traumas challenge our basic beliefs about the goodness of life and other people, and when these beliefs are shattered, PTSD is more likely to occur (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Second, human-caused disasters often strike individuals

rather than whole communities, and suffering through a trauma alone, seems to increase a person's risk of experiencing PTSD.

Previous research has also shown that *economical difficulties*, such as overindebtedness might be a serious threat to health (Ahlström, 1998, Aldwin & Revenson, 1986; Hintikka, et al, 1998; Nykänen, Kuntula & Palonen, 2000) However, there is a paucity of research when it comes to the understanding of how the mechanisms of negative emotions affect health during economic pressure, especially when it comes to the specificity and combinations of negative emotions. Also, the intensity of emotions and temporal aspects such as the onset, continuation, and chronic presence of negative emotions is of considerable interest. This issue is important to pursue, since the number of overindebted individuals and households is growing in the whole western world at an alarming rate. For example, according to Betti et al, (2001) the amount of overindebted households in the European union is at present 16 percent.

In order to investigate these considerations, the present study was carried out. The aim of this study was to describe, analyze and evaluate the presence of negative emotions among overindebted individuals, and this as a first step to deepen our understanding of the importance of negative emotions and its links to health during different kind of economic pressure.

2. Methods

This study is a substudy of a cross-sectional study (Ahlström, 1998), which examined the health and quality of life of overindebted individuals in Sweden. The focus of this substudy was to analyze the emotional impact of severe debts on the individual. The emotional impact was assessed using a self-report questionnaire, which was mailed to the subjects and filled in at their home location, and hence returned to the investigator in a reply paid envelope.

2.1. Measures

In addition to items covering relevant socio-demographic data (e.g., gender and marital status), a questionnaire was included that focused on the assessment of the emotional impact of severe debts on the individual. This questionnaire, comprising 26 statements, was constructed on the basis on a content analysis of the results of 20 in-depth interviews previously held with overindebted individuals in the Swedish cities of Gothenburg and Sundsvall. The statements in the questionnaire mirrors frequently expressed emotions when reflecting the experience of being in debts among the participants in the interview study. The purpose of the questionnaire is to measure and evaluate the impact and structure of emotions when being in a life situation characterized by severe debts. For each statement a five degree Likert scale was attached, comprising a range from 1: "Disagree completely", to 5 "Agree completely". For reasons of convenience, the questionnaire will hence be referred to as the IMPdebt-scale.

2.2. Participants

A total of 300 subjects agreed to participate in this substudy. They were all recruited in a two-step procedure by officials from the Money advisory service in 20 communities in Sweden. The two-step procedure was used to secure the participating subjects' anonymity. The inclusion criterion for participation in the study was that the subject should fulfil the legal court requirements for debt settlement according to the Swedish debt settlement law (SFS, 1994). This imply that the subject has been severely overindebted during a substantial time period, with no, or very limited capacity to pay back his or her debts. The twenty communities were selected as to represent the most typical average living conditions in Sweden with respect to average income levels, education, geographic region etc.

Out of the total 300 subjects, 236 subjects (i.e.78,6 %) subjects returned the questionnaire. Due to missing data 16 questionnaires were excluded from the final analysis. The final sample of subjects (n=220) comprised 136 women and 84 men. Mean age for men and women was 46,2 years. On average, the subjects in this study had been overindebted for 7 years and 4 months.

2.3. Statistical analyses

A first-order factor analysis was used to explore the content and pattern of the 26 statements in the questionnaire (i.e. the IMPdebt-scale). In order to compare the relative emotional impact of scale items a mean values analysis was carried out. Analysis of variance was used to test sociodemographic differences. These three statistical analyses were performed with the SPSS 12.0 software package. In addition, a second-order factor analysis was performed based on the factor structure of the first-order factor analysis employing the LISREL 8.50 software (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2001)

3. Results

3.1. Factor analysis

In order to explore the main aim of the study in an adequate way, a factor analytic approach was chosen. Factor analysis is a suitable method here, since its employment makes it possible to map the not directly observed (i.e. latent) dimensions underlying subjects' ratings of the questionnaire statements, as well as the relative importance of these latent dimensions.

In a preliminary step, the internal consistency of the 26 IMPdebt scale items was calculated. In the present sample the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.90, which imply good psychometric properties. Second, taken together, the results of Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p < 0.0001$), and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin's measure of sampling adequacy (0.90) indicates that the IMPdebt scale indeed fulfils the necessary requirements of factor analysis (Hair Jr, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1995).

In order to identify as many theoretically meaningful latent dimensions as possible, the maximum likelihood method for factor extraction was chosen, in combination with a direct oblimin rotation method.

The results of the factor analysis yield a very meaningful factor structure consisting of six dimensions (see Table 1). Initially, the factor extraction indicated an eight-factor solution, based on Kaiser's criterion (i.e. Eigenvalues > 1), but the six-factor solution was superior when it comes to interpretability and meaningfulness. Solutions based on less than six factors resulted in an impairment of interpretability and meaningfulness. The six-factors taken together explain 45,8 percent of the total variance.

The result of the factor analysis is interesting. The first factor is dominating, whereas the explanatory power of the other five factors is clearly less important. In **the first factor** there are mainly three groups of items, and each one of them express a distinct emotion. The three items in the first group 2, 4 and 10 ("I feel totally powerless", "I feel outlawed" and "I have almost no control of what is happening to me") all address a basic feeling of having no or very limited control over one's own life. In the second group of items 3, 5 and 8 ("I feel frightened when thinking about my debts", "My life in debt very often terrifies me" and "I worry all the time that the sheriff is planning to distrain the few, last assets that makes my life endurable") the emotional content express fear and worries. In the third group of items in factor 1, items 6 and 9 ("I feel constantly on the run", and "It feels like I am living under a constant threat") there is a definite emphasis on being hunted and threatened. The remaining two items in factor 1, 1 and 7 ("The uncertainty of my own future is painful", and "Managing my debts is like a full-time work in itself") accentuate and links to the significations of emotions contained in the groups of emotions in factor 1. Taken together, the significance of items in factor 1 clearly indicates the existence of a **mental trauma** among subjects.

In **factor two**, only two items (11 and 12) give rise to strong factor loadings. These two items ("Sometimes at night, not being able to find sleep, I have nurtured desires of vengeance towards those people who put me in this life situation", and "One day I will hit back hard on those people who forced me in the debt trap") no doubt signify emotions that are centered on a basic desire for vengeance and revenge. Therefore factor two was labelled **desire of vengeance**.

Factor three comprising three items 13, 14 and 15 ("More and more, I feel that I have to go underground, without address and identity", "I wished I could escape to a foreign country where they cannot find me", and "I am loosing the grip of reality") signifies emotions that focus on a wish to escape the debt problems, either factually by "going underground" or to emigrate (items 13 and 14, or by an inner escape route that implies loosing the sense of reality (item 15). Factor three was labelled **flight**.

The three items; 16, 17 and 18 ("My debt problems are shameful", "Having debts makes me feel like a criminal", and "I am personally guilty for the collapse of my economy") captured in **Factor four**, very clearly address feelings of shame and guilt. Therefore, this factor was labelled **shame and guilt**.

Table 1. Factor loadings from the factor analysis of the IMPdebt scale items. Only factor loadings higher than .40 are shown.

Scale items	Mental trauma	Desire for vengeance	Flight	Shame & guilt	Infringement	External attribution
1. The uncertainty of my own future is painful.	.796					
2. I feel totally powerless.	.611					
3. I feel frightened when thinking about my debts.	.607					
4. I feel outlawed.	.591					
5. My life in debt very often terrifies me.	.581					
6. I feel constantly on the run.	.496					
7. Managing my debts is like a full-time work in itself.	.491					
8. I worry all the time that the sheriff is planning to distrain the few, last assets that makes my life endurable.	.487					
9. It feels like I am living under a constant threat.	.482					
10. I have almost no control of what is happening to me.	.417					
Percentage explained variance=29.8						
11. Sometimes at night, not being able to find sleep, I have nurtured desires of vengeance towards those people who put me in this life situation.		.875				
12. One day I will hit back hard on those people who forced me in the debt trap.		.640				
Percentage explained variance =4.6						
13. More and more, I feel that I have to go underground, without address and identity.				.871		
14. I wished I could escape to a foreign country where they cannot find me.				.631		
15. I am loosing the grip of reality.		.481				
Percentage explained variance =3.6						
16. My debt problems are shameful.			.676			
17. Having debts makes me feel like a criminal.					.546	
18. I am personally guilty for the collapse of my economy.					.452	
Percentage explained variance =3.3						
19. I have been humiliated.					.751	
20. I have been treated nicely when it comes to my debts.					.539	
21. I have suffered physical violence from creditors.					.511	
22. At times I am furious when considering the treatment I have been given.				.423		
Percentage explained variance =2.4						

/ Table 1 continued

Items	Mental trauma	Desire for vengeance	Flight	Shame & guilt	Infringement	External attribution
23. I can simply not grasp that people and institutions that create financial breakdowns are given awards and promotions, while people like myself are punished.						.631
24. I feel like a victim on the financial market.						.612
25. I feel sheer disgust that there is people and companies who makes a profit out of my debts.						.550
26. The reason that my economy collapsed is solely due to external factors beyond my own reach.						.431
Percentage explained variance=2.1						

Extraction method: Maximum Likelihood
 Rotation method: Direct oblimin with Kaisers normalization

The **fifth factor**, contain four items; 19-22 (“I have been humiliated”, “ I have been treated nicely when it comes to my debts”, “ I have suffered physical violence from creditors”, and “At times I am furious when considering the treatment I have been given”). Item 20 is here reversed. The emotional impact mirrored by these items, taken together, is focussed on aspects of negative treatment executed by creditors and officials. Three out of four items in this factor (i.e., 19, 21 and 22) signify feelings of **infringement**.

Finally, the **sixth factor** entails four items; 23-26 (“I can simply not grasp that people and institutions that create financial breakdowns are given awards and promotions, while people like myself are punished.”, “. I feel like a victim on the financial market”, “. I feel sheer disgust that there is people and companies who makes a profit out of my debts”, and “The reason that my economy collapsed is solely due to external factors beyond my own reach.”) that express an attribution of one owns economical failure to external forces (e.g., creditors, debt collection companies, law enforcement etc). Also, the items express a resentment of being somehow victimized on the financial market. This factor was labelled **external attribution**.

With the exception of factor one, all remaining five factors (i.e. two to six) contribution to the overall amount of explained variance, is roughly the same ranging from 2.1% – 4.6 %. This indicates, that the reciprocal relationship in the hierarchical order between these five factors is probably arbitrary in the sense of what factor is more important than any other factor. Also, in contrast with component analysis, a factor analysis with an oblique rotation method (i.e., the choice in this study) assumes that factors are intercorrelated.

Another aspect of the results of the factor analysis in this study, is the dominance of the first factor. This in turn might indicate the presence of one or more additional higher-order latent factors, which are inter-correlated in a subtle, however systematic way with the factors

obtained in a first-order factor analysis. In order to investigate this aspect, a complimentary second-order factor analysis (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2001) was carried out. This analysis indicated that the introduction of one additional second-order latent factor to some extent brought about a minor improvement in the overall explanatory power of the initial factor analysis. However, by closer inspection in terms of the interpretability of factors and factor structure the result provided no improvement whatsoever, and was therefore dismissed.

3.2. Analysis of item mean values

An additional, but far less complicated evaluation of the way questionnaire scale items measure the emotional impact of debts, is the calculation and comparison of item mean values in a rank order fashion. By focusing on the ten most prominent scale items and their corresponding arithmetic mean values, the following result was obtained (See Table 2).

The result exhibits a great deal of overlap with the results obtained in the factor analysis, and therefore support the main findings previously obtained.

Table 2. The ten most prominent scale items, based on the rank order of arithmetic mean values (n = 220) Max: 5.0; Min: 1.0.

Scale item	Mean value
1. The uncertainty of my own future is painful	4.02
2. I feel sheer disgust that there is people and companies who makes a profit out of my debts	3.87
3. The reason that my economy collapsed is solely due to external factors beyond my own reach.	3.83
4. I feel frightened when thinking about my debts.	3.80
5. I feel totally powerless.	3.72
6. I feel outlawed.	3.71
7. My debt problems are shameful.	3.60
8. I feel constantly on the run	3.56
9. I feel like a victim on the financial market.	3.53
10. It feels like I am living under a constant threat.	3.40

3.3. Analysis of variance of sociodemographic differences

In order to evaluate the influence of the main socio-demographic background variables (i.e. gender, age marital status, education, occupational status, the number and amount of debts) on the emotional impact, separate one-way analyses of variance were performed. In these analyses the dependent variable (i.e., emotional impact) was operationally defined as the summed score of the IMPdebt-scale across subjects. The result was negative; i.e. no significant differences were found for any one of the socio-demographic background variables. This means, that regardless of gender, age marital status, education, occupational

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status, the number and amount of debts, the subjects probably share the same magnitude of a basic, complex of emotions as expressed in the dependent variable.

4. Discussion

The aim of this study was to describe, analyze and evaluate the predominant emotions among a group of severely overindebted individuals in Sweden. Taken together, the results indicate that the life situation of the subjects recruited for this study is characterized by mental hardship. Especially the results obtained in the factor analysis provide evidence that the dominating emotional experience is overwhelmingly negative. For example, the essence of the scale items loading high on the first factor address fears, worries, threats, and uncertainty of ones future. These emotions are also linked (in the same factor) with emotions of powerlessness and feelings of being without legal rights. Descriptions of this particular complex, or rather, combination of emotions is frequently found in the modern psychiatric literature under the heading PTSD -post-traumatic stress syndrome (Barlow & Durand, 2002). An important facet in the life of the participating subjects in this study is, that the average time spent in overindebtedness is almost seven and half years. A life situation characterized by fears and worries in combination with severe economical hardship (i.e., poverty) during an extended period of time is no doubt deleterious to mental and physical health. Also, the economical situation in overindebtedness is worsened by debt collecting procedures ranging from distress of assets and salary to losing ones home by eviction.

The results that were obtained in the factor analysis (e.g., factor three) also provides evidence that subjects expressed a need to escape their debt problems. In the areas of emotion psychology and psychiatry there is an abundance of research findings linking fears and flight fantasies and flight behaviours. Flight is a normal, adaptive and beneficial reaction to threats that bring about fears. However, flight behaviour as a response to enduring fear provoking threats is not beneficial from a health perspective.

In contrast to previous research (Phil and Starrin, 1998; Starrin and Kalander-Blomqvist, 2001), the results obtained in the present study do not support the claim that the predominant emotion in the life of overindebted individuals is shame. Rather, the results that are evident in the first factor in the factor analysis in the present study, as well as the result of the analysis of item mean values of the IMPdebt scale, indicates that fear and worries and related emotions are more salient in the life of the overindebted individual. However, as suggested by Tangney & Fisher, 1995) emotions like shame and guilt can interact with fear and anxiety thus creating an attenuated stress response.

4.1. Study limitations

Despite the reasonably large sample size in this study, one has to notice that the sample was not a representative population sample of overindebted individuals. Furthermore, there is a imbalance in the number of men and women recruited for the study.

Another obvious limitation is that all assessments were self-reports and no objective health outcome data could be incorporated in this study.

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Furthermore, the results are based on cross-sectional data only, which limit the understanding of how negative emotionality develop over time in this group of exposed individuals. Also, the study was carried out in Sweden. The legal system in different countries is different, also when considering debt-handling, debt-collecting and the debt settlement procedure. This imply that the pressure executed by the authorities towards the overindebted individual and his/her family) might be quite different in different countries.

4.2. Conclusions

It is concluded that the results support the idea that the life situation of overindebted individuals is characterized by hardship and mental trauma. The content and specific structure of negative and long lasting emotionality, as a precursor to extreme stress, implies that overindebted individuals are at high risk for mental and physical breakdown.

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Psychological predictors of personal debt in Iceland

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Abstract.

Levels of debt have reached an unprecedented extreme in Iceland. This rise has occurred in the context of a consumer culture highlighting supposed psychological benefits of buying consumer goods. Over-indebtedness can have serious financial, social and psychological consequences, thus studying its antecedents is vital. This paper reports findings from two studies examining materialistic and motivational precursors to various financial outcomes. The first study ($n = 271$) showed that people who endorse materialistic values have more financial worries, have more tendency towards compulsive buying and spending and have higher credit-card debt, but this is particularly true for lower earners. The second study ($n = 304$) showed that people in lower income brackets who buy goods for mood related purposes are more likely to have higher consumer debt.

1. Introduction.

In Iceland, household debt (including mortgages) has reached new and worrying heights (Bank of Iceland, 2007). Households owe nearly 240% of their aggregate disposable income, which is considerably higher than the year before, when this proportion was 215%. Obviously, such a trend cannot continue without serious consequences. It must be noted, however, that some, but not all, of the surge of household indebtedness in Iceland can be attributed to the fact that housing prices have risen immensely in the past decade due to increased competition in the mortgage market. No official numbers exist as to how much of the increase can be reliably attributed to the house prices alone, and how much is due to individual consumption. This is because housing loans are not required to be deployed entirely on residential purchases. Thus, although one can trace loans to different lending institutions, one cannot assume that loans are for consumption

purposes only and not for housing or that second mortgages are for housing and not for consumption (Kristjón Kolbeins, Bank of Iceland, personal communication, 27. 9. 2006).

Although information on personal debt is not as easily accessible as aggregate data on household debt, it is likely that the enormous recent increase in household debt is disproportionately due to individuals spending more on consumption, such as material goods or holidays, given that the rise in household debt outstrips the rise in house prices. This rise in household debt has occurred in the context of a consumer culture highlighting supposed psychological benefits of buying consumer goods, such as greater happiness and a better self, encapsulated in the slogans of “retail therapy” and “I shop therefore I am” (Dittmar, 2007; Kasser & Kanner, 2004). Thus, it is highly likely that over-indebtedness can have significant psychological causes.

To date not many studies have focused on the underlying psychological functions of buying and spending that may *lead to* overspending and, consequently, indebtedness. It is important to address this gap in research, because debt not only has serious financial consequences, with bankruptcy at the extreme, but can also have social and psychological effects (e.g. Elliot, 2005; Ryan, 1992). Over-indebtedness can contribute to physical and mental health problems, such as anxiety and distress, as well as psychosomatic symptoms. The most extreme consequence of serious indebtedness is suicide. Social consequences include serious relationship problems which can lead to the break-up of families. Given that over-indebtedness can cause such prolonged misery to individuals and families, more investigation into its antecedents is both fully justified and timely.

To address this research gap and to try to decipher how much of total household debt can be attributed to individual spending on consumption; the authors have launched an ongoing research programme¹, both in the UK and in Iceland. The research programme aims to test a theoretical model of indebtedness, which integrates various psychological factors that have already been shown to be linked with individuals’ buying and spending behaviour: materialistic values, identity deficits, and psychological buying motives. Money-management skills are also included, because they have been shown to play a role in whether or not people are likely to plan and monitor their consumer spending, rather than giving into desires for immediate consumption. This model will be described in more detail later. The primary focus of this present research paper, however, is to report the findings from two prior studies upon which, among others, we base our theoretical model.

2. Study 1.

2.1. Current knowledge.

Elliot (2005), in his overview on what determines debt levels, claims that the cause of debt is a combination of three factors. One factor, temptation from lenders, such as the ease of making personal loans, increasing overdrafts, and getting new credit-cards, is not addressed in the present research. The focus is on the other two factors. The first is naïve personal financial management. This means that the borrower has some fundamental

¹ Funded by RANNIS, the Icelandic Centre for Research.

flaws in his/her management of finance, such as disregarding budgeting and financial advice, and has an unrealistic optimism that things will get better. The second factor consists of external and internal pressures that cannot be resisted, and this factor is of special relevance to the present research. The external pressures constitute equipping a home, size of family, business ventures, meeting spending demands of family. The internal pressures (arguably originating from outside sources) are, for example, the maintenance of a lifestyle equal to peers, relatives or society, or maintaining an *identity* or *image* that is deemed socially acceptable. The lifestyle pressures of maintaining or seeking a better identity and positive emotions are likely to be linked to an underlying belief structure that places a strong emphasis on money and material goods as a means to achieving important life goals, such as life satisfaction, happiness, and success. This belief structure is characteristic of a *materialistic value orientation*, which has increasingly become an integral component of consumer culture.

Materialism

A materialistic value orientation can be defined as the “the importance ascribed to the ownership and acquisition of material goods in achieving major life goals” (Richins, 2004, p. 210). A person with highly materialistic values believes that the acquisition of material goods is a central life goal, prime indicator of success, and key to happiness and self-definition. People who are materialistic strive for things that do not improve their well-being in the long-run, they are misguided in their thinking that financial success, wealth and possessions *are* or *bring* ‘the good life’ (e.g. Garðarsdóttir, 2006).

There is a growing research literature that demonstrates a negative link between a materialistic outlook and individual’s Subjective Well-Being (SWB, for an overview see Kasser and Kanner, 2004). However, financial downsides of materialism have been largely overlooked in the research literature. It is, quite possible that the negative impact of materialism extends beyond SWB and also affects people’s finances, their consumption patterns, their tendencies to spend or save, and consequently, their levels of debt.

Watson (2003) has examined people’s attitudes and behaviours towards debt, saving and spending, depending on their level of materialism. His study showed that people who were high in materialism were more likely to see themselves as spenders, compared to people low in materialism. It also showed that there is a tendency for people who are low in materialism to exhibit more careful saving behaviour, such as investing safely. People who scored highly on materialism also had different attitudes towards long-term borrowing of money than people with lower scores. Further, Watson found that higher materialists had more favourable views of taking loans for home improvement, beautifying/correcting treatments, vacations or holidays, buying recreational vehicles or expensive sporting equipment as well as purchasing art, furs and jewellery. From these findings, Watson concluded that materialists were more favourable towards overspending and borrowing for luxury purchases. These findings all suggest that materialists are more likely to be more indebted than non-materialists, but the study did not address actual amounts of debt as is done in the research presented here.

Compulsive buying

Dittmar (e.g., 2000; 2004; 2005) has found in numerous studies that people who endorse materialistic values *and* have large ‘self-discrepancies’ (are different from what they would ideally like to be), are more likely to be compulsive shoppers. This is because

people who are materialistic are more likely to pursue their happiness through acquisition or possession rather than through other means (Richins & Rudmin, 1994). There is no agreed upon specific definition of compulsive buying (Dittmar, 2004), and in the current diagnostic manual DSM-IV-TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2000), compulsive buying is included in the non-specific, residual category “Disorders of Impulse Control Not Otherwise Specified”. Nevertheless, there is consensus that compulsive buying consists of three core features: a) the impulse to buy is experienced as irresistible, b) individuals lose control over their buying behaviour, and c) they continue with excessive buying despite adverse consequences in their personal, social, or occupational lives, and financial debt (Dittmar, 2004). This last feature of compulsive buying - the inability to stop buying despite the accumulation of debt - is especially relevant to the present research programme. Compulsive buying can lead to substantial and serious indebtedness (Faber, 2004). When assessing the effects materialism has on people’s finances, studying the causes and consequences of such dysfunctional shopping and spending is therefore imperative.

Money management

A common finding in previous research on personal indebtedness is that higher debt can be attributed in part to poor money-management skills (Kim, Garmand, & Sorhaindo, 2003; Elliot, 2005; Watson, 2003; Lea, Webley & Walker, 1995). Lea et al. (1995) found that people who were in serious debt were less likely to have bank or building society accounts, and they rated themselves as poorer money managers than non-debtors. Money-management skills are therefore taken into account in the two studies presented here in order to establish whether debt can be attributed to particular psychological determinants directly, or whether money-management skills affect the relationship.

Income

Iceland’s economy is flourishing with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita (\$40,277²) among the highest in the world (IMF, 2006). At the same time income disparity appears to be growing in Iceland³ and this once impoverished country now has multi-billionaires raising the lifestyle standards for the rest of the country, who are (perhaps consequently) drowning in household debt. Income has before been shown to play a moderating role in the association between materialism and well-being (Garðarsdóttir, 2006; Garðarsdóttir, Jankovic & Dittmar, 2007). Income moderated the relationship between materialism and SWB in such a way that higher income earners were in certain respects protected from the adverse psychological effects of materialism. There may therefore be reason to believe that income could interact with materialism with regards to financial and consumer behaviours and attitudes. Also, if certain values and behaviours have bad effects for the lower income groups of society, but not the higher earners, this can have important political implications.

2.2. Aim and hypotheses.

The aim of the first study is to examine the effect of materialism on debt, attitudes to spending and saving, compulsive buying tendency and financial worry. Based on research by Watson, it is proposed that higher levels of materialism will predict more favourable attitudes to spending, (Hypothesis 1), more financial concern (Hypothesis 2)

² Adjusted for Purchasing Power Parity.

³ This is debated. Politicians have trouble agreeing what statistics to include in calculating income disparity (GINI index), thus this remains officially unsolved.

and higher credit-card debt (Hypothesis 3). Further, based on research by Lea et al. (1995), it is proposed that materialism will affect these relationships even though skills for managing money have been controlled for. Based on research by Dittmar (e.g. 2004), materialism will be expected to be associated with compulsive buying (Hypothesis 4), also having controlled for money management skills. Finally, based on research by Garðarsdóttir (2006), income is predicted to interact with materialism with regards to its effect on financial and consumer behaviours and attitudes. Materialism is predicted to have a stronger effect for the lower income group than for the higher income group (Hypothesis 5).

2.3. Method.

Participants and procedure.

A questionnaire was set up as a web page which also contained an introduction and instructions. After submitting their answers, participants were debriefed on the purpose of the study. Participants were recruited via a snowballing method. An E-mail with a link to the online questionnaire was sent to contacts of the first author and they were asked to complete the questionnaire and forward the link to their contacts. Directions were given to participants to pass the questionnaire on to Icelandic adults (over 18 years of age, non-students) in full-time employment. This resulted in 271 participants, 56 (20.7%) of the respondents were men and 215 (79.3%) were women. The average age of respondents was 38.41 years, *SD* 10.27, median = 35, ranging from 22 to 68. The average income was 300,805 ISK per month, *SD* = 206,158; median = 275,000, ranging from 20,000 to 2,500,000 ISK per month (equivalent to $M = \$ 4,866$; $SD = \$ 3,335$; median = \$ 4,448, range = \$ 324 - \$ 40,438⁴).

Measures.

All participants completed a questionnaire consisting of seven main sections. One section asked for demographic information, including age, gender, income and education, whereas the other six sections consisted of the core measures central to the model.

Materialism was assessed using the Richins and Dawson's (1992) Materialistic Values Scale (MVS) which consists of 18 items measured on a 6-point Likert-type scale. The MVS measures 3 aspects or dimensions of materialism; 'Success' (The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life), 'Happiness' (I wouldn't be any happier if I owned nicer things (rev.)) and 'Centrality' (I try to keep my life simple as far as possessions are concerned (rev.)). Internal consistency of the scale was excellent, $\alpha = .80$.

Compulsive buying. The extent to which people engage in compulsive shopping behaviour was measured by the 11-item Compulsive Buying Scale (CBS; d'Astous, Maltais, & Roberge, 1990). This scale focuses on both financial and psychological aspects of compulsive buying and addresses each of the three core features of compulsive buying; irresistible impulses, loss of control and continuing despite adverse consequences. The items (e.g. 'I sometimes feel that something inside pushes me to go shopping', 'At times I felt somewhat guilty after buying something because it seemed unreasonable') were measured using a 6 point format ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). Internal consistency was excellent, $\alpha = .90$.

⁴ Based on average exchange rate in January 2005, 1 USD = 61.82 ISK.

Financial concern. The extent to which finances are causing worry or concern was measured with nine items, thereof six were taken from Jessop, Herberts, and Solomon (2005, e.g. 'I worry about my financial situation'). Three further items measuring particular concern with debt and overspending were developed for the purposes of Study 1 ('I never seem to make ends meet', 'I owe too much money', 'My spending habits worry me'). Items were rated on a six point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). The nine item scale had excellent reliability, $\alpha = .92$.

Spending tendencies. Six items were used to measure people's spending tendencies. Four of the items (e.g. 'I spend everything I earn') were taken from Watson (2003). Two additional items were developed specifically to measure people's attitudes towards their own spending and saving behaviour (e.g. 'I should save more of my money'). The scale had acceptable reliability, $\alpha = .64$. Higher scores indicate greater tendency to spend.

Money-Management Skills (MMS). Five items were used to measure skills in money-management, thereof three items were developed for the purposes of this study ('Do you monitor your financial statements?' 'Do you put away money for bills?' 'Do you keep an eye on your cash flow?') These were measured on a 5 point scale measuring frequency, ranging from (1) never to (5) always, where higher scores represent better money-management. Also, two items asked people to rate on a scale of 1 (very good) to 6 (very bad) how good or bad they believed they were at managing their own money. The items were taken from Watson (2003). Internal consistency of the items was good, $\alpha = .79$.

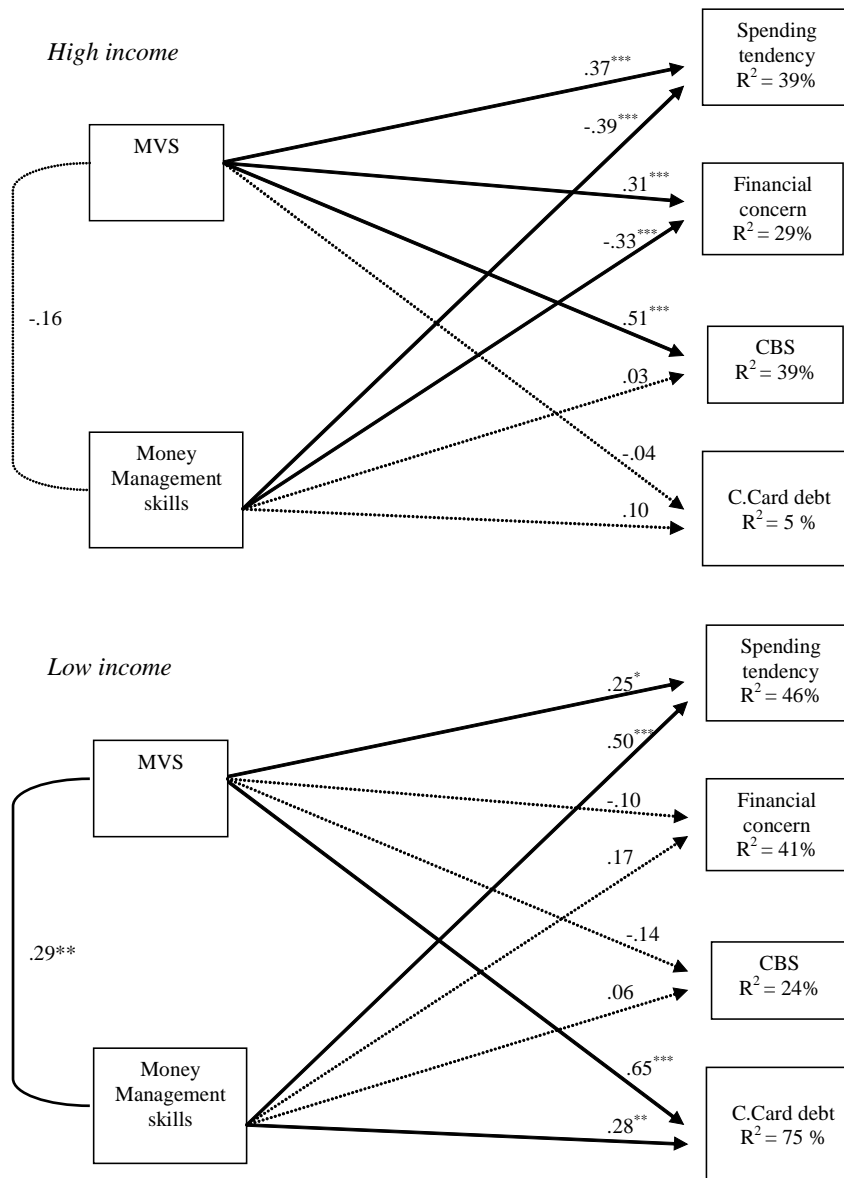
Credit-card debt was assessed by asking people first if they owned a credit or store card. If they answered yes, they were asked to estimate in an open-ended question how much they owe. Credit-card debt is probably more likely to reflect short-term spending due to consumption than any other form of common debt. This, however, is an assumption and as it is difficult for a researcher to access participant's bills, it is impossible to assess what people are using their credit-card for with total accuracy (some people could conceivably shop for food and other necessities using their credit-card). It is therefore not assumed that amounts owed on credit-card are an entirely accurate measurement of consumer spending or by-product of materialism, but a close proxy measurement.

2.4. Results, Study 1.

Hypotheses were tested using structural equation modelling (SEM, EQS version 6.1, Bentler, 1995). A two-sample SEM was used, modelling associations simultaneously for both higher and lower income groups (split by median income), and assessing model fit with respect to both groups. The model provided an adequate fit, $X^2(72) = 741.423$, $p < .001$; CFI = .94; GFI = .94; ST.RMR = .058; RMSEA = .099. The chi square fit index is significant, which indicates that there is some discrepancy between the model and the data, which is to be expected for an analysis that measures a reasonable numbers of items in various samples. Figure 1 depicts the paths from the analysis and Table 1 shows inter correlations between outcome variables in Study 1. Not depicted are paths for control variables. Age, gender and education were controlled for.

Materialism (MVS) is related positively to spending tendencies in both income groups, supporting Hypothesis 1. Materialism is related to more financial concern for the high income group only, partly supporting hypothesis 2, and at odds with hypothesis 5.

Interestingly, materialism is associated positively with compulsive buying tendencies for the high income group only, partly supporting hypothesis 4. However, in support of hypotheses 5 and 3, materialism is a very strong predictor of credit-card debt for the low income group but is not related significantly to debt in the high income group. This is true despite the fact that both high income, $M = 2.78$, and low income groups, $M = 2.76$, endorse materialistic values equally, $t(252) = -.22$; *ns*. Also, the average amount of credit-card debt for the two income groups does not differ significantly $t(136) = -1.51$; *ns*.



Note. Error terms and control variables are not shown for the sake of visual clarity. Table 1 shows correlations between outcome variables.

Figure 1.
Two- sample SEM Model showing the effect of materialism on financial outcomes, controlling for money-management skills. High income and low income groups.

Table 1.

Zero order correlations between outcome variables in the study.

	Tendency to spend	Financial concern	Compulsive buying
<i>Lower income</i>			
Financial concern	.46 ^{***}		
Compulsive buying	.46 ^{***}	.39 ^{**}	
Credit-card debt	.09	.18	.01
<i>Higher income</i>			
Financial concern	.42 ^{***}		
Compulsive buying	.55 ^{***}	.38 ^{***}	
Credit-card debt	-.16	-.14	-.19 ⁺

Note: + $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

The effect of money-management skills also differs with regards to income group. In the lower income group, people with self-reported good MMS tend to be more inclined toward spending their money, while the opposite is true for people in the higher income group. A negative association was to be expected. Logically, people in the higher income group who have better self-reported MMS have less financial concern. For the lower income group, there was not a significant association between MMS and financial concern. MMS does not affect tendencies toward compulsive buying for either income group. Oddly, for the lower income group, good MMS predict higher credit-card debt.

2.5. Discussion, Study 1.

The findings of Study 1 show that materialism does affect debt, but for the lower income group only. Interestingly, materialism, combined with MMS explained a very large amount of the variation in credit-card debt for the low income group, while, for the high income group, they did not relate to debt at all. In Study 1 debt was only measured using credit-card status as a proxy indicator of consumer debt, and therefore not a thorough measurement. Also, some odd findings emerged with regards to money management skills suggesting that the measurement of MMS needed improving.

3. Study 2.

3.1. Current knowledge.

There is evidence that the very nature of buying and shopping has become more psychological, focusing on hoped for emotional and identity-related benefits (e.g. Dittmar, 2005). In popular culture, these developments are captured by such slogans as 'retail therapy' and 'I shop therefore I am'. This is characteristic of a materialistic value orientation, which has increasingly become an integral component of consumer culture. This value orientation sends unrealistic messages that emphasize psychological benefits from consumer goods (Dittmar, 2005). Study 1 has already established that materialism is a likely predictor of credit-card debt. There has, however, been a lack of research on the underlying *psychological functions of buying* as factors that may increase the likelihood of consumer over-spending. In Study 2 both debt and money-management skills are measured in better detail than in Study 1. Also, importantly, Study 2 examines a new set of psychological predictors, namely *buying-motives*.

Buying motives

Buying motives refer to the motives or reasons people have for buying consumer goods. According to Dittmar (e.g. 2000; 2004; 2007) these motives can be both practical and psychological for most people. The practical motives focus on economic and functional aspects of buying, including usefulness, value for money, and efficiency. The psychological motives, however, describe behaviour whereby individuals engage in buying and shopping in order to obtain emotional and identity-related benefits (for a review see Dittmar, 2007). Buying motives have been found to predict compulsive buying, and this study aims to test whether they can also be predictive of debt when measured directly. There is some evidence that emotional and identity-related buying motives could predict overspending. Dittmar (2007) showed that the reported ease of spending money inadvertently could be predicted from identity-seeking buying motives. Mood and identity related motives made it more likely that individuals spent more money than they intended or, possibly, could afford.

3.2. Aims and hypotheses.

The aim of the second study is to assess whether buying motives contribute to the understanding of indebtedness. For the second study, improved measures of money management skills were used, furthermore, participants were asked to assess their debt in more detail than in Study 1. Following Dittmar (2007) it was hypothesised that seeking a better identity and positive emotions through shopping is linked to debt (Hypothesis 1). This association is hypothesised to exist with money management skills controlled for. In line with previous findings, it is hypothesised that income moderates the relationship between buying motives and debt. Mood and identity related buying motives are predicted to have a stronger impact on debt for the low income group than the high income group (Hypothesis 2).

3.3. Method.

Participants and procedure.

As before a questionnaire was set up as a web page, also containing an introduction and instructions. An E-mail with a link to the online questionnaire was sent to participants who were volunteers recruited by the third author in various large workplaces in different locations in Iceland. A total of 304 participants completed the questionnaire, thereof 104 (34%) were men, 162 (53%) were women and 38 (13%) did not specify their gender. The average age of respondents was 38 years, *SD* 9.54, median = 37, ranging from 21 to 65. The average income was 404,864 ISK per month, *SD* = 456,416; median = 350,000, ranging from 10,000 to 6,000,000 ISK per month (equivalent to $M = \$ 6,333$; $SD = \$ 7,139$; median = \$ 5,475, range = \$156 - \$ 93,854⁵).

Measures.

The questionnaire consisted of four sections, one containing questions on background (age, gender, income, education, occupation, number of people in the household), and the remaining three on the core measurements of the study.

Money-Management Skills. A 12 item scale was used to assess people's self-reported skills in managing money. Six items came from Lea, Webley and Walker (1995, e.g. I always know exactly how much money I owe) and six questions were developed by the authors (e.g. I keep an eye on my cash flow). Half of the questions were answered on a

⁵ Based on average exchange rate in April 2007, 1 USD = 63.93 ISK.

five point frequency scale ranging from always (5) to never (1), and the other half using a five point scale measuring agreement ranging from disagree strongly (1) to agree strongly (5). Internal consistency of the scale was good, $\alpha = .77$.

Buying motives were assessed using a 25 item scale, whereof 13 items came from Dittmar, Long, & Meek, (2004) and the remaining 12 were developed for the purposes of the study. Participants were asked to agree or disagree with statements describing various reasons people may have for buying personal consumer goods such as clothes, CD's, accessories, cosmetics or decorative house items. They were instructed not to answer with everyday grocery shopping in mind. The scale assessed four types of buying motives, mood or emotional motives (When I buy these goods, I do so in order... to get a real buzz), practical motives (...to get a good buy), identity motives (...to feel more like the kind of person I would like to be) and for the current study an additional scale measuring social comparison motives (...to feel I am better than other people around me).

Debt. Participants were asked whether they had any credit-card, overdraft and other short term debts, and were then asked to estimate the amount they owed on each type of loan. The total amount of debt from these three sources is used as an outcome measure in the analyses to follow.

3.4. Results, Study 2.

The hypotheses were tested using a two sample SEM like before. The model had good fit indices, $X^2(36) = 50.41, p < .05$; CFI = .95; GFI = .97; ST.RMR = .055; RMSEA = .043. Figure 2 shows that none of the buying motives predict total short term debt for the higher income group (not supporting hypothesis 1). However, for the lower income group, mood related buying motives predict debt, despite MMS being controlled for, partly supporting hypotheses 1 and 2. Table 2 shows the covariances among the independent variables. As was expected, the three psychological motives (identity, social comparison and mood) are interrelated but do not relate to the practical buying motives. Not shown are paths for the control variables which were; age, gender, occupation, education and number of people in the household.

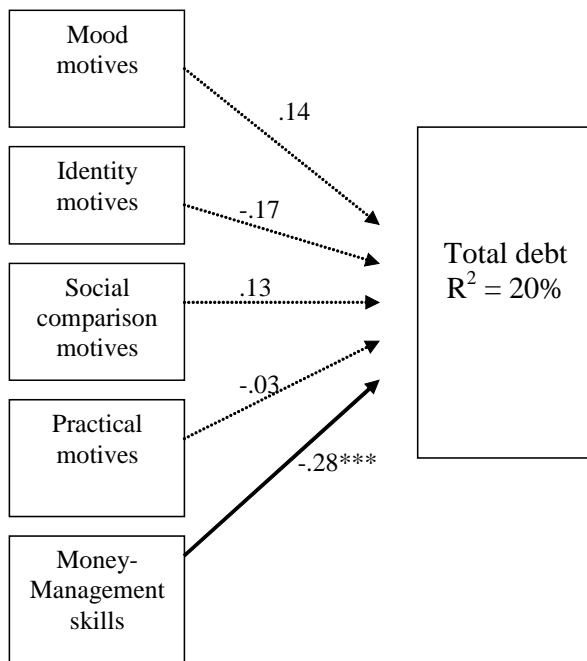
Table 2.

Covariances among independent variables in the model

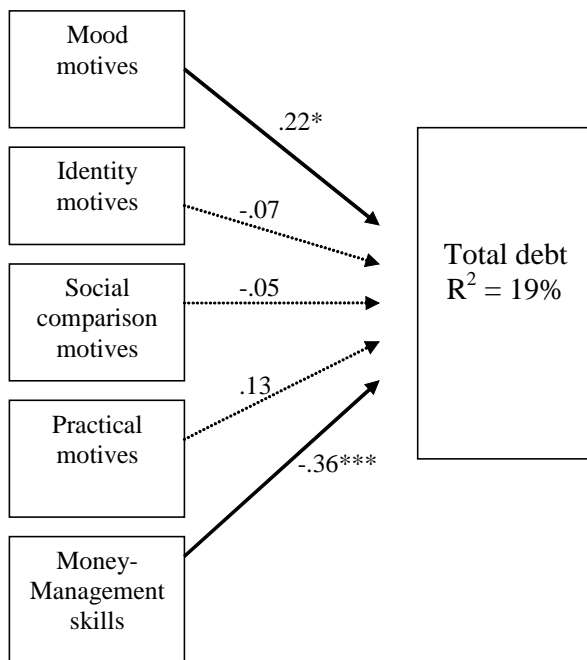
	Mood motives	Identity motives	Social comparison motives
<i>Lower income</i>			
Identity motives	.51 ^{***}		
Social comparison motives	.31 ^{**}	.57 ^{**}	
Practical motives	.03	.04	-.04
<i>Higher income</i>			
Identity motives	.66 ^{***}		
Social comparison motives	.42 ^{***}	.62 ^{***}	
Practical motives	.01	.09	-.04

Note: + $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

High income



Low income



Note. Error terms and control variables are not shown for the sake of visual clarity. Table 2 shows covariances between independent variables.

Figure 2.

Two- sample SEM Model showing the effect of buying motives on financial outcomes, controlling for money-management skills. High income and low income groups.

A supplementary analysis was done in order to compare participants who did and did not have particular types of debt. Participants did not differ on any of the buying motives depending on whether they had or did not have credit-card debt and overdraft debt. However, MMS did differ depending on whether or not participants had overdraft or credit-card debt. Consumers who are indebted with personal short term loans are more likely to shop for mood and identity related reasons than those who do not have personal short term debt (See table 3). They also have worse money-management skills.

Table 3.

Means and standard deviations of buying motives and MMS for people who do and do not have short term debts, other than overdraft and credit-cards.

	Short term debt		No short term debt	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Money-management skills	3.83	0.70	4.00	0.65 *
Identity buying motives	2.38	1.10	2.07	1.03 **
Social comparison motives	1.79	0.87	1.63	0.67
Practical motives	4.46	1.00	4.31	1.03
Mood buying motives	3.08	1.16	2.63	1.12 **

Note: + $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

3.4. Discussion of Study 2.

Study two shows that mood related buying motives are a significant factor in predicting debt for lower earners, but not for higher earners. Identity buying motives, which have been shown to relate to compulsive buying, were not related to debt. People who have short term debt other than credit-card or overdraft are more likely to buy for identity or mood related reasons than those who have not got such loans.

4. Conclusion.

The findings from the two studies reported here show that there is ample cause to believe that debt has psychological antecedents, and is not only founded on bad money-management, attitudes toward debt and socio-economic status as much previous literature has assumed (e.g. Lea, Webley & Levine, 1993; Lunt & Livingstone, 1992). Obviously, indebtedness is multi-determined, consisting of financial, social, situational and cultural causes. Nevertheless, psychological factors such as materialistic value orientation and mood related buying motives can contribute to understanding personal debt.

The two studies confirm different psychological factors as important, which are included in the psychological model to be tested in the ongoing household debt research project. There are two further factors deemed worthy of inclusion of the basis of previous literature. These are Subjective-Well Being and Self-Discrepancies. Dittmar (e.g. 2000 & 2004) has shown that people with high *self-discrepancies*, i.e. people whose actual self differs markedly from their ideal, and are highly materialistic are more likely to be compulsive shoppers or suffer from shopping addiction. Dittmar (2005) also demonstrated that identity deficits in materialistic individuals are linked with a buying motive, whereby people buy goods in order to try and move closer to the person they would ideally like to be, which in turn predicts excessive buying.

The new proposed model of psychological predictors of debt is outlined in Figure 3. This model treats individual personal debt as the main outcome variable, predicted from buying motives as proximal predictors, the impact of which are likely to be moderated by money-management skills. The buying motives, in turn, are predicted from materialistic values and self-discrepancies. An interaction effect of self-discrepancies and materialism is predicted because self-discrepancies should manifest themselves in emotional and identity-related buying motives only for individuals who endorse a materialistic value orientation. Compulsive buying tendency and SWB are examined as correlates of debt. Furthermore various socio-economic variables will be controlled for. This model would appear to fit the recently affluent Icelandic nation which is often perceived as being preoccupied with appearances, keeping up with the Jones's and the chase after the "good life".

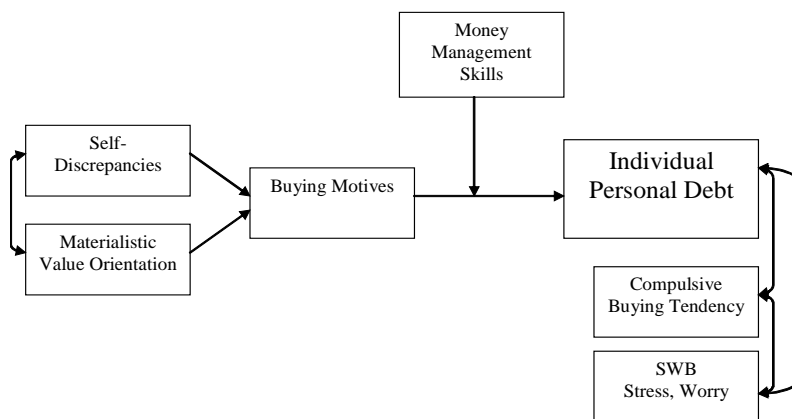


Figure 3.
Model of Psychological Predictors of Individual Personal Debt

This research programme has important theoretical and applied implications. Theoretical implications include the added understanding of the nature of the link between various psychological factors and debt. In particular, offers a first insight into these factors as psychological *causes* of debt. Applied implications are various such as identifying specific buying motives and values that may lead to debt, help with consumer advice both in schools and in the public domain, and interventions for indebted households. Also, this information can be of considerable use to lending institutions and policy makers in assessing risk levels for debt handling and loan limits per person.

The findings from these studies provide important information for the designing of interventions programmes, e.g. whether it is more effective to focus education on good money-management or on the underlying psychological triggers of over-spending such as high self-discrepancies, materialism and buying motives. To date, interventions have only focused on the former type of education. Future research should compare the effectiveness of the two types of intervention programmes.

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Innovative Consumer e-Services in the Financial Sector

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Abstract

In this paper we discuss innovative e-services in financial markets. On the basis of the theoretical considerations we propose a new definition for innovative financial e-services and tackle issues that are essential in new e-service innovations. Thereafter, we empirically examine the content of three innovative e-services in the financial sector that have recently been developed and/or launched. We limit our study to cover only e-services provided on the screen and leave other processes connected to them outside the scope of the study. Finally, we discuss the importance of interaction and trust in the electronic environment and suggest several viewpoints for future research.

1. Background

During the last ten years a large number of e-services have been launched in electronic markets. Especially in banking services, consumers have rapidly moved to the electronic environment. In Finland, for example, about 70% of bills are paid through e-banking (The Finnish Bankers' Ass. 2006). However, lending, wealth management and insurance are still subject to face-to-face interaction, even though most financial companies also provide these facilities via the Internet. As far as insurance issues are concerned, consumers have only recently come to accept e-services and started to use them more actively. The development has been slower than predicted, but the trend towards e-services is clear. As Lovelock et al. already pointed out in 2002, the Internet Revolution is still in its early stages.

Rust (2004) indicated that technological development presents service providers new tools and opportunities, but in many cases traditional financial services have simply been moved to the electronic environment and human work has partly been substituted by computers and software. Therefore, it is important to analyse various types of currently-marketed innovative financial e-services that are targeted at consumers and determine how these services respond to the present state of services marketing literature.

The purpose of our paper is to analyse new innovative e-services and propose definitions for both e-services and innovative financial e-services. Especially we pay our attention to the role of interaction in electronic environment. The paper includes conceptual and theoretical considerations of the definitions, but also empirical examples and analysis of recently launched e-services. At the end of the paper we discuss future challenges for innovative financial e-services by combining both theoretical and empirical knowledge. The reason behind this is our strong belief that proper e-service innovation calls for conceptual roots connected to empirical reality.

The basis for the theoretical part is formed by the fact that there is no unique way to define e-services, even though the term is commonly used in current literature concerning electronic commerce. In this paper we limit our examination to e-services provided on the screen, and thus leave outside the scope of the study those service processes that occur behind the screen.

Innovative e-services are similar to other innovations in that they usually increase efficiency, reduce costs, create new activities and open new avenues to global markets. Innovation research in the financial sector is a relatively new area, since it started as late as the 1980s (Lievens and Moenaert 2001; Akamavi 2005). Even the basic terminology is still developing. This may partly be the result of the limited number of studies in the area. So far, innovation research, especially in the financial sector, has been carried out from perspective of the organisations involved and has focused on themes such as how innovation processes are managed and how innovations have been born within organisations (Akamavi 2005). In addition, a recent research report by Tekes (2007) has shown with case examples that innovations in the financial sector seem to concentrate on information processes, and core services gain only limited attention in these processes. The above arguments indicate that it is worth paying more attention to innovative financial services themselves in both theoretical and empirical senses.

2. Defining e-services in the financial context

There is no unique way to define e-services, even though the term is commonly used in the current literature concerning electronic commerce. According Rust and Lemon (2001),

"e-Service is providing consumers with a superior experience with respect to the interactive flow of information."

Rust and Kannan (2002) stated that

"e-Service can be defined as the provision of service over electronic networks such as the Internet."

Zeithaml (2002) included both pre- and post-Web site service aspects into the concept of e-service quality. However, none of the authors have paid attention to describing e-service content or characteristics in their definitions. This indicates that discussion of the definition and content of e-services is really needed.

The definitions of e-service presented above refer to services that are delivered in a special way, namely through electronic channels or networks. These channels most often refer to the Internet, even though other electronic channels exist (see Järvinen & Lehtinen 1996; Vuorinen et al. 1998). However, e-services used by consumers are mostly provided through the Internet

and therefore, in this paper, we concentrate on this channel only. Still, the above definitions lack consideration of the content; what is an e-service like?

Technology-based services have been categorized by various authors, e.g., Bitner et al. (2000) and Dabholkar (1994). Heinonen (2004) has even defined a technology-based service "as a service with both tangible and intangible elements that is performed totally or partly by the customer via a technology interface." From our perspective, e-service is a different concept compared to technology-based services. The deviation between the two concepts can be illustrated with the aid of two examples from the financial sector. Namely, there are services that benefit from IT, such as ATM banking services and unit-linked insurance, but they are not e-services (Järvinen and Lehtinen 2005). Even though banking and insurance services are considered as among the most abstracts of services (see Järvinen et al. 2001; Järvinen 1998; Järvinen and Heino 2004; Nordman 2004), they are often made more tangible with the aid of various documents such as insurance policies and loan agreements.

For this reason, we here define e-services according to Järvinen and Lehtinen (2005):

e-Service is a benefit-providing object of transaction that can be characterized as an intangible process that is at least partially produced, marketed and consumed in a simultaneous interaction through electronic networks.

It should be emphasised that the above definition is meant to be general and exceptions exist, especially in ways of interacting with customers. Some service providers choose automated interaction, some try to provide a human touch, some try to combine automation and a human touch, and some offer non-interaction.

In many contexts (e.g. Heinonen 2004) it is stated that information-based services are particularly suited to the electronic environment. As information exchange is about to begin to dominate economic activities (see Vargo and Lusch 2004a), this will bring new challenges to e-service activities. Services differ in their frequency of use (Nordman 2004). Some services, e.g. insurance, are quite rarely used, while others, e.g. bank transactions, are used weekly or even daily. We agree that these two issues affect the way traditional service can be transferred to e-service and whether this transfer is successful.

Many financial e-services are simultaneously marketed and produced, but only partially consumed because, for instance, insurance provides security that lasts the whole insurance policy period and investments in stock may provide profit during the whole owning period. Many other financial services follow the same mode: customers can enter their bills into an online bank before the due date and the bill can be paid automatically when it is due. On the other hand, many banking transactions can be executed in real time, although e-loan applications, for example, have to be submitted beforehand and an e-loan decision may take a couple of days.

Like traditional services, e-services consist of a core service and supplementary services. A core service is the reason to be on the market, but supplementary services are those additional services that facilitate the use of the core service, increase the value of the service or differentiate it from other services (cf. Lovelock and Yip 1996; see also Grönroos 1990).

3. Interaction in connection with financial e-services

The definition of e-services by Järvinen and Lehtinen pays attention to simultaneous interaction through electronic devices and is formulated on the basis of an early article by Lehtinen (1984).

More recently, some other service scholars have also adopted the interactive element in their definitions. For example, Lovelock (2001) defined services "as an act or performance offered by one party to another (...)." Grönroos (2000) also stressed the process nature and interaction between customers and service providers. Moreover, Liljander and Strandvik (1995) divided services into episodic and relational ones, where the latter comprise the interactive nature of services. However, e-service definitions have overlooked the role of interaction and Bitner et al. (2000) even argued that alongside technological development, interpersonal service encounters will disappear altogether. This is because interaction in e-services materializes in the interaction through computers?] between customers and service providers.

In reality, personal interaction has been eliminated from many e-services and customers only interact with their computers. We call this automated interaction. In this sense, all kinds of reservation systems (hotel, flight/railroad tickets, packaged tour and food take-away) represent automated interaction, whereas banks, insurance companies and financial advisers offer some e-services that are linked to human interaction, even though not always on a real-time basis. Our term 'mostly automated' refers to linking partial human interaction with automated interaction.

Lovelock et al. (2002) emphasized that the human factor plays a lesser role in e-services than in face-to-face or even telephone-based services. However, as soon as anything goes wrong, personal interaction is vital in performing service recovery and human work is obligatory in solving technical problems. The empirical study by Järvinen and Lehtinen (2005) revealed interaction as the most interesting of the studied e-service characteristics, as it varies more among e-services than other studied characteristics. Even Vargo and Lusch (2004a) emphasized social processes, i.e. interaction, in connection with services. We, on our part, raise two questions: 1) what actually is interaction in the e-context? 2) Does interaction always require a personal or personalized response, or can an automated standard reply be considered as an essential element of interaction? The key issue in interaction is a prompt response, but empirical studies show that there are still companies that do not confirm e-orders or reply to e-mails. Järvinen and Lehtinen (2005) referred to such situations as non-interaction. In these cases, even automated response systems are better than non-response.

A great challenge lies in the continuum between personal interaction and automated interaction. Each e-service provider has to decide on its strategy towards the element of interaction and find a balance between technology and a human touch (see Järvinen et al. 2003). Concerning this, Vargo and Lusch (2004a; 2004b; see also Lovelock & Gummesson 2004) suggested that the goal should be in developing ongoing communication processes or dialogues. However, Lovelock et al. (2002) warned of the dangers in rushing to adopt new e-strategies without thinking through the implications for customers, employees and overall operating system, because it may end up in pain. This requires careful scripted plans of the content of each e-service.

4. e-Service innovation

Innovation is not a new term in the academic literature, being utilized as early as the 1930s (Schumpeter 1934). Sundbo (2001), referring to Schumpeter, defined innovation as "the introduction

of new elements or a new combination of elements in the production or delivery of manufactured and service products.” Newness seems to be the central characteristic of innovation in this definition. Service innovation is naturally a sub-type of innovation. Innovation can be defined either narrowly as confined to the “idea generation” phase (Edvardsson et al. 2000), or widely, incorporating the whole process of service development (e.g., Sundbo 1998; 2001).

Hill and Jones (1998) defined innovation as "the process by which organizations use their skills to develop new goods and services or to develop new production and operating systems so that they can better respond to the needs of their customers." By this definition, the main characteristics of service innovation are skills that organizations use in developing new services and/or developing new production and operating systems as well as better responses to the needs of customers. This replaces the construct of newness in the former definition.

Lehtinen and Järvinen (2007) propose following definition for service innovation:

Service innovation is a largely intangible benefit-providing object of transaction that includes to some extent inseparable production, marketing, consumption and other service processes, and is better targeted to respond to the needs of customers and providing organizations, and evolved by using the skills and knowledge of service providers and customers in simultaneous interaction.

Thus, service innovation is a service with the basic service and innovation characteristics included in the definition. Naturally, innovation is a benefit-providing object of transaction or exchange if we speak about service-like marketed entities. The processual nature is important in service innovation, and every service process should be studied carefully as a part of innovation, because it may be influenced by different service characteristics in unique ways compared to other processes. These processes may be partly invisible to customers. This draws attention to production and operating systems, which as such are not included in the definition. It is true that the influence of better production and operating systems can usually be seen as better innovation, but the customer cannot entirely see them because they are, to a large extent, invisible functions. Like Atuahene-Gima (2005), the above definition considers the skills and knowledge of personnel of utmost importance in developing service innovations. Atuahene-Gima (2005) went even further in his analysis and proposed that both competence exploitation, i.e. using existing knowledge and skills, and competence exploration, i.e. building of entirely new knowledge and skills, are required.

Many new services fail because they simply have no market (Ogawa and Piller 2006). Repo et al. (2006) argue that totally new services are unlikely to achieve commercial success until users perceive needs or values for them. Respectively, Ogawa and Piller (2006) suggest the integration of customers into the innovation process. Nevertheless, innovations are increasingly expected to respond to the needs of customers in order to be saleable. In this, continuous interaction with consumers is inevitable in one form or another.

Various scholars have paid attention to the levels of innovation. Johnson et al. (2000) depicted the development from radical to incremental innovations. Radical innovation means that a totally new service or system replaces an old one and incremental (or improvement) innovation refers to the increase in value of an existing service resulting from some kind of development effort (see Johnson et al. 2000).

Lovelock et al. (2002) identified seven categories for new service development. Only the two first categories include clear innovation, but in some other categories also have innovative elements. The

first category deals with major service innovation, i.e. a new core service for markets that have not previously been defined, and the second category comprises major process innovation, in which existing services are produced and delivered through new processes with additional benefits. The other categories concern product line extensions by offering new services to existing customers, process line extensions delivering existing services in distinctive new ways, supplementary service innovations that can be either new services or improvements in former supplementary services, service improvements and style changes. The two last categories are the most common types in practice.

We consider that our conceptualisation is in line with Lovelock's vision. We respect all service improvements as valuable, but believe that service providers earn the best profits from proper innovations, i.e., core services clearly offering new benefits or values that may also be targeted at new customer segments. We agree with Vargo and Lusch (2004a) when they argue that success does not come from finding ways to provide efficient, standardized solutions but from making it easier for customers to acquire customized service solutions. These solutions can be offered in the form of e-service packages, including core service plus all necessary supplementary services (see e.g. Grönroos 2000; Järvinen 1998; Normann 1991). Achrol and Kotler (1999) even extended this issue to the 'customer-consulting function.'

Following the lines of the above discussion and referring to the service innovation definition by Lehtinen and Järvinen (2007), we define innovative financial e-services as follows:

Innovative financial e-services are mostly intangible, benefit-providing and novel core or supplementary services that are better targeted to respond to the needs of customers and evolved by using the skills and knowledge of service providers and customers.

5. Three empirical examples of innovative e-services in the financial context

It is common that financial companies launch new or re-designed e-services every year. These e-services are quite seldom truly innovative services in reality, but merely small improvements or copies of financial services marketed by domestic or international competitors. Below we describe the content of three recently-developed and/or launched innovative financial e-services. Thereafter, we assess their innovativeness and comment how they fit into our e-service definition and how interaction with customers is organized. Our method is close to conceptual analysis, which in this case means that empirical examples are compared to the proposed theoretical constructs.

Example 1: Safety and insurance advisor for consumers¹

The eInsurance service concept termed the "safety and insurance advisor" was developed in two separate phases during 2003 and 2007 by a research consortium consisting in the first phase of one university, one research organisation, two insurance companies and two software companies, and in the second phase of two universities, two research organisations, one insurance company and two software companies. The first part of the service, called the "insurance cover evaluator," was developed in the first eInsurance project during 2003 and 2004, and the second part called the "safety advisor" was the result of the second project executed during 2005 and 2007. The overall service concept is an Adobe Shockwave application that can be accessed through the project Web site. The selected application type enabled the development of a suitable graphical user interface

¹ see more Ahonen et al. 2007.

and the use of an external database that provided easy-to-update storage of information. The whole concept comprises three functions that are described below.

The first phase of the service concept is a “*selector*” function that collects information about the consumers’ living environment in order to suggest a suitable type of insurance cover along with tailored safety information. The consumer is asked to provide information on the following topics: 1) accommodation (apartment, terraced house, detached house), 2) family members (male, female, teen, child, pets), 3) assets (vehicles, valuables, summer cottage, forest, etc.) and 4) activities (travel, hobbies).

The second phase of the service consists of the “*insurance cover evaluator*” function that lists the selections made earlier by the consumer and combines them with suitable insurance types (e.g. family member, asset). The insurance types were divided into two categories: primary insurance types, which are the most common and therefore highly recommended types (e.g. car, home and travel insurance), and secondary insurance types, which are optional but useful types, especially for customers who want full insurance coverage against risk (e.g. all-risk car insurance, health and sports insurance). By selecting an object from the list, the consumer is provided with information about each specific insurance type covering the risks of that object. The combination of consumer selections and insurance types clarifies the relationship between them and suggests an insurance cover as a whole. The information can also be printed out and used as foreknowledge when contacting an insurance company or an independent broker.

The third phase of the service consists of the “*safety advisor*” function. This function combines the earlier customer selections with examples of accidents and hazards that might occur within the customers’ living environment. The customer can acquire safety information about four different topics within their living environment: home, vehicles, travel and hobbies. The graphical user interface provides several scenarios within each topic, for example a fire in the kitchen or losing one’s luggage during a trip abroad. The individual scenarios include the following information:

- *What might happen?* (a scenario of an accident or hazard that might happen)
- *How to avoid damage?* (how to prevent the accident and/or minimize the damage)
- *In case of damage* (how does insurance apply in this situation and what kind of issues must be considered in making an insurance claim)
- *Did you know...* (statistical, instructional and/or other information related to the scenario)

At the moment only a pilot version of the insurance and safety advisor is available via the Internet (www.einsurance.fi).

Example 2: e-Invoice

Various e-Invoice systems have been developed in many countries, but in all countries the system has to be adapted to the national e-banking infrastructure. In Finland, e-Invoice for consumers was launched at the beginning of 2007. Before that, corporate customers already had their own e-Invoice system.

Consumers who are willing to join the e-Invoice system must have Internet banking codes and passwords and have to sign an agreement with the bank. After that the consumers receive invoices directly via their online bank and it is their duty to accept the bill to be paid, which can be done by clicking on a button. However, they have an opportunity to change the due date and the total amount of the invoice before accepting it.

The advantages of e-Invoice are that the consumers do not have to enter any details of the invoice into the online bank and the mailing of paper invoices can be stopped. The consumers have to monitor when invoices arrive at the online bank, but if not willing to do that, they can order a message notifying of arriving invoices by e-mail or mobile phone. This service is not free of charge, but may save overdue payments.

Example 3: Housing loan calculator in connection with the estate broking portal

Housing loans have been a target of tough competition between banks during recent years while the housing-estate industry has been booming as a result of more and more families seeking and moving to new homes. For a long period of time banks have advertised housing loans on their Internet pages, where they also have loan calculators that consumers can use in order to test their financial standing by changing loan amounts and pay-back periods.

Recently, a loan calculator was also introduced as a supplementary service in the estate broking portal called “www.Etuovi.com” [Frontdoor.com]. This portal is designed for consumers searching for a new home. It contains information, photographs and location maps of properties for sale. The costs of the portal are carried by estate agents and for customers it is free of charge. The portal is a few years old but has been recently been redesigned in order to help customers find an appropriate home more easily and match their wishes better against various alternatives offered.

The loan calculator at Etuovi.com functions as follows. First, it automatically enters the asking price of the property that the consumer has selected to obtain more information. The calculator approximates the current loan interest rate and the length of the pay-back period. The task of consumers is to enter the amount of self-financing, but they are able to change the other details as well. After that the consumer can accept the figures provided by the calculator and the computer offers them an application form on which details of the housing loan and the property are already printed. When the consumers have added their personal data, they can forward the application to three Finnish banks or only one or two of them and receive a loan offer by return in due course.

The loan calculator with the estate portal is convenient for consumers: it bundles the housing loan with the property for sale and there is no need to organise any separate contact with the bank. It also makes it easy to compare the loan terms between the banks.

Evaluating the innovativeness and level of interaction of the three financial e-services

When evaluating the innovativeness of each studied financial e-service, it can be presented on a continuum between radical innovation and incremental innovation. Equally, the level of interaction can be presented on a continuum where at one end is non-interaction and at the other end personal interaction. Between the two is, among others, the automated interaction that was discussed earlier in this paper.

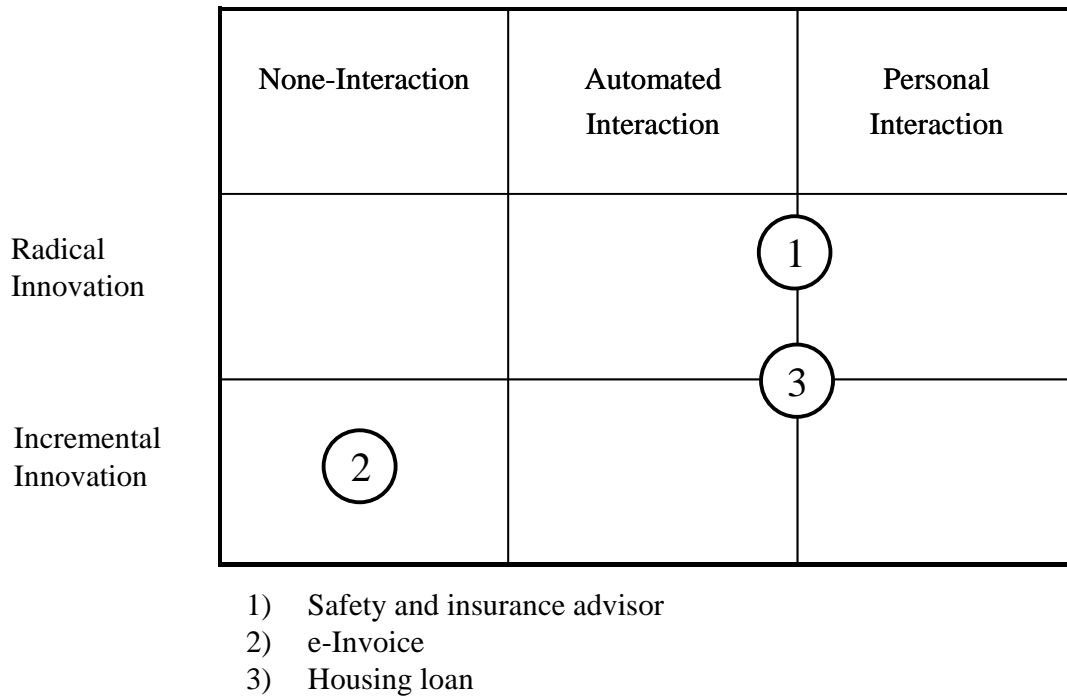


Figure 1: Evaluating innovative financial e-services

Starting from the level of innovation, the safety and insurance advisor represents a radical innovation, because no other such concepts exist, neither as e-service nor manual service. e-Invoice is an incremental innovation, because it has been adapted from the e-invoice system that was earlier developed for corporate customers. The housing loan is between the two, because such a service existed earlier via online banks. The part of the loan calculator that can be considered as a radical innovation is its location in the estate portal and the automatic entering of various data.

There are also variations in interaction between the studied e-services. e-Invoice works with non-interaction with the bank personnel, whereas the other two e-services initially function as self-services, with the consumer later being able to change to personal interaction and negotiate completely tailor-made solutions.

6. Discussion

In this article we discuss innovative e-services in the financial sector. The paper includes theoretical considerations of e-service definitions and innovations, as well as our proposition to define innovative financial e-services. In addition, three empirical examples of such innovations are presented.

Reasons for starting the service innovation process vary. Some service providers are merely seeking price competition, while others wish to add value through innovative service concepts. In our opinion, cost-saving purposes may even ruin successful service innovations, since during the innovation phase costs are usually even higher than during the production phase. Nevertheless, many companies target faster, better and cheaper ways to organize their activities through innovation projects (Thomke 2006). However, we believe that many customers may lose trust if they find out that the only purpose for service providers is to save money. Within the context of

service innovations, the importance of trust and loyalty will increase, because innovative service business conducted through technological devices multiplies risks as well as uncertainty. In this respect, customers have to rely on image and promises (cf. Reichheld & Schefter 2000). Trust helps to keep customers. Without trust, service providers cannot manage referrals. All other attributes, such as low costs and a broad selection, remain far behind.

Reichheld and Schefter (2000) pointed out that word of mouse spreads even faster than word of mouth, and referrals on the Internet are therefore even more lucrative than in traditional services. However, the Internet is fast in spreading both good and bad publicity: trust can change to mistrust and referrals become a curse. Trust and loyalty are intertwined. Reichheld and Schefter (2000) argued that e-business makes customer loyalty more important than ever and loyalty is an economic necessity: acquiring customers on the Internet is enormously expensive and only if these customers make repeated purchases over the years will profits remain. The only way to avoid negative publicity is to earn trust each day and keep it tomorrow. This, for its part, calls for better understanding of e-service content and context.

Customers choose how they use services and whether to engage in self-services (i.e. do it yourself). However, to be successful at self-service, customers have to have sufficient physical and mental skills and/or appliances to make self-service possible (Vargo and Lusch 2004a). Therefore, customers are dependent on adequate system infrastructure. On the other hand, when comparing e-services with traditional services, it is clear that methods to provide concrete services deviate and there are various ways to visualize e-services on the screen that are not available in traditional service encounters (Järvinen and Lehtinen 2005). This issue calls for new ways to look at e-service innovations. One such way is to design e-services to educate customers, as in the case reported by Reichheld and Schefter (2000).

To be honest, we must ask if some of these innovations have already gone too far in the standardization and industrialization of the services in question. This is an especially relevant issue if we remember that there are different market segments in all markets. In addition, attitudes and competencies of customers can never be equal in any market; rather, they tend to move in a more fragmented direction.

Along with new technology, service automation has been a popular theme in recent years, and it has been pinpointed in the sense of productivity and efficiency of organizations. When services are automated, part of the staff working in the service sector can be moved to other fields, and human contact in services will often become a luxury. However, the most demanding and information-intensive services may not always be suitable for the automated environment.

Another important issue in the context of financial services is the human need for social contact. There are indicators (e.g., Tuorila 2001; Järvinen and Heino 2004; Tuorila and Kytö 2005) that all age segments of customers include individuals who prefer to rely on human services instead of electronic services. This represents a challenge both to service innovation research and business and management in general.

Consequently, we anticipate the following future trends in the case of financial e-services that should be targeted in research:

- Most of the financial services will be commonly available on the Internet.
- Visibility through electronic devices will allow more personal interaction and real-time problem solving.

- Some services will remain a face-to-face mode or they will need another perspective to be successfully automated.
- Consumer segments will be polarised: some will prefer personal interaction, some will rely on self-service through the Internet and some will choose combination of the two alternatives.

The first two trends mean that services should be seen as a continuum, where automated (i.e., non-touch) services and those involving human touch are at opposite ends of the continuum, although all services lie between the ultimate points, i.e., include an opportunity for face-to-face interaction at least in certain situations (see Järvinen et al. 2003). As soon as real-time voice and image opportunities through electronic devices become commonly available, this may start a new e-service innovation boom. The technology already exists to organize this system, but the hindrance lies in consumers' attitudes together with the costs incurred. It is also good to remember that many technological innovations have been finally buried because they have been too complex for customers, who have not accepted them, or they have been ahead of their time and customers have not yet been prepared for them.

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Consumers as Private Investors in Financial Markets

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Abstract

Investment behaviour of private investors has been little researched in Nordic countries. In our study we provide answers to the following questions: How do consumers make their investment decision and what motivates consumers to invest? The theoretical roots of the paper lie in both consumer behaviour and behavioural finance theories. The study is qualitative and the data was gathered in the six focus group interviews. We found two types of private investors, active and passive. Active investors were interested in investments, searched for information on them and were confident in their investment decisions. Passive investors trusted in the expertise of financial companies and did not want to waste their time in learning more about investments. As a result of the study we try to reveal knowledge gaps in consumer wealth management and investment decisions, in order to suggest how to improve the position of consumers in financial markets.

1. Motivation and purpose of the study

The amount of privately-owned financial capital has rapidly increased during the past ten years throughout Europe. In Finland the total amount of privately-owned financial capital was 120 billion euros in 2006 (FK 2007). This means that more and more consumers are acting as private investors in financial markets and becoming acquainted with various financial services. Active financial markets are important for the whole of society. It is even more important that money is directed to the most productive investments that can thereby promote economies of scale.

As a consequence of blooming financial markets, more financial companies have appeared. They have responded to consumers' interests and started to actively offer a wider assortment of financial services. These services are often packaged in order to spread consumers' risks and minimise volatility in their investment portfolios. According to previous studies, consumers consider financial services complex and it therefore takes time to become acquainted with them. Moreover, the contents and risks of various financial services vary greatly and consumers require a specific ability termed financial literacy to identify the best investment solutions for their purposes.

Despite increased interest and activities in the area, private investments have been little researched in Nordic countries, at least from the consumers' point of view. The reason for this lack of research lies in additional challenges linked to all financial services in general. According to Campbell (2006), it is important to ask how consumers actually invest, but it is difficult to answer this

question because the data are difficult to obtain. This is because it is unusual for consumers to reveal details of their intimate affairs. In addition, many consumers have complicated finances with multiple accounts at different financial companies that have a different tax status and include both mutual funds and individual stocks and bonds. Even households that wish to provide data may have some difficulty in answering the questions accurately.

Acknowledging the challenges mentioned by Campbell above, it is important to contribute to this research area in order to learn more about consumers' motivation and decision making. Thus, the purpose of our paper is to explore consumers' wealth management in financial markets. This includes the following research questions:

- How do consumers make their investment decisions?
- How do consumers manage their investments?
- What motivates consumers to invest?

The theoretical roots of the paper lie in both consumer behaviour and behavioural finance theories. In addition, the service literature, especially adapted in the financial services context, is utilized. Within consumer behaviour literature this paper is focused on consumer decision-making processes, whereas behavioural finance seeks the consumer motivations behind the decisions.

2. Theoretical background

The theoretical background of the study is formed by three angles (Figure 1). The classical theory of consumer decision making is complemented by the rather new approach of behavioural finance. As private financial investments form the focus of the study, the nature of these services has implications for consumer behaviour. All three angles are shortly discussed below.

Private financial investments

Consumers' private financial investments consist of bank deposits, stocks, bonds, equity funds, life and pension insurance. The share of each item in Finland is presented in Table 1.

<i>Financial Investments</i>	<i>billion euros</i>
Bank deposits	55.7
Stocks	26.5
Life and pension insurance	20.7
Equity funds	17.3
Bonds	1.4
Total	121.6

Table 1: Private financial investments of consumers in Finland in 2006 (FK 2007)

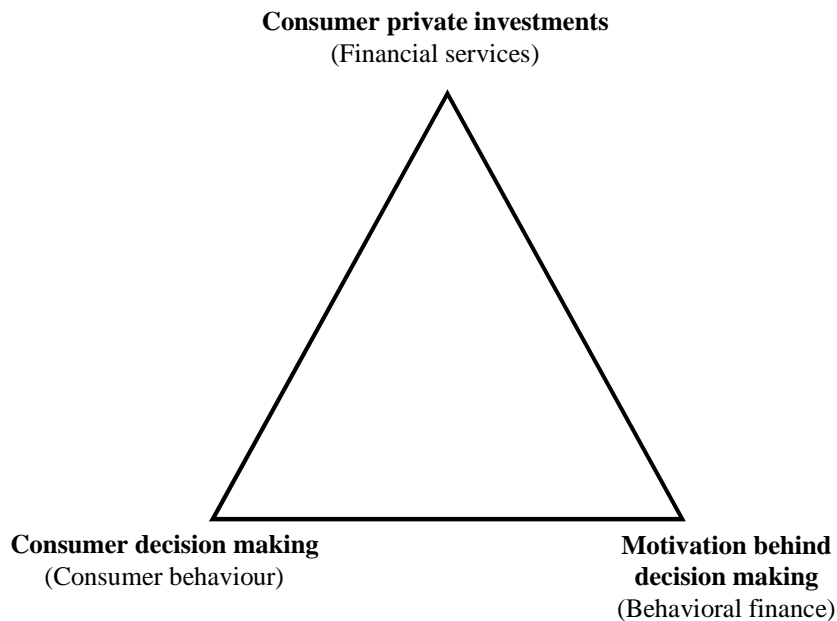


Figure 1: The theoretical roots of the study

Campbell (2006) emphasises that a major question is how consumers construct their portfolios within each asset class. According to Swedish data, real estates account over 70% of household assets, bank deposit and money market funds 11%, stock and mutual funds 6% each and bonds, derivatives and insurance account for the remainder. Altogether, 62% of households participated in financial markets by holding financial assets other than bank deposits and money market funds. (Ibid.) In Finland, real estates form 66% of household assets, but financial assets only 2%, of which bank deposits alone account for 46%, stocks and insurance around 20% and funds 14% (Statistics Finland 2007). The statistics show that Finnish consumers do not yet operate in financial markets on a large scale, but the figures are increasing rapidly.

Financial investments are a part of financial services. Financial services differ in nature from many other services. The common service characteristics, such as intangibility, heterogeneity, perishability, simultaneous production and consumption, are only partly fulfilled in connection with financial services (see e.g. Ylikoski et al. 2006). Financial services encompass a vast variety services, some of which are quite simple, whereas others are even too complicated from the consumer perspective. Investment services are among the most complicated, and many consumers find it difficult to understand the structure of these services. Therefore, it is difficult for many consumers to make investment decisions.

Some financial services are used often, even weekly, but some only once a year. On the basis of their use, financial services are divided to low frequency and high frequency services. Those services that are needed often tend to be more familiar to consumers than those that do not require attention on a regular basis.

Financial services can also be divided to low and high involvement services. Involvement is defined as “a person’s perceived relevance of the object based on their inherent needs, values and interests” (Zaichkowsky 1985). Even though involvement may also be caused by advertisements and purchase decisions (see e.g. Solomon 2004), in this paper we refer with involvement to the feeling that is directed towards the private financial investment products. Low involvement in connection with financial services means that consumers are not interested in the services, and the whole service sounds more like a ‘must’. This is the case with many insurance types. By comparison, high involvement refers to those financial services that consumers are committed to and that arouse positive feelings. For example, the possibility to gain in stock markets usually leads to high involvement.

Consumer decision making

During the past two decades, research in the area of consumer behaviour has been divided into information processing (utilitarian) and experimental perspectives. The information-processing view concentrates on decision-making processes and portrays consumers as rational problem solvers, whereas the experimental perspective focuses on the symbolic, hedonic and aesthetic nature of consumption. Traditional consumer behaviour assumes that consumers differ from each other in their socio-economic and demographic background, but the experimental perspective also takes into account emotions and personalities (e.g. Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Mäenpää et al. 2006).

Burton and Easingwood (2006) combine the above-mentioned perspectives in their utility model, which they have developed based on the model of Kim and Mauborgne (2000). The suggested levers are: 1) consumer productivity, 2) simplicity, 3) convenience, 4) risk, 5) environmental friendliness and 6) hedonic benefit.

Mäenpää et al. (2006) found in their study that hedonic consumers expect more from on-line banking services than less hedonic consumers. However, they also recognised that more profitable consumer groups for banks, i.e. older, richer and more educated, seemed to be less hedonic. As a consequence of this the experimental perspective is less interesting for the purpose of this study, and therefore we concentrate in this paper on the utilitarian view, especially the consumer decision-making process.

The stages in consumer decision making start from problem recognition and continue to information search, evaluation of alternatives, product or service choice, and finally the evaluation of outcomes (e.g. Engel et al. 1990; Solomon 2004). Traditionally, researchers have approached this process from a rational perspective, where consumers calmly and carefully integrate as much information as possible with what they already know about a product or service. They even weight the pluses and minuses of each alternative until they arrive at a satisfactory decision. However, it is now realized that decision-making involves a repertoire of strategies. First, consumers evaluate the effort required to make a particular choice and then they choose the most suitable strategy to fit the level of their effort. Thus, there are at least three alternatives in the decision-making process (Solomon 2004):

- Extended problem solving, which corresponds most closely to the traditional decision-making process presented above.
- Limited problem solving, which is usually more straightforward and simple than extended problem solving.
- Habitual decision making, which refers to choices that are made with little to no conscious effort.

When considering private financial investments and the discussion of their nature above, it is clear that extended problem solving is the usual mode, but in case of renewal of investments limited problem solving is most probably also used. In addition, the amount of money invested is an important determinant of the length of the decision process. A small amount of money saved in a deposit account may require only little effort, whereas an investment in stocks can produce various analyses of the past and future of the particular stock.

However, some consumers may proceed with their decision-making process by using cost-benefit evaluation, where each decision associates with benefits and their probabilities, but also has certain costs (Bettman et al. 1991). In addition, Wertebroch et al. (2007) claim that consumers evaluate financial transactions against their budget constraints and other reference standards. They also mention the mechanism of money illusion, which is the result of consumers' thinking in nominal rather than real terms. We find these concepts relevant, especially in context of financial investments.

Järvinen and Heino (2004) have proposed a framework explaining consumers' experiences in the financial sector adapted from Engel et al. (1990). The framework consists of the stages of the traditional decision-making process and four factors affecting the process. They are financial services themselves, psychological processes, environmental factors and personal individual factors.

As a rule, consumer decision making entails some kind of perceived risk. Solomon (2004) divided risks into monetary risk, functional risk, physical risk, social risk and psychosocial risk (see also Stone and Gronhaug 1993; Goldsmith 1996). March and Shapira (1987) noticed that consumers often claim that they 'take calculated risks' but they 'do not gamble'. This statement indicates that risks are seen as controllable and bad outcomes refer to bad decision making.

De Bondt (1998) wondered why it matters if small individual investors do not behave as they should. He finds two reasons: First, financial management affects consumers' well being, and second, investors' behaviour affects what happens in markets. This means that too risky behaviour causes harm not only for those consumers acting against their own good, but also for other consumers and actors in the markets to some degree.

Many consumers take too much risk without knowing it. They either do not care or do not understand the potential harm and losses that follow if the risks are realized. Campbell (2006) argues that some consumers make serious investments mistakes, although many consumers find adequate solutions to the complex investment problems they face. According to him, the problems arise from participation in risky asset markets, underdiversification of portfolios and failure to refinance mortgages.

An important lesson of modern portfolio theory is that diversification pays, i.e. properly diversified investors can earn higher returns without having to face the danger of higher risk. Yet many consumers are underdiversified. The very idea that risk is defined at the level of the portfolio rather than at the level of individual assets, and that risk depends on covariation between returns remains foreign to many private investors. (De Bondt 1998)

Motives behind decisions - behavioural finance

Motivation refers to the processes that lead people to behave as they do. It occurs when a need is aroused that the consumer wishes to satisfy (Salomon 2004). The need may be either rational or irrational.

Behavioural finance theory describes the choices consumers actually make (Campbell 2006). It relaxes the most important assumption of traditional finance theory: investor rationality (Linnainmaa 2003). Therefore, for behavioural finance the human being is susceptible to making mistakes and often acts under “irrational” and passionate impulses (Kleinubing Godoi et al. 2005).

Studies related to behavioural finance have been embodied in the finance context in recent decades, but started to flourish in the 1990s. The pioneers in the field have been Kahneman and Tversky (1979), who criticized the utility theory as a descriptive model of decision making under risk and developed an alternative model, showing that individual’s feel the pain of loss much more than the pleasure of gain. A phenomenon correlated with loss fear is regret fear, according to which many investors try to follow most market behaviour in order not to make mistakes themselves. Kahneman and Tversky (1979) and Statman (1999) have especially approached the retrospective feeling of pain, when the consumer finds out that other choices would have resulted in a better outcome.

The main issues studied in behavioural finance are loss aversion, overconfidence, exaggeration of optimism and pessimism, and overreaction or under reaction to market news (e.g. Kleinubing Godoi et al. 2005). In addition, constructs like mental accounting, decision framing, regret avoidance and familiarity bias are found to underlie irrational consumer behaviour.

In this study the concepts of overconfidence and mental accounting seem to be most relevant according to a priori understanding. Dittrich et al. (2005) defined overconfidence as the persistent overevaluation of one’s own investment decision. They demonstrated that overconfidence increases with task complexity. It has been shown that overconfident investors overreact to private and under-react to public signals (Daniel et al. 1998). Mental accounting refers to situations where consumers have not only one but multiple attitudes towards risks. Risk tolerance is low and for some investments and the opposite of others. It is also explained that consumers keep their money in separate jars depending on the purpose: there are Christmas Club accounts, accounts for credit cards, accounts for food, accounts for mortgages etc. (see e.g. Nevins 2004)

There have been several empirical studies in the area of behavioural finance concerning consumers’ decision making. For example, Benartzi and Thaler (2002) investigated the subjective attractiveness of portfolio decisions by comparing three alternatives: the individual portfolio, the median portfolio and a portfolio picked by a professional investment manager. The majority of survey participants preferred the median portfolio and the professional portfolio to the self-selected one. The authors explained the results by a desire for investor autonomy which appears as initial over- and underconfidence. However, Dittrich et al. (2005) provided evidence that investors highly value their own investment choice, and feel reluctant to switch to alternative investing opportunities.

There are numerous indications of consumers’ investment choices being short-sighted or turning out to be far from rational. Therefore, it is justified to ask, like Campbell (2006), whether consumers should plan their financial affairs over a lifetime rather than over a single short period.

All in all, the concepts of behavioural finance concerning human nature find support in psychoanalytical theory, and the observation that consumer behaviour is susceptible to cognitive and emotional mistakes is quite familiar to psychoanalysts who are used to listening to their patients narratives about difficulties in dealing with money (Kleinubing Godoi et al. 2005).

3. Empirical findings

Methodology of the study

The study is explorative in its nature, because only a few pieces of research have been published in the area. Therefore, it was decided to start data gathering from an “empty table” and allow consumers to explain in their own terms their understanding of private investments, their risks and how they perceive their own wealth management. For these purposes, qualitative data are most suitable.

The empirical data were gathered in six focus group interviews in May and June 2007. Altogether, 33 consumers were attending these groups. They were selected from among the members of a consumer panel maintained by the National Consumer Research Centre. Each discussion took at least two hours. The discussions were transcribed and the preliminary qualitative analysis performed during the summer of 2007.

The advantage of the focus group method is that participants are able to freely discuss various phenomena in depth and from various points of view (e.g. Heiskanen et al. 2005; Kitzinger and Barbour 2001; Woolley and Spencer 1999).

Preliminary results of the focus group interviews

When consumers in the focus group interviews discussed their wealth management, they referred to the following items:

- dwelling
- summer cottage
- forest
- bank accounts
- equity funds
- stocks
- insurance
- car
- boat
- work of art
- jewellery
- inheritance
- human capital.

The dwelling is an exception among the others in the above list, because many consumers cannot imagine their home as an investment. In this, Finnish consumers differ from Americans, who mostly consider their dwelling as an investment that will be changed to a better one every 4 to 5 years (Laitamäki 2007).

Like Campbell (2006), we asked from interviewees how consumers allocate their assets across broad categories of opportunities. Even though they did not mention the share of each financial item in their portfolio, most discussion focused on stocks, funds and pension insurance. They revealed that their decision making is mostly based on their own interests and own knowledge about each investment item, but the trustworthiness of the financial company was also very important. In addition, experience, emotions and social networks affected their financial investment decisions.

The interviewees were of two types:

- Active investors who are interested in investments, search for information on them, and are confident in their own investment decisions. This group also felt a lack of confidence with the expertise in financial companies.
- Passive investors who value easy care most of all, and do not waste their time in learning more about investments. Unlike the first group, they trust in the expertise of financial companies and in many cases bank tellers have persuaded them to start financial investments. Some of them favour various deposit accounts.

Mental accounting was easily recognised among interviewees when they explained their motives behind investment decisions. The investments were made in order to save for retirement, for children, for inheritance and to show status and success. In addition, worries about bad times in the future inspired investments. Some consumers also paid attention to the gain and taxes. Moreover, there seemed to be a division in their minds between their dwelling and their other investments.

It is interesting that among interviewees safety came before many other motives. In that sense, wealth releases the burden of a future shortage of money, makes it possible to fulfil dreams and satisfy all kinds of needs, and provides enrichment to life. However, the importance of profits varied, and a conflict was seen between wasting and investing money. Some consumers honoured the traditions of their family by their investments.

Concerning the discussion of short-sighted consumers, many consumers in this study were goal oriented and acted in the long term, but those who acted spontaneously and in short term considered themselves as only small savers, not real investors.

Risks are connected to financial investments, but the relationship between risk management and wealth management was unfamiliar to most of the interviewees, except in the case of insurance. A common factor was that the recognition of various risks varied. Some consumers linked them to their own life, some to financial markets, some to financial companies, and some considered them global. Some consumers were constantly worried about financial risks, but the rest felt that their investments are so modest that there is no need to worry, because in any case the money goes somewhere.

Only some suggestions for financial risk management were brought into the discussion. They included the allocation of investments, long-term orientation, assessment of one's own financial statement, and reactions to changes in financial markets. Finally, it was commonly acknowledged that "risks are a part of life."

4. Discussion

In this paper we have combined the theories of consumer decision making and behavioural finance with considerations of the nature of private financial investments in order to form the framework for our empirical study. The empirical study consisted of the six focus group interviews with altogether 33 participants. Although we presented the traditional consumer decision making process at the beginning of the paper, we did not discuss the process itself with interviews, but concentrated on the decision making stage and the motives behind it.

The empirical results show that confidence is an important construct in consumer decision making concerning financial investments. The active investors have self-confidence with their decisions,

but the passive investors can be considered even over-confident with their financial company, yet they do not even question the expertise of these companies. In our study part of the consumers were actively learning more about financial investments, but it was not common to seek advice from financial planners and other experts as was confirmed in Campbell's (2006) study.

According to a priori-knowledge, mental accounting was easily recognised from the focus group interviews. However, there may well be variation in weightings between mental accounts that depend on cultural characteristics. For example, Christmas shopping accounts are important in the USA, but travelling accounts in Finland.

Our empirical study confirms that the consumers do not make their financial decisions purely on a rational basis, but irrational behaviour is surprisingly strong when they explain their motives. Before conducting the empirical study, it seemed only natural that consumers would emphasise the importance of gains and profits and avoidance of losses in their wealth management, but these issues were not considered the most important ones. In addition, there was lively discussion of human capital, although before the interviews it was decided that the interviewer would not take this topic actively into discussion.

Financial risks and how to manage them are not well known constructs for consumers, even though financial risks are more familiar to them than most of the other risks they face in their every day life (see Peura-Kapanen et al. 2007). If consumers knew more about financial investments they could probably evaluate the risks better than our study indicates. It can be concluded that there is plenty of room to educate consumers in how to better handle their financial affairs.

As a result of the study we will present triggers for consumer investment motives. In addition, we try to reveal knowledge gaps (or knowledge deficiency) in consumer wealth management and investment decisions, in order to suggest how to improve the position of consumers in financial markets. For financial organisations we will suggest new ways to provide information on wealth management and means to attract consumers in these markets.

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Choice, freedom and responsibility: young consumers in credit markets

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Indebtedness is a serious and increasing problem among young consumers worldwide. The use of credit cards has expanded at a record-breaking rate from the 1980s to the present. The use of credit cards to finance consumer purchases has also become an unarguable way of life among young consumers. Young people's lifestyles are based to an increasing degree on credit products and services. At the same time, this ongoing development has brought new risks to consumers' consumption habits, finances and credit use. Payment defaults and payment difficulties have become common alongside the increase in credit card use.

Young people between the age of 18-29 years form a challenging group. They are moving from the transition phase to the establishing phase in their life. It has been found that adolescence has been prolonged and delayed. Emerging adulthood is a developmental concept for the period from the late teens to the twenties in industrial societies. This is a period when change and exploration are common. The young are beginning to establish, for instance, their economic life and make more and more decisions about how to handle their private finances. In addition to age, gender, household structure, living conditions and the occupation or work situation are the most important factors affecting young consumers' consumption-based lifestyles. Young people are also usually in very different circumstances and stages on their way to independence. Young consumers are not a homogenous group. Traditional courses of life have de-standardized and become less dependent on age. Today's young people represent a generation that has been living in a materially affluent society. Young consumers have been socialized into a world that is directed by information and communication technology and are essential partners in the network society, and they also shape consumption and communication culture through their choices and activities.

Internal migration and expanding ICT together with continuously changing fashions and trends challenge lifestyles and also involve lots of demands. One has to make appropriate choices and develop the skills to survive in the information society. The same concerns consumption. Consumption and consumer goods, and also competition, qualify as ingredients in the construction of identity and self reflection, but also as sources of togetherness. One has to be able to make choices among an array of alternatives. More than before, young people have to rely on themselves in their choices. Today's model favours independent, ambitious and motivated characteristics. A fundamental or existential question is whether one is good enough according to prevailing criteria. Identity-seeking and self-creation through consumption can be considered as characteristics of a certain life-course stage and lifestyle, mainly because consumption is currently an essential element in the rites of passage from youth to adulthood.

Young consumers' credit use and indebtedness has been researched, among other countries, in Canada, the United States of America, South Korea and Great Britain. The biggest causes of indebtedness are simply small incomes and large expenses. However, consumption, credit use and potential payment defaults have a multifaceted nature and are not the result of any single factor, but

of the whole lifestyle of consumers. Additionally, different situations caused by individual and societal factors affect their development.

This study examined the credit-based lifestyles of young consumers and related payment problems in Nordic countries. Further, it focused on the concept of responsibility, its role and implications in credit use from the viewpoint of young consumers and other societal actors. Qualitative, explorative and comparative data were collected by interviewing young consumers (aged 18-29) in four Nordic countries (Denmark, Iceland, Finland and Norway). Additional Finnish data, including interviews of the representatives of market sector (credit grantors, collection companies and the execution office), were analysed from the viewpoint of responsibility issues.

Lifestyles help us to define our attitudes and values as well as show our wealth and social position. Discussion of lifestyles is a feature of the modern world or modernity. Lifestyles can be considered as patterns of action that differentiate people. They help to make sense of what people do, why they do it and what doing it means to them and other people. People also use lifestyles in everyday life to identify and explain wider complexes of identity and affiliation. Research indicates that certain objects, attitudes and styles become particularly significant icons, and lifestyles are a particularly significant representation of the quest for individual identity.

In this study, lifestyle was broadly taken to be the totality of people's conditions and resources, practices or activities, as well as values, attitudes and subjective experiences. Various situations in life may bring about a considerable decrease in income, including illness and unemployment. They are more occasional by nature, but have strong implications concerning the financial management of consumers. Previous studies suggest that people are, in general, willing to pay back their debts, but unexpected events may disturb, or totally prevent repayment. Furthermore, some lifestyles, per se, may without any problematic situations lead to overextended credit use.

Based on this study, three lifestyles were identified among young consumers based on the way they talked about consumption and credit use: an easy-living, pleasure-seeking lifestyle, a risk-investing lifestyle and a disorganized lifestyle. Young consumers in the first category used credit to maintain their desired lifestyle. Those with a risk-investing lifestyle used credit to make financial investments or invest in their own education. Finally, in a disorganized lifestyle, credit was used to purchase necessities. The interviewees' lifestyles and consumption had largely been based on different kinds of consumer credit. Even though their credit use had been conscious, the young consumers did not ultimately understand the impact of credit on their own finances. Our findings clearly indicate that the young had difficulties understanding what they had agreed to in signing a credit agreement. The key factors behind indebtedness were usually the young person's own consumption, spending habits and the phase of life (emerging adulthood). External circumstances and incidents as well as debts incurred by other people were other reasons.

The sharing of responsibility between pertinent parties was examined on the grounds of how they regarded the credit agreement. The credit agreement is an essential element in a credit relationship. Although there has been much discussion lately about corporate social responsibility, the concept was quite unfamiliar among those companies we interviewed. Among credit grantors and collection companies, responsibility is a new concept. The concept is technical and appears as rules and guidelines in their business actions. For companies, responsibility means proper estimation of a customer's paying capacity and making the right decisions. They emphasize that credit granting and money collection are business activities. Both pertinent parties feel more responsibility collectively than towards each other.

All interviewees (the young and companies) found it very easy to obtain credit. Since no-one had questioned their capacity to manage finances, neither had the young begun to ponder their resources. Nevertheless, these young consumers had made their decisions themselves, and so it was difficult for them to place the blame on anyone else. We found responsibility among young consumers to be subjective, which extends to all sectors of life. The young did not understand that they were liable for the credit agreement, which they also confessed. They did not reflect on the credit agreement until they had defaulted on payment and were forced to do something. They acted reactively rather than proactively. In the light of this study, it appears that inexperienced young consumers have negotiated with experts in credit granting or debt collection.

When applying for credit the young did not act in a liable way, but when clearing their debts they tried to act responsibly. They cleared their debts on their own, but mostly they wanted to dispel the feeling of shame, guilt and deviance. They had failed to manage their finances, and payment default had cut consumption and freedom. They felt payment default to be a punishment and did not obtain more credit. They felt more or less deviant in society because consumption was the way through which they could become a member of it. Membership of society means adulthood, but they had not yet reached it, even though they were consenting adults.

We found that young consumers were socialized to the consumption society and credit society, where credit use is a routine practice. Young consumers seemed to be very consumption-oriented and their life was consumption- and credit-centred. Their consumption was based on pleasure seeking and experiences, but consumption was also a necessity. The young had easy access to credit, which was surprising, because according to previous studies young consumers have an unsteady income, short-term jobs and quite many are set against credit use. Consequently, it should be quite difficult for young consumers to obtain credit. They knew they could use credit but they did not understand what they had agreed with the creditors or what might be the consequences of credit use. They lacked the information and skills to manage money matters and economic issues.

The results show that there is need for pre-emptive measures to prevent indebtedness. The existing information should be targeted so that it reaches those who need it. There should be access to consumer education and advice throughout the educational system. It is important to pay attention to the identification of potential risk-groups. It has been said that a positive debt register does not reduce indebtedness, but could a positive register prevent the debts of risk-groups such as the young? Could it be possible for young debtors to get a 'fresh start'? Debt causes serious and long-term troubles and limits their opportunities to participate in studies, careers and housing. These difficulties prolong and delay their growing up. A permanent negotiation board for the key representatives of the credit system could be useful in which, for instance, legislators, bankers, merchandisers, consumer authorities, educators, counsellors and politicians can meet and discuss. Above all, there is also a need for public discussion on the 'acceptable' level of debt problems in society and how to support reasonable consumption and credit use. A crucial issue is how to share responsibility or promote responsible behaviour in the free market.

The relationship between parenting style and adolescents' future orientation and spending preferences¹.

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Abstract

In this study, we explore the role of parenting in the intergenerational transfer of future orientation and economic behaviour using data collected from 600 14-15 year olds in Norway. We focus on conscientiousness, future orientation and present orientation and find these dispositions associated with spending preferences and ability to resist spending. Furthermore, we study the link between these dispositions and 4 parenting dimensions: responsiveness, behavioural control, psychological control, and autonomy granting, as well as the link between the dispositions and 4 parenting typologies. We find adolescents who perceive their parents as psychological controlling to be less future oriented and conscientious and more present oriented than others, while adolescents who perceive their parents as responsive, autonomy granting and controlling of behaviour are more future orientated and conscientious than others. Direct effects of the parenting styles on spending preferences and ability to control spending are weak, so the effect of parenting on economic behaviour is likely to be indirect through the shaping of general dispositions. The parenting typologies were found important for the plans for the adolescents' educational plans.

1. Introduction

Economists have long been interested in the transmission of human capital from parent to child and in understanding what determines the economic success of children. Research within several fields show that parents have an impact on their children through a variety of channels: they invest in their children's education, transmit cultural values and social skills,

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and pass on their genes. But exactly which values and skills are important for the transmission of economic behaviour is far from clear and we know little about what is transferred and how. Research on individual differences in saving and borrowing behaviour indicates that the shaping of time horizon and future orientation may be an important candidate for the transition of economic behaviour. For example, Webley and Nyhus (2006) found that parental behaviour (such as discussing financial matters with children) and parental orientations (conscientiousness, future orientation) have a weak, but clear impact on children's economic behaviour as well as on economic behaviour in adulthood. These results provide some evidence of an overall economic orientation being passed down through the generations although the mechanisms through which economic orientations are passed down remain obscure.

In this paper, we explore the role of parenting style in transferring future orientation. The research is inspired by Seginer et. al.(2004) who have demonstrated links between parenting styles and future orientation in children in a recent study. They studied the link between perceived parenting style and adolescents' motivation to engage in future thinking, the cognitive representation of the future, and future-related behaviours. The domains used in their study were work and career and marriage and family. Their model included self-evaluation as a mediating factor. They found that autonomous-accepting parenting is linked to future orientation indirectly via self-evaluation, self-evaluation is linked directly only to the motivational component, and the motivational component is directly linked to the cognitive representation of the future and behavioural components. Trommsdorff (1986) report that adolescents who perceive their parents as loving and supporting had a more positive future orientation and believed more in personal control over their future. Similarly, Pulkkinen (1990) reported that positive memories of child-rearing and parents having time for children encouraged future orientation in Finnish adolescents. All these studies provide an indication of parental support being one important determinant of children's and adolescents orientation towards the future.

As pointed out by Trommsdorff (1983), future orientation contains cognitive, motivational and affectionate components and the same label seems to be used for very different aspects of this cognitive-motivational system across studies. Future orientation is used to denote structuring of future events, coherence of future orientation, anticipation of need satisfaction, the experience of the future as optimistic or pessimistic, etc. In the following, we focus on the

motivational aspects of future orientation and use the concepts of future time perspective and present orientation as described in Zimbardo and Boyd (1999). Future oriented people are concerned with future goals and rewards. Present enjoyment is contemplated in terms of future consequences. Present hedonistic people, on the other hand, are living for the moment and show little concern for future consequences. Both concepts include the trade-off between pleasure or pain now or in the future as well as preferences for planning, fun and spontaneity.

2. Parenting style

According to Baumrind (1991), the concept of parenting style captures normal variations in parents' attempts to control and socialize their children. The underlying idea is that the broad patterns of parenting are more important than specific behaviour such as, for example, teaching the children about budgeting or making them save using a bank account. In her seminal studies, Baumrind (1967; 1971), argued that the two dimensions "demandingness" and "responsiveness" are particularly important. Based on the degree of responsiveness and demandingness employed by parents, she defined three parental styles: authoritarian, authoritative and permissive. Maccoby and Martin (1983) later revised Baumrind's classification and suggested distinguishing between permissive and indulgent and permissive and neglectful. They labelled the two dimensions of parenting "parental warmth or supportiveness" (corresponds to Baumrind's responsiveness) and "parental behavioral control" (corresponds to Baumrind's demandingness). Behavioural control can be defined as parental monitoring and limit setting (Steinberg, 1990). Moreover, they advocated, in line with Baumrind, that it is the combination of these dimensions that is important, rather than each individual dimension and devised the following typology of parenting styles:

Authoritative parents are characterised by high demands for maturity and self-control from their children, while they also display high levels of sensitivity, emotional warmth, and involvement. The authoritative parenting style is associated with positive child outcomes across several domains, such as higher education, more social responsibility, increased self-regulatory ability, frequent use of adaptive strategies, fewer depressive symptoms, etc (Baumrind, 1991).

Authoritarian parents also have high demands for self-control but they are less sensitive to the child's developmental needs, providing minimal emotional support and demand high discipline. Children and adolescents from authoritarian families tend to perform moderately well in school and be uninvolved in problem behaviour, but they have poorer social skills,

lower self-esteem, and higher levels of depression. The authoritarian parenting style has been found associated with poorer child outcomes, such as lower academic grades compared to the authoritative parenting style. It increases the risk for various psychological and behavioural problems compared to the authoritative parenting style.

Indulgent/permissive parents are characterized by low expectations for self-control and discipline while they are sensitive and warm. Children raised by permissive parents are found to have higher self-confidence, but lower level of self-control than children raised by authoritative or authoritarian homes. Children and adolescents from indulgent homes are more likely to be involved in problem behaviour and perform less well in school, but they have higher self-esteem, better social skills, and lower levels of depression.

Neglectful parents show low demands for self-control and are insensitive to the child's needs. Children raised by neglectful parents are found to have a higher likelihood of depression, smoking, and poorer educational achievement. Children and adolescents whose parents are *uninvolved* perform most poorly in all domains.

According to Silk et al (2003) the dimensions "psychological control" and "autonomy granting" are particularly salient during adolescence when teens are becoming more independent from their families. Psychological control is characterised by hostility, guilt induction, shaming, and an environment in which acceptance is contingent on the adolescent's behaviour (Barber, 1996). Psychological control is related to Baumrind's "responsiveness" and may be used to distinguish between authoritarian and authoritative parents. Both types of parents place high demands on their children, but authoritarian parents usually are low in psychological control compared to the authoritative parents. Autonomy granting is manifested in parental encouragement of individual expression, decisions and independence. It is related to Baumrind's "demandingness" and may be used to distinguish between permissive neglecting and permissive indulgent parents. Autonomy granting has, according to Silk et al, been found to promote academic achievements, lower levels of substance use, self-esteem and ego development. Silk et al (2003) find that psychological control and autonomy granting are two separate constructs, rather than opposite ends of a continuum. Parents may, for example, use the guilt induction to increase the likelihood of the preferred behaviour while they simultaneously encourage independent thinking and behaviour.

Parenting style may have an impact on the development of preferences for spending and saving beyond the effects of the parents' efforts to teach their children about economic

behaviour. It may be important for the development of a general ability to delay gratification. For example, Mauro and Harris (2000), using younger children (4-year olds) found that mothers of children who fail to delay gratification typically have a permissive approach to child-rearing. Mothers who rate themselves as more restrictive and nurturant (that is displayed what Baumrind would call an “authoritative” parenting style), tend to have six- to eight-year old children who delayed gratification more than those who are restrictive but not nurturant, that is “authoritarian”. A more recent study has found the authoritarian parenting style to be associated with overweight status (Rhee, et al, 2006). Rhee et al found that children with authoritarian mothers had an increased risk of being overweight than children with authoritative mothers. Children of permissive and neglectful mothers were twice as likely to be overweight compared with children of authoritative mothers.

In this study we explore the links between parenting dimensions, parenting style, future orientation, preference for spending, and ability to control spending. We expect adolescents describing their parents as authoritative to be more future oriented and have the lowest preference for spending than the adolescents describing their parents as practicing the other parenting styles. In the following, we describe the methods used in the study in section 3, report the main findings in section 4, while section 5 concludes.

3. Methods

The data for this study were collected from students in schools in Kristiansand, Norway, a medium sized city (population of 78 thousand) and predominantly middle-class. Schools were contacted to gain access to year 9 students (aged approximately 14) and data were collected between March and June 2005. All relevant schools in the municipality were contacted, and seven of nine schools agreed to take part in the study. The principals of the remaining two schools declined participation due to an overload of other projects. Researchers were allowed access to classes of students for one period. In this session, the children were introduced to the researchers and asked to fill out a questionnaire about pocket money and money management, without mentioning the concept of saving. Parents were sent a letter in advance giving details of the study and an opportunity to prevent their child from taking part. This type of passive parental consent results in a smaller sampling bias than active consent which may result in overrepresentation of well-functioning adolescents and parents (Lamborn et al, 1991). Only three of the sampled students declined to participate due to unwillingness. A few others were

absent from school on the day of data collection due to dentist appointments, illness or other reasons not associated with the investigation.

Questionnaires

The questionnaire was divided into five sections. The first (general information) contained three straightforward demographic questions (age, gender, number of siblings) and seven questions on pocket money and earnings. The second section covered general money management and dealt with what students usually did with money they were given or earned. Their *general approach to spending* was measured by asking “what do you usually do with your pocket money/allowance/income?”, which the students answered by using a 5-point scale (save all of it, save most of it, save some and spend some, spend most if it, spend all of it). Three *social comparison* questions were included in this section. These had the form: “With regard to /the money my parents give me/the money I earn/the money we as a family have/ I think, in comparison with my best friends, I get/earn” with a 5-point response format (a lot less, a little less, about the same, a little bit more, a lot more, and I don’t get pocket money). One question asked how often the student argues about money matters with their parents, using a 5-point scale (never, rarely, sometimes, often, always).

The third section dealt with getting large sums of money (larger than the usual income per month). These fifteen questions, which asked about various strategies for obtaining large sums of money, were taken from Otto and Webley (2004) and slightly adopted. They deal with five different ways of obtaining large sums of money: saving, asking parents, working, selling things, or adjusting expenditure. The fourth section consisted of a 10-item conscientiousness scale from the IPIP (Goldberg, 1999; International Personality Item Pool, 2001), and twenty items drawn from Zimbardo’s Time perspective inventory (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). These cover two of the five factors identified by Zimbardo (present-hedonistic and future time perspective). Some of the questions were slightly modified to make them suitable for adolescents. For example “I meet my obligations to friends and authorities on time” was rewritten as “I do what I should for teachers on time” and “It upsets me to be late for appointments” became “I generally don’t like being late”. In addition, the fourth section consisted of ten items intended to tap into how well a respondent is able to take specific steps to control their spending (e.g. not break into large notes, not take money out of your bank account) and a 30-item adolescents’ attitude towards saving scale, as reported in Otto (2004).

Section 5 consisted of a series of questions which measure the adolescents' perception of the parenting style they are subject to. The first block of fifteen items included statements such as "My family does something fun together" and "When I get a poor grade in school, my parents (step-parents/ guardians) propose to help me". These questions, based on the Parenting Scales reported in Lamborn et al. (1991) were used to measure "responsiveness". Two questions were added to the original scale. The response format was changed as to allow for more variation, so rather than using Lamborn et al.'s response alternatives with two (usually true or usually false) or three (never, sometimes, or usually) options we rephrased the questions to fit a 5-point scale (labelled never, sometimes, usually, often, always). Some questions were asked twice, asking about mother and father respectively. In two-parent families, the average scores of these paired questions were used as measures. The next block of twelve questions, also based on Lamborn et al.'s scale, concerned how much parents try to know and really know about what the adolescent is doing outside home (where the student goes at night, uses his/her free time etc) and two 'curfew' questions. The students could answer by using the response alternatives "Don't try", "try a little", "try somewhat", "try a lot", and "try a very great amount". These questions were used to derive a measure of *behavioural control*. The third block of sixteen questions was adopted from the study by Silk et al (2003). The *psychological control* subscale describes covert, psychological methods of controlling the adolescent's activities and behaviours, like guilt induction, love withdrawal, and excessive pressure for change. Sample items from the Silk et al scale are "When I get a poor grade at school, my parents make me feel guilty" and "My mother acts cold and unfriendly if I do something she doesn't like". These were included here, though instead of mother, the referent for the second question is 'my parents'. The *autonomy granting* subscale, also adopted from Silk et al, describes the extent to which the adolescent is encouraged to think and behave independently. Sample items are "My parents emphasise that every member of the family should have some say in family decisions" and "My parents keep pushing me to think independently". The last questions in the questionnaire was about plans for further education, asking if the student planned to work, attend secondary education or attend secondary education followed by higher education.

Sample characteristics

Among the 600 students interviewed, 52 were excluded from the analyses, since their responses were considered untrustworthy based on their behaviour during the data collection

or the way they had filled in the questionnaire (made patterns rather than answering the questions). The remaining respondents had the following characteristics:

The age range was 14 – 16, and the mean age being 14.4. There were 271 boys (49.5% of the sample) and 274 girls (50% of sample), with 3 respondents not filling in gender. 515 (94%) of the sample were Norwegian, while 33 (6%) reported 1 of 29 other nationalities. 499 (91.1%) respondents reported that Norwegian was their mother tongue, while 44 (8%) reported having another language. The number of siblings ranged from 0-11, with the average number of siblings being 1.9.

4. Results²

A principal component analysis with oblimin rotation was carried out to estimate the factor score coefficients for the parenting dimensions. Missing data was handled by pairwise deletion of cases and the program was instructed to extract 4 factors. Items that did not discriminate sufficiently between the factors were removed. Factor score coefficients were estimated by the regression method. The responsiveness factor ($\alpha=.86$) was based on 11 items, the behavioural control factor ($\alpha=.88$) on 10 items, the psychological control factor ($\alpha=.76$) 7 items, and the autonomy granting factor ($\alpha=.63$) on 6 items. These factors explained 45,8% of the variation in the data. The KMO=.87 and Bartlett’s test of Sphericity was significant at the 1% level. Table 1 shows the relationship between the 4 parenting dimensions. Responsiveness is positively associated with behavioural control and autonomy granting, while it is negatively associated with psychological control. There is also a positive relationship between behavioural control and autonomy granting.

Table 1: Relationships between parenting dimensions

	Responsiveness	Behavioural control	Psychological control	Autonomy granting
Behavioural control	.33**			
Psychological control	-.24**			
Autonomy granting	.28**	.18**		

Note: Only significant correlation coefficients shown.

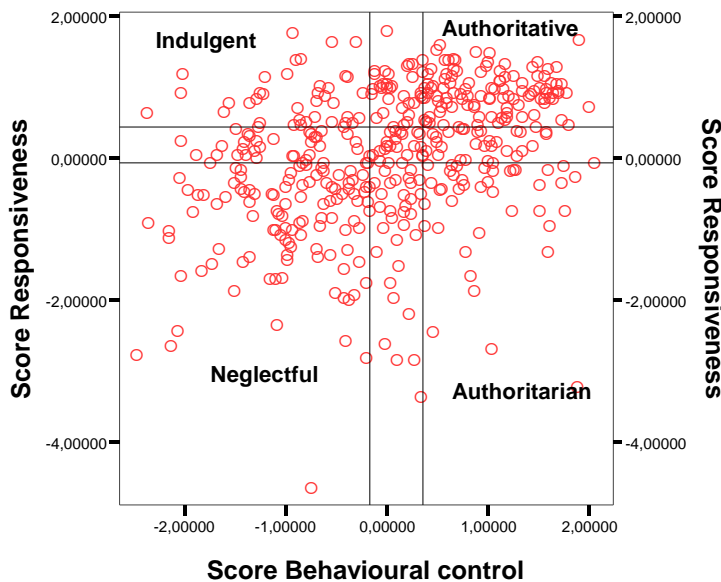
n = 442

**significant at the $p<.01$ level

² We are reporting preliminary analyses here. For an up-to-date version of the paper, please contact the authors.

The sample of adolescents was divided into four groups depending on how they had rated their parents on the responsiveness and behavioural control dimensions. We used an approach similar to the tertile-split procedure as described by Lamborn et al (1991) in order to ensure that the four groups were different from each other. Due to a smaller sample size, we used the a quintile-split to categorise the families, rather than tertiles. Authoritative families (n=109) are those who scored above the 3th quintile on both dimensions, while neglectful families (n=106) are those who scored below the 2nd on both. Authoritarian families (n=41) are those who scored above the 3rd quintile on behavioural control and below the 2nd quintile on responsiveness, while the indulgent families (n=38) are those who scored below the 2nd quintile on behavioural control and above the 3rd quintile on responsiveness. It is important to note that this makes the definition of the parenting styles sample specific. A family that is defined as neglectful in this sample may not be regarded so compared to a different population. Figure 1 shows the scores for the two parenting dimension from each adolescent and the combination of them. Observations between the middle lines are not included in the analyses of effects of the parental styles. There is a clear tendency to rate their parents either as both responsive and strict (authoritative) or as little responsive and permissive (neglectful), so that these groups are larger than the adolescents perceiving their parents as either authoritarian or indulgent.

Fig 1: Scatterplot for Scores on Responsiveness and Behavioural Control



The score for conscientiousness ($\alpha=.73$) was computed by calculating the mean of the scores for respondents who had answered 8 of the 10 items comprising the index (4 items reversed). The scores for future orientation ($\alpha= .68$, 12 items) and present orientation ($\alpha=.62$, 8 items) were assessed by calculating the mean of the answers from respondents with two or less missing items for each factor (2 items reversed). The score for spending preference ($\alpha= .81$, 11 items) was calculated by using the average answer the questions about what the respondent usually do with money received or earned and other questions concerning saving and spending. Means were calculated for respondents who had answered 9 or more of the 11 items. The measure of self-control ($\alpha=.84$, 10 items) were calculated by estimating the mean of the responses to 10 questions regarding strategies for preventing oneself from spending money. The score was calculated for all who had answered 8 or more of the 10 questions.

The results from the different analyses are reported below. First, we report on analyses that replicate Webley and Nyhus (2006), such as the relationships between future orientation, conscientious and saving in adolescents. Table 2 shows results which confirm that general orientations and dispositions are related to children’s approach to money: the pattern here is very clear with conscientiousness and future orientation being positively associated with a preference for saving and a ability to use strategies to control spending while hedonism (and income from pocket money) being associated with a preference for spending and less ability to use self controlling strategies.

Table 2: Correlations between the child’s dispositions, behaviour and income

	Log Income from pocket money	Log Income from earnings	Conscientiousness	Future orientation	Present hedonistic orientation	Preference for spending rather than saving ¹
Log Income from earnings	.25**					
Conscientiousness	- .06	.04				
Future orientation	-.04	.03	.61**			
Present hedonism	.12*	-.06	-.16**	-.08		
Preference for spending rather than saving ¹	.27**	.07	-.38**	-.24**	.36**	
Ability to use Self controlling strategies	-.21**	.01	.45**	.36**	-.21**	-.60**

Notes: Ns are lowest for the Log earnings correlations (between 301 and 484), for the other cells they vary between 539 and 547.

Income here is adolescent reported pocket money and earned money and does not include money given irregularly by adults

* significant at the $p<.05$ level **significant at the $p<.01$ level

Variation and differences in outcome variables across parenting styles were first studied for each of the four parenting dimensions. Table 3 shows that each of the dimensions of parenting behaviour is associated with conscientiousness and future orientation. As expected, parental involvement (warmth), behavioural control, and autonomy granting are positively associated with future orientation and conscientiousness, whilst psychological control are negatively associated with both. Psychological control is related to present orientation, a preference for spending rather than saving and reported difficulty with controlling expenditure.

Table 3: Relationships between parenting dimensions, dispositions and behaviour

	Conscientiousness	Present orientation	Future orientation	Preference for spending	How easy to control expenditure
Responsiveness	.29**		.22**		.11*
Behavioural control	.17**		.28**		.11*
Psychological control	-.16**	.21**	-.16**	.215**	-.17**
Autonomy granting	.13**		.12*		

Notes: Only significant correlations shown.

Ns vary between 435 and 442

* significant at the $p < .05$ level **significant at the $p < .01$ level

Following the method of Lamborn et al (1991), variation in the outcome variables were also studied for the authoritative, authoritarian, neglectful and permissive parenting styles respectively. These preliminary analyses reported in Table 4 show direct effects of parenting styles on spending preferences, ability to control spending and plans for education as well as indirect effects of parenting styles on economic behaviour through impact on general dispositions such as future orientation and conscientiousness. The results are in line with other research that shows that an authoritative parenting style is one of the most consistent family predictors of competence from early childhood through adolescence and can also be used to explain differences in adolescences' approach to economic life. In our sample, we find that adolescents describing their parents as authoritative has the highest mean for future orientation and ability to control spending. More adolescents in this group have a plan for further education, and the high number of respondents in this group having plans for university education is noticeable. Adolescents with neglectful parents had the lowest average scores for conscientiousness, future orientation and ability to control spending, while they had

the highest average score for preference for spending. Only 36,8% of the respondents in this group had plans for a university education, compared to 69,7% in the authoritarian group. There is a gender effect in the sample that should be investigated further in future research. Girls, more than boys, tend to describe their parents as authoritative, while more boys than girls tend to describe their parents as neglectful.

Table 4: Relationships between parenting typologies, dispositions and behaviour

	<u>Authoritative</u>	<u>Authoritarian</u>	<u>Neglectful</u>	<u>Indulgent</u>
Responsiveness	High	Low	Low	High
Behavioural control	High	High	Low	Low
N	109	41	106	38
Sex Boys/Girls (%)	34 / 74 (31,5/68,5)	22 / 29 (53,7/46,3)	66 / 40 (62,3/37,7)	51 / 49 (51,4/48,6)
Number of siblings	1,8	2,0	1,9	1,8
Nationality (% Norwegians)	96.3 %	92.7%	93.4%	100%
Gets pocket money? (% yes)	92.4%	89.2%	85.3%	91.7
General Dispositions:				
Conscientious (mean)	3,3	3,2	3,0	3,4
Future orientation (mean)	3,2	3,0	2,8	3,1
Present orien. (mean)	3,4	3,3	3,4	3,3
Economic preferences/behaviour				
Preference for Spending	3,0	3,0	3,1	2,8
Easy to control spend.	3,8	3,7	3,4	3,7
Plans to continue study?				
No (%)	1%	7,5%	2,8%	5,3%
Yes – (%)	27.5%	36.6%	60.4%	44.7%
Yes – university (%)	69.7%	56.1%	36.8%	47.4%

5. Discussion

Though the analyses reported in this paper are very much exploratory ones, it is clear that these results do provide evidence of a link between parental approaches to economic matters and that of their children. It is tempting to interpret these results as demonstrating a causal link from parental behaviour to child behaviour but of course the results are correlational, and the direction of causality may be the other way around. Nevertheless, the consistent findings with other longitudinal studies give some strength to a causal interpretation.

Results of the preliminary analyses show that both parental responsiveness and parental behavioural are associated with higher scores for conscientiousness, future orientation and ability to control spending. Psychological control, on the other hand, is associated with present orientation, preferences for spending and difficulties with controlling expenditures. We observe strong relationships between future orientation and conscientiousness and preferences for spending and problems with controlling expenditures, which suggests that any effects of parenting are likely to be both direct and indirect. In line with previous research, we find that adolescents with authoritative parents have higher scores for conscientiousness and future orientation, while children of neglectful parents have the lowest scores for these variables. Finally, we find a strong relationship between parenting style and plans to continue studying and enrol in higher education. The results suggest that economic training and fostering of future orientation in primary schools may be important in order to decrease intergenerational transfers of economic inequality.

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The demand for private insurance in the Norwegian welfare state - how do people adapt in a typical social-democratic welfare state system?

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Abstract

In this paper we examine the demand for insurance connected to typical social service activity. How do people in a typical social-democratic welfare state system behave according to private social security insurance? The analysis focus on four different types of insurance: health insurance, pension insurance, life insurance and child insurance. There is of course an ideological aspect tied to this debate. Use of private insurance is one central aspect of the liberalisation of the economy. This ideological dimension applies not only to ideological differences between regimes but also to different ideological views at the individual level. Our analysis reveals that the more positive people are towards holding private insurance as an alternative to the welfare state the more likely they are to hold kinds of private insurance that compete with or supplement public social security.

1. Introduction

The modern welfare state can be regarded as an insurance institution aimed at protection of the citizens against risks related to disease, disability, unemployment, old age etc (Svallfors 1996). The last twenty years there has been an ongoing debate whether private insurance can supplement or even substitute public social security. It has been suggested that private insurance in many respects may be better suited to insure people against risks (Norges forsikringsforbund 1996).

In this paper we examine the demand for forms of insurance that compete with or supplement public social security. How do different social groups in a typical social-democratic welfare state system adapt in the market of private social security insurance? The analysis focus on four different types of insurance: health insurance, pension insurance, life insurance and child insurance.

2. The Norwegian welfare state system

Norway has a comprehensive welfare state system. This means that the public sector is large with universal welfare service financed by taxes and that income inequalities are low. The universalism in the Norwegian welfare state has distinguished it from that of most countries. The Norwegian welfare state is further distinguished by a high labour force participation for women and an institutionalized commitment to full employment through active labour market measures. Central trade unions have contributed to equality in wages and the base level of income is relatively high and unemployment relatively low. Norway is then regarded as a prototype of the social-democratic welfare regime (Esping-Andersen 1990:73-76).

Major public social service policy programs, such as sickness benefits, national medical insurance covering the entire population, day care and family allowances lag behind that of many nations. State institutions have a major responsibility for the administration and delivery of service. Public social expenditures are then higher than most nations. In 2003 total public social expenditures were 25,1 % of GDP in Norway and the average for EU was 20,7 %, public expenditures on health were 6,5 % and the average for EU was 5,9 % and public expenditures on pensions were 7,0 % and the average for EU was 6,9.

In social provision the market then has a weaker role than in most other countries which means that provision through private insurance and employer sponsored schemes are less widespread.

High level of public social expenditures also means that the need for private insurance to secure social security would be less than in a typical liberal welfare state system like the US. However, no welfare state system can secure all kind of social service demanded. Public social expenditures have increased in Norway later years. At the same time private insurance to secure welfare service have also increased in Norway.

3. Market based versus public insurance

For the individual the main purpose of insurance is to secure oneself against financial losses caused by unforeseen and unwanted events. Insurance is characterised by four features (Socialförsäkringsutredningen 2005). Firstly, insurance handles risk by taking over each individual's risk and compensating for financial losses caused by particular events. Secondly, insurance spreads the risk of damages on all insurance-holders. In the longer term total premiums must cover the compensation costs. Thirdly, the benefit of insurance is not primarily the compensation of losses but rather the security by being insured. Fourthly, the insurance must be clearly defined and stable regarding what events it covers and the conditions for compensations.

Usually, one thinks of market based forms of insurance in relation to the concept of insurance. One can distinguish between on the one hand *personal insurance* like life insurance, accident insurance, health insurance and pension insurance that covers financial losses related to illness, disability, old age and death and on the other hand *general insurance* or non-life insurance that covers damages on property due to fire, housebreaking, car accidents etc. But it is also makes sense to regard public social security and social assistance as insurance because these welfare arrangements share with market based insurance the four characteristics mentioned above.

There are, however, several characteristics that distinguish market based insurance from insurance offered by the welfare state (Norges forsikringsforbund 1996). Public insurance is offered by one large supplier while market based insurance is offered by several competing suppliers. The pricing of market based insurance is based on actuarial principles in which there is a correspondence between premiums and the payments that can be expected (so-called 'fair pricing' or 'actuarial justice'). As a contrast public insurance is financed through taxes with a more loose relation between contributions and expected benefits. In other words, while market insurance-holders can expect higher compensations the higher premiums they pay, citizens can to a larger extent expect to be benefited regardless of how much taxes they pay.¹

Another difference between market based and public insurance is that insurance companies must be profitable while the welfare state merely must see to that expenses do not exceed income (taxes) in the long run. While there is a market risk connected to private insurance public insurance is vulnerable to political risks, i.e. that changing political regimes may substantially alter the terms offered by welfare arrangements.

4. Two perspectives: embracing risk and the precautionary principle

Ewald (in Baker and Simon 2002) claims that there has been two paradigm shifts within insurance since the 19th century. The prevailing paradigm in the 19th century was the paradigm of *responsibility* implying that every person must bear the consequences of the events that one is exposed to, except that one is entitled to compensation from other persons that have caused losses. Foresight, prudence and charity for others are the main virtues within this paradigm.

The second paradigm is the paradigm of *solidarity* that replaced the paradigm of responsibility during the 20th century. The point of departure for this paradigm is not guild and responsibility but risk. The main question is not who is responsible for the events but instead how to distribute the financial losses related to unforeseen events. Individual financial losses is covered partly or wholly from a common pot financed either via taxes or insurance premiums.

According to Ewald the paradigm of *precaution* is presently replacing the paradigm of solidarity. The fundamental idea of this paradigm is that there are limits towards what risks that can be insured, both because too much insurance is not social efficient and because the modern risk society implies new risks (like environmental disasters) that cannot be calculated. These facts threaten the fundamental idea of insurance as fixed premiums in advance that guarantee certain compensations afterwards. Instead of relying on insurance individuals must to a larger extent be cautious and avoid risks.

Baker (in Baker and Simon 2002) suggest another development than the one indicated by the precaution paradigm which he names 'embracement of risk'. The core idea is that too much protection and insurance paradoxically can lead to more losses. Thus it is in the interest of both individuals and society as a whole that each individual bears more risk. One main argument bears on the concept of 'moral hazard', i.e. the phenomenon that individuals adapt their behaviour (act less prudent) because they are insured.

¹ There are, however forms of public insurance, like public pension insurance, in which payments are related to contributions.

The precaution principle and the embracing of risk are apparently two contradictory perspectives in that the former emphasises prevention of risks while the latter emphasises taking and individualizing risks. According to Baker they still have in common that they both question the basic tenets of the solidarity paradigm, namely that it is possible or even desirable to redistribute risks.

In our context these principles actualise the questions of how private insurance and increased individualisation of risks function compared to public welfare arrangements, especially what distributional consequences such a transition will have. There is of course an ideological aspect tied to this debate. The last 20-25 years a neo-liberalistic approach has gained ground. Public arrangements and regulations have to a certain extent been replaced or supplemented by market based solutions (Stamsø 2005). Use of private insurance is one central aspect of the liberalisation of the economy. This ideological dimension applies not only to ideological differences between regimes but also to different ideological views at the individual level.

5. Hypotheses

In accordance with the discussion above we want to test out whether the demand for private insurance is influenced by ideological views. The main research hypotheses behind this study are:

- H1: Insurance forms that directly compete with public social security will be influenced by attitudes towards private insurance versus public insurance while other forms of insurance will not be influenced by such attitudes.
- H2: The more positive people are towards private insurance the more likely they are to have types of private insurance that compete or supplement public social security.

In addition the demand for private insurance may be influenced by the family situation (single versus couples and parents versus non-parents), the educational level, the financial situation (household income and savings) and life stage or generation (old versus young people). We are in particular interested in whether the demand for private insurance increases with financial resources or not.

6. Methods

The analyses in this paper are based on data from the yearly SIFO survey. 1000 respondents between the age of 18 and 80 have been asked questions concerning different aspects of consumption, among them insurance. The data were collected through computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI).

The questions concerning insurance are related to the household as a whole. Accordingly, we only want respondents that are capable to answer on behalf of the household. Thus, respondents that are not one of the main persons in the household are excluded. Then it remains 930 observations.

In order to be representative for the Norwegian population the data material is post-stratified (weighted) by using information on sex, age and geography. Still, there remains an overweight of high-income households in our data material compared to national statistics. This bias is handled by controlling for income in the multivariate analyses.

The multivariate analyses are carried out by using binominal logistic regression analysis (Agresti 1990; Long 1997). Odds ratios are reported instead of logits. An odds ratio less than 1 means that the relationship between the independent and the dependent variable is negative, while an odds ratio above 1 means that the relationship is positive. An odds ratio similar to 1 indicates that there is no relationship between the variables in the data material.

7. Dependent variables

Insurance companies offer a great diversity of insurance products. In this study we focus on four insurance products that are relatively well known and that in some ways represent a parallel to traditional social security arrangements within the Norwegian welfare state. These are health insurance, life insurance, pension insurance and child insurance.

Health insurance

Health insurance covers for care and expenditures that are not included in the public health care system. In Norway the insurance companies offers four different health insurances: "Top-up insurance" covers for a fixed share of expenditures within a certain level (relatively low), for treatment domestically not offered by the public health care system. The insurance is affordable for all and widespread in countries with comprehensive public health care and social security system. "Principal health insurance" is more comprehensive than Top-up insurance in all respects, among others in the insurance sum, the treatments offered and that it covers treatment wide world. This insurance is most widespread in countries with a poor public health care system. "Principal hospital insurance" is world widespread and covers mostly hospital treatment. "Critical disease" insurance offers payment that is not connected to treatment after diagnosed critical disease.

In these analyses we do not separate between different kinds of health insurance.

Life insurance

Life insurance compensates for economic loss resulted from death, disability or old age. Life insurance then operates as both a saving agreement and as an insurance against risk. The security of risk against income loss resulted from disability means that it is also a kind of health insurance. Three main categories exist: life insurance with death risk, life insurance with disability risk and life insurance with life risk. Different kind of life insurance covers for either one or more of these elements and some are combined with saving elements for the insured.

In these analyses we do not separate between different kinds of life insurance.

Pension insurance

Pension insurance is a savings agreement that secure payments during old age. In Norway both individual and occupational pension insurance exists as a supplement to the public retirement pension. Individual pension insurance also works as a supplement to collective pension insurance. The insurance can incorporate marriage partner/cohabitants and children

and also cover for disability. Individual pension insurance give the insured right to tax allowance.

Our analysis only include individual pension.

Child insurance

Child insurance is a pay out resulted from death and for economic loss resulted from disability or loss of provider. Different types of child insurance covers for different kinds of losses.

This analysis includes all kind of child insurance.

The four mentioned forms of insurance will be contrasted with more traditional forms of insurance, namely house contents insurance and travel insurance.

8. Measuring attitudes towards private insurance

The main independent variable is the attitude towards private insurance as an alternative to public social security. In our survey we ask three questions about people's attitudes towards private insurance. The questions are formulated as follows:

“Are you positive or negative towards that it is more common to take out private insurance related to...

- the treatment of illnesses?
- old-age pension?
- disability due to accidents?”

The question is slightly unbalanced and will probably tend to over-report the number that is positive towards private insurance.

The questions are meant to measure people's attitudes towards the use of private insurance instead of public welfare arrangements. However, the questions may also measure people's attitudes towards precaution in general. Thus, a positive answer can mean at least two things: firstly, that one means that private insurance is a good alternative to public welfare arrangements and (the private-public dimension), secondly, that one is positive towards the fact that people are aware of and insure themselves against different forms of risks (the precautionary dimension).

This second component will probably vary a great deal for each of the indicators. One way to reveal whether there is a common component in these three indicators or not is to conduct factor analysis. The factor analysis reveals that there is one common component that has an eigenvalue above 1. This common component “explains” 66 per cent of the total variance. All three variables have factor scores (that indicate the correlation between the common component and each of the indicators) above 0.55. Cronbachs alpha, that measure the consistency of an index containing these three indicators, is 0.74. This is above the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Tabachnick and Fidell 2001), indicating that the reliability of the index is satisfying.

There remains however still the question of what component that has been retained through the index construction. Is the private-public dimension or the precautionary dimension? One

way of controlling the construct validity of the index is to check out the *nomological validity* of the concept, i.e. whether the index behaves in an expected manner or not (Cronbach and Meehl 1955). It is reasonable to believe that the precautionary dimension will be relatively little related to political attitudes while the private-public dimension, since it is related to liberalisation that is attributed to conservative and neo-liberal parties.

Table 1: Attitudes towards increasing use of private insurance (index) dependent on political attitude. 2007. Norway.

	Left	Centre	Right	Total
0	35	28	16	26
1	24	17	16	19
2	26	28	22	25
3	16	27	46	30
Total	100 (N=261)	100 (N=124)	100 (N=262)	100 (N=647)

$p < 0.001$ (chi-square test)

The relation between attitudes towards use of private insurance and political attitude is shown in table 1. The table reveals a monotonous relationship between the variables with a Gamma of 0.35. The mode shifts from 0 (negative) to 3 (positive) when moving from adherents of left wing parties to adherents of right wing parties. The relationship is statistically and the cross-tabulation supports the hypothesis that our index is related to the political dimension and thus measures the private-public dimension and not the precautionary dimension.²

9. Analysis

We have chosen four different types of insurances, namely health insurance, pension insurance, life insurance and child insurance. All these insurances represent supplements to traditional public welfares arrangements in Norway. Life insurance is of course an old insurance form. Private pension insurance has also existed for a relatively long time. Its popularity rose particularly in the 1980's. Health insurance and child insurance represent relatively new insurance products on the Norwegian insurance market.

We want to see whether there is an ideological component behind the purchase of such insurance products or not. The ideological component is measured by two indicators, the private-public index discussed above and political sympathies.

In addition purchase of insurance can be related to, firstly, age and civil status that are indicators of life stage and generation differences. Secondly, we include different indicators of capital, namely educational level, household income and whether the household has been able to save money or not the last year. A third set of control variables was also tried out, namely whether one has been exposed to different dramatic life events such as long-lasting illness or disability and unemployment. None of these indicators were statistically significant, so they were dropped in the final analysis.

² This relationship holds even when we control for civil status, education and household income.

Table 2: Logistic regressions on health, pension, life and child insurance. Odds ratios. 2007. Norway.

	Health	Pension	Life	Child
Age	0.953***	1.192***	0.984*	0.971°
Age squared		0.999**		
Single	1.071	0.641	0.690	
Single parent	1.757	0.696	1.190	0.944
Couple parents	1.530*	1.090	2.094***	
University education	0.626**	1.220	1.006	0.626
Household income	1.001*	1.000	1.001**	1.000
Household income squared	0.999*		0.999**	1.000°
Political centre	1.238	0.986	0.697	0.799
Political right	1.396	1.237	0.808	1.014
Political none	1.167	1.080	1.158	1.551
Saved money last year	1.123	2.005***	1.122	0.956
Private-public index	1.242**	1.450***	1.261**	1.457**
N	805	826	829	355
Pseudo-R ²	0.12	0.08	0.10	0.07

°: $p < 0.10$ *: $p < 0.05$ **: $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

Table 2 shows the results from logistic regression analyses. All analyses indicate that the propensity to have health, pension, life or child insurance respectively is higher the more positive attitudes towards private insurance contra public welfare arrangements. We will shortly sum the other results.

The likelihood of having private *health* insurance is lower the older people are. There can be several reasons for this. Young people may be more eager and dependent on avoiding the Health Service queue. It may also be more expensive and more difficult for older people to get private health insurance. In addition health insurance is a relatively new product in Norway that may not be well known among old people.

Secondly, parents with children are more likely to have health insurance than couples without children. Again, this may be due to a wish or need to avoid the Health Service queue. These families rely on income from the main supporter(s) and cannot afford a long-lasting period of reduced income because of disability. In addition, we see that household income increases the likelihood of having health insurance while education reduces this likelihood.

Concerning private *pension* insurance, the likelihood increases with increasing age until the age of 63, then it start to drop. This pattern may on the one hand be the result of a life stage effect that make people more eager to insure their old age when they get older and on the other hand a generation effect in which older people have more trust in the provisions of the welfare state while younger people. In addition people who have saved money the last year are more likely to also have invested in pension insurance.

The Norwegian social security system is universal and based on principles of both high base level and on a certain connection to income (Øverby in Stamsø 2005). These principles could give important contributions to explain the need and demand for such insurances. As seen from the analysis the demand increases with income. This is an expression of affordability to

buy insurance. However on pension it is also connected to the principle of equalisation in the Norwegian public pension system. Only income up to a certain level gives pay up in the public pension system. This level is equal with middle income, which means that income above this level give no pay up. For people with income above middle level it would then be favourable to buy private pension insurance.

The probability of having *life* insurance is lower the older people are. This indicates that younger people are more inclined to use this sort of insurance and investment than older people. Life insurance is also very expensive and less accessible to older people. Like health insurance life insurance is more common among couples with children than couples without children. Since death or disability of (one of) the main provider(s), may have serious impact on the financial situation, couples with children may have felt to need to insure risks more heavily than couples that do not have the responsibility of raising children.

Finally, when it comes to *child* insurance there are none of the control variables that are statistically significant on the 5 per cent level. If we relax the significance level, two variables may have some impact, namely age and income. Older parents seem to be somewhat less likely to have child insurance. Older parents are more likely to have older children, thus taking child insurance may be somewhat less relevant. Further, household with high incomes seem to be less likely to have this kind of insurance. This may indicate that high income parents can afford and are more willing to take the risk instead of insurance but we must be careful when interpreting these results.

It is interesting to compare the analyses above to similar analyses conducted for two other kinds of insurance, namely house contents insurance and travel insurance. These results are shown in table 3.

Table 3: Logistic regressions on house contents and travel insurance. Odds ratios. 2007. Norway.

	House content	Travel
Age	1.097***	1.157**
Age squared		0.999**
Single		1.161
Single parent	0.116**	0.853
Couple parents		0.845
University education	0.881	0.994
Household income	1.008*	1.003***
Household income squared	0.999*	0.999***
Political centre	0.857	1.651
Political right	2.725	1.507
Political none	1.593	1.806*
Saved money last year	8.283***	1.934**
Private-public index	1.231	0.983
N	840	828
Pseudo-R ²	0.48	0.15

°: p < 0.10 *: p < 0.05 **: p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

The main difference between the latter analyses (table 3) and the former analyses (table 2) is that the private-public index is not statistically significant and that economic capital (income and saving behaviour) is positively related to the likelihood of having insurance that does not represent alternative to social security.

10. Conclusions

Our main hypotheses were that the demand for forms of private insurance that directly compete with public social assistance are related to ideological views in such a way that the more positive people are towards private insurance as an alternative to the welfare state the more likely they are to hold these kinds of private insurance. Our analyses support these hypotheses. In particular the analyses show that only insurance forms that compete with public social security are related to ideological views while other forms of insurance (in this case house contents insurance and travel insurance) are not.

Since the data are based on a correlational research design we cannot in principle conclude on the causal direction of the relationship between the variables (Shadish, Cook, and Campbell 2002). It seems, however, more reasonable to conclude that ideological views in general influence demand for insurance than the opposite.

The analyses also reveal that financial resources influence the demand for insurance. The likelihood of holding life insurance and health insurance increases with household income while people that have saved money last year are more likely to hold private pension insurance. Child insurance is, however, an interesting exception with the slight tendency that people are less likely to hold such insurance when household income increases. Our analyses of insurance that do not compete with public social security reveals that holding these insurances is positively related to income but not to ideological view.

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Theme 8. Design and fashion in consumption

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Papers

Giertz-Mårtenson, Ingrid: Fashion Forecasting – Manipulating or Assisting the Consumer?

Hansson, Lena: Universal Design to Make a Difference

Klepp, Ingun Grimstad: Care and maintenance, a contribution to the planned Western Europe volume of Berg's Encyclopaedia of World Dress and Fashion

Markkula, Annu: Sustainable Consumption – Sustainable Ways of Consuming Fashion

Ryynänen, Toni: Design, Media and Consumer Culture? – The representations of design in Finnish economical press

Fashion Forecasting – Manipulating or Assisting the Consumer?

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Introduction

Within the fashion system there are many different agents (like designers, manufacturers, buyers, editors, models and photographers). Though the interest for fashion seems insatiable, many parts of the system are yet virtually unknown or poorly understood. Practical realities of the fashion business seem to be little known to very few other than those who work within it. A small group of agents is specialized in what is called *fashion forecasting*: they produce and sell information on what is believed to become the *must haves* of next season. They claim to reveal the future of fashion.

Having been active within the fashion forecasting business myself (directing for many years the Swedish Fashion Council) I have seen this phenomenon from within. In this paper I will discuss the following questions: what is fashion forecasting, who are the actors, how do they produce their information, and who is using it? What relationships do they have to one another and how is status and recognition created in the continuous struggle between the actors? And how is the ordinary consumer influenced by these trend predictions – or are they? Is forecasting actually helping the consumer to make better choices or does it manipulate us into consuming goods that we actually did not know existed and even less wanted? The paper is based on a study of some sixty trend books with predictions for 2005 – 2008 from major international trend agencies active on the Scandinavian market as well as on interviews with key people producing and buying this type of information. The study is to a large extent built on ethnographical material as I also used participant observation of trend seminars, trade fairs and exhibitions.

Using the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu, I see fashion forecasting as an autonomous field of cultural production where symbolic capital is used and produced to obtain and maintain positions and prestige, and various social practices exist to create trustworthiness and status.

Why listen to Forecasters?

Historically the most important forecasting agencies are based in Paris. Here a few women founded the first businesses some forty years ago in order to meet the emerging needs of guidance in a society where, up till then, the seasonal French Couture showings had been the credo for the fashion world. To promote their predictions, traditional trend agencies today produce documents (“trend books”) regarding style, fabrics and colour cards and arrange seminars and exhibitions. A typical trend book can be anything from a 100-page document with photos, sketches, fabric swatches, colour cards and small gadgets for inspiration, to plain

”magazines” with nothing but hundreds of pages with photos from the international runway. Other documents communicate a more conceptual information with associative texts and images for an individual interpretation. Among the users of this kind of information you find companies from a variety of categories: luxury brands down to low-end manufacturers and from fashion as well as life-style related areas: cars, mobile phones, sports, media, food, cosmetics and entertainment.

The price level for forecasting information is very high and there is a lot of secrecy around this phenomenon within the fashion world. The predictions are made one to two years in advance, following market needs of production and consumption. Today however, the market moves much faster: a new style or trend can be developed and produced in a couple of weeks – the market is invaded by what is called *fast fashion*. This creates a problem for the traditional and “orthodox” forecasting agencies: several on-line actors as well as various media today challenge them. Information from the runway, trade fairs and market trends bubbling up from “street fashion” is communicated daily to professionals as well as consumers. Thus, predicting reliable truths regarding a phenomenon as fickle as fashion and the development of market and consumer trends more than a year in advance is losing ground: it is the Achilles heel of the field.

Old and New Strategies

Why are so many companies prepared to pay so much for predictions that rarely prove to be true? What creates trustworthiness within this autonomous field – the producer of an inspiring creative message or the one who comes up with truly commercial predictions? Is it at all possible to combine the two? And do the forecasters try to manipulate the consumer with fantasy trends or are they actually interpreting contemporary movements in society into concepts that later will become “fashion”?

The paper discusses if and how it is possible to predict trends. What tools does a forecaster use to “look into the future”? The study argues that there is something called *trend pitch* found in some forecasters, a gift to spot trends and new “winds” in society and the ability to interpret them. This means an important symbolic capital for the forecaster – some have it and others do not. It is a vital ability in order to gain recognition and prestige in the field. Others seem to justify their predictions through *trend spotting*, just screening the market for the latest news. But the interviews show that there is little reason to believe that fashion forecasting actually *creates* fashion: forecasting helps push certain trends, and those actors who are seen as successful make their predictions in a creative way, often presented through associative and abstract images. While many independent designers want to draw on their own creativity and not be influenced by others (“forecasting is useless – old fashioned and too late anyway”), other users have a different opinion: the information is seen as an affirmation and assurance, a kind of “safety-net” and guarantee that one is “on the right track”. To be “with it”, and to know what everyone else looks at is also an important motivation. The constant commercial pressure and the demand for continual economic growth and improving financial results haunt everyone. This means that looking at trends from someone who has a good track record of credibility might be helpful and worth paying for.

The Creative Consumer

Today the main challenge to traditional trend forecasters is the ubiquity of information about fashion and the sheer amount and variety that now exists, all instantly accessible. If you are a fashion-interested designer or consumer, the Internet offers the opportunity to seek out any type of information that you want – be it photos from last night's show at a New York night club, showing what the seventeen year old hipsters are wearing right now, to Japanese online fashion magazines, to fashion communities in Germany, to Scandinavian fashion bloggers. It helps that much of this takes place in English. On sites like Myspace you can make 'friends' with other people with the same interests and trade ideas across continents. The *creative consumer* will be more and more active in the future and create their own fashion forecasts through blogs and on-line videos.

Conclusion

Fashion forecasting can be seen as a representative of modernity with its demands for individuality, diversification and growing consumption: The different strategies of today's actors indicate a change and an adaptation to new ways of marketing and communication: while traditional forecasters still base their information on documents, with predictions for what is going to happen at least a year ahead, newcomers have chosen to go on-line in order to deliver constantly updated and *à la minute* information. Timesaving tools and fast information means prestige in a business that constantly is looking for new and fresh ideas.

The study shows that forecasters do not create new fashion trends but can help push ideas that already exist on the runway, on celebrities, in the street and in society. Creative and visual information gets higher recognition than verbal texts that are often disregarded and not read at all. Information is seen as a guarantee and help to find the right balance between novelty and continuity, reducing the uncertainty that is constantly found in the challenge of commercial pressure.

However, traditional forecasting is losing ground. A young generation of designers and consumers find their inspiration in a more and more globalized world, where the explosive development of "trend spotting" on the web, in fashion blogs and social networks lead the way to a more individualized fashion. The huge amount of free information on the web will – at least to a degree – erode the importance of the traditional forecasters. This is an arena where the creative consumer can create his or her personal fashion trends and communicate them to millions of friends and experts all over the globe. But the professional forecasters could still offer some value in organising all existing information into easily understandable categories. They effectively 'curate' the information into messages that help save time and position what is happening into real, understandable movements for those who are willing to pay for it.

Universal Design to Make a Difference

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Abstract

This paper aims to describe Universal design from a Swedish design perspective. Universal design includes an ambition to create a more 'inclusive' society by working against design exclusion. It opens up for a more extended view of consumers as it implies that all designed products, services, environments etc. should be usable and accessible for as many people as possible. In Sweden, the interest of Universal design, also commonly known as Design for All, can be derived from design traditions in the field of 'social responsible design', ethical statements reflected in governmental policies, and the potential market of elderly (considering the aging populations of Europe and Sweden). Still, Universal design is easier to elaborate as a "way of thinking" rather than visualise in the design practice. Nevertheless, it implies what can be achieved by design.

Universal design in a Swedish context

Design constitutes a significant dimension in contemporary Western consumption societies and the design practice implicitly determines consumers' ability to create a meaningful life. Depending on for whom the designed objects are made, some consumers are included and others are excluded from consumption. If design as an important aspect in consumers' everyday life is discriminatory it becomes a social and cultural issue. Universal design is a design concept that has the ambition to create a more 'inclusive' society. In theory it is defined as "an approach to design that incorporates products as well as building features which, to the greatest extent possible, can be used by everyone" (Ostroff, 2001).

The purpose with this paper is to describe Universal design from a Swedish design perspective. The paper is based on material collected for the author's thesis about Universal design from a consumer research perspective (Hansson, 2006). The material in this paper includes twelve qualitative interviews lasting 1,5 hours in average with designers and other design experts within different design fields and consist of rich accounts of their experience and their practice of Universal Design. The informants will

be presented as design experts in the paper, and their expertise in Universal design should be implied.

Three aspects illustrating the interest of Universal design, also commonly known as Design for All¹, will be discussed in the paper as a result of the study made among Swedish design experts promoting the concept. In Sweden, the interest of Universal design can be derived from design traditions in the field of ‘social responsible design’, ethical statements reflected in governmental policies and similar, and the potential market of elderly (considering the aging populations of Sweden as well as Europe). The interviewed design experts use both ethical and market arguments to justify the necessity of Universal design. However, their interest is also influenced by design traditions that are related to specific design fields. What is needed to make Universal design a successful practice will be discussed as well and the paper is ended with a discussion of the implications of Universal design for consumers.

The emergence of Universal design and influential design traditions

Universal design emerged during the 1980’s and through the work of advocates such as designers and producers, as well as among representatives from disability rights organizations and politicians, the concept is nowadays globally recognized (Ostroff, 2001). With an ambition to embrace everyone, the concept includes an ideological view of design and an urge to serve humans and society as a whole. This is far from a new thought in the design world since design is assumed to both reflect and influence societal and cultural values as well as commercial and political interests of its time (Sparke, 1987; Thackara, 1988; Woodham, 1997).

Universal design can be compared to other known design movements with the pursuit of making changes in society with the help of design. The modernists in the latter 19th century believed in creating a democratic ideal society “whereby the majority would be able to enjoy an improved quality of life in a hygienic, healthy, and modern environment” (Woodham, 1997: p34). The famous German design school Bauhaus stands as a role model for the modern style and still has an impact on designers in these days even if it is challenged by many other views of design. Although it can be argued whether this design movement always works in favor of the people or nourish an elitist view of design. A democratic idealism has been a basic premise of Scandinavian design since the beginning of the last century (Sparke, 1987).

Furthermore, the Universal design ‘movement’ partly resembles the ‘social responsible design’ movement which started out in the 1960’s when the purpose of design as a differentiator or market-led design (e.g., Whiteley, 1993) was criticized. It was during this time the views of designers like Papanek (1984) became very influential, emphasizing a true user focus and the need to consider minorities including people with

¹ There are a number of names given design approaches like Universal design. Universal design is originally an American term, also popular in Japan. In Europe Design for All is commonly used, with a Swedish correspondent. In United Kingdom the preferred term is Inclusive design.

disabilities. He also demanded high social and moral responsibility from the designer. In Sweden, Papanek's work inspired design students at Konstfack in Stockholm during the end of 1960th and 1970th (Svengren, 1995). Sweden has further a 50-year history of design for accessibility in the built environment and in ergonomics approaching disabled users (Paulsson, 2002) as the design fields of assistive aid emerged in close connection to the field of ergonomics during the late 1960's (Rosell, 1994). These design fields have been influential in the Swedish design community ever since and as they are closely related to the ideology of Universal design, with its background in barrier-free design² and accessible design, it is not surprising to find that several of the interviewed design experts have their professional background within these design fields or sympathize with these views of design.

The field of 'social responsible design' includes ethical and green design as well and is known for its tradition of design criticism. The core of the critical tradition implies that there is a direct and inevitable link between a society's design and its social health: design is a manifestation of the social, political and economic situation (Whiteley, 1993). Thoughts close to Universal design has thus been around for some time and Sweden is no exception. The design concept embraces consumers that are commonly neglected in the design process, for instance elderly, children, disabled, consumers that are deviating from the norm. But it is not design for specific consumer groups, i.e. design for disabled and elderly (e.g., Welsh, 1995; Leibrock & Terry, 1999). What characterizes Universal design is the awareness of design exclusion.

Countering design exclusion means to be aware of who are excluded, why they are excluded along with how they are excluded in order to create more inclusive or 'universal' solutions. And by identifying why and how end-users cannot access or readily use a product or service, it allows for the possibility to counter such exclusion (Clarkson, Coleman, Keates, & Lebbon, 2003). One way of doing this as Clarkson et al. (2003) explains is to identify the capability demands that are placed upon the user, any user, by the features of the designed object. Prescriptions, i.e. what an object allows or forbids the user to do are materialized inscriptions made by designers when they decide how an object should work and look like (Akrich, 1992; Latour, 1992). These prescriptions can also make it harder for consumers to use them if it requires certain capabilities, certain strength in the fingers, arms, legs, or ability to move or read. It is in this way that design empowers people or makes them disempowered.

An ethical perspective reflected in governmental policies

The design experts depict Universal design as a means to create opportunities for more people to take part in everyday life and participate in society on equal terms. Designers in favour of this thinking object to the traditional segregation and stereotyping of people who do not fit 'the norm', such as children, elderly, and disabled. But the ethical perspective is ultimately about human rights and the view of people. The design experts

² Barrier-free design and Accessible design are concepts closely linked to legislation requirements for built environments and emphasize accessibility for disabled people specifically.

think that design should support people's possibilities to live a normal and independent life despite of age, ability etc. and believe it is possible to make a difference with the help of design. They are convinced that Universal design is a way to create a more inclusive society.

The view of disabled people changes over time and the importance of social and cultural aspects have come to be realized as important to consider along with the environment (Ridell & Watson, 2003; Minkler & Fadem, 2002). How the environment is designed has implications for those using it and can facilitate or set up barriers, making people feel handicapped.

"The environment puts certain demands on you and if you can't control all of them, you become handicapped." (Karin)

An important notion reflected in the study is that even if you do not have a disability, to become or feel handicapped is something most of us experience at times for different reasons. For example, if the lighting is bad it makes you see worse, if your arms and hands are occupied with something it hinders your flexibility, if you break a leg and use crutches accessibility becomes more important, and using a complex device or a badly designed device makes it harder to work with if it is possible at all. This is very interesting and highlights the consequences of the shortcomings in design, something that people commonly blame themselves for (e.g., Norman, 1998). This means we can all be handicapped at times and in certain situations.

"We are individuals, we are of different lengths, we have different abilities to hear well, and we also hear in various ways in different situations, we see differently well in different situations. In the mornings when it's dark in the bedroom it can then be hard to see the time if it isn't well-lit, or if the contrasts are not good etc. and in other situations we can easily see the time, and it's the same for those who are visually impaired, in certain situations they see great and in other cases they get really dazzled, which is more disturbing than anything else for one person but not for another." (Håkan)

Behind the philosophy of Universal design you find the assumption that we will all eventually be discriminated by design for various reasons, not the least as we grow older and abilities diminish over time. This is a natural cause of life and should be recognized in the design. The general opinion among the design experts is 'equal possibilities' for everyone and it is in relation to an environment that someone becomes handicapped.

The ethical arguments used by the design experts to justify Universal design are reinforced by their reference to human rights and other non-discrimination policies. Universal design is no charity and the EU Treaty of Amsterdam is mentioned. With the aim of achieving equality of opportunity and social inclusion for everyone, the anti-discrimination clause states that actions should be taken against discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation and towards physical accessibility (Ostroff, 2001; EU Treaty of Amsterdam³). In response to

³ www.itcilo.it/english/actrav/telearn/global/ilo/blokit/eutrety.htm, 2006-01-27.

this, governmental policies that reflect human rights and equality declarations have been formed and constitute important reference points for the design experts. The Swedish proposition ‘From patient to citizen – a national action plan for the handicap politic’ (Government Bill 1999/2000:79) seems to be significant as it is mentioned by most of the design experts. Especially the ambition to create accessibility for ‘all’ by 2010. One of the design experts summarizes the core meaning of the message in the proposition concerning design as follows:

“Everything that a person meets, you can be cognitive or physical disabled or immigrant, he should be able to understand the society, take part of society, not feeling excluded.”
(Kristina)

Universal design or Design for All is recommended as a means to create a society for all and reach the goal “accessibility for all by 2010” in public spaces. The same goes for the Government Bill ‘An information society for all’ which states that “...everyone must be able to take part in the information society...for people with disabilities it requires that the IT-systems are accessible and usable” (Government Bill 1999/2000:86). Furthermore, in an SOU⁴ report from 2003 concerning governmental politics of elderly, Design for All is recommended as a possible way to reach higher independence for elderly people in the future (SOU 2003:91). On a European level there is an amendment⁵ in the European Union directive nowadays that require public authorities to take into account accessibility for people with disabilities and design for all requirements whenever possible (EIDD, www.design-for-all.org, 2004-02-02).

A market perspective of Universal design

Another commonly used argument for explaining the interest in Universal design among the design experts is the potential market of elderly due to undisputable changing demographics. The market potential embraces the needs and requirements of aging populations of Sweden as well as Europe, USA and Japan among others. By 2010, for instance, one in five Europeans will be aged 62 and over (Eurostat: 101) and every second European will be over 50 years old in 2020 (Coleman, 1999). From being a marginal group of consumers, the elderly will become a powerful consumer force which in research is referred to as the grey market, 55+ consumers etc. (Shoemaker, 2000). Although they are commonly grouped due to their age, it is far from a homogenous group (Moschis et al., 1997).

Older consumers have within the field of marketing historically been viewed as uninteresting as a consumer group based on old stereotypes of aging people. The overwhelming majority of people with disabilities are older people with minor impairments, problems with hearing or with walking far without aid or assistance et cetera, which hinder everyday activities (Green & Jordan, 1999). But being elderly today means something different than being elderly in the past and since people grow older

⁴ SOU – Statens Offentliga Utredningar

⁵ The European Union directive, amendment 33, article 23, paragraph 6a

very differently the cognitive age might divert significantly from the biological age (Moschis et al., 1997). The cognitive age is as important to consider in the design process although inevitable changes in abilities come with aging.

Elderly consumers may not feel old or want to change their lives just because they are experiencing age-related impairments. Nobody wants to be stigmatized. Consumers wants products that are usable, i.e. the design to make sure that a user can grasp what to do and knows what is going on products (Norman, 1998), but aesthetics and emotions are as important in consumers' interaction with any designed object (Norman, 2004). Consumer products etc. should thus not only be accessible but also social and cultural acceptable. To integrate Universal design into mainstream design makes sense since people in many ways are expressing themselves through their consumption and if you then are excluded – cannot take part in the consumption due to shortcomings in the design of products et cetera – consumers can easily become socially and culturally excluded. Design is acknowledged in contemporary consumer cultures both as a practice of creating desirable objects but also for consumers as a means to create a meaningful life (e.g., Lury 1997).

Using a Universal design approach in practice requires high user involvement and to include 'everyone' ought to be expensive. However, no socially acceptable design can be made without the help of the end-users (Papanek, 1984). The cost might be impossible to refuse in the future going towards an 'accessible' Swedish society, at least in the public environments. At the same time money can be saved with the social benefits reached with the help of Universal design, enabling consumers to live a more independent life longer.

The market potential is the most pronounced argument for justifying Universal design economically. At the Center for Universal design they claim that Universal design has become a very marketable approach, since it addresses the diverse needs of a majority of consumers thus leading to reasonable cost (CUD⁶, 2007-01-16). On a global scale this might be accurate but to what extent this is true in Sweden cannot be concluded from this study. The economical perspective of Universal design was not pronounced by the Swedish design experts in any depth although a market potential implies that something can be marketed and sold with profit. What is argued though is common sense; to think carefully beforehand is better than realizing your mistakes afterwards. Design expert Birgitta believes that future needs ought to be assessed in new buildings instead of having to do costly changes later on because you have not been thinking enough about the users and their requirements from the beginning. However, long-termed calculations are seldom made within the construction industry only immediate investigation cost.

"...It's often said that if we should adjust and make it very Universally good in every way then it costs more, the counterargument is then if we use a general standard, that you do everything from the beginning so to speak then it won't become more expensive, because it's the changes, to rethink, that costs more." (Jan)

⁶ CUD – The Center for Universal design, www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/about_ud/about_ud.htm

To design for access is more cost effective than afterwards changes or adjustments of products and it also lead to better designed products that can give companies competitive advantages. But it is always a question about money and the companies must see the result and that it is a profitable investment. As one of the design experts explains, if you are creating an IT-system with the right technology to make it accessible this is argued to give only advantages as it also becomes faster and cheaper.

How to make Universal design a successful practice

The definition of Universal design is open for interpretation which is the strength as it opens up for different solutions and creates possibilities. At the same time it is a weakness since it might easily be ignored or dismissed because of the challenging ambition to include all and for its focus on usability and accessibility. Furthermore, it is not easily practiced because what is to be defined as ‘universal’? What does it mean that something is ‘universal’ or universally designed? Nevertheless, the design experts do not see any contradictions between Universal design and special or unique design. Even if the ambition with Universal design is to reach a design usable for many, it is not possible to achieve or even desirable to embrace everyone, but to use a broad consumer base and include others than the ‘average’ consumer. Universal design should therefore not be interpreted as an impossible standard or a ‘one size fits all’ approach but a quest for more alternatives so that ability impairments will not stand in the way for individual consumers to choose in accordance to their preferences of taste and style.

Design expert Maria believes it is possible to design products for many users as possible functionally, without implying that it becomes a product without character. It can be diversified when it comes to the communicative expression so that it addresses and attract maybe younger users but that it still works functionally for a rather wide target group. This is reflected in parts of IKEAS assortment according to her. IKEA is very aware of the ageing population and that the needs of these consumers have to be satisfied. They work in a quite invisible way and might be bold as it can also work repellent. If a product becomes viewed as an assistive product, then it can be rejected also by those who really need it because it becomes unwanted.

Designers can use the seven design principles of Universal design for guidance in their work but these are only recommendations and are in their descriptions open for interpretations just like the definition (Story et al., 1998). The principles can also be used to evaluate existing design to see how accessible they are. The rather free use of the principles and way of applying Universal design is deliberate and works as an alternative to standards. Standards are in theory believed to be inadequate and tend to make things uniform and provide barriers for designers to work creatively (Welsh, 1995). Novitski (2001) argues that Universal design is not a euphemism for accessibility but differs from the prescriptive ADA standards, which give many individuals access to spaces, but may not support their active and full participation. Sweden has no equivalent to ADA (Americans with Disabilities Acts) standards, which are constituted by law in USA (Ostroff, 2001).

The design experts express contradicting opinions when it comes to standards. They are not against standards per se but believe they can become obstacles if taken for maximum requirements instead of minimum recommendation. Standards could be used as a benchmark but the disadvantages seem to be greater as the standards get outdated when things change. Design expert Birgitta believes that existing knowledge should be utilized but Swedish building norms, the so-called 'Swedish standard', should only be used as general outlines and furthermore need to be updated. However, they are no longer mandatory, and Jan, another design expert, believes there was a greater need of standardization in the beginning of the 1950's with the negative consequence that buildings became rather uniform. Today the picture is different.

"...Now we have limited laws [building legislation of framework character] that give pretty generous instructions, soft instructions and they can be interpreted in different ways and the risk is naturally that questions like these [accessibility] aren't solved well."
(Jan)

Within the UN they are talking about initiating standards for Universal design or Design for All when it comes to products and services⁷. Industrial design standards are possible to obtain but should not according to design expert Lena be expressed in numbers and figures in any way. The design should not be restricted to something that gets old. Instead these standards should be challenging and illustrate the best possible way to improve and still avoid limiting the development possibilities. In this way standardization could be used to achieve refined knowledge. One of the design experts uses the international guidelines W3c of Web Accessibility Initiative⁸ in her work, but expresses a concern if used without doing real user tests. Because every 'book of rules' needs to be interpreted and gets out-of-date as the development within this area proceeds at an incredibly fast rate.

If standards are used as a minimum and no users participate in the design process the risk is that standards become a tool of uniformity and the flexibility possible to accomplish with design and Universal design is lost. This is in line with Novitski's (2001) view who believes that knowledge about users and their diverse capabilities is needed in addition to standards as both design and human bodies change over time. One needs to go beyond standards to achieve Universal design and therefore such ought to be used with caution.

Instead, three other factors are mentioned by Ostroff (2001) as important to make Universal design develop into a successful practice: education for design professionals; evaluation of universally designed products and environments; and communication with the general public. All three factors are mentioned by the design experts in different contexts but the most emphasized is the requirement of knowledge. Working with Universal design puts new requirements on designers. They must be able to handle a diversity of human capabilities of which many may be unknown to designers. The design experts talk about the value of competence and discuss the lack of it among designers.

⁷ Article about Design for All and standardization on a European level in the magazine Consumer Power (KonsumentMakt), No. 3, June 2003.

⁸ Web Accessibility initiative, www.w3.org/WAI/, 2004-03-13.

One of them claims that to have knowledge of Design for All is a valuable competence as these questions today have an international touch because of the ageing population and legislation within the area in Europe, USA and Japan. It is a competitive advantage to have this competence.

In Sweden, an education project in Universal design finished 2004. The Universal Design Education Project-Sweden (UDEP-S) was launched in spring 2001⁹. The purpose of the project was to promote and develop the Universal design perspective in design education programs and all major universities have been participating (Paulsson, 2002). Activities like this helps to increase the awareness of design and the possibilities to create a more inclusive society, to make a difference. Although the project has come to an end the knowledge of Universal design stays with those involved in the project, teachers and students as well as other involved actors. The future will tell if it has had any permanent influences on the participating design educations.

However, it is not only designers that need to be educated in these questions but also those purchasing design competences.

“...I see it like you can accomplish more by so to speak educate better buyers, when they eventually buy design that they [the designers] get a good specification, if they get a good spec the designers can make a good job, if they don't well, it is of course an interaction [between designer and the buyer about the spec].” (Andreas)

“Environments are in general rather bad, because in order to save money they reduce professional knowledge but if then the purchaser is educated in Design for All, then he knows he needs to get help from someone who really knows which functions that are needed.” (Kristina)

In fact, everyone that influences the design process needs knowledge, as they work as ‘silent designers’ (Gorb & Dumas, 1987), which includes engineers, marketers, constructors etc. Not to forget policy makers. Several of the design experts therefore provide education for other designers and constructors along with people feeling a need to know and use a Universal design approach in their work. In the governmental and the municipal area this is probably more common because of their mission to serve all citizens. Design expert Elena, not only share her knowledge about how to make accessible spaces but believe it to be important to provide education in ‘awareness’ [insikt], that is, why you should do things in a certain way; how you treat people; about dignity because people want to be independent. People need to know why they are doing things in a certain way otherwise they tend to go for the ‘old’ way, “this is how we always have done it”. Some of the design experts even view the issue of education as something additional to their work.

“The problem with Universal design is that people is not always aware of the significance and the need for it but also requires knowledge and a conscious attitude and

⁹ UDEP-S (The Universal design Education Project – Sweden), www.universaldesign-sweden.com/, 2002-10-14.

design methodology. If the client is not aware of this the educational work is also important.” (Maria)

There are also influential institutions that promote Universal design and work for creating a more inclusive society with the help of design by trying to change the view of design among decision makers, companies and the public. The Swedish branch of the network the European Institute for Design and Disability (EIDD) is one of those and works for enhancing the quality of life through Design for All (www.design-for-all.org, 2003-05-13). Several of the design experts are members and one of them gives a background to the start of EIDD Sweden and its relevance.

”EIDD Sweden was established in 1996 because the involved people thought that the design of architecture and products and environments was very bad as regards to people. It was flashy and nice in many ways but the people had disappeared totally, whether we are talking about disabled or ordinary people. And that was what Paul Hogan [initiator of EIDD Europe] also thought and the reason why he tried to get it all going.” (Jan)

An interesting project born from the initiative of EIDD is the project designforalla.se¹⁰. The project provide good examples of Design for All and are trying to reach out broader both to the business community and the public sector. They also provide information to the public. An advertising campaign was launched last year directed towards the public, emphasising human diversity and criticizing the ‘average’ person used in many marketing and developing processes, especially since such a person does not exist in reality. The message of the campaign is: ‘Liberation of diversity’ and ads where shown for instance in the subways of Stockholm for the public to see. Increased knowledge among consumers can make them aware of what demands they should have on consumer objects and put pressure on producers and similar.

The project “Considerate design” (Design med omtanke) in the West Swedish Region is using ‘Design for All’ to design public spaces in a sustainable way (www.design.medomtanke.com/, 2004-02-25). It has grown into a business and they give education in Design for All among other issues for every participating designer. The educated designers are to be found on the website for anyone interesting in using this approach to their own design.

Implications of Universal design for consumers – a conclusive discussion

The Universal design movement wants to change the fact that design has become a means of exclusivity, of segmentation which puts many desirable goods and services out of reach of many consumers. The problem is that most objects, services and environments

¹⁰ The non-profit institute EIDD Sweden, a non-profit institute stand behind the project. The Swedish Industrial Design Foundation (SVID), The Swedish Agency for Disability Policy Coordination (Handisam) and the Swedish Disability Federation (HSO) are collaborators. The project is being funded by the Swedish Inheritance Fund and has a planned lifespan of three years (2005-2007). www.designforalla.se

are designed for a target group of consumers, addressing their needs and wants and thus excludes others. However, a large group of peoples is excluded just because they are diverting from the norm of 'the average consumer', conceptualized in marketing and by designers in the design process. The unequally aspect should not be neglected and there are many means of barriers for exclusion e.g. social, economic, attitudinal and spatial (Dischinger, 2000).

From a consumer perspective it is of great importance to try and create awareness of design exclusion and the possibilities of using design to counteract it. Especially for those today excluded by design because they cannot live up to the requirements set up by the design. Consumers with impairments are not necessarily viewing themselves as disabled but become handicapped in the interaction with products, services and environments. This affects their possibilities to be consumers and express themselves in preferred ways with the help of their consumption choices. As discussed in the paper, anyone can at times and in different situations experience design exclusion and feel handicapped, although people with special requirements due to impairments may have less access to designed objects than others. They do not want to be discriminated or feel stigmatised when consuming which makes it a good reason to broaden mainstream design with the help of Universal design. Because it is not until all consumers are considered in the design and development of products, services and environments that they can become equal participants in society and today's consumption society.

This 'right' can partly be legalised but the study shows that there is a strong focus on the public area when it comes to policies and design. Governmental policies only address public places and concerns while the private area remains practically unregulated. Standards are no solution according to the study so standardization is not the best way to go either. That is probably why a market argument is used as well to make Universal design economical justified. Universal design can then both provide business opportunities and at the same time make society more equal. From such a perspective it is possible to see Universal design as a way to think differently and consider true human diversity and instigating change, a design dimension that Buchanan & Margolin (1995) acknowledge.

The study implies that Universal design is still more elaborated as a 'way of thinking' rather than visualised in the design practice. One of the reasons for this is probably the difficulty of defining what is universally designed and not. There are no restrictions of how to use Universal design and recommendations that are made are free for interpretation which decrease the risk of conformity but leave designers with a challenging design practice. When can a product be considered 'universal'? Is it from a user perspective, i.e. that many users agree when trying it that it works for them in respect of usability and accessibility or is it a professional view point that counts. And who should determine the evaluation criteria for what can be defined as 'universal'? The existing principles of Universal design can be used but they are only recommendations and do not fit all design and are rather open for interpretations. Even if designers use the principles the practice may result in very different end-results. Another thing that complicates it is that Universal design should actually work invisibly (Welsh, 1995), as design should not stigmatise. A 'universal' object cannot be too distinct from other

similar products etc. in appearance, even if it can and should be accessible for many more or most consumers.

To conclude, the Universal design movement wants to move the attention away from disabilities and niche markets like ‘assistive aids’ and ‘barrier-free design’ towards mainstream design where diverse abilities is considered something normal. Design would then become more ‘inclusive’ and hence ‘ethical’ but above this it could also become economical. How well it will develop is hard to judge today and in the context of the entire design society the impact is still marginal. So far the Universal design movement in Sweden can only be described as a rather disparate network of enthusiastic people working with various activities like the Swedish education project UDEP-S, organizations like EIDD Sweden, those who work with public spaces and services and who has knowledge of these issues.

Although Universal design might be morally and ethically justified it is not a prerequisite of creating an inclusive society. However, it is a way to think about design as a means to make a difference. Just by using such ‘way of thinking’ I believe one has come further towards a more inclusive society. If everyone who works with issues of inclusion or exclusion and accessibility are aware of the possibility of Universal design and what can be achieved with design, much have been accomplished. For this to happen knowledge need to be achieved not only among professional designers but for anyone involved in making decisions about the design and development of products, services, and environment, whether it be for private or public use. Not the least among policy makers who are important ‘silent’ designers who influence the supply and selection of consumer objects that are accessible and do not exclude consumers. As Universal design is one way of creating a more inclusive society, its possibilities are important to make policy makers aware of. However, policies are not enough to encourage designers and other ‘silent designers’ to use the philosophy of Universal design. The market aspect works better in some respect, especially within the business community and if Universal design can generate businesses then it can be integrated into mainstream design. Besides talking about Universal design, showing good examples will help visualising the possibilities and can play down images that people have of ‘universal’ objects if interpreted literary as a “one size fits all” approach.

By studying design issues like Universal design, it becomes apparent what can be achieved by design, both for individual consumers and on a societal level. The possibility to make a difference by design is challenging but also rewarding. As people are deeply affected by their ability to function in the physical surroundings with a sense of comfort, independence and control (Kanes Weisman, 4/1999), creating an inclusive society by design means that increased social sustainability is achieved at the same time.

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Care and maintenance, a contribution to the planned Western Europe

volume of Berg's Encyclopaedia of World Dress and Fashion

Conference theme 8: Design and fashion in consumption

Abstract

Our clothing is not just a result of the clothes themselves and the way they are produced, but also of how they are maintained. Today laundry is an important part of this maintenance, but a few decades back laundry was far more infrequent, and techniques such as stain removal, airing and particularly repairs were crucial in securing a presentable appearance. I will show some of the principal features of this development and discuss how changes in perceptions of cleanliness, the value of textiles, the increase of affluence, technology and access to water, electricity and detergents can help explain them. The article is written as a contribution to the planned Western Europe volume of Berg's Encyclopaedia of World Dress and Fashion. In addition to discussing the content I would like to discuss this to discuss

the Encyclopaedia as a literary genre as a literary genre.

Care and maintenance, a contribution to the planned Western Europe volume of Berg's Encyclopaedia of World Dress and Fashion.

The two enclosed texts about *care and maintenance* and *Why do women throw out clothes?* are both written for this planned Encyclopaedia. The publisher has provided the authors with a detailed agreement which contains the content, style and “tone” of the planned publication. A short version of this and a description of the project was formulated as follows by Kathryn Earle, Managing Director, Berg Fashion Library Limited:

The Berg Encyclopaedia of World Dress and Fashion will be published in 2010 by Berg Fashion Library Ltd, a subsidiary of Berg Publishers/Oxford International Publishers Ltd, a leader in book and journal publishing in fashion and cultural studies. A ten-volume scholarly reference, The Encyclopaedia will explore all aspects of dress and adornment across cultures. The overall encyclopaedia project is edited by Joanne B. Eicher, Regents Professor Emeritus of the Department of Design, Housing, and Apparel, University of Minnesota, USA. It will contain 655 articles, all written by scholars and organized by theme within geographical sections, as well as 500 images per volume. An international collaborative outreach effort, this thorough, cross-disciplinary reference will convey the full breadth of scholarship on

dress and fashion, making it accessible to students, researchers, scholars, and non-specialists in school, academic, and public libraries around the world for many years to come.

In order to serve a wide range of readers, we ask that all articles be written in a clear, intelligible manner. Articles should include all relevant factual information and be even-handed in presenting any controversial issues.

At the conference Dressing Rooms in Oslo in spring 2007 Lise Skov, Editor of the Western Europe volume, presented the paper Encyclopaedic knowledge of dress and fashion. In her paper she discussed why we just now get not only one, but in fact two such comprehensive publications, with reference to how knowledge about dress and fashion is constituted today. In her paper she wrote:

... in the last decade or so, there has been a veritable explosion of publications which for the first time make it possible to talk about something like fashion studies. Yet the demands of the new discipline are contradictory. On the one hand, the need to legitimise research seems best met through imitation of humanities paradigms that emphasise aesthetic or cultural autonomy. On the other hand, the need to prove the value of fashion research calls for a closer association with practices in design, production or marketing. In this respect, the emerging field of fashion studies stands at the epistemological crossroads on a foggy day when neither of the beaten tracks seems to lead to a reliable destination. (Skov 2007:1)

Skov concludes that the encyclopaedic form suits this situation because it allows “more dissonance” than for instance a textbook does. In contrast to a number of other academic texts this type of text is characterised by not contrasting and arguing against the findings and views of other researchers. On the contrary, the texts should appear to be authoritative in their field and not as an argument for or against different views. At the same time it is clear that both the content, i.e. the selection of authors, subjects and perspectives, and the texts themselves will represent different ways of understanding dress and fashion. I will for instance be interested in the relationship between understanding clothes as a result of the thoughts and ideas of producers and vendors versus understanding clothes as something that is constituted through everyday use.

The choice of subjects and authors is partly based on a wish to cover the great variety that exist, and partly on the basis of current research in the various fields. That means that some of the texts – like the two that are enclosed here – are based on extensive previous research. Other texts, on the other hand, will have to cover more or less white spots on the map and be based on much weaker empirical evidence. One by-product of the work with the publication will thus be to identify precisely such white spots. Out of the texts that I will contribute, “Clothes for Sports and Outdoor Life” (maps the development of dress for outdoor life and sports in Western Europe from 1800 to the present) is an example of such a white spot. One problem with the first type of texts is that the research is usually situated in one country, in my case

Norway, whereas the text of the Encyclopaedia is supposed to cover a greater geographical area, in this case “Western Europe”.

I want to discuss this literary genre based on these two texts.

- Are they “clear, intelligible”, and do they include “all relevant factual information and be even-handed in presenting any controversial issues”?
- Does the relationship between the predominantly Norwegian empirical evidence work in comparison to the wider geographical area they are supposed to cover?

In addition I want a wider discussion about whether this is a type of publication that will advance “fashion studies”, in contrast to textbooks and journals about clothes, or articles about clothes in publications where the dominant theme is not clothes, but consumption, material culture etc. Of course I do not think that it is a matter of either-or, but that it may be important for an academic field in rapid development to reflect on how the field should be constituted in the years to come.

Care and maintenance

Care and maintenance are important for durability and the way clothes look, they have been both an advanced craft and a time consuming part of women's unpaid work in the home.

Throughout much of Western European history clothes and textiles have been

among the most precious possessions of a household. The many labour intensive processes, from the cultivation of flax and shearing of sheep to the finished clothes, made extensive use of repairs and maintenance profitable. Hard physical labour and few items of clothing per person resulted in a lot of wear. In poor families the mother stayed up past bedtime because repairs had to be made when the clothes had been taken off for the night. Many people did not own more than what they wore. Even for better off women mending and patching were significant everyday tasks.

Techniques for repairing textiles were important parts of home economics training for girls, which became common with the introduction of primary schools at the end of the 19th century. The girls were not trusted with repairing real clothes, but practised on mending and patching samplers that were later used as models for their own work. In the domestic science schools that emerged during the same period repairs were an important part of the curriculum. Repairs should be as invisible as possible. The girls also learned different techniques to prevent wear and ensure that future repairs would be as simple as possible. Closely associated with this knowledge were ways to use and store clothes to prevent wear, wrinkling and soiling as much as possible. Protective clothing worn over regular clothes in the form of aprons, overcoats and galoshes was part of this.

Proverbs show that wearing clothes with holes was associated with shame, as opposed to properly mended clothes, which did not dishonour a man (examples from Denmark? England?). Inability to use textile remnants, rags and patches to the last fibre was also associated with shame. Patches were either used in repair work or

made into new textiles by sowing small pieces of cloth together. If the remnants were of poorer quality they were used as padding, woven into rag rugs or carded and mixed with new fibres. Several of these techniques had a revival during and immediately after World War II, when the access to new textiles again became more limited.

In the post-war era the standard of living in Western Europe has increased rapidly, and most rapidly in Norway, which was among the poorest countries and today is among the richest. Along with growing affluence access to clothes and textiles increased. The rag heaps grew rapidly both in quantity and quality. The techniques that had been used as a virtue of necessity were associated with frugality and diligence, good feminine virtues. With the hippie movement, women's liberation, anti-fashion and not least the increasing focus on creativity these economising techniques enjoyed an upswing in the 1970s as fun ways of “making something yourself”. The patches should no longer be invisible, but were used as decorative elements. Torn and tattered clothes were no longer unambiguous signs of poverty and deprivation. The transition between repairing and decorating clothes was blurred. Patches were increasingly produced by new materials, and patching techniques were no longer a way of making use of resources, but had an independent aesthetic value.

Laundry; changes in techniques and increase in quantity

Whereas repair work has decreased drastically, the time spent on keeping the clothes clean and the home clear of clothes on their way back to wardrobes, drawers or the

laundry basket has increased significantly. This increase has occurred in spite of new and effective laundry aids.

In the middle of the 19th century the quantity of laundry was still very limited. Among the general population in Norway the practice of using various interior textiles such as table cloths, napkins and curtains had not yet arrived, and clothes were to a limited extent washed. We have good information about this through Eilert Sundt's comprehensive description of "cleanliness in Norway" (1969). He reports that it was not common to own a towel in rural areas of Norway. The most frequently washed clothes were the underwear, which was usually washed between once every fortnight and once every 2-3 months. However, many people did not wear underwear and wore clothes of leather and homespun. Leather was not washed and homespun was only washed in exceptional cases. The body was washed a couple of times a year, or possibly only during the annual Christmas bath. Sundt writes that many a pair of pants were worn out without tasting any other water than the occasional rain shower. Socks were not washed in rural areas, and Sundt comments that this is no stranger for rural people than it is for city dwellers not to wash their shoes.

The transition from beds with fur rugs and ticking – which were not washed – to feather-beds with sheets and quilt covers as well as the increased use of interior textiles contributed to the growth of laundry. So did the spread of underwear and other linen and cotton clothes. Laundry was organised as seasonal work, ideally once a year. The work took several weeks and was performed by professional washerwomen. The techniques that were used for washing linen were common to

large parts of Europe. The clothes were boiled with lye made from ashes, or simply boiled with ashes. After that, the clothes were beaten clean of dirt and ashes, usually in brooks or lakes. The use of soap in addition to lye was on the increase during the 19th century and contributed to whiter laundry. After being boiled with lye the laundry was laid or hung out to bleach in the sun. The shining white textiles were the measure of the washerwoman's art, and also a strong symbol of feminine purity and chastity – a point that producers of detergents later would put into words and images.

Soap has been industrially produced in Norway since the early 19th century, however, home-made soap from fat and ashes was not uncommon up until after World War II. Soap was one of the earliest consumer goods, and a product that has made strong use of advertising and other forms of marketing all along . Sunlight is regarded as one of the first branded goods. Soap has also been an important export article from the West to the colonies, both as a regular commodity, but also ideologically closely linked with civilising black people.

Laundry was hard work, and as the amount of laundry increased, there were experiments with new and improved methods. The first major improvements were zinc buckets, which lightened the transportation of water, and the washboard, an American invention from the 1860s. At the end of the 19th century different manually operated washing machines and laundromats appeared, in 1925 came the first electric laundromat from the USA, and the first fully automated laundromat appeared in 1949. The organisation of the work also went through major changes. The amount of laundry increased, also for regular people, and access to cheap female labour and

house maids was more limited. Thus more and more women washed their own family's textiles. The laundry moved into washhouses and cellars. Laundry experts were eager to turn laundry into a professional service, but nevertheless most of the laundry was done in the home, particularly in Scandinavia, where commercial laundries are little used. The housewife, a female role that transcends economy and class, thus became the performer of this ancient female profession.

The increase in the amount of laundry was one of several aspects of the increase in cleanliness and hygiene in Europe in the 19th century up until the 1960s. This development was a grand alliance between medical reformers and educational and political reformers who aimed to improve public health and fight the great epidemic diseases, but also to cleanse society of disorder and undesirable elements. The housewife became an important ally in this fight, with a particular task in keeping the home clean and teaching the rising generation the importance of a pleasant and hygienically clean home. Domestic science schools were important both in the training of housewives and in the establishment of institutions that developed and administered domestic science knowledge.

Attention had primarily been directed at infrastructure, water and sewage, but after this had become more organised during the 19th century, the attention moved inside the homes and to the individual's body and clothes. Doctors, domestic science experts and not least advertising for hygiene products argued in favour of increasingly frequent body and clothes wash, and of doing the laundry more often instead of letting it accumulate into big laundry days. At the start of the 20th century

the underwear – which had become a matter of course by that time – was washed once a week together with the weekly body wash in the city and once every fortnight in the Norwegian countryside. The weekly change of underwear survived as a norm until the 1950s and -60s. Today it is common to change underwear every day. In Norway 88 % change this often, whereas 98 % of the Dutch population put on clean underwear every day. The corresponding figure for washing t-shirts in Norway shows that 52 % put on clean shirts every day, whereas 71 % of the Dutch did so in 2002.

There is good information about laundry in 1955 through a Swedish public survey “tvätt” (“laundry”). If we leave underwear aside, the average annual laundry for a man included 78 shirts, 24 collars, 12 shirt cuffs, eight sport shirts, three overalls, two pullovers, a track suits, four shorts or other casual pants, three slipovers and a windcheater. For women the annual laundry included 64 aprons, 12 overcoats, 42 blouses of different kinds, 12 jumpers, 14 dresses, four sweaters, a windcheater and four shorts. On average she washed a protective item of clothing for housework between once and twice a week, more often than she washes sweaters, blouses, jumpers or dresses combined. Long pants and skirts were not part of the laundry. Compared with the great amounts of training and leisure wear we wash today, an annual laundry consisting of one training overall, a windcheater and four shorts is of course surprising. In the Netherlands in 2002 jeans were usually washed after being used twice (38 %) and after five times or more in Norway (35 %). The survey from 1955 also shows the importance of protective clothing. Dirt was still perceived as something that came from without in the form of dust and filth. Today the focus is

rather on dirt that comes from the body through sweat and bodily grease. It is the smell and not the stains that decide whether something needs to be washed.

Hygiene was an important argument for the shift towards washing laundry once a week, but for the shift to even more frequent washing other arguments were used. These were partly tied to the danger of smelling and thus for social stigmatisation, and partly to the new synthetic materials that “required” more frequent washing to preserve their good characteristics. At first nylon stockings and shirts were not part of “the laundry”, but had to be rinsed by hand after use, which according to both advertising and domestic science books in the 1940s and 1950s would save work.

In 2000 an average washing machine in UK washed 274 washing cycles with an average 2 kg load. The Americans washed approximately twice as much, 1332 kg per year, three times as much per household as in 1950. The growth in laundry was particularly due to more clothes, more washable clothes, increased changing frequency for clothes and towels, and the fact that the washing machine has replaced other methods of keeping the clothes in order. During this period there was little or no change in the washing of bed linen, and possible a decline in the washing of interior textiles. The latter is due to less use of such textiles and a shift to other materials, such as paper napkins and oilcloths. Sanitary towels and diapers disappeared from the laundry and were replaced with disposable products. In the period from 1950 until today many new fibres and the shift towards coloured textiles has resulted in more complex laundry. The main laundry is no longer white. Even

though underwear is washed more frequently, this has not lead to more laundry because the individual items of clothing have become smaller and lighter, and because fewer types of underwear are in use.

Laundry today is completely dominated by washing with water and soap, mostly in privately owned fully automated washing machines. Only a couple of decades ago other techniques were equally important. Stains were removed as soon as they appeared, and clothes were aired, brushed and pressed. If we go even further back, a plethora of different techniques were in use to keep textiles reasonably clean and free from vermin.

The finishing work has changed considerably. Smoothing was an important part of the work with the white woven linen and cotton fabrics. The tools for this purpose have changed, from smoothing stones, via rollers and mangles to irons first warmed with coal or on the stove, and later with electricity, like the ones we use today.

The shift to other fibres, more use of knitted fabrics and changing ideals for the use of women's time and for the look of textiles have reduced the use of smoothing. Today not everybody iron the most obvious “ironing fabrics”, such as canvas woven cotton. Others have extended the tradition of smoothing all textiles to the new “non-ironing” fabrics such as terry cloth and jersey.

Even though many people have cut down drastically on the smoothing, this does not mean that laundry no longer requires finishing. With the large amounts of clothes that are used – and washed – today, a lot of work goes into sorting, folding

and putting the clean clothes back in place. This work is closely associated with keeping track of the family's clothes, what they have, where it is, where it should be and whether it is clean and presentable when it is supposed to be used. This also involves defining when something needs washing and putting it in the laundry basket. The latter is an issue that often leads to conflicts because of diverging standards and different perceptions of the boundary between keeping one's own things in order versus joint housework chores. The laundry basket is often used as a way of tidying up, a place to dump the heap of more or less used clothes that pile up on available surfaces, such as chairs, beds and floors.

Pure female honour

One aspect of care and maintenance has not changed; the work and the responsibility for the work did and does lie with the women despite persistent attempts to achieve a more equal distribution of the unpaid work in the home. Today, laundry is the most female dominated part of housework. Therefore laundry can be used as a point of departure for understanding the interplay between men and women in relationships (Kaufmann), or to discuss why not more has changed in practice after several decades of gender equality as a publically accepted discourse (Klepp).

An obvious way of explaining why laundry is so dominated by women is quite simply that after all most things to do with clothes and textiles are. But there are also other explanations.

Eilert Sundt writes that women competed to have the whitest laundry and that

an unkempt person in a household would dishonour a woman. In the world of the fairytales the ability to wash white is associated with pure, proper femininity and distinguishes a real bride from trolls and other non-Christians. Hard work in wash houses was regarded as a cure for loose women. Generally there is a close connection between external purity and feminine purity, interpreted as sexual innocence. Even though it is not expected that women today are virgins when they marry, the idea of a more delicate female purity is still alive. Women wash their own clothes more frequently than those of their men. Dirty children and unkempt men will still hurt a married woman's reputation.

Women are supposed to be pure, but at the same time the feminine is closely associated with dirt and the intimate. Whereas no-one reacts when mother sniffs her family's clothes that lie around to find out if they are dirty, a man with his nose down his wife's or daughter's panties will arouse quite different associations. Men are assumed to be uncomfortable with bodily secretions and intimate care for children, sick or elderly people. When women want to keep laundry to themselves part of the explanation may be that they do not want to let men get so close to their dirty clothes.

The most important reason why women do the laundry “themselves” is men's alleged lack of skills and inability to learn to sort laundry properly. Kaufmann shows how formerly good washers among French men slowly, but inexorably became bad washers after they established themselves with a female partner. It is more difficult to wash other people's clothes than one's own, and women's clothes are more complex and therefore more difficult to wash than men's. Nevertheless, it is striking that men –

who do not generally have learning difficulties – so consistently are thought incapable of learning this.

One practical explanation of female dominance over laundry is that clothes are so intimately associated with social life. This, too, is a female-dominated field in Western Europe. Women dominate arrangements about social events, and not least know (or determine) what is suitable to wear on different occasions. The laundry work is closely interwoven with organising the family's clothes, and thus also knowing what is clean and in order at any time. If women hand over control of laundry, they may also have to renounce on the possibility to control what the family wears on different occasions.

Clean clothes

After going without clothes, wearing dirty clothes is the most obvious violation of clothes norms, possibly next to breaking the gender specific dress norm for men. As long as the clothes are clean and proper, they may be both old-fashioned and “wrong” with regard to occasion and age.

For centuries being well-groomed has been regarded as one of the most important criteria for being well-dressed. But what is regarded as well-groomed has changed. Today the focus is on the absence of odour, and on newly washed clothes. Today putting on fresh clothes every day is regarded as a way of showing that you are a responsible and reliable person. But this norm – like most clothes norms – does not apply equally to all, and certainly not equally on all occasions.

The norm about clean clothes is stronger for women than for men. Whereas women cannot be too clean, overly meticulous men are not masculine. Thus there is an ideal of a (slightly) unshaven, unkempt man, while a corresponding ideal does not exist for women. Similarly chalk white has different significance depending on gender. On women it is associated with innocence, as in the virgin's shining white bridal dress. On the contrary, men dressed all in white are immediately sexually suspect. For a man in a suit, the norm says that the shirt should be immaculate, and as long as it is, no-one questions the cleanness of the suit. For women varying between different outfits is an important way of visually showing that the clothes are frequently changed and thus also washed.

The norm about cleanness also changes with age. Small children should be allowed to get dirty. Particularly in the Nordic country, where a good childhood is strongly associated with active play in nature, children full of mud and dirt are a sign of happy and healthy children. For school children the focus on cleanness increases. Among adults the rule is that ill-groomed elderly people are even more unsavoury than ill-groomed adults.

The relationship between occasion and cleanness is complicated. But the requirement for cleanness increases when you leave your own home, when you are in the company of others indoors, and in situations where your professionalism or other forms of reliability are at stake. Due to the great focus on body odour, training – especially indoors – has gradually become a place where the clothes should be newly washed.

Washing and maintenance of clothes are important for how they look and thus for how a person appears. As in most other areas to do with clothes there are numerous nuances and distinctions in this field. Some of them are durable, tough structures, such as the perception that this is primarily women's responsibility. Others may be short lived and break with traditions, such as the production of new clothes with apparent dirt and wear. With regard to the social significance of the cleanness of clothes this is a field within clothes research that is little developed.

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Sustainable Consumption – Sustainable Ways of Consuming Fashion

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Sustainable consumption related to fashion and clothing has not yet received systematic research attention. This study aims to cover parts of this gap by analyzing literature on sustainable consumption with specific focus on fashion and clothing consumption in order to find out what kind fashion and clothing consumption could be considered to be sustainable. The paradox between the definitions of fashion and sustainable consumption is also addressed. The study addresses further the need and importance of doing cultural research on sustainable consumption in order better understand the possibilities and limitations sustainable consumption practices. Current fashion consumption practices need to be reformed, but also governments and companies need to contribute to advancing more sustainable life styles.

Extended abstract

Recently the political role of consumers has been emphasized when discussing possible solutions to overcome environmental problems of consumption (Ministry of Trade and Industry 2004; European Commission 2005). This is clearly manifested for example on European Union's consumer policy guidelines. However, there are signs that a more holistic perspective will be needed to advance more sustainable ways of living (UNEP 2007). This implies that also governments and industries need to contribute towards this common goal.

Little attention has been paid so far on sustainable consumption as regards fashion and clothing sector. Studies on retail sector have mainly been focused on grocery shopping although clothing is one the biggest sectors of industry. Having also important effects on retail and advertising sectors, fashion and clothing sector does have a remarkable role in striving for more sustainable development and society (UNEP 2004).

The sustainability of fashion and clothing sector has remained quite untouched perhaps as the short-living character of fashion has been taken for a granted for which there is very little to do. Both sustainable production and consumption related to this sector need to be critically re-discussed in order to reach environmental, economical, and social sustainability. This said, also the current fashion consumption practices would need to be reformed.

In order to advance more sustainable consumption practices, the term "sustainable" itself should be reviewed and discussed more profoundly. This is particularly true as regards

the field of fashion and clothing. There is no clear understanding among the consumers what could be defined or considered as sustainable fashion and clothing consumption. Moreover, there is also a remarkable lack of academic papers dealing with sustainable fashion and clothing consumption. Ethical issues and green fashion have been more broadly investigated (e.g. Joergens 2004, Iwanow et al. 2005; Iwanow 2007, 35) but also these studies are very few. No researches address specifically what kind of consumption is considered to be sustainable as regards fashion and clothing.

In this situation the question what is sustainable consumption has become most relevant. This study aims to provide insights into this subject by analyzing literature on sustainable consumption with specific focus on fashion and clothing in order to find out what kind of fashion and clothing consumption could be considered to be sustainable. By doing this, this study aims also to discuss the ways in which fashion and clothing consumers are presented in sustainable consumption related literature (Moisander 2001).

Based on the definition of World Commission (1987), sustainable consumption has been agreed to mean meeting the needs of present generations without compromising the needs of the future ones (Heiskanen & Pantzar 1997, 410; Fuchs & Lorek 2005; Birtwistle & Moore 2007). Although during the past 30 years sustainability issues have gained remarkable attention, the definition of sustainable consumption did remain somewhat unclear for years (Heiskanen & Pantzar 1997, 410). In fact, in the common discourse the terms sustainable, green, ethical, responsible, and conscious consumption are still often used interchangeably or as synonyms.

Sustainable development does not focus only on environmental issues as it encompasses three general policy areas: economic development, environmental protection and social development (UN 2005). Consequently, sustainable consumption should also consider the totality of social, economic, and environmental concerns related to consumption (UNEP 2007). The review on the concepts of sustainable, green, ethical, responsible, and conscious consumption would seem to suggest that although the concepts of ethical consumption and socially conscious consumption (Cooper-Martin & Holbrook 1993, 113) take into account the social and environmental aspects of consumption, the role of economic sustainability seems to play a minor role also in these concepts. Economic sustainability addressed partly when addressing concerns for the public consequences of private consumption. In fact, attention on economic aspects of consumption has mainly been concerned with the negative consequences of increasing consumption and this has resulted in a limited understanding of sustainable consumption as a whole. Furthermore, ethical issues are not simple questions to discuss as for example Moisander (2007) has recently re-addressed.

For consumers around the world purchasing and consuming clothing and fashion do not barely serve as a means to satisfy basic needs, but rather as a means to create identity, distinction, and status (e.g. McCracken 1986) and shopping itself has become a leisure activity. Covering one's body is, however, a necessity no matter what stance one takes towards fashion - spending in clothing is thus a necessity. With the advent of fast fashion and globalization also consumers who claim to be all but fashion oriented can end up as

owners of items labeled as fashionable or items that have been produced with the same procedures. Thus the question is not so much about the conceptual differences between clothing and fashion – it is more a question of consuming to cover the body.

The study elaborates on fashion, clothing, and sustainability further. When talking about fashion, clothing, and sustainability, the synonymous use of terms responsible, sustainable, ethical, green, and conscious consumption is faced again. The paradox between the definitions of fashion and sustainable consumption is addressed. This study takes the position that when talking about fashion and clothing, we are ultimately dealing with actions of consumption aiming to cover the body, and that the short-living character of fashion should not be taken for a granted for which there is very little to do in terms of sustainable consumption practices.

Based on the literature reviewed understanding sustainable consumption and specifically understanding the sustainable consumption of fashion and clothing seems to be a complex task as the phenomena seems not have been studied broadly. Guidelines for environmentally friendly consumption of clothing are widely available on various web sites. These guidelines also include some prosocial aspects. In order to make green choices time, effort, and knowledge are also required from consumers as assessing the environmental impacts of a product is not a simple task: consumption guidelines are lists of long and detailed advices that may also be contradicting. In general, consumers are recommended to buy second hand clothing and recycle; choose more durable quality and timeless styles, favor repair, choose products with environmental labels, and to wash clothes less often, at lower temperatures and using eco-detergents (e.g. Allwood et al. 2006).

Commodities are produced via complex networks of relations: consumption decisions are influenced, shaped, and constrained by linked choices being made, and power being exercised, as products are created, distributed, used, and disposed (Princen et al. 2002, 15). Regarding the problem of consumption's sustainability as a problem of personal choice has failed to appreciate the socially situated and socially constructed character of consumption (Antonides & van Raaij 1998, Moisander 2001; Princen et al. 2002; Southerton et al. 2004; Peñaloza & Venkatesh 2006). The use of quantitative methods has largely ignored the social construction and culturally shared moral ideas, meanings, and signifying practices embedded in consumption processes. Thus the interest of research should not merely be in trying to identify gaps between attitudes and behavior but instead in trying to understand in more depth the cultural processes of markets including the relations of power in which the subjectivity and nature of the consumers are being shaped. (Moisander & Eriksson 2006, 272)

As long as continuous economic growth and growth in material wealth are desired goals in the society (Killbourne 2004, 202), what can be done to promote more sustainable consumption practices? Consumer's choices are influenced by contextual social forces, notably in advertising and media images of the good life, which also seems to imply that the attention should be placed on social relations and locations of power that structures consumer choices (Princen et al. 2002, 15). Businesses could, however, take to encourage

better practices while still remaining profitable and government could support these efforts. According to Allwood et al. (2006) this kind of practices enabling more sustainable consumption practices could include the following: more fact-based information offered for consumers; more emphasis on durability in new fashions; new business models (re-)introduced for clothing retailers; overall rise in consumer retail prices; new technological material developments.

Overall, the study addresses the need and importance of doing cultural research (Moisander & Valtonen 2006) in addressing the socially situated and socially constructed character of consumption (Antonides & van Raaij 1998; Moisander 2001; Princen et al. 2002; Southerton et al. 2004) to better understand the possibilities and limitations sustainable consumption practices related to fashion and clothing consumption. This calls for the need to shift policy attention to studying, addressing, and targeting people as members of different groups to understand better the moral, political, and practical problems related to sustainable consumption (Moisander 2007, 409). This study suggests that in order to advance more sustainable consumption practices of fashion and clothing, more research will be needed to understand more profoundly the cultural practices of the contemporary market place.

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Design, Media and Consumer Culture? – The representations of design in Finnish economical press

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Abstract

This paper presents empirical examples of how design representations could be seen from the aspect of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT). As suggested by Arnould and Thompson (2005), CCT examines consumer ideology - systems of meaning that tend to channel and reproduce consumers' thoughts and actions in such a way as to defend dominate interests in society. These very same issues seem to be under a considerable debate, both in contemporary academic and practical fields of design. Are the representations of design in any relation to CCT and how is industrial design represented from the consumer culture aspect? The focus is on the analysis of economic press articles concerning industrial design representations in the context of mass-mediated marketplace ideologies. The analysed data is collected from economic newspapers in Finland, and it consists of altogether 400 articles from 1990 to 2005. The discussion suggests that Finnish economical press presents the industrial design as beneficial for the nation, companies and consumers. Representations of industrial design are relevant part of culturally orientated consumer research.

1. Introduction to design and consumer culture

The artefactual, material culture inevitably guides our daily life at work and leisure. It gives us the most immediate and very tangible cultural frame. The effects of material culture are in general not clear to people and evade explication because of the anonymity and self-evident presence of the artefact world around us. The important role design has in enhancing the aesthetic and functional level of our environment is not generally understood. (Järvinen and Koskinen 2001, 10-11)

As described in the quotation above both design and material culture are important parts of our everyday life (also Miller 1987; 1995). It is easy to see the importance of designed objects in everyday life, but defining design is quite problematic. Generally speaking design is the human power to conceive, plan, and realise products that serve human beings in the accomplishment of any individual or collective purpose. Or simply "*[Design is...] the conception and planning of all the products made by human beings [...]*" (Buchanan and Margolin 1995, X). As a term design describes a wide array of activities from popular usage to professional activity in product development. Histories and theories of design are also exceptionally diverse, representing a wide range of beliefs about what design is, how it should be practiced, and for what purpose (Buchanan 1995, 23).

The representations of design in economic press can be divided into three classes. The classification is based both on end-products and the type of the design activity itself. In the economic press there are articles concerning Arts and Crafts design, applied arts design and industrial design (also Karihalme 1996). *Arts and Crafts design* is handicraft work usually done by a single designer. The end-product is typically unique and artistic, for example a glass vase. *Applied arts design* refers to low-tech and mass-manufactured products, for example furniture or glassware. There is usually one designer involved, but the manufacturing of the product is done by other people. *Industrial design* is cooperative work typically conducted in an industry or in a design consultancy. The scale of manufacturing is large and in many cases the designs are high-technology consumer products or business-to-business capital goods. The economic paper articles consider mostly industrial design, but there are articles addressing also other areas of design. In this paper an emphasis is on industrial design.

Design is an interesting topic since it seems to unite both production and consumption in a cultural context. Design is activity in productive side - planning and realising products. On the other hand, design is something that has an effect on consumption and to consumers' actions as well. For example, in consumer products aesthetic design gains more and more foothold (Charters 2006). There are various goods where the aim of design is to enhance functionality in addition to the advantages gained from visually attractive design. Many consumer goods have become articles of fashion and indicators of a certain lifestyle (Chaney 1996). Consequently in the consumer's mind, designed equipment is quite automatically linked to fashion issues. The sales of most consumer goods and products are largely dependent on the trends in fashion and the fluctuation in the markets. (Järvinen and Koskinen 2001, 122).

In this paper the term "culture" is used in the meaning of ideas and activities with which people construct the world. In the same vein, consumption is defined to include the processes by which consumer goods and services are created, acquired, used, communicated, and finally disposed. Basically, consumption is shaped, driven, and constrained at every point by cultural considerations. The system of design and production that creates consumer goods is an entirely cultural enterprise (McCracken 1988, XI; also Featherstone 1991). The "research enterprise" of consumer culture was born in the 1980s. Consumer culture - as a culture of consumption is unique and specific form of activity. It is the dominant mode of cultural reproduction in Western countries in the modern era. "*Consumer culture denotes a social arrangement in which the relation between lived culture and social resources, between meaningful ways of life and the symbolic and material resources on which they depend, is mediated through markets*" (Slater 1997, 7).

What, then, links the above defined design to consumer culture? Celia Lury has stated that a process of stylization is what best defines consumer culture (1996, 4; also Featherstone 1991). The stylization of contemporary consumer culture is in relation to the importance of the circulation of commodities, changes in the interrelationship of different systems of production and consumption or regimes of value, the relative independence of practices of consumption from those of production and lastly, the special importance given to the consumption or use of cultural objects (Lury 1996, 4). Consumer culture provides interesting context because consumption is the social activity which, above all others, unites economy and culture (Lee 1993, XIII; also Douglas and Isherwood 1979).

The discussion of consumer culture is the common ground linking design to economic, societal and cultural context. Consumer culture research is basically an extension of

anthropological studies concentrated on material culture (see Miller 1987; 1995). Latest findings on the field of consumer culture crystallises into a proposition of consumer culture theory (CCT) suggested by Arnould and Thompson (2005). CCT is divided into four research programs each having a somewhat different angle to the study of consumption. The programs are *consumer identity projects*, *marketplace cultures*, *the sociohistoric patterning of consumption*, and *mass-mediated marketplace ideologies*. It could be stated that the keywords are consumer identities, marketplace, historical development and media.

Consumer culture theory examines consumer ideology - systems of meaning that tend to channel and reproduce consumers' thoughts and actions in such a way as to defend dominate interests in society. In these theories consumers are conceived of as interpretive agents their meaning-creating activities range from those that tacitly embrace the dominant representations of consumer identity and life-style ideals to those that consciously deviate from these ideological instructions. In this paper it is suggested that readers of economic press are also consumers acquiring information about design.

At the macro level CCT research investigates the influences that economic and cultural globalisation exert upon consumer identity projects and identity-defining patterns of social interaction in distinctive social contexts. However, at the meso level of analysis consumer culture researchers also explore how a particular cultural production system systemically predisposes consumers toward certain kinds of identity projects (Arnould and Thompson 2005). In this case the cultural production system is media and the articles of economic press in Finland.

It seems that a division of consumption and production is not relevant in a larger cultural context. Many of the contemporary consumer and social science researchers have also suggested that this division is out-dated and basically slowing down the development of consumer research (Fine & Leopold 1993; Firat and Dholakia 2003; Ritzer 2004; Trentmann 2006). This notion makes design an even more interesting topic when consumer culture is considered - "design phenomenon" unites both the production and issues in consumption in a cultural context.

2. Research data and methodical procedure

The focus of the paper will be on the analysis of economic press articles concerning mainly industrial design representations in the context of mass-mediated marketplace ideologies. The empirical part of the analysis is based on a tradition of representation studies while the theoretical part is based on the idea of CCT. The analysed data is collected from economic newspapers in Finland, and it consists of altogether 400 articles from 1990 to 2005¹. The data consists of all published articles concerning design in the mentioned time period.

The main questions of this study are: *what have the representations of design been like when the cultural aspect of economy is considered? How can these media representations of design in economic context be classified in a relevant way?*

¹ The Finnish economic papers the data was collected are Kauppalehti (KL, Business News), Taloussanommat (TalSa, Economic News), Tekniikka&Talous (T&T, Technology&Economy), Talouselämä (TalE, Business Life) and Markkinointi&Mainonta (M&M, Marketing&Advertising). All the quotations taken from economic press are originally published in Finnish. The English translation is done by the researcher.

Besides the above stated questions this study pays attention to the appearance of the relationship of design and economical issues. For example, the effects of the economic recession of the 1990s are discussed in detail. Consequently, this paper deals with design discussions on the level of three cultural conventions analysed from the data. These classified themes are considered in detail in the following chapters.

The research method applied in this paper is a rather well-known and quite simple approach to study qualitative texts and their content: classification of themes. The nature of classifying is rather heuristic than strictly methodological. On the other hand, flexible research method is applicable in qualitative research setting in which the purpose is to describe the "design phenomenon" in press and find new categories. In many cases strict data analysing method guides also the results of the research (Gadamer 1975). When the method of analysis is fixed from the very beginning the results can be distorted. After all, discourse analysis will provide discourses and frame analysis some frames despite the differences of the data.

The analysis and classification is focused on the usage of language and on what kind of meanings press articles are mediating: to conceptual classifications and to different meanings language can transmit. Basically, social reality is produced in various socially determined conventions. This socially constructive approach means that social meanings, communicative aspects and culturally orientated issues behind the texts have control over other relevant factors. The usage of language is not seen as a bridge to the reality, but rather as a part of reality. In the event, radical interpretation could state that the results of this research are shaping the perceived reality. The researcher's central challenge is not a perception of different systems of meaning but a detailed analysis of ways of using these systems. In the case of design in the economic press context it seems that various benefits that could be gained applying design are in focal interest.

This paper is based on qualitative examination of economic newspaper articles. The applied method of interpretation, classification of themes, can be divided into three general procedural phases. Firstly, the repeated representations of design were recognised and isolated from the irrelevant part of the economic press data. Secondly, these representations were classified based on topicalisation, functions and goals these representations were emerging for. Thirdly, classified themes were compared in a cultural context: three different classes or themes of how design is represented were formulated.

3. The frame of economy - the meaning of design in market

The actual substance of economic press is to communicate various international and national economy-related events and news to citizens. Economic press is also describing widely the actors as well as phenomena taking place in the market. Design and particularly industrial design is attached to this context quite easily. Industrial design is discussed in relation to international competitiveness as well as activities of individual companies. In economic press articles different interest groups are bringing forth relevant issues from their own point of view. For example representatives of companies, designers, design managers, policy and political actors and institutions promoting design are interviewed in various occasions. Also journalists are expressing themselves through apt columns.

Basically the articles of economic press are considering industrial design. Traditional applied arts are also present, but lesser extent. Cases of unique design or heavily art-based "Arts and Crafts-design" are quite exceptional. It is quite obvious that economically modest handicraft design is not the most interesting area of inquiry in economic press. Discussions are concentrating on the role of industrial design in the context of international competitiveness. Focus is on design as an exploitable resource in increasing nation's competitiveness. Economic press data include wide scale of articles in terms of text type or text genre. For example, economic press described in detail in 1998 published national report that pinned down the present state of Finnish Design and possible future scenarios (Korvenmaa 1998; 2001; Rynänen 2006b). Another example is the launch of national design policy program and the preliminary preparations that took place in the late 1990s and in the beginning of 21st century (Saarela 1999; Valtioneuvosto 2000). Articles that are closer to consumers' or customers' everyday life deal with role of design in general betterment of the Finnish society.

Describing design is heavily related to continuous change and ever tightening competition. In many cases these scenarios of tightening up economic situations are built on various discursive constructions (Hall 1999). Interestingly, issues and aspects the media communicate can develop in quite rapid phase as general information or "well-known fact" that is repeated over and over again. Privatisation, incorporation, outsourcing, networking, innovation and creativity-generation are examples of hype-words that are usually linked to industrial design in the economic press. These are representations that "efficient" industrial design should turn out in industry. On the other hand, representatives of design are characterising the management of industry as backward-looking. It is emphasised that attitudes towards design are negatively loaded in industry. It is argued that this is a great part of explanation why industrial design is not exploited in its full potential.

"At the same time, when art penetrates even deeper to industry, the advancement of bio-, material- and information and communication technologies will provide new challenges to design. In a broad meaning design carries product's, process's or experiences total message. Highly aesthetic expertise has to be elevated beside the technical and commercial knowledge. Also industrial corporations have to employ people that understand how combination of virtual, visual and experiential influence increasingly to the choices of people. The result of manufacturing has to appeal the user and buyer and it has to fit in the environment of use. [...] Linking shape and content to smooth part of Finnish industrial and commercial success story will be the great challenge of the next decade." (KL 4.11.1999)

In any event, every interest group sees industrial design and creative product development significant regardless of the level of discussion (international competitiveness, company level, consumer's wants/needs). The basic thought is that design has to be raised on the strategical level in companies' activities. It is underlined that design should be the basic principle putting together company's strategical planning, business operations and the value increasing process. Mentioned goals are valuable, but from the aspect of another discipline argued visions might appear quite megalomaniac. In the cultural development of design this is not peculiar in any way. In the "golden age" of Finnish Design media was made good use of telling unrealistic stories (see Kalha 1997).

In economic press articles financial and economical benefits are emphasised across the board. Designers' arguments consider the usefulness of design, and they use frequently economical and marketing related terms. In this sense interests are unified and industrial design as well as economic-related development is highlighting the same goals. Contacts to industry are important because industrial design consultancies and in-house design organisations have to be able to provide products that function on several levels for their customers, and ultimately for consumers.

It is emphasised in many occasions that industrial design can provide high-technology products which are understandable, more enjoyable and more desirable for consumer. Some of the companies compete not so much with functionality, but with "pure design". In particular, customers may be design-conscious, and judge new products not just in terms of the qualities of products, but also in terms of design. This seems to be the case in some consumer products such as mobile phones and - perhaps - cars (Järvinen and Koskinen 2001, 172). In economic press industry is represented as being interested predominantly to utilise professional industrial design in product development processes and when strategical advantage can be reached applying design to existing processes.

Articles are mostly positively-orientated. Especially gained advantages and benefits are emphasised. Negative commentators are highlighting missing or shorthanded state subsidies allocated to design promotion. Other negative comments are explicitly in relation to industrial design. These are lack of common sense in applying industrial design or underutilisation of industrial design in companies' product development processes. As a consequence of underutilisation the press articles state that useful resources are being wasted and competitive advantage is critically weakened. All of the above mentioned consequences are built on the main argument concerning economic success or loss of it in the near future. Industrial design is represented as culturally relevant activity in the context of economic press whether the focus is on international competitiveness of the nation or successful product development of a firm.

The connections of design and the economy seem to be important. The research reports that address the relations of design and the economic gain are not so outspoken. Measuring the financial benefit of design has proven to be quite difficult (Calonius 2002; Calonius 2004; Gorb 1990a, 2; Lindström 2005; Lindström and Pajarinen 2006; Lindström, Nyberg and Ylä-Anttila 2006; Nyberg and Lindström 2005; Sulonen 1968, 115). The results of research are on a general level and findings are based on then measurement of opinions of the corporate representatives (Nyberg and Lindström 2005, 21). In next chapters the classified themes of design and economy are discussed in detail.

4. The themes of design in economic press

4.1 External competitiveness - Design as an agenda on a national and industrial level

Finnish Design is internationally known and well appreciated. This view is repeated in the media, also in the economic press, and it is based mainly on achievements of traditional history of Finnish Design (Kalha 1997; Takala-Schreib 2000). This discourse of the "golden age" of Finnish applied arts, spanning roughly from 1930s to 1960s, is still visible in

economic press articles. In more contemporary settings and especially in the context of an economic activity this historical fame cannot carry far. In the context of economy there are representations that highlight the role of design as a leverage pulling up the Finnish manufacturing industry. It was noticed that when the design discussions began to move to the field of industrial design in the 1970s, the commercial aspect was also emphasised. The surrounding culture was pushing forth economical issues in Finnish society. The message in the economical press articles is quite clear: it is worth to invest industrial design in order to gain competitive advantage.

Research data starts from the late 1980s when Finnish society faced the major economical upswing usually referred as "the casino years". Despite that, in those days design representations were low in numbers in economic press. In the beginning of the 1990s Finland was descend into exceptionally deep economic recession covering years 1990-1994 (Kalela et al. 2001; Kiander 2004). In the first years of recession design writings are related to international competitiveness and to "the ethos of surviving", that is how to outcome the recession and what would be the means to achieve this goal. The recession fell also on the design companies, but still unsuccessful design solutions were never accused as a reason for the recession. Several articles were emphasising Finnish design know-how's uniqueness and ability of design to ease the economic situation of the firms'. In addition, various design quarter's encouraged industry to exploit the benefits that design could provide in reviving market. The recession made it clear that economic issues, communal aspects and cooperation are fundamental parts of industrial design. Basically, the smoothness of design collaboration is constructed on outlining consumer's general usage-situation, efficient product development process and business activity as profitable as possible.

"Finnish design is going through tough times. General recession kills design firms around the country and whole industries are in danger to vanish for good. [...] – The problem is how to bring both designers and industry to the same table. There are plenty of examples in Finland how well-managed company combined to adept design will provide viable industrial manufacturing. – Design provides the needed surplus value for a product. Since the world is already full of things, design remains almost the only mean to shape product's identity." (KL 10.5.1991)

"So far Finnish industry does not exploit design properly. Industrial design as a term is, unfortunately, hazy to the corporate management. [...] Industrial design is a natural part of product development, Arts and Crafts -based design is totally another topic. – When SME entrepreneur overhears the word designer, he or she thinks that people are talking about some artist, who draws beautiful pictures. However industrial designer is a professional operating in the middle ground of engineer and artist. But the fault seems to be with both parties [...] industrial design having also been underdeveloped as a business activity." (KL 25.10.1991)

When economic recession tightened up the national economy, the international competitiveness was emphasised even to a greater extent. The rhetoric of competitiveness was applied in other contexts as well (see Heinonen 1992; Heinonen et al. 1996). In economic press articles there is also reappearance of "Finnish Design discourse", aspiration to find the guilty ones and reasons why design was withering (Kalha 1997; Takala-Schreib 1995; Takala-

Schreib 2000). There are also discussions concerning the new economical upswing that will strengthen the Finnish competitiveness.

“The state of Finnish design has been under the debate a lot and long. Term 'Finnish Design' is nowadays only a nice memory, and so will be the case soon in many design based industries. Domestic textile companies goes down one per week, exports of the furniture industry is almost stagnant, glass industry is in danger to disappear for good. The international success story of industrial design for the last years, too, takes the only form of a mobile phone. The core of this problem is in concept of applied arts. When designers' and industry are not collaborating, there exist on grounds for businesses to survive. Designers shift the blame onto industry, the companies for not understanding the additional value design brings to manufactured products. Whereas in industry the designers are seen as hard nuts and very troublesome people to cooperate with. [...] Still some of the companies have succeeded. Almost in all of these companies design plays a major part in a finished product. [...] - Whole societal atmosphere was different after the Wars, full of hopeful entrepreneurship. Of course that reflected to design. – Now people are living in a totally different industrial environment, but designing have held the standard.” (KL 10.5.1991)

During the 1990s economic recession missing design activity was linked to companies' backward product development process and incompetency to exploit competitive advantage design could provide. Virtually, the background themes were the same in the 1970s when oil crisis swept around the globe. In those days environmentalism, ethicality and general responsibility were issues that surfaced in a rapid phase in the field of design (e.g. Papanek 1973). In other words, communal issues and increasingly also the globalisation contribute to design representations in economic press (Ryynänen 2006a). In the beginning of 1990s ethically acceptable, aesthetically developed and sustainable product development was, at least on discursive level, highly appreciated. These issues were seen as means to increase products' value and quality perceived by consumers. It was suggested that the above mentioned goals and also increasingly appreciated symbolic meanings could be achieved by applying design to the product development process.

”- Finland is in economic crises and companies are suffering. The international competitiveness of our companies ought to be supported. The best option is to increase our products' value; to better the value consumers' perceive. [...] In post-industrial society markets are matured. In many cases technical product development is advanced to the optimum. When every stereo set are technologically in top class and shoes are ergonomically good, differences are created only by branding and through symbolic meaning creation. – Products are turning out to communication devices. [...] When the technical quality is self-evident there will be a need for another kind of quality. Products must turn out ethically acceptable, good looking and environmentally sustainable.” (KL 20.8.1992)

Highlighting the symbolic meanings is common in consumer societies since the 1960s (Baudrillard 1970; Featherstone 1991; Ilmonen 1993; 2007). It is suggested in economic press that it is the role and task of a designer to create symbolic meanings to manufactured

products. Production of cultural meanings is usually linked to rise of consumer culture, symbolic meanings of products, lifestyles, consumer differentiation and distinction. (Hall 1999; Lury 1996; Slater 1997; McCracken 1988; Julier 2000)

The role of design as a provider of international competitiveness surfaces again in the late 1990s in economic press. Using design as means to leverage international competitiveness of a nation is not solely a Finnish phenomenon. In the economic press there are writings that refer to Nordic discussions concerning industries ability to exploit design in global markets in its full potential. This all-embracing promise is also heavily questioned. Designers claim more investments to industrial design activities and at the same time the role of marketing is argued as too strong in product development especially when design related issues are under consideration (KL 28.11.1990).

”In the competitive situation design is a focal element to distinguish one self from others that master similar technological innovations. A central part of good quality is the finished off design. – Design classics have achieved an enduring reputation. [...] Design is at best when people do not notice it. Part of the everyday life quality is also that the shape of the door handles makes opening easy and smooth.” (KL 12.11.1998)

In the beginning of the 21st century the relation of design and international competitiveness is constructed on activity taking place mainly in companies. It is emphasised that design is an essential part of the product development process, not an extension or a last phase of it. Design matters not only in the case of product's appearance but also in terms of ergonomics, work safety and usability. In terms of competitiveness obsolescent appearance gives a retarded image to the product, which in turn is crucial for the success. Economic press articles address that internationally known product or brand image will be important in the future. It is argued that successful design will provide additional value from which also a consumer is willing to pay more.

The theme of competitiveness is regularly emphasised in media. Still, the striving for internationalisation of Finnish companies' has been modest and usually manufacturing-led (Salimäki 2003; Tikkanen 1994). Salimäki found that internal efficiency, price competitiveness, research and design-led differentiation were highlighted as subjects of further development in companies. From this point of view the connection of design and international competitiveness seems to be a discursive construction. The existence of this construction is validated by listing every positive thing in the context of economical activity that design can provide when applied professionally. On the other hand, international competitiveness is a quite abstract phenomenon and concrete examples are few in numbers. In many cases article texts are embellished with rhetorical devices. The case is about various individuals, groups and organisations and the interests of these actors. The rhetorical devices are employed whenever it is necessary to fight for the design cause.

4.2 Companies internal efficiency - design as a practical competitive advantage

Economic press articles addressing the recession in Finland in 1990s, exporting design and the role of design in international competitiveness are all in relation to economic activity on a macro level. When the scope is moved onto a more pragmatic level the activities of companies are emphasised. This means that discussions shift away from general competitiveness of the nation to more tangible competitive advantages companies employ. In the case of design the discussions concentrate on cost savings and on benefits design can provide to companies.

In theory, an investment to product design should benefit the manufacturing company, affect positively to sales, market share, profit, and increase the growth of the company in the long run (Roy 1990, 49; Ughanwa 1989, 297). New demands are set for designers in the business context - in international competitiveness discussions stated design being beneficial in general. When design is being considered as a competitive advantage the requirements are set differently. Besides technical know-how designers have to be aware of industry's prospects on market, be familiar with materials and company's productive machinery. All of this information is applied to design process in order to increase the company's competitive advantage, to create cost savings and products' manufacturability. In addition, this activity has to be controlled in which case "Design Management" structures are vital in an organisation. Furthermore, it is argued that designers are lacking proper commercial skills and they do not master properly useful economic parameters (for example return on investment, ROI) in managing design function in a business organisation (Blaich 1993, 91-166; Heskett 1989; Lorenz 1986, 104-113).

Design consultancies approach this theme from slightly different angle. Consultancies are providing knowledge-intensive business services to industry when economic and market capabilities are connected both mastering consultant's own business and value production to client company (den Hertog 2000; Kemppilä and Mettänen 2004; Lith 2003; Luukkainen and Niininen 2000; Hakatie and Ryyänen 2007).



Pictures 1 and 2. Cobra-diving computer has made Suunto industry's trend-setter. Wrist computers help both extreme and novice athletes. (Picture 1: Outi Järvinen, TalSa 27.1.2004). Mobile phone companies have the courage to trust design. Benefon mobile phone in exhibition of Design Forum Finland. (2. Picture: Outi Järvinen, TalSa 14.3.2001)

Both industrial manufacturers and design consultancies are developing good quality products in the representations of the economic press articles. This development is done in a balanced way - in the end, product's price and the manufacturing costs have to be tuned in for profit-making. Efficiency-based design discussions have also surfaced in economic press articles. Design has a role in the articles considering economic efficiency generation (Hakatie and Ryyänen 2007; Ryyänen 2006a; Ryyänen 2006b).

”– Small and medium sized companies have not entirely understood the meaning of design. Design has to be in fit if company wants to succeed in the market [...] Two basic structures of design are beauty and practicality, aesthetic and functionality. Sheer beauty is not enough but design has to support the usage of a product. Successful design is user-friendly. [...] If there is success, where are the new stars? Where are new sarpanevas? - Nowadays, design tackles so complex problems that one person cannot handle it alone anymore. Product design is done in teams. In these teams, there are individuals that each has his/her own and unique capabilities [...]” (TalSa 2.7.2002)

Term "design management" was already used in the 1960s to describe various tasks in managing designers and to describe design managers' different organisational roles (Farr 1966; also Borja de Mozota 2002, 82). From companies' aspect managing design is something more than merely managing designers' daily work routines. In large design organisations design manager's tasks can vary from sketching design scenarios to organising meetings. Design management tasks vary in detail also when in-house organisations are compared to design consultants (Valtonen 2007, 175-177).

Michael Farr approaches design management as an activity: design management is a function which defines design problems, takes part to search for suitable designer and enables a designer to do his/her job in terms of schedule and resources (see. Farr 1966, 3). Farr's point of view emphasises strongly smooth cooperation in an organisation. Peter Gorb defines design management broadly as distribution of design resources in an organisation in order to achieve planned goals (Gorb 1990a, 2-3; Gorb 1990b, 10-11). Successful allocation of design resources makes it possible to attain product innovations, quality product development, and development of product group. Design management is also applicable in coordinating inter-organisational design processes, in product simplification and in promoting certain product groups (Gorb 1990a, 4; Ughanwa and Baker 1989, 31).

Robert Blaich divides the tasks of a design manager to four distinct areas (1993, 14-15). Design manager takes part to creation of company's strategic goals and commits to follow this strategy through in design organisation. Secondly, there are design resource-related management tasks, and thirdly there is concrete design process management which is connected to company's overall product development process. Lastly, design manager's task is to create and maintain knowledge and idea networks. Prevailing practice of design presuppose active cooperation and communication outside one's own organisation (Hasu et al. 2004). Mike Press and Rachel Cooper noticed that design is in interaction between the industry and the society generating a possibility to accumulate profits and express company's social responsibility (1995, 3). Thereby it is possible to link design to the wider contexts - design management is connected to social, cultural, technological and commercial aspects.

In economic press articles design is represented as a led process. It is said that the identity of a company is in its products and product design. The same style must go through product categories if the goal is a coherent corporate image. Thereby design management is the basic tool for corporate communication, a strategic factor and an issue for top level management. At the same time the frames of economy and marketing are becoming more important - design activity is budgeted and more accurate accounting takes place (KL 6.5.1988).

”Design management is about controlling the corporate image. This presumes centralised management of design and planning activities. Also communications and external image of corporation has to be connected to design management. [...] – There is a remarkable monetary value of design and losing money is never desirable. It also means that a company should have a separate budget for design.” (KL 2.5.1988)

When the design management is under debate, the role of top managers' attitudes are set in high priority. The behaviour of the management is seen as one of the most crucial issues concerning successful design. Design consultants can provide guidelines and ideas, but realisation of the ideas has to take place inside the organisation. The encouraged commitment to design is needed. It is noticed that the commitment of various parties, clarity of assignment and focused distribution of work tasks are critical in terms of successful design project (Hakatie and Ryyänen 2007).

The expanding role of design in companies and in industry is emphasised in economic press articles. At the same time industry is encouraged to exploit Finnish design capabilities that are verified with research findings. Arguments state that proper exploitation of design will provide badly needed competitive advantage.

Design as a competitive advantage of a company is linked to other issues in research data. It is claimed that designers are approaching the products and issues under development from different angle. When routine procedures are questioned there is room for new and simpler solutions. It is argued that result is cost savings, sustainable corporate identity, and company's products or services will be personified and differentiated from rival products and services.

”Design is greatest differentiating competitive factor today [...] It has been surprising how fast the meaning of design has increased. [...] Products are quite similar in terms of technological standardisation, which has increased the meaning of product appearance substantially.” (T&T 26.4.2001)

Good design does not ensure the success in all the cases. As mentioned, it is probably that when the standard of living rises people want to consume and own different products. The control of product variation and stream-lining the product groups are on the domain of design function. From this aspect design is one part of brand building. Several articles addressed that a successful product is based on the functionality or how does the product fulfil the purpose of use. In addition, the role of creativity, manufacturability and fitness to desired price segment are highlighted in the articles.

In the last years of the data there are still discussions going on concerning design, industry and possible competitive advantage created by design. The highlighted benefits of design are furthermore almost the same as in the late 1980s, but there are also some new themes as well. There is, following the spirit of times, brand rhetoric, design connected to innovation activity, and the strategic dimension of design. Before emphasis was on controlled corporate image, design management, market know-how, and discussions concerning general betterment of design.

"Design could be used in differing products, services and operation processes. It makes products understandable and easy to use. Design makes product attributes and corporate know-how visible. When applied products will be more attractive, desirable and product's brand image will become stronger. Strong brand is something that people are willing to pay more. This equation is familiar to everybody especially from luxury markets. Successful design decrease manufacturing and implementation costs. Design is not something cosmetic glued on the top of a product, decoration or some brand-tape. When applied professionally creative designing rises from the needs of people. Or as professional designer say: user centred innovation activity. The full advantage is gained when design is brought to strategical level and when it is integrated to company's every function. The deeper design is integrated to company's innovation activity the greater will be the gains attained [...] International research results show that design intensive companies are succeeding better than their competitors. The same goes with nations and geographical areas." (KL Presso 5.8.2006)

Increasingly faster changes in international economy, the advanced competitiveness of developing countries and differentiation of geographical areas fuelled by the globalisation are also mentioned in economic press (also Ritzer 2000; 2004; Urry 2003). Life cycle of the products' has shortened, which demands the time span of product development also to be shortening. Companies have to create and produce novelties and new innovations increasingly faster pace (Lorenz 1986, 43). In addition, the role of the consumers' and customers' in product development is stronger than before. In 1999 Design Forum Finland's managing director Anne Stenroos includes also the societal and cultural aspects to the list:

"Contemplating the state of design is topical nowadays. The countries that do not have a long design tradition like Finland does, have noticed that design is a considerable factor [...] It is crucial to understand that design has both economical and societal influence. There is also a strong cultural effect [...]" (T&T 28.10.1999).

4.3 Design and the benefits on a marketplace - The role of consumers', customers' and users'

”- When companies compete with similar products, when manufacturing costs and product attributes are the same, design will be the differentiating factor and the reason for choosing the product. – People have always been interested in well-designed, aesthetic products. Nobody will wake up in the morning and say: today I'll go out and buy some truly bad and faulty products.” (KL 28.4.2000)

Previous quotation positioned industrial design towards the experiences of consumers' and end-users'. In the end, the success of products' and services' are defined ultimately in markets where consumers are making their undisputed judgement by purchasing products. Yrjö Sotamaa, the rector of University of Art and Design Helsinki starts his column in *Kauppa-lehti* Presso by considering his own consumption choices in relation to design.

"The product has a second or a couple of seconds to win my interest, otherwise it will remain in shelf as a loser. How to beat competing products, which product (brand) promises most, which functions best, which matches my life style and feelings? Same questions arise everywhere whether the topic is about clothing, cars, mobile phones, make-ups or flights. The markets of plenty and increasing competition make differentiation created by design a vital condition. Brand image created by design is crucial. Brand crystallises consumers' rational, functional, emotional, and symbolic values. The relationship between people and products is deeper and more multidimensional as usually is thought. The stronger the emotional and social relationship is towards a brand the harder it is to choose differently." (KL Presso 5.8.2006)

In this theme the central factors are distinguishing the products from others. At the same time, styles and fashions are strongly indicative to culture from the aspect of consumers'. In consumption process routines and traditions are playing roles besides different styles and fashions (Corrigan 1997; Gronow 1997; Ilmonen 1993; 2007, 247).

Design was connected to style in examined economical press articles. Especially in the case of information technology design will be emphasised in the future. Frequently stated argument is that technological standardisation launched the era of low prices - now design is perceived as an element which differentiates the products and which has a remarkable effect on consumer's purchase decisions. At the same time, creating a personal product image will become important especially in consumer products. Articles stress that style is something in a product where a consumer can identify him/her self (TalSa 4.10.1999). Successful products embody attributes that address consumer personally and individually. Style must be enduring, because by definition stylish product cannot become obsolete. Questions of emotions, style and fashion are related especially to mobile phones.

"Designers of mobile communicators are taking into account ergonomics as well as emotion. 'Using a mobile phone should be like looking to friends face' [...]"

Style is more and more important, products must lead the trends". (TalE 10.12.1999)

"Fashion is a remarkable market factor in mobile phones [...] – The charm of novelty is influential, same products and gadgets will not please for long. [...] New design stands out and it will sell. – Producers have to consider how various needs of different users are fulfilled. Mobile phone manufacturers are studying methodically consumers' attitudes and lifestyles, and the knowledge is applied in the process of new product development, design and marketing." (TalSa 10.9.2003)

The relationship between branded product and design is under debate in economic press in the beginning of the 2000s. Before that brand and design discussions are quite few in numbers. The connection between brand and design is manifested to a question of how designing the product could change and develop a brand perception. While brand and product portfolios are expanding the product range and assortment have to be fixed and accurately tailored. Single product must carry the same features that a product category in order to be recognised as a product family. It is noticed in the articles that daring or futuristic design may as well fail or succeed. There is no general formula for success stories in the field of design (KL 27.5.2003). Companies are striving for balanced differentiation through brand image: excessive consumer adulation could end up to a dull and mediocre product that nobody is willing to buy.

In addition, it is mentioned that the meaning of design in communicating company's brand is understood better from the late 1990s. Design is seen as a factor that could be used in communicating companies' strategic identity. Thereby product design cannot be in conflict with brand image, and product design should be supported by the means of strategic communication (KL 29.11.2004).

"– Do you know what is common with mobile phone business and Iittala's business? The three most important things are brand, design and logistics, answers Lundmark² himself. Out of these three brand and well-working logistics are vital for the crane company, design is also a useful activity. Lundmark sees traditional machine shop industry in a same path the electronic industry went already in the 1990s. [...] Images and ideas are important in crane business. – Brands are not significant only in consumer product business. People make the decisions; people are also buying the cranes. [...] – The meaning of brand is increasing in traditional industry, but it is only possible to build on a real product substance." (TalSa 12.3.2005)

Bringing brands and branded products to the discussions of design is connected closely to companies' aspect to consider consumers and the market. There is also pondering and willingness to understand the meaning of consumer and customer in products' manufacturing processes. This connection of consumers' to the success of designed product is quite new

² Pekka Lundmark was at the time of interview the CEO of Konecranes Oyj (global company designing and manufacturing large industrial cranes)

phenomenon described in economic press articles. In the 1980s companies' design management, general competitiveness and competitive advantages were focal points of the discussions. In the beginning of the 2000s consumers and their needs and wants are appeared to the industrial design writings. Companies are also interested in consumers' reactions towards design and their possible participation to product development.

The product development and design are characterised as customer orientated or user centred. From this point of view product's usefulness, ease of use and desirability are defining the success in the market. All of these three factors are important to consumers or customers both in making buying decisions and when using the product. Above-mentioned reasoning leads to argue that product's success follow automatically if consumers are willing to choose the product. Higher price and "good" design are also connected together (KL 13.3.2003). Desirable product must also create new content to consumer's imagination.

”What a consumer wants to buy in the future? Smart house, where all of the operations of home will be taken care of by pushing a button? Quality time with family? Third generation mobile phone and connection provided to everywhere and all of the time? Or perhaps products whose eventual purpose of use consumer can affect him/herself? [...] Over emphasising of technology will lead to a situation where the ultimate solutions are provided to the consumers - then these perfect solutions are rejected. Most fit and interesting solution will turn up through a dialogue. [...] - Companies have to learn to tolerate their own mistakes, and to take into account that estimations concerning the purpose of use of their products or services might be wrong. This is the reason why product development and design should be as explicit as possible so that users could participate to defining the final use situations. [...]” (TalSa 10.5.2000)

In the economic press designers are emphasising the functionality and usability of products in contrast to "styling" or re-designing the external surface. In a larger context journalists writing in economic press consider consumption and design as a phenomenon taking place in a society and which are interlinked to societal development. While the standards of living achieved a higher level also the aesthetic values of different products are gaining greater importance and meaning in consumers' lives. Design and luxury, maybe even some sort of consumer "flirtation" through using and owning designed products is noticed in economic press articles. Showing off is not any longer connected to vanity or considered as negative trait of a human being. Aesthetic values are attached to Finnish tradition of industrial design.

”At best designer is a link between consumer and producer. Design can connect company's know-how to their products in a useful and even artistically enjoyable way.” (KL 11.4.1990)

What consumers then want? Stories, experiences, stylishness, creative solutions and new innovations are central issues that consumers are looking for, at least in the representations of economic press. Consumers themselves have not given the above answer. It is more common that the statements are articulated by design consultancies, representatives of consumer product manufacturers and actors that promote design (KL 25.10.2002; TalSa 16.2.2002; TalSa 14.8.2004). Is customer the king or is consumer always right? In economic press articles this arrangement is not questioned, but still consumers' or customers' rights are under

the debate and they have to choose products from those offered on the market. It seems that productions' push -model is increasingly changing to consumer-led or demand-led direction.

More and more attention is paid to consumers actions. From the aspect of design it is noticed that consumers acquire from two products the one which is more elegant and easier to use. Bringing consumers' thoughts and ideas to the design process is not only the issue in companies' strategies. More traditional applied arts and companies that base their business on applied arts are also taking consumers more seriously than before. The reactions of consumers' and the link between artistic work and business are under considerable debate. In addition, design is redefined in relation to consumers' dominating role in companies product development processes (KL 13.11.1997; KL 15.4.2004).

5. Discussion

On the level of products and consumer commodities not only the functionality but increasingly also the cultural signs and messages transmitted via design help to characterize the habits and socio-cultural profile of groups and individuals. In this way the immaterial, cultural-based values have become vital in design practice and the new product development it serves. (Järvinen and Koskinen 2001, 11). New innovations utilize cultural understanding often in a highly conscious manner. Culture can be an important source of new ideas and business. At best, it can articulate scientific, artistic and popular cultural values in the marketplace in those products that people use in their lives (Järvinen and Koskinen 2001, 12).

The cultural reflections of Finnish design and representation in economic press seems to divide in three dimensions. Firstly, the general themes of the recession and international competitiveness were emphasising the role of design on a national and international level. Secondly, recognised theme was linked to a more concrete level and particularly to companies striving to achieve competitive advantage when compared to rivals. Also issues concerning design management and creative product development process were connected together. Thirdly, economic press emphasised consumers' and brands' meaning and their relation to design. All of these three themes were in context with economic issues. Usually culturally orientated and understood design was now connected to management systems, quality production, consumers and fragmented markets.

"Made in Finland" is again a guarantee of quality in international markets, as CEO Pekka Paasikivi of Oras Oy said in Kauppalehti interview in 7.11.2002. Especially Nokia's pioneering work in electronic industry, Finland's membership of the European Union and the particularly good statistics of international competitiveness have contributed to this development. In consumer cultural context industrial design can be seen as a part of both national economy and more concrete business environment (Lindström et al. 2006). The economy is naturally an ensemble of its own, but promoting and developing design takes place also in other fields as well. Particularly, design policy and governmental decision making, design education, actors and organisations promoting design are in interconnection with each other. All of these actors are marking the culturally understood themes of Finnish design.

In the research data examined, there were three means to represent design in cultural context. For example, culturally distinct way to represent design as a means to develop international

competitiveness in a situation where technological advancement did not produce needed edge anymore. Companies' internal efficiency and competitive advantage that could be gained through properly applied design was second mode of representation in economic press. Lastly there were the attainable benefits of design in marketplace. This meant highlighting the role of consumer and consumption in general. In international discussions that concerned competitiveness, national economy and the great recession in the 1990s were essential. Another theme concentrated, as mentioned, on companies possible benefits when applying design, efficiency, cost savings and competitive advantage provided by design. In the third theme customers' and consumers' convenience and benefits were discussed. In addition, product differentiation, marketing and brand value were connected to design activity in manufacturing companies.

In consumer products, consumers' emotions, experiences, as well as fads and fashions play a crucial role in decisions concerning what is deemed desirable and what is not. In contrast, in business-to-business sectors, professional buyers stress features such as reliability, performance, cost-effectiveness, and maintainability. (Järvinen and Koskinen 2001, 117). Consumers or customers, depending on what industry is producing, gain quite much importance in economic press. End-users or in many cases consumers appreciate products' or services' technical functionality, usability and convenience. These attributes are seen as self-evident. Consumers are appreciating rather enjoyable products, pleasure, feelings and new experiences. Technical functionality as a base attribute seems to be moved to "experiential" use value. In these cases products and services are built on individualistic "internal spirit" (see Pine and Gilmore 1999). In the light of critical articles the main thing is not linked to production per se. Successful companies have to understand different consumers and they have to build individual experiences through goods and services. Product's visual age and ageing will most probably be a crucial competitive advantage besides the technological ageing. Experiential part of a product will also affect to the status of a company - this is the reason products experiential dimension is described in economic press to influence on companies assets, advantages and value production processes in the future.

Design does not evolve in isolation from the rest of society. Occasionally, designers are also involved in shaping society and culture at large. Basically, designers create an understanding of what design has to offer. The ideas and arguments formulated by the design world influences economy indirectly. (Järvinen and Koskinen 2001, 131). Consumption and consuming manufactured products has become a key for building differentiation and distinctions between people (Bourdieu 2002; Featherstone 1991, 86; Forty 1986; Hall 1999). Design, consumption and cultural relations are all interrelated to each other constructing a part of contemporary consumer culture. As mentioned before, economic press articles are presenting empirical examples concerning this cultural assimilation in textual representations. Although a major part of economic press articles tackled with productive side of product development design brings consumers and users into discussions. After all consumer culture research is not possible if the "both sides" are not considered. Mass mediated marketplace ideologies are born in cooperation and in a cultural context both production and consumption cannot evade.

"[...] The increasing demand for quality design could be explained by societal structural change. New middle class wants to express their lifestyles and to communicate the social group they belong to. – Designers should consider also

these societal connections. When the way of living change, changes design.”
(KL 30.8.1991)

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Theme 9. Family consumption patterns and time use

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Papers

Bonke, Jens & Martin Browning: Allocation of expenditures within the household: a new Danish survey

Grinfelde, Anda, Viola Korpa & Aija Eglite: The Influence of Income and Consumption on the Life Quality of Pensioners in Latvia

Gwozdz, Wencke: Why does less housework for women not (yet) lead to an equal division of housework between men and women?

Jalas, Mikko & Mika Pantzar: Backcasting energy conservation in everyday life; new and persistent patterns of time use

Niemi, Iris & Hannu Pääkkönen: Time Use Database in Analysing Consumption Patterns

Varjonen, Johanna & Kristiina Aalto: Combining time and money for family well-being – life cycle perspective

ALLOCATION OF EXPENDITURES WITHIN THE HOUSEHOLD: A NEW DANISH SURVEY*

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We report on a new data initiative that is designed to address the question of “who gets what” within the household. The data consists of supplements to the Danish Expenditure Survey (DES) which is a traditional nationally representative, diary based survey of expenditures. We collect supplementary data of two kinds for all couples (with or without children) in the survey. The first addition is that respondents report on the intra-household allocation of each item of expenditure (‘joint’, ‘her’, ‘him’, ‘children’ and ‘outside’). The second addition is an extra set of ‘sociological’ questions concerning household management, autonomy and family background. These types of information for the same respondents may facilitate research bridging the divergent views of economist and sociologists concerning the allocation of resources within the household.

The paper focuses on the survey design and gives some descriptive statistics from the survey. We also show how the distribution of expenditure on clothing, which is investigated in most expenditures surveys, is related to the distribution of expenditure on other goods.

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Keywords: Household Production, Intra-Household Allocation, Household Survey methodology.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The paper describes a new data source that is designed to throw light on intra-household allocation. That is, for the first time respondents in a conventional family expenditure survey are asked to state for whom the goods purchased are bought. Moreover, information on decision processes for the same households are collected. We hope that having both types of information for the same households may facilitate more economic research on the allocation of resources within the family, see for example Lundberg and Pollak (2003) and Browning et al (2006), as well as sociological research, see for example Pahl (1995) and Heimdahl and Houseknecht (2003), and a synthesis of economic and sociological research in this area.

First we report on a pilot-study validating the formulation of questions used in the survey. Then we describe the data collection procedure in detail and make comparisons with other investigations. We also present some descriptive statistics from the data gathered up until 2002. Finally, we present an analysis of how expenditures on men and women's clothing are correlated with the distribution of spending on other goods. The former is often taken as a proxy for within household allocation so that it is important to investigate how reliable it is as a proxy. The problem of infrequency of purchase of some goods (such as clothing) is addressed in Browning and Bonke (2006), and the analyses of the distributional regime phenomenon in Bonke and Uldall-Poulsen (2006).

The formal empirical tests of the various allocation models will be addressed in other papers. However, we hope that this paper will be of interest to other researchers who are contemplating doing similar data exercises for research in intra-household issues.

2. THE DATA

2.1. *The sample*

Our data are collected in conjunction with the Danish Household Expenditure Survey (DES). This is a continuous survey of approximately 1,000 households per year. It is administered by Danmarks Statistik (DS). The DES includes a questionnaire and an accounting book ('diary'), the latter being self-administered and registering the purchases of each adult household member during a two weeks period (Danmarks Statistik, 1999). We began by establishing a pilot study with DS to find the most appropriate formulation

of extra questions and methods to be used in the project. We only sample households 'headed' by a married or co-habiting couple. Furthermore, to diminish heterogeneity only couples with both spouses between 18 and 59 years old are included in our sample.

The supplementary data collection has two aspects (described in more detail in the two sub-sections below). In the DES, all members keep a diary of their purchases. In the diary we append five columns in which respondents record for each good bought (except food stuffs), for whom it was bought. Specifically they can respond one of: 'mainly for her', 'mainly for him', 'mainly for the household', 'mainly for any children' or 'mainly for someone outside the household'. To our knowledge such information has never been collected before for a wide range of expenditure categories.

To supplement this extra information and the information routinely gathered in the DES we also ask a set of extra questions at the end of the final DES interview. Basically there are three types of questions. First, there are questions on the background of the respondents. These include how long they have been living together and their mothers' labour market status when they were 14. The latter have been successfully used in, for example, analyses of French budget surveys (see Browning and Lechene (2003)). Second, we have a small suite of questions concerning the management of household finances and how much autonomy husband and wife feel they have. These are modelled on questions asked in other surveys that have been conducted by sociologists. Finally we have some new questions about the effect of a hypothetical transfer of income from one person to the other in the household. This is to address directly the income 'pooling' question and to test whether we can obtain direct evidence on intra-household allocations.

The pilot study was conducted in September to November 1998, and the results collected were used in preparing the final questions for the DES. Surveying began in early 2000 and, given our sample selection, we had information on 1372 couples by the end of 2002. One notable feature of survey data in Denmark is that we can use personal numbers to link the survey information to a very wide range of administrative data for each respondent over the period 1980 to 2002. The latter includes labour force status, marital status, earnings and asset income (from tax returns) and housing information. This greatly expands the possible analyses that can be conducted with our data.

In the rest of this section we report on the specific questions asked. An analysis of responses is given in the later sections.

2.2. *The accounting book information*

At the start of the survey period each adult member of the household is given an accounting book (diary) in which she/he is asked to record all expenditures during the survey period of two weeks. At this time some demographic information is collected and also retrospective information on expenditures on large, infrequently purchased items such as cars and electrical goods. At the end of the survey period the interviewer returns to the household and the respondents go through the diary and for each item record who the good was bought for. A code-description is displayed on a card to the household indicating the possible for whom-categories, and for the interviewer the concurrent values are given, see question 1.

QUESTION 1: EXPENDITURE DISTRIBUTION

For whom is the good bought?

- 1 Mostly for the husband
 - 2 For the whole family
 - 3 Mostly for the wife
 - 4 To the child(ren) in the household
 - 5 To persons outside the household (ex. gifts)
 - 6 Do not know
-

If only one spouse participates in this interview an indication should be given by the interviewer in a specific question about this matter. However, this does not prevent the respondent answering on behalf of the spouse, although it might cause some problems for specific items in which case an indication is given to us by the interviewer. Below we report in detail on the outcome of this procedure, but for now we merely report that this step did not present any problems for most goods and most respondents.

2.3. *The interview information*

After having filled out the booklets the respondents are given a questionnaire. This includes questions on how they perceive their own distributional system and the expected consequences of changes in the income-distribution within the family. The regime question - question 2, given below - includes 9 categories inclusive of an unspecified and a do not know category. Most of them follows the categories used in other investigations (see, Vogler & Pahl, 1994) although some minor changes are to be

found. Thus, the regimes saying that the husband/wife has the disposal of some of the housekeeping money and that the wife/husband manages the rest of these money are presumed to be similar to the female/male whole wage systems (Pahl, 1989). The regime stating that some money are conceived as ones own and other as joint money is placed between the pooling and the independent management regimes, a regime not present in the Pahl-system.

It has to be emphasized that the regime question as well as some of the other additional questions are asked to both the husband and wife for which reason the interviewer has to be attentive to who responds to every specific question.

The third question is about autonomy in the spending of money and asks in general terms if the wife and the husband have to discuss their individual buying with their partner beforehand, and if this happens if there is a lower limit of autonomy indicated by a certain amount of money that can be spent without discussion.

QUESTION 2: DISTRIBUTIONAL REGIME

I want to ask you some questions about the way your household organize the economy. Which one of the following ways, as indicated on the card, do you think fits best to the way, your household perform?

- 1 All money are shared, we do not distinguish between “my” or “your” money
 - 2 Some money are conceived as ones own and other as joint money
 - 3 What we earn individually belongs to ourselves
 - 4 The husband manages the money and the wife receives an allowance, when she is in need of
 - 5 The wife manages the money and the husband receives an allowance, when he is in need of
 - 6 The husband has the disposal of some of the housekeeping money, the wife manages the rest of these money
 - 7 The wife has the disposal of some of the housekeeping money, the husband manages the rest of these money
 - 8 Some other arrangement
 - 9 Do not know
-

QUESTION 3: AUTONOMY IN BUYING - ASKED TO THE WIFE AND THE HUSBAND INDIVIDUALLY

How much can you buy for yourself without discussing it with your partner beforehand? Indicate an amount or the way, which fits best.

- 1 No matter what I buy, I usually discuss it with my partner, if it costs more than DKK
 - 2 It depends on what I am going to buy. However, if I find it to a reasonable price, I usually do not discuss it with my partner
 - 3 It does not matter what it costs, I always discuss all my buying with my partner - except small things as newspapers or tobacco
 - 4 Do not know
-

**QUESTION 4: INCOME-DISTRIBUTION AND SPENDING - TRADE-OFF I
- ASKED TO THE WIFE AND THE HUSBAND INDIVIDUALLY**

If you were earning 1.000 DKK more per month (net of tax) and your spouse 1.000 DKK less, would you then spend more money on yourself? It is assumed that you and your partner work the same number of hours as now. It is only the distribution of income, which has changed.

- 1 Yes
 - 2 No
-

**QUESTION 5: INCOME-DISTRIBUTION AND SPENDING - TRADE-OFF
II - ASKED TO THE WIFE AND THE HUSBAND INDIVIDUALLY**

If you were earning 1.000 DKK less per month (net of tax) and your spouse 1.000 DKK more, would you then spend less money on yourself? It is assumed that you and your partner work the same number of hours as now. It is only the distribution of income, which has changed.

- 1 Yes
 - 2 No
-

Questions 4 and 5 deal with the hypothetical distributional effect of a change in the income distribution. Specifically we ask about the consequences of a redistribution of income between the two partners, the first favouring the respondent and the second the spouse. These two questions are asked to each spouse individually.

In the interview we also ask some socio-economic questions. The first of these is on the length of the current marriage/cohabiting relationship (question 6). Another dimension asked for in the DES interview is the family background of the respondent when she/he was a child, see questions 7 and 8.

QUESTION 6: MARRIAGE/CO-HABITING CAREER

For how long time have you been living together with your present partner?
years

**QUESTION 7: ADOLESCENCE CONDITIONS I - ASKED TO THE WIFE
AND THE HUSBAND INDIVIDUALLY**

When you were about 14 years old did you then live together with your mother and father?

- 1 Both my mother and father
 - 2 Only my mother
 - 3 Only my father
 - 4 Do not know
-

QUESTION 8: ADOLESCENCE CONDITIONS II - ASKED TO THE WIFE AND THE HUSBAND INDIVIDUALLY

When you were about 14 years did your mother then work at the labour market?

- 1 Yes, full-time
 - 2 Yes, part-time
 - 3 No
 - 4 Do not know
-

QUESTION 9: THE INTERVIEW SITUATION (INTERVIEWER INFORMATION)

Who replied to the question?

- 1 Both
 - 2 Only the wife
 - 3 Only the husband
-

Finally, we ask the interviewer to record who was present at the interview, question 9, because the information level about consumption is not necessarily the same among spouses.

2.4. The pilot study.

The DES follows a well-documented data-collecting procedure and the validity and reliability of the expenditure information have been subject to different investigations. However, the additional questions asked here, including the ‘for whom’ diary questions, are novel so that a pilot study was performed. In the pilot-study 14 households were interviewed by 4 interviewers (see Table 1 for details). The purpose was to investigate if the questions asked were suitable as well as to examine if the ‘for whom’ questions made sense to the respondents in respect to all the different items bought during the two week diary period.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

The interviewers reported that the ‘for whom’ question did not appear to raise any significant problems for most of the respondents. In general no discrepancy was found between the two spouses in how and what to respond to the questions nor in how to fill out the booklet. It was emphasized that the interviewers had to try to persuade both partners to participate in the interview, and if they did not succeed a note should be

given in the booklet. If only one spouse was present and he/she was not the one doing everyday shopping, which happened in two out of the 14 families, severe problems were encountered. Nonetheless, some families gave examples of purchases, which were not easy to categorize. For example, a bottle of wine which was mostly consumed by one partner but the other had one glass. A curious example of non-response was the buying of Christmas gifts, which the respondent did not want to tell for whom they were bought when sitting in front of a potential receiver! Also the buying of pet-food was found dubious, because pets do not necessarily belong to the “the whole family”-category.

The general instruction was that all goods except foodstuff should be classified in the ‘for whom’ question. However, some foodstuffs, such as ice cream and hotdogs, are consumed immediately where it is bought. In this case the ‘for whom’ classification is appropriate. Foodstuffs not to be classified are thus those brought home to be consumed as they are or after further preparations. All other foodstuffs and other items have to be classified by whom it is bought for, see question 1. Some respondents, however, found it easier to classify all foodstuffs as well, which they were allowed to do. The general attitude among the respondents to the questions was that they were interesting and a nice supplement to the other questions in the Household Expenditure Survey. They were found to fit naturally into the context and nobody were puzzled over the formulations for which reason it was not necessary to stress that it was voluntary to reply to these questions, because they “are outside the aim of this investigation”, as the interviewer-instruction said. Of course, participation in the DES is voluntary as are responses to every individual question.

Even though the list of recorded expenditure items is long, the ‘for whom’ categorisation went quickly. The interview-time in the pilot-study was calculated as 5-10 minutes for the survey-questions and another 10-15 minutes for the supplement to the diary, which gives an overall average of 15.3 minutes. The variation was modest, and even the over 60 years old respondents did not spend more time in replying to the questions and in filling out the booklet than did other respondents. Nonetheless, it was decided to introduce an upper age limit on 59 years for the main investigation - and a lower limit on 18 years.

Concerning the interview questions the interviewers reported that they were easily understood and even understood in the same way by different respondents. Nonetheless,

it was decided to employ more cards to be shown to the respondents, namely one for each of the questions Q1, Q2 and Q3.

Furthermore, some interviewers reported that the autonomy question (Q3) caused some interpretational troubles. The first version of the question, thus, said that for how much one usually can buy for personal purposes without asking the partner, and four intervals were given - 0; 1-199; 200-1.000; >1.000 DKK. Some respondents thought that the question referred to the household budget constraint and not to the perception of autonomy, while other respondents found that the upper level was too low and that responding to given intervals *per se* was inappropriate. For that reason the wordings were changed and an open interval introduced, see the final outcome in Q3.

Question 4 and 5 about the relationships between income-distribution and spending pattern - trade-off - were easily understood, and this holds even though the amount of money referred to was net of tax (a natural income concept for Danes). Finally, it was proposed to change the order of regimes in question 2, so the individual regime (value 3) was mentioned before the partly pooling (value 2) and pooling (value 1) regimes. As the majority of families was expected to belong to the pooling regime the order was kept intact.

3. THE RESULTS

We now report on some results from the survey from 1999 to 2002. Table 2 presents the details of the numbers of people interviewed. As can be seen, in 77% of cases both husband and wife responded but in about a quarter of households we could only obtain responses to survey questions from one partner. Even when only one partner was present at the final interview, all household members kept diaries. In the following all the information on spending behaviour refers to the account book ('diary'). This means that low-frequency purchases are included for a small number of households whereas no registrations are done for other households even though such items might have been bought within the year referred to in the interviews. In Browning and Bonke (2006) a statistical model is developed to account for this infrequency problem.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

3.1. *Distribution of consumption*

In Table A.1 in the Appendix we present results for detailed categories using the DS categorisation of goods. We found it best to focus on potentially assignable (non-public) goods, to exclude durables and to re-categorise specific items to broad categories that more closely approximate those found in other expenditure surveys. Thus we concentrate on the seven commodities: food at home, ‘vices’ (alcohol, tobacco and eating out), clothing, services (household operations), transportation, recreation and personal services. In table 3 we present the proportion of goods distributed among the household members; the proportion of expenditures for which respondents report an allocation; the number of non zero-respondents and, finally, the budget share for each good (as a share of total expenditure on potentially assignable goods).

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

As can be seen from column 6, respondents were willing to report allocations for most of their expenditures the exception being foodstuffs. This latter is undoubtedly because we did not require interviewers to ask for the allocation of this good in the first few months of the survey. To be frank, that respondents were willing to allocate expenditures was a major relief for us: even after the pilot it was not altogether certain that respondents would be willing to assign goods. As we might expect, most foodstuffs are reported being bought for the household (87%), and for the remaining part the spouses get the same proportion as the child(ren).

The results on the ‘vices’ category hide many interesting details which are worth reporting, see Tables 4 to 6. From Table 4 we give the distribution of smokers. Half of households have no-one smoking. Of those with at least one smoker, the numbers of ‘both smokers’ are the biggest followed by ‘only husband smoking’, whereas the number of ‘wife only smoking’ are considerably lower. For drinking the pattern is somewhat different (see table 5). About one third of households report no alcoholic beverage expenditures in the two weeks reporting period. Of those reporting some expenditure, the great majority is for the household as a whole, with a significant minority reporting for the husband only. Households in which only the wife consumes alcoholic beverages are rare. Table 6 presents statistics on the allocation of expenditures on alcoholic

beverages, tobacco and eating out. As can be seen, more than half of expenditures are for both partners but the ‘husband only’ is considerable and twice as great as the ‘wife only’ share.

TABLE 4-6 ABOUT HERE

Turning to clothing, we first note that in the DES respondents have always been asked for whom clothing is bought, and therefore used in empirical analyses of for example the sharing rule, see Lundberg et al (1997). We have made comparisons between the responses to these questions and the responses to our new questions on allocation. Not surprisingly, the two sets of information give very similar results, see Table 7. Thus the additional information we collect on clothing is not likely to significantly improve on the previous information we had available. Referring to Table 3, we see that, as in most surveys, expenditures on women’s clothing are higher than for men’s. Furthermore, the child(ren)’s share is also considerable being bigger than that of men but smaller than that of women. We find the proportion of expenditures that are reported ‘for others’ (11%) surprisingly high.

TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE

Household services are mostly reported as being for the household as is transport. Recreation expenditures is a high budget share category, being passed only by food at home. The major recipients of assigned goods are children; this is not surprising since this category includes toys and cd’s. Finally, personal services are mostly assigned to one member, with the wife receiving far and away the largest share.

When we aggregate all potentially assignable goods, we find that the shares of husband and wife are very similar (13.5% and 14.1% respectively). This is extremely interesting given that the allocations of individual goods are often quite skewed. In Browning and Bonke (2006) a more detailed analysis of the distribution of relative shares across households is given.

3.2. *Distributional regimes*

In the sociological literature different distributional regimes are used to analyse the

decision making processes concerning the allocation of economic resources within the family. Among other Pahl (1983, 1989) employs the following distributional regimes;

- *the whole wage regime*, where one of the spouses, usually the wife, is responsible for the management of the total income of the household and the paying of nearly all expenditures, i.e. the husband hands over his income except a minor part dedicated to personal expenditures, or he takes some money back after having handed over the full income to the wife. If the wife earns money herself these will be put on top and used for the best of the household.
- *the household allowance regime*, where the husband hands over a fixed amount of money every week or month for the buying of specific everyday goods. The rest of the income remains in the household for the paying of goods of which he is responsible.
- *the pooling regime*, where both spouses ‘pool’ earning.
- *the independent regime*, where the spouses keep his/her money for own consumption and management. None of the spouses has access to the full income and they are each responsible for the paying of specific joint goods, the decision of which has been taking beforehand.

The interpretation of these regimes is problematic. For example, the term ‘pooling’ referring to the management regime is not necessarily synonymous with ‘income pooling’ as economists understand it. In the sociological literature the regimes are often identified with particular ‘power’ regimes. It could be, however, that they refer only to ‘technological’ features of the household with particular regimes being chosen because they are the most efficient for the household. In such a case one person could be an effective dictator but delegate all of the implementation of the desired outcomes to the other person. One goal of our data initiative is to assess the relationship between the responses to questions regarding management regime and actual distribution within the household. In this paper we shall simply report on the responses and leave the difficult issue of interpretation and inference for future work.

In this investigation we apply similar categories by asking the interviewed persons, which regime they believe they belong to if any, the different possibilities are given in Question 2 above and include a) All money are shared, we do not distinguish between “my” or “your” money, i.e. the pooling regime, b) Some money are conceived as ones own and other as joint money, i.e. The partly pooling regime, c) What we earn

individually belong to ourselves, i.e. The independent regime, d) The husband manages the money and the wife receives an allowance, when she is in need of, i.e. The allowance regime, the husband manages, e) The wife manages the money and the husband receives an allowance, when he is in need of, i.e. The allowance regime, the wife manages, f) The husband has the disposal of some of the housekeeping money, the wife manages the rest of these money, i.e. The whole wage system, the wife manages, and g) The wife has the disposal of some of the housekeeping money, the husband manages the rest of these money, i.e. the whole wage system, the husband manages.

TABLE 8 ABOUT HERE

Table 8 gives the findings from some earlier surveys and from our survey. Most investigations find that the pooling system is the most widely distributed with among 50 per cent of all households belonging to that regime. In this investigation the proportion is even bigger, with two thirds (67%) of all households pooling their resources. Furthermore, in Denmark 6 per cent belong to the individual regime and in Sweden 14 per cent, as opposed to only 2-4 per cent in the other investigations, the exception being the Pahl study (102 cases) in which 9 per cent represent the independent regime. Between the pooling and the independent regime the Swedish and the present investigation operate a hybrid - the partly pooling regime - to which 19 and 21 per cent, respectively, state they belong to. The remaining regimes - the allowance and the whole wage regimes - appear very infrequently opposite to what is found in most other investigations, where between one third and two-thirds of all households report they belong to either the whole wage regime or the allowance regime.

One possible explanation for the differences is that the Danish and Swedish surveys are for later periods and simply reflect changes over time. Whilst this is certainly possible we do not believe that it can be a full explanation for such large differences. There are other plausible explanations as to why Denmark and Sweden are so different to UK, the Netherlands and US. One is that the proportion of dual-earner families is higher in the two Scandinavian Countries than in the other countries implying that the spouses' contributions to family resources are more equal and the pooling regime thus more appropriate. Another is that the family institution is more unstable with more marriages ending up with divorce in the former countries than in the latter countries for which

reason the independent regime is also more likely than other regimes (Pahl, 1989). Tables 9 to 11 presents more results on the management/distributional regime.

In Table 9 we see that households who pool are older and have longer partnerships. There are several possible explanations for the latter correlation. One is that good matches at the beginning of a partnership, or the expectation of such a partnership, are likely to lead to both pooling and to longer marriages, see Stratton et al (2005). It could also be, however, that as marriages evolve the pooling regime becomes more attractive. Without panel data (so that we could observe if long lasting marriages adopt pooling earlier) it is difficult to see how we might distinguish between these alternative explanations. Another notable feature of Table 9 is that the regime does not seem to be correlated with the wife's share of income. Finally, the pooling regime and the individual regime families are the richest the total household income being 19 to 24 per cent higher than among partly pooling regime families. This is probably due to the differences in age between the different households.

TABLE 9-10 ABOUT HERE

To investigate if belonging to a specific distributional regime is partly an inheritance from the parents' behaviour we asked about the labour market participation of the mother of the respondent when they were 14 (see question 8 above). Table 10 indicates that every third husband and wife pooling their incomes had a full time working mother, whereas nearly half of the husbands and more than half of the wives partly or not pooling their incomes are descendants from full time working mothers. Being brought up by part-time mothers, on the other side, means that sons choose partly pooling regimes more than pooling and individual regimes, whereas daughters choose individual regimes more often than pooling and partly pooling regimes. Furthermore, if the mother was not working at the labour market when the respondent was 14 years old, the pooling regime is by far the most often chosen for men as well as for women.

3.3. Income-distribution trade offs.

Table 11 depicts the prevalence of income distribution trade-offs within different distributional regimes. The question is, thus, to what extent personal spending is assumed to be influenced by redistribution of incomes between the spouses. First of all,

more women than men claim that their spending would increase, if they themselves earned another 1.000 DKK a month net of tax and the spouse 1.000 DKK less a month, and, vice versa, that less income would decrease women's spending more than men's, the latter effect being bigger than the former indicating that spouses benefit less of personal time of prosperity than they offer in case of personal recessions. Furthermore, due to expectations the gendered effect is more pronounced within individual regime families than within pooling regime families. About one fourth of all women within individual regime families declare that they would increase their spending and every second decrease theirs in case they household income were distributed in favour of or in disadvantage to them, while the same proportions for men are one fifth and one third, respectively. For partly pooling regime families the proportions are considerably smaller, and for pooling regime families only a small proportion of women and men would change their individual spending if their personal income changed relatively to their spouse's. The conclusion is that women seem to be more affluent in their personal spending than men, the more individualistic oriented distributional regime they suppose to belong to.

If the responses to the trade-off questions are coherent is investigated in table 12, where the expected spending behaviour due to more earnings for the one spouse and less for the other spouse is compared. The general result is that in most families a redistribution of income does not influence the aggregate level of consumption either because no changes in the spending behaviour occurs, which 82 per cent of the families claim, or because "symmetric" changes are proclaimed, which occurs within 5 per cent of the families. The spouses within the remaining families behave "asymmetrically" in the sense that the one spouse does not change her/his spending in spite of the fact that the other spouse claims that he/she expects to do so, i.e. in most of the interviews both spouses were present (table 2). The implication might be that redistribution of income within 2-4 per cent of the families means an increasing consumption level, and in 7-11 per cent of the families a decreasing consumption level.

TABLE 11-12 ABOUT HERE

3.4. *Autonomy in buying*

The degree of autonomy in buying is investigated by asking a question on possibly

discussions before the spending of money on different goods (see question Q3). Table 13 shows that every fourth man and woman have what might be interpreted as full autonomy in the sense that they themselves decide what to be bought for own purposes, while every second man or woman usually discuss the buying if it amounts to around 1.400 DKK on average (table 14). The number of non-autonomic spouses, who always discuss personal buying with their partner, makes up nearly every fifth husband and wife. From table 13 we also find that for 4 per cent of all the families the husband has more autonomy than the wife, while in 7 per cent the opposite appears, i.e. the wife has more autonomy in the spending of money than has the husband. If this is in accordance to individual preferences or enforced by the other spouse, the present investigation cannot reply to.

TABLE 13-15 ABOUT HERE

Finally, table 15 shows the autonomy in buying within the different distributional regime, and, surprisingly not, we find that more husbands and wives within the individual regime are autonomous than within the pooling regime with the partly pooling regime to be found in between these two regimes. Moreover, within the individual regime we also find some gendered autonomy differentials, as more men than women are found to have full autonomy and more women than men partial no autonomy in buying. Within the pooling and partly pooling distributional regimes we find the opposite pattern with more autonomy among women than among men in spending behaviour. Further investigations will show if these patterns are different for different social groups and other classifications of the population.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study describes a new data initiative designed to provide more information on within household allocation. Specifically, we collect supplementary data in the ongoing Danish household expenditure survey on 'who gets what' within the household. To supplement this extra information and the information routinely gathered in the DES some extra questions are asked on the background of the respondents, the management of household finances and how much autonomy husband and wife are supposed to

have, and, finally, on the hypothetical effect of transferring income from one person to the other in the household.

We find that respondents are willing to assign more than 90 per cent of expenditures to our recipient groups. Only foodstuffs have a lower proportion of distributed expenditures, which is certainly due to the fact that the interviewers were not asked to get that information in the early months of the survey. Some goods, such as household services, are mostly assigned to the household jointly, but large proportions of other categories of goods are assigned to either the husband, the wife or the children. For many of these goods, the relative shares are quite different. For example, the husband wife share for vices is about 23%/12% whereas the relative share for personal services is 11%/44%. Despite these differences the mean share in total expenditure assignable expenditure is about the same for men and women (about 14% in both cases). We also report on the responses to 'sociological' questions concerning the management of household finances. In accordance with most international investigations we find that the pooling system is the most widely distributed with a proportion of two third of all Danish households pooling their resources. Furthermore, 6 per cent belong to the individual regime. Between the pooling and independent regime we find the partly pooling regime to which every fifth state they belong to. The remaining regimes - the allowance and the whole wage regimes - appear very infrequently. This contrasts with earlier surveys for other countries in which between one third and two-thirds of all households claim they belong to either the whole wage regime or the allowance regime. Finally, we report on the responses to some hypothetical questions concerning the effects of changing the distribution of income within the household, and the degree of autonomy in buying within households by asking a question on possibly discussions before the spending of money on different goods.

We draw four main conclusions from the analysis presented above. First, it does seem to be feasible to collect information on 'who gets what' within the household. Second, preliminary results suggest that although the relative share of husband and wife for particular goods is quite different, the mean share for men and women is about the same. Third, the household management regimes used in Denmark in the late 1990's seems to be markedly different than those found for other non-Scandinavian countries in earlier periods.

In forthcoming papers we present empirical tests of the various allocation models and

draw together the economic and the sociological aspects of the new data. Hereby, we expect to contribute to further exchanges between social scientists interested in within family interactions.

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APPENDIX

TABLE A1.
THE DISTRIBUTION OF GOODS WITHIN COUPLES.
ACCOUNTING INFORMATION

	For whom					Not distributed	Non zero respondents	Expenditures
	The husband	Both adults	The wife	The children	Others			
(A) Foodstuff	2,7	88,8	2,2	5,2	1,1	10,6	99,9	15,3
(B) Non alcoholic beverage	9,4	75,5	6,5	8,0	0,6	4,0	97,1	1,7
(B) Alcoholic beverage	14,0	78,1	2,0	1,1	4,8	1,2	74,8	2,2
(B) Tobacco	37,5	36,6	24,3	0,9	0,7	1,2	48,0	2,2
(C) Clothes	21,9	3,8	35,7	26,8	11,8	1,1	83,1	6,6
(C) Footwear	21,1	1,2	34,6	37,4	5,7	2,3	27,4	1,3
(D) Rent	xxx	xxx	xxx	Xxx	xxx	100.0	38,8	6,1
(D) Calculated rent	xxx	xxx	xxx	Xxx	xxx	100.0	66,1	1,9
(D) Maintenance of house	xxx	xxx	xxx	Xxx	xxx	100.0	24,3	1,7
(D) Water and other services	xxx	xxx	xxx	Xxx	xxx	100.0	77,6	2,7
(E) Electricity, gas and other fuels	xxx	xxx	xxx	Xxx	xxx	100.0	99,6	6,5
(F) Furniture	xxx	xxx	xxx	Xxx	xxx	100.0	59,2	1,8
(F) Soft furnishings	xxx	xxx	xxx	Xxx	xxx	100.0	33,8	0,0
(F) Household machines	xxx	xxx	xxx	Xxx	xxx	100.0	40,9	1,1
(F) Service and tools for household	1,9	52,4	6,5	4,0	35,1	2,7	45,9	0,7
(F) Tools and equipment for house	21,6	65,7	2,6	2,1	7,9	1,5	46,6	0,9
(F) Other goods / services for household	2,8	90,6	3,0	2,4	1,2	2,8	96,3	1,2
(G) Medical products	23,6	22,6	45,4	8,2	0,2	0,7	45,3	1,2
(G) Out-patient treatment	26,6	10,5	59,4	0,0	3,6	2,0	2,0	0,1
(G) Services from hospital	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	100.0	1,5	0,1
(H) Purchase of vehicles	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	100.0	37,3	7,9
(I) Petrol and maintaining of vehicles	17,8	72,7	7,5	1,7	0,3	2,7	77,7	6,7
(I) Transport services	19,7	46,2	25,6	6,2	2,2	1,0	40,1	1,1
(I) Postal- services	10,5	61,6	13,5	4,5	10,0	2,0	21,8	0,1
(I) Buying	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	100.0	32,1	0,1

telephones								
(I) Use of phone	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	100.0	96,9	2,1
(J) Electronic leisure-time equipment	19,4	46,8	3,9	18,8	11,0	1,1	49,9	1,6
(J) Other major durable consumer goods	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	100.0	8,2	0,5
(J) Sports equipment, toy, pets etc.	8,2	45,0	4,4	21,4	21,0	2,4	85,2	3,1
(J) Services related to leisure	17,3	60,4	11,2	9,1	2,0	1,3	72,4	2,5
(J) Newspaper, books, etc.	13,0	41,2	22,6	10,2	13,0	1,1	85,3	1,8
(J) Travels	6,1	46,4	8,2	39,3	0,0	1,6	3,6	0,2
(K) Education	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	100.0	26,6	0,6
(K) Restaurants, hotels etc.	19,9	61,7	10,4	5,3	2,7	3,2	84,5	4,1
(K) Personal hygiene etc.	11,5	24,4	45,1	14,4	4,6	1,7	94,5	3,1
(K) Other personal services	6,4	3,1	61,1	13,3	16,1	2,5	2,8	0,1
(K) Personal effects	9,9	6,6	41,6	21,4	20,5	2,2	38,6	1,1
(K) Social benefits	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	100.0	39,4	3,1
(K) Insurances	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	100.0	97,5	4,6
(K) Financial services	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	100.0	69,0	0,3
(K) Other services	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	100.0	21,2	0,2

TABLE 1.
INTERVIEW-TIME PER INTERVIEW AND INTERVIEWER
IN THE PILOT-STUDY

INTERVIEWER	INTERVIEW-TIME						AVERAGE
	Minutes						
a (39 years old)	12	15	14	10	10	8	11.5
b (42 years old)	25	20	20	20			21.3
c (34 years old)	10	15	15				13.3
d (40 years old)	20						20

TABLE 2.
NUMBER OF INTERVIEW PERSONS PRESENT IN THE INTERVIEW

	FREQ	PERCENT
Both	1050	76.6
Husband	176	12.8
Wife	145	10.6
Missing	1	0.1
Total	1372	100

TABLE 3.
THE DISTRIBUTION OF ASSIGNABLE GOODS WITHIN COUPLES. PERCENT

	FOR WHOM							
	The husband	House hold	The wife	The children	Others	Not distributed	Non zero respondents	Expenditures
Food	3.4	87.4	2.6	5.5	1.1	9.9	99.9	29.7
Vices	23.0	59.4	11.8	3.1	2.7	2.2	97.1	14.8
Cloth	21.7	3.4	35.5	28.5	10.8	1.3	85.9	13.7
Services	8.7	73.0	3.8	2.7	11.9	2.3	98.3	4.9
Transportation	18.1	68.8	10.1	2.3	0.6	2.5	89.1	13.5
Recreation	13.5	48.8	9.8	15.8	12.0	1.6	98.3	16.0
Personal	11.0	19.6	44.5	16.1	8.7	7.4	95.3	7.4
Total	13.5	56.5	14.1	10.3	5.5	4.3		100.0

¹For a more detailed distribution of goods, see table A1 in appendix.

TABLE 4.
SMOKING PATTERN FOR COUPLES. ACCOUNTING INFORMATION

Husband:		
Wife:	Smokes	Does not smoke
Smokes	311 (23%)	121 (9%)
Does not smoke	211 (15%)	729 (53%)

TABLE 5.
CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES FOR COUPLES

Husband:		
Wife:	Consumes.	Does not consume.
Consumes.	799 (58%)	23 (2%)
Does not consume.	110 (8%)	440 (32%)

TABLE 6.
THE DISTRIBUTION OF EXPENDITURES ON ALCOHOL BEVERAGES, TOBACCO
AND EATING OUT WITHIN COUPLES. PERCENT

	FOR WHOM							Expenditures
	The husband	Both adults	The wife	The children	Others	Not distributed	Non zero respondents	
Alcohol	14.0	78.1	2.0	1.1	4.8	1.2	74.8	27.4
Tobacco	37.5	36.6	24.3	0.9	0.7	1.2	48.0	27.5
Eating out	18.2	64.7	9.4	5.4	2.4	1.2	82.7	45.1
Total	22.4	60.6	11.5	3.0	2.6	1.2	94.3	100.0

TABLE 7.
THE DISTRIBUTION OF CLOTHES AND FOOTWEAR IN COUPLES

	FOR WHOM					
	The husband	Both adults	The wife	The children	Others	Not distributed
	Total number of purchases (N)					
Male ¹	607	12	6	9	89	1
Female ²	4	27	1319	19	90	13
Children ³	9	28	13	1717	201	28
Total	620	67	1338	1745	380	42

¹Male (age>=18), ²Female (age>=18), ³Male or female (age<18)

TABLE 8.
DISTRIBUTIONAL REGIMES

	PAHL (1983)	FAMILY GROUP (1983)	VOGLER (1989)	BIRDS EYE (1983)	GRAHA M (1985)	DOBBEL TSTEEN & KOOORE MAN (1996) HUSB/ WIFE	AHRNE & ROMAN (1997)	THIS SURVEY (1999-02)
Regimes: the whole wage regime								
- the wife manages	14	18	26	14	17	27/26	5	0.2
- the husband manages	-	-	10	5	8	11/10	-	1.0
the household allowance regime	22	24	12	26	41		3	
- the wife manages						9/12	-	0.8
- the husband manages						0	-	2.1
Pooling	56	54	50	51	31	52/52	59	67.4
Partly pooling							19	21.4
Independent	9	4	2	1	3	./.	14	6.0
Other			-		5			1.1
All	100	100	100	100	100	100/100	100	100
N:	102	250	11211	711	64	2811		1382

TABLE 9.
REGIME CHARACTERISTICS

	Age husband	Age wife	Years of marriage/ cohabiting	Wife's share of total income	Mean household income (1000 DKK)
Regimes:					
Pooling	41.5	39.1	15.3	40.8	598
Partly pooling	35.6	33.7	8.8	41.7	510
Individual	37.5	35.3	7.8	39.6	581
Others ¹	42.4	40.6	15.2	39.4	569
Total	40.0	37.8	13.5	40.8	576

¹Includes the regimes 4-8 in question 2.

TABLE 10.
MOTHERS LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION. PERCENT

	Husband				Wife			
	Full time	Part time	Not working	Not know	Full time	Part time	Not working	Not know
Pooling	38.4	24.8	36.5	0.3	39.7	26.3	33.1	0.9
Partly pooling	49.3	25.7	25.0	0.0	54.3	24.5	20.9	0.4
Individual	45.8	23.6	29.2	1.4	43.2	27.0	27.0	2.7
Others ¹	39.7	19.1	41.3	0.0	49.2	18.0	32.8	0.0
Total	41.2	24.7	33.8	0.3	43.5	25.6	30.1	0.8

¹Includes the regimes 4-8 in question 2.

TABLE 11.
THE INCOME-DISTRIBUTION TRADE-OFF WITHIN DIFFERENT
DISTRIBUTIONAL REGIMES. PERCENT

	More spending on one selves if 1000 DKK more and spouse 1000 DKK less				Less spending on one selves if 1000 DKK less and spouse 1000 DKK more			
	Husband		Wife		Husband		wife	
	Yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	Yes	No
Pooling	2.6	97.4	3.6	96.4	4.8	95.2	7.1	92.9
Partly pooling	15.2	84.8	21.2	78.8	26.6	73.4	35.0	65.0
Individual	24.0	76.0	28.0	72.0	36.0	64.0	49.3	50.7
Others ¹	4.6	95.4	7.6	92.4	4.6	95.4	19.7	80.3
Total	6.6	93.4	9.0	91.0	11.2	88.8	16.1	83.9

¹Includes the regimes 4-8 in question 2.

TABLE 12.
THE INCOME-DISTRIBUTION TRADE-OFF COMBINATIONS

Less spending on oneself if 1000 DKK less and spouse 1000 DKK more	More spending on ones self if 1000 DKK more spouse 1000 DKK less			
	husband		Wife	
	Yes	No	yes	No
Wife	Yes	63 (5%)	157 (11%)	
	No	27 (2%)	1124 (82%)	
Husband	Yes			64 (5%) 90 (7%)
	No			59 (4%) 1159 (84%)

TABLE 13.
AUTONOMY IN BUYING

	Husband				Total
	Full autonomy	Partial autonomy	No autonomy	Do not know	
Wife					
Full autonomy	329	35	19	5	388
Partial autonomy	30	692	36	5	763
No autonomy	5	15	178	2	200
Do not know	0	2	1	18	21
Total	364	744	234	30	1374

TABLE 14.
PARTIAL AUTONOMY IN BUYING

	Limit of autonomy		
	Average	St.dev.	N
Wife	1354.9	1898.9	690
Husband	1624.4	4729.9	690
All	1489.6	3314.4	1380

TABLE 15.
AUTONOMY IN BUYING WITHIN DISTRIBUTIONAL REGIMES. PERCENT

	Full autonomy		Partial autonomy		No autonomy		Do not know	
	Husband	wife	husband	wife	husband	wife	husband	Wife
Pooling	18.6	21.1	59.7	60.3	19.7	17.3	2.0	1.3
Partly pooling	39.4	39.4	47.5	50.8	9.8	6.7	3.4	3.0
Individual	69.3	68.0	25.3	25.3	5.5	6.7	0.0	0.0
Other ¹	31.8	34.9	39.4	45.5	25.8	19.7	3.0	0.0
Total	26.5	28.3	54.2	55.6	17.1	14.6	2.2	1.5

¹Includes the regimes 4-8 in question 2.

The Influence of Income and Consumption on the Life Quality of Pensioners in Latvia

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Abstract

Fast economic development of Latvia creates opportunities for upgrading people's life quality, which is especially important in old age when people themselves can do little to raise the level of their income and consumption (welfare). The aim of this research is to investigate the influence of income, as an indicator of consuming opportunities, on pensioners' subjective assessment of quality of life. During the empiric sociological study pensioners with different levels of income and consumption that live in private houses in all regions of Latvia were interviewed. Time Series, Crosstabs and Chi-square tests, Spearman's rank Correlations Coefficients were used for data processing. The most significant determiners of pensioners' quality of life are income, health, and harmony in family. There is a strong correlation between level of income and consumption and also between consumption and satisfaction with life. The hypothesis about connection between pensioners' income level and subjective assessment of satisfaction with life is validated.

1. Introduction

The aging of society in Europe is becoming more topical, but the quality of life in old age varies in different countries and socio-economic groups, so only extensive and long-term research can provide necessary cognitive resources in order to carry out the scenario for improving the quality of life.

The quality of life is a category that is not only standardized as 'quality' concept in the

international ISO standards. Each community works out this concept independently, based on their ideals. Consequently, in many countries the concept of quality of life has turned into a national concept. The quality of life includes legislation, financial security, harmony with nature, responsibility before future generations and many other issues. (Институт качества жизни). An obvious example of it is Latvian development model called „An individual as a priority”. Its main purpose is to improve different aspects of the quality of life of each individual (Latvijas izaugsmes modelis “Cilvēks pirmajā vietā”).

The quality of life is a comprehensive concept, which combines many different factors that so often can not be quantitatively evaluated. This concept encompasses: factors that affect the standard of living; conditions for work and recreation; housing conditions; social security and guarantees; security; nature conditions; climate and environmental conditions; leisure time and opportunities for its productive use; subjective feeling of peace, comfort, stability and assurance for future. The quality of life is determined by personal satisfaction with oneself and one's life, as well as objective factors typical to human life. It is a broad concept, which encompasses not only aspects related to living conditions, but also personal opinion of life. The quality of life concept is oriented not only towards assessment, but also an individual's ability to construct his life conditions, to influence and improve them, to achieve goals, and to fulfil dreams. Ability and opportunity, as well as a positive thinking, good overall feeling about one's life are significant variables for evaluation the quality of life.

The quality of life is a complex, economical and political concept that sums up life conditions of different social groups. One of the social groups is pensioners, which this article defines as population above the working age that receive old-age pension. From a sociologically theoretical perspective, the concept of people above the working age can be regarded as synonymous with the concept of elderly people; they are individuals who at the age of approximately 65 leave active social life and have reached the final stage of adult life or life in general (Гидденс Э., 2005).

Old age is a specific stage of life involving not only high social, cultural, organisational, technological and economic innovation potential but also risks. Therefore, aging is a process that entails both biological and social changes. Elderly people's welfare level, as well as other factors, differs from that of other groups. The environment created by the social space inhabited by elderly people is about to drastically change during the coming years; because of the low birth rate, late marriages and high divorce rate, the traditional network of family relations is shrinking. These changes will influence the social integration of elderly people and their participation in social activities (Report on 7 study programmes: Need for study on demographic changes – quality of life in old age and the required technologies).

The quality of life is a concept that creates a great deal of interest in our days, thus giving reason to investigate the phenomenon and processes associated with it. Calvert-Henderson model provides important theoretical basis that helps to determine the indicators of the quality of life (Calvert - Henderson model <http://www.calvert.henderson.com/uf/models.htm>), and so do research models developed in New Zealand (New Zealand model). According to Eric Allardt (Allardt E., 1993), the quality of life can be reached if the three systems of basic needs are met: material wellbeing, social affiliation and existence. However, supporters of Flanagan's model (Flanagan J.S. model) believe that the quality of life is determined by individuals' satisfaction or happiness with life on the terms that are important to them. Thus, a concept that was once known as 'subjective welfare' now is called 'the quality of life'.

Since 1990 one of the most popular global studies is the annual Human Development Report by the UN Development program (UNDP), which describes the life standards of world's population and ranks countries after this parameter; however, it does not include the main values and their mutual proportions that are important to the inhabitants of Latvia. The quality-of-life index developed in 2005 by the Economist Intelligence Unit is more

comprehensive; it compares the quality of life in different countries according to various criterions. Studies on the quality of life in EU cities, which are based on subjective survey data, are similar (Index on quality of life in Latvia, 2006).

A striking feature of the research priorities identified is that some research gaps in one country have already been filled in another. This suggests that there is considerable scope for sharing research knowledge between EU countries. There is a common need for research in all of the countries in the following eight fields; this article emphasizes these few:

- 1) defining and measuring quality of life, where the most important element is the inclusion of elderly people's own definition of the quality of life;
- 2) income and wealth, for it is observed that there is a common research gap on quality of life differences based on socio-economic security and the relationship between income and wealth and subjectively assessed quality of life;
- 3) wellbeing and satisfaction with life, since all countries require a better understanding of elderly people's definitions of wellbeing and which aspects of life give them satisfaction (Walker A., 2005).

The 'third Latvian revival' had the regaining of Latvian independency as its goal, and now those amazing years are slowly becoming a far memory. Many Latvians, including present and future pensioners, then believed that it is better to be barefooted but in a free land! It could be possible that in the time of changes the material welfare did not affect people's feeling of happiness. But present changes, especially in the economics – transition towards free market - created environment for various economical and social problems. The process of social segregation is becoming more and more apparent in Latvian society. „A large portion of pensioners can be added to the social group of 'outcasts'. They "survive", get barely by, can't make ends meet, experience constant hardships and aren't able to enjoy life (Bela B., Tisenkopfs T., 2006).”

For this reason in 2005 – notably, exactly 15 years after regaining of independence and a year after joining the European Union – the study "Quality of life in Latvia" was commenced. In order to develop index of population's quality of life, the Commission of Strategic Analysis was created. Economists, sociologists, experts of political science and the field of statistics joined their efforts to reach this goal. It is essential that information obtained by the study "Index on quality of life in Latvia" shows that people above the working age are less satisfied with the quality of life, comparing to other socio-economic groups, except for unemployed, which are the least satisfied (Bela B., Tisenkopfs T., 2006).

Evaluating theoretical concepts and studies on the quality of life, it must be concluded that there have not been any profound studies on pensioners as a social group, which includes about 20% of the whole population of Latvia. Therefore, this study can be regarded as novelty, because it emphasizes the study of connection between pensioners' income and their subjective assessment of the quality of life.

The hypothesis is advanced that there is a connection between income level of pensioners and their subjective satisfaction with life. In order to validate the hypothesis, an empiric study was done with a goal of clarifying tendencies how income, as an indicator of consuming opportunities, influence pensioners' subjective assessment of life. Thus, the aim of the study will be pensioners' subjective assessment of different aspect of quality of life. The object of the study is pensioners of all regions of Latvia, including those living in individual houses, since only less than 1% of Latvian pensioners are under the institutional care.

Following tasks were set in order to achieve the aim:

- 1) to ascertain the opinion of people above working age on the relevance of a research concerning the structure of income and consumption, as well as on the possibilities and goals of savings;
- 2) to obtain understanding of pensioners' assessment of quality of life aspects connected

- to income and consumption and their connection to the sense of wellbeing;
- 3) to clarify whether there is a connection between pensioners' income, consumption and subjective assessment of quality of life.

The method of sociological research, a standardized interview is used for the empiric study. The advantages of this method are researcher's direct contact with objects of study in order gain as much trust of respondents as possible, which is essential in contacts with such a socio-economical group as pensioners. For this purpose a questionnaire form was created with closed, semi-open and open questions that allow researches to analyze the data, using both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. In order to compare income and consumption structures in dynamics, the researches have used Latvian household budget data from 2000 till 2005, except year 2001, when research data was not published.

The study was done in the period from November 14, 2006 till March 11, 2007.

The study used selection that was nonprobable, purposive and available, including 200 pensioners according to the following criteria so that all different regions of Latvia would be represented: place of residence, age group, gender groups, source and level of income, the number of people in household. Respondents were selected randomly, involving relatives and acquaintances of the students of Latvian Agricultural University that live in different areas of Latvia. Respondents have reached the retirement age and agreed to be interviewed.

Data processing was done, using data analysis tools provided by SPSS data processing programme.

2. Results and discussion

The quality of life of the population is determined by the life potential of society, various social groups and individuals. Thus, it is important to specifically study the influencing aspects of the quality of life of separate socio-economic groups, which is the goal of this study about the influence of income and consumption on the quality of life of pensioners' in Latvia.

The previous studies testify that the quality of life must be measured not only using objective elements (quality of condition expressed in numerically measurable quantities), but also subjective elements of the quality of life (level of individual's wellbeing), that is why this study, for the most part, will be based on pensioners' subjective assessment, which will allow to uncover the main tendencies in order to study the subject in more depth..

Describing the selection of the study, it must be pointed out that:

- 1) regional division of respondents includes all statistical regions of Latvia: Rīga – 9.5%, Pierīga – 13.5%, Vidzeme – 16.5%, Kurzeme – 22.0%, Zemgale – 26.5, Latgale – 12.0%;
- 2) 54.5% of respondents are urban population: 15.5% of them live in small towns, 8.0% of them live in the capital, but 45.5% of them are rural population –19.0% of them live in individual farms and 26.5% in villages;
- 3) 38.5% of respondents are men and 61.5% - women; such predominance of women can be explained, first of all, by the fact that in this age group above 65 years the number of women exceed the number of men for about 35% (Latvijā pieaug vecu cilvēku īpatsvars), secondly, women were more open and responsive, more willing to answer the questions in households consisting of 2 pensioners;
- 4) an average age of respondents is 71.78 years, (Median -71.00; Mode – 68), the youngest respondent is 62 years old, but the oldest - 96 years old. Describing age groups of respondents it must be noted that about 44% of respondents are in the age group of 62-69, 43% of them – in the age group of 70-79 years, but 13% are older than 80 years;

- 5) it is essential to emphasize that 37.0% of respondents live in single-person households, 31.0% come from 2 people household, 20% come from households of 3-4 people, 24% - from household of 5-7 people, but average number of household members is 2,34 people (Median -2.00);
- 6) all respondents can be divided according to the education level as follows: bachelors or masters degree – 25.%, high school – 46.0%, elementary school – 29.0%.

From the beginning of the interview it was essential to clarify pensioners' opinion on the necessity of study on the quality of life (see Figure 1).

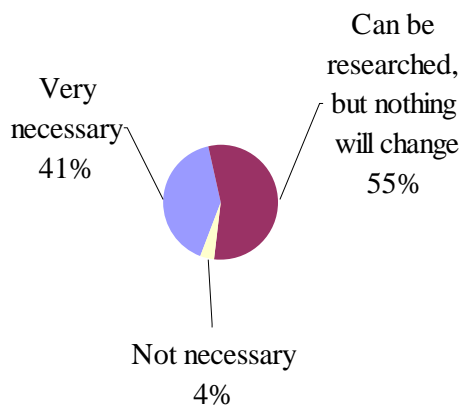


Figure 1. **Necessity to research the Quality of Life as viewed by the pensioners**
(in per cents)

Source: Graph drawn by the authors on the basis of the results of the survey

Figure shows that less than half of respondents (41%) believe that the study on the quality of life is very needed, but a little more than half of them (55%) tend to agree with the statement, but have lost any faith in possibilities of future improvements, because they don't believe their life will ever change. It is remarkable that only 4% of the interviewed pensioners think that there is no need to study the quality of life. It proves beyond doubt that such studies on the quality of life of pensioners are needed and urgent.

The quality of life must be viewed as a system of indicators that describes the realization level of human life strategies, satisfaction of life needs. It is a sum of indicators of human wellbeing, which describes the level of material consumption, as well as consumption of non-material benefits (Институт качества жизни). One of the indicators of welfare is income that is a fundamental factor, which influences the quality of life. Differences in income level in old age are determined mostly by one's life before retirement, for example, type of employment, sex etc.

The disposable income - is income in cash and the cash value of goods and services obtained in kind, received in form of wages and salary, other income for work (after deduction of taxes), transfers, net income (income after the deduction of production costs) from entrepreneurial activity (business) and agricultural production, income from property, rent etc.(Household Budget, 2005) As provided by Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (further in text as LR CSP), information on pensioners' income structure obtained by studies of household budget (see Figure 2), the largest part of income comes from pension, which ranges around 80% with a tendency to expand on account of lessening of other transfers. It is crucial to note that salary tends to shrink in the structure of pensioner's income from 5.1% - in 2002 to 4.2% - in 2005; it is self-evident, since pensioners have fewer opportunities to find suitable jobs and compete in job market with people of working age. Analyzing the quality of life

study data of 2005, the conclusion was made that job plays a very important role in the value system of Latvian population. Besides, there is no reason to believe that job is important only as a source of income (Bela B., Tisenkopfs T., 2006), especially for pensioners, which see job as a chance to reach their goals, for example, membership of a certain organization, communication etc.



Figure 2. Structure of disposable income by Pensioners households in Latvia (in per cents)

Source: Data provided by the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia.

Data of Latvian studies of household budget do not totally cover all sources of income of pensioners; that is why the authors, in order to cover them in more detail, included question about sources of household income in their empiric research questionnaire. Pensioners were offered a list of seven income sources, as well as possibility to add other sources not named in the list; also they were asked to name all possible income sources in their particular household. The answers were coded, and as a result the authors obtained 18 different combinations of answers (see Table 1). Using the data of Table 1, it can be seen that 30% of respondents name pension as the single source of their income, 28.5 % state that in addition to pension they also receive financial help from their children and other family members, but considering the fact that almost half of these live in households of 3 and more people, this number can be higher. 22% of the interviewed pensioners receive additional income by selling things they personally have produced; it is typical for this age group of Latvian population. These people continually grow vegetables or domestic animals and try to sell the remainder in order to obtain some additional money. 9.5% of respondents have turned to social services for financial help. 8% of pensioners lease their property and receive additional income, but 3.5% of pensioners receive interest on bank deposits. It can be concluded that the spectrum of additional sources of income is rather broad and it signifies that pension alone can not secure high quality of life. Further analysis of pensioners' subjective opinion proves it.

Table 1

**Sources of pensioners' household income
(Number of the answered in per cents)**

Sources of pensioners' household income	%
Pension	30.0
Pension, support from relatives	21.5
Pension, salary	11.5
Pension, sale of self-made products	9.0
Pension, sale of self-made products, social support	7.0
Pension, salary, support from relatives	4.5
Pension, salary, lease of property	2.5
Pension, social support	2.5
Pension, lease of property	2.0
Pension, salary, sale of self-made products	2.0
Pension, salary, lease of property, support from relatives	1.5
Pension, salary, interest on bank deposits, sale of self-made products	1.5
Pension, sale of self-made products, sale of personal forest	1.0
Pension, salary, lease of property, sale of self-made products	1.0
Pension, interest on bank deposits, lease of property	1.0
Pension, interest on bank deposits	0.5
Pension, interest on bank deposits, support from relatives, sale of self-made products	0.5
Pension, pension for the loss of provider, support from relatives	0.5

Source: Graph drawn by the authors on the basis of the results of the survey.

As stated before, pension is the most important source of pensioners' income; that is why it is essential to learn the rates of growth of pension in dynamics (see Figure 3). In Latvia in the time period from 2000 till 2007, real rate of growth of average monthly pension was 2.12% annually. The Square of the Correlations coefficient ($R=0.8967$) explains the model of exponential regression of 89.67 % from changes of average monthly old-age pension.

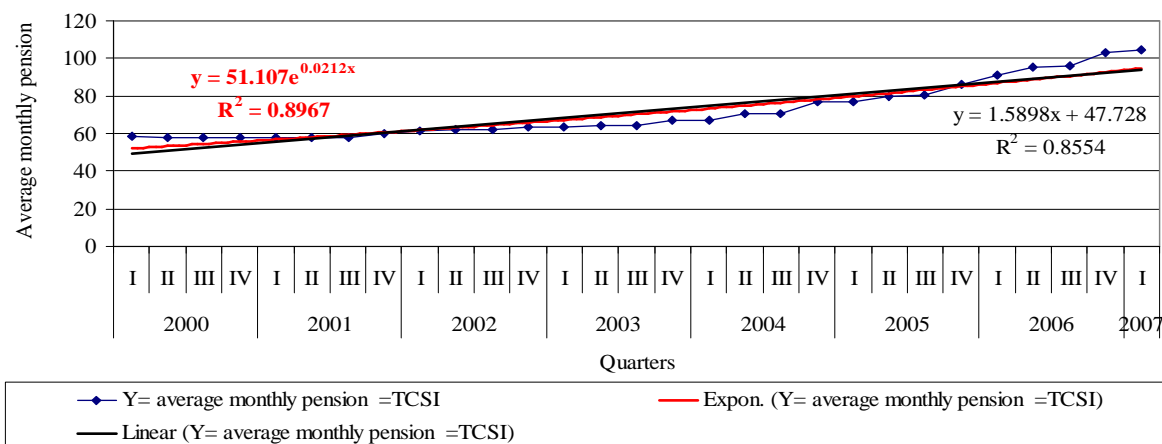


Figure 3. Retirement pension dynamics in Latvia in time period from 1st quarter of 2000 till 1st quarter of 2007 (average pension in LVL), (1 LVL = 1.42 EUR)

Source: Data provided by the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia.

Assessing pensioners' satisfaction with the quality of life, it must be said that old-age pensions grow slower than prices of goods and services, which are affected by increasing inflation in last years in Latvia.

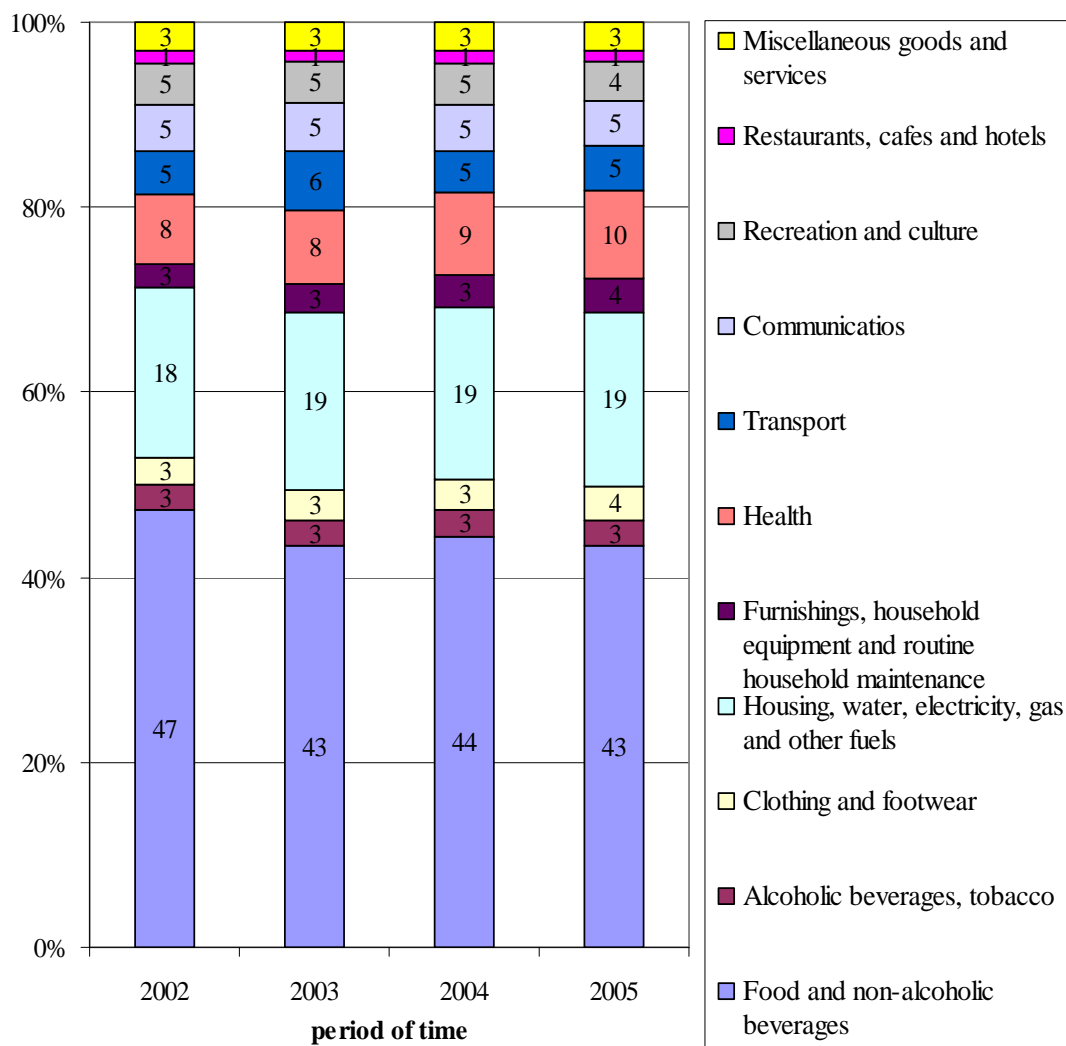


Figure 4. Structure of consumption expenditure by Pensioner s households in Latvia (in per cent)

Source: Data provided by the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia.

Consumption is a social, economic and cultural phenomenon, which is not just a simple process of consuming goods, because processes hidden behind a simple act of consuming, when consumption becomes a lifestyle, must be taken into consideration. Thus, consumption gives an identity to individual. Creating an understanding of “a good life”, it is important to clarify the structure of expenditure, their possible changes in dynamics. Household consumption expenditure - according to the international classification of consumption expenditure COICOP/HBS all consumption expenditure is divided into 12 groups as to their functional meaning (see Figure 4.) Figure 4 gives data on 11 groups, because pensioners' expenditure on education did not reach 0.5 %, so mathematically approximating it, the result was '0' and was not included in the figure. It demonstrates that there haven't been any noticeable changes in the structure of pensioners' household expenditure from 2000 till 2005.

Analyzing proportions of each consumption group in the whole structure, it can be seen that the main expenses are food (43-44%), and housing and utilities (19%). The third priority is health expenses (8-10%). Comparatively, the third place in the structure of average Latvian household is taken by transportation expenses. People in their sixties and older spend 9-10 LVL per household member a month for health, while people ages 18-39 spend 2-4 LVL, and people ages 40-59 spend 2-5 LVL. Thus, pensioners spend 2 to 5 times more money on health than the rest of Latvian population, which is self-evident (Household budget in 2005, 2006). Nevertheless, „answering questions about daily health habits asked by “Report on National Development 2004/2005 („Pārskats par tautas attīstību” 2004/2005”)), 19% of respondents admitted that they do not do a thing for their health’s sake (Bela B., Tisenkopfs T., 2006). We must highlight Latvian inhabitants’ opinion that medical care system in Latvia is very expensive, which is confirmed by medical experts: ”quite often people find themselves in situation when instead of discussing the illness, necessary tests and all of the rest, doctors and patients discuss the prices”(Bela B., Tisenkopfs T., 2006). It would be useful to study pensioners’ consumption expenses deeper in the aspect of consumers’ behaviour in medical care context, in order to obtain information about the connection of possibilities and needs and desires to improve one’s health, which is a important factor affecting the quality of life. Comparing pensioners’ consumption structure to ratio of other households, we see that pensioners spend less money for clothing and footwear, transportation and communications, as well as recreational activities.

In order to study consumption expenditure in a more deep and qualitative way, the empirical research questionnaire included a question on how much an average respondent spends on different expense groups. Comparing the obtained information with the Household budget data by LR CSP no essential differences in the consumption structure and its priorities were found.

Housing conditions is one of the quality of life dimensions for pensioners, since most of their time is spent in the living space they have created. Thus, it was useful to learn whether pensioners have a sufficient amount of household appliances in their home.

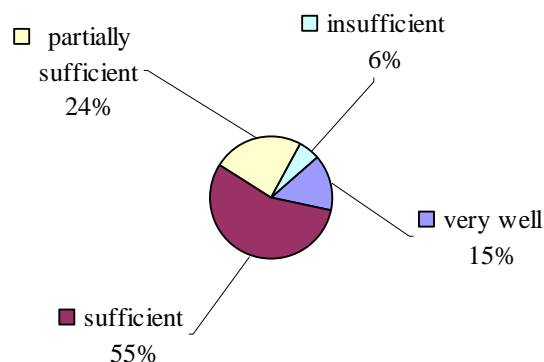


Figure 5. **Provision with household appliances as self-assessed by pensioners (in per cents of respondents)**

Source: Graph drawn by the authors on the basis of the results of the survey.

As we can see (see Figure 5) the biggest part (70%) of pensioners believe that they are sufficiently provided with household appliances, however one fourth of them (24%) consider the provision to be partially sufficient, and 6% - to be insufficient. Besides, the information was collected on what household appliances pensioners are planning to purchase in a close

future. One fifth of respondents gave following answers to this question: the most frequent answer was a washing machine (5%), then – an electrical or gas stove (4%), a television (3%), and a refrigerator (2%). However, the most part of respondents were not planning to purchase any household appliances to improve their housing condition or didn't have the opportunity to do so. Except for the mentioned appliances, few respondents mentioned more exclusive goods, such as air-conditioner, dishwasher, computer etc.

One of very significant aspect of the quality of life is communication, so in today's dynamic life it is very important for pensioners to have a telephone. It gives an opportunity to regularly contact relatives and friends, as well as doctors in the case of crisis. 63% of respondents have land line telephones, 52.5% showed mobile phone expenses, however, to 10.5% of respondents telephone is not available. Pensioners spend about 5 LVL a month for telephone, both stationary and mobile.

One of the favourite leisure activities for pensioners is reading. In spite of low income, pensioners allow themselves to subscribe to print media and to buy books, as well as actively use what libraries offer. The biggest part of respondents (78.5%) show that an average of 4.52 LVL a month is spend on print media, books and attending library.

Latvian media often sound a slogan that refers to the concept of quality of life: "Lets live better today, but pay for it tomorrow". Empirical research gave an opportunity to obtain data on how frequent the socio-economic group of pensioners use the credit opportunities. From 200 of interviewed pensioners, 15 respondents have taken a risk and used a short-time credit; they spend about 10-20 LVL a month for payments; the least sum mentioned was 5 LVL and the biggest was 50 LVL. It is significant that of these 15 pensioners, 11 are women and 4 are men.

It was very vital to learn of the possibilities to create savings. As seen previously, for 3.5% of respondents (see Table 1) one of the income sources is interest from bank deposits. 38% of interviewed pensioners save following amounts from their monthly income: 12% of them save an average of 10 LVL each month, subsequently, 6% - 20 LVL, 5% - 5 LVL, the smallest sum was 2 LVL, the biggest - 200 LVL that was saved by a pensioner, who was also a businessman. It must be noted that both genders are equally economical.

Besides, the research form contained a question about the goals of savings (see Figure 6). The largest part of interviewed pensioners (67%) answered that their savings do not have a particular goal; possibly, some of them did not want to disclose their goals to the researchers. Most of savings are made for unexpected situations (12%), to support children and grandchildren (10%) and for the funeral (4%). A conclusion can be drawn that an important and very particular goal for savings is to support children and grandchildren; many pensioners answered "I am saving for Christmas presents for grandchildren" or "I am trying to help my grandchild with school money". Even though almost 30% of respondents receive financial help from their children, these pensioners want to experience this type of interaction, because it is equally important to them to receive both financial and emotional support from their family, and to be useful and give support to their family members and friends. If such income flow exists between the generations, mutual satisfaction occurs, which is one of the conditions of a good life.

The theories on the quality of life especially emphasize one's subjective assessment. One of the criteria is appraisal of household's economic situation. For this reason the questionnaire form of LR CSP annual budget study contains a following question: "What is your appraisal of your current economic situation?"

Comparing the statistical information in dynamics from 2002 to 2005 (see Figure 7), it could be observed that in later years pensioners assess their economic situation as getting worse, so

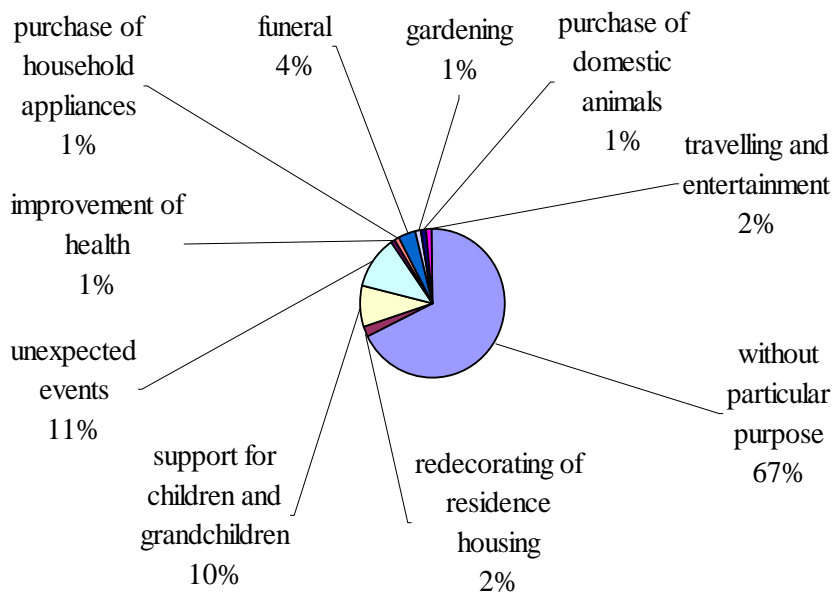


Figure 6. Pensioners' goals for savings (in per cents of respondents)

Source: Graph drawn by the authors on the basis of the results of the survey.

their assessment is more negative than that of the rest of Latvian population. Pensioners consider themselves poor twice as often as Latvian population as a whole; percentage wise, it is the smallest self-assessment group with a positive tendency to grow smaller - from 16% in 2002 to 12% in 2005. Looking at pensioners' answers, another positive feature emerges: on

How do you evaluate the present living conditions of your household ?

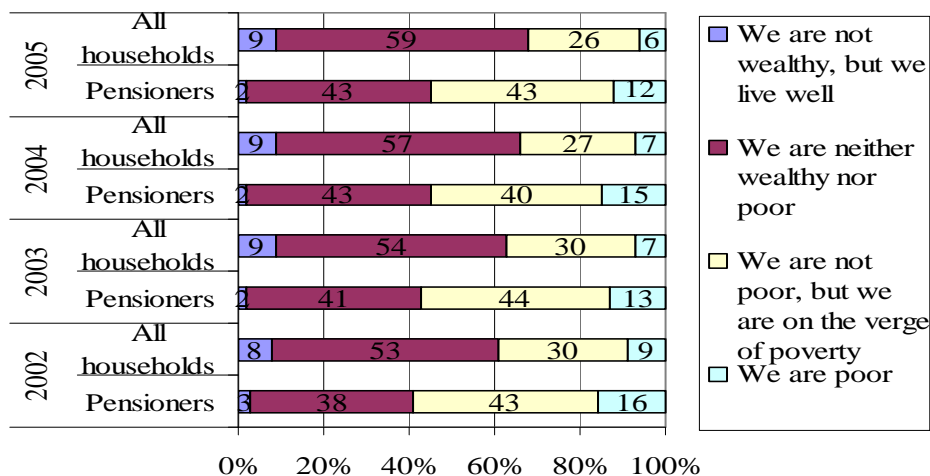


Figure 7. Self-assessment of living conditions by socio-economic groups in Latvia (In per cent)

Source: Data provided by the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia

account of changing of poverty self-assessment, the group that deem themselves to be on a verge of poverty has equalled out with the group that deem themselves neither rich nor poor (43% in both groups in 2005). Comparing the answers given by all households, we can see that the group of those considering themselves to be neither rich nor poor is twice as big as the group of those considering themselves on the verge of poverty. It is significant that only 2% of pensioners believe themselves not to be rich, but to live well; by comparison, 9% of the whole households claim that about themselves.

Self-assessment of pensioners' economic situation as one of the aspects of the quality of life is affected not only by the size of income, but also by the level of fulfilment of needs. In order to study an income level in-depth, the empirical research also considered a question of what regular monthly income limits and what possibilities to fulfil needs a pensioner identifies with. For this purpose income was divided into five groups, and pensioners were asked to mark particular group. Crosstabs and Chi-square tests were used for information processing (see Table 2).

Table 2

**Level of pensioners' monthly income and its self-assessment
(number un proportion of respondents in per cents) 1LVL=1.42 EUR**

Level of regular monthly income (LVL)	<u>Sufficient</u>	<u>Partially sufficient</u>	<u>Insufficient</u>	Total
	(able to fulfil the main needs) Number/per cent	(able to fulfil only the most basic needs) Number/per cent	(unable to fulfil basic needs) Number/per cent	
45-80 LVL	8 25.0%	10 31.3%	14 43.8%	32 100%
81-115 LVL	22 29.7%	35 47.3%	17 23.0%	74 100%
116-150 LVL	30 50.0%	25 41.7%	5 8.3%	60 100%
above 150 LVL	23 67.6%	8 23.5%	3 8.8%	34 100%
Total	83 41.5%	78 39.0%	39 19.5%	200 100%

Source: Graph drawn by the authors on the basis of the results of the survey.

None of the respondents have shown income lower than 45 LVL, which is the minimal state pension. For this reason the first group ranges from 45, which is the minimal state pension, up to 80 LVL, which is an average pension in the country. The second group is from the average pension in the country up to value of minimum consumer basket of goods and services, but the third group reaches the highest income of all households according to the regional divisions, which mostly reflects the situation in Riga. The fourth level exceeds the previously mentioned limit of 150 LVL.

Numbers do not totally clarify the situation, since on all these levels pensioners assessed them as being sufficient, partially sufficient, or insufficient. Nevertheless, it is obvious, that about 70% of pensioners of the group above 150 LVL give the highest estimate and consider

income to be sufficient to fulfil all important needs. In the income group of 116-150 LVL a half of respondents give a positive estimate un a little less than half of respondents believe that the income level is only partially sufficient to meet the most basic needs; in the income group of 81-115 LVL almost half of respondents agree with the previous statement. In the lowest income group of 45-80 LVL a little less than half of respondents (44%) assess their income level as insufficient and believe that with this amount of finances they are not able to meet even the most basic needs, a third of respondents in this group consider their income to be partially sufficient, but 25% of them – even to be sufficient. It means that in creating assessment algorithm of quality of life, this subjective assessment must be taken into account; it shows the differences in pensioners' life standards: some individuals live on a very low income and are satisfied with life, but others are not satisfied, even though their income is rather high. Nevertheless, we see a trend were the higher the income level, the bigger the opportunity to fulfil one's needs, and this connection can be proved by Chi-square test (p value is 0.01).

It is very important to assess different factors that influence pensioners' satisfaction with life. For this reason pensioners were asked to give an estimate on their satisfaction with different aspects of life (see Table 3). Following estimates were offered: „completely satisfied”, „satisfied”, „neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied”, “not dissatisfied”, „completely dissatisfied”. Information was processed using Spearman's Correlation Coefficients.

Table 3

Correlations table of pensioners' satisfaction with different aspects of their life

Satisfaction with	wellbeing	income	pension
Family life	0.256(**)	0.191(**)	0.299(**)
Support they receive from relatives	0.224(**)	0.209(**)	0.165(**)
Support they receive from friends	0.322(**)	0.251(**)	0.318(**)
Housing	0.306(**)	0.193(**)	0.242(**)
Support they give to relatives	0.328(**)	0.277(**)	0.201(**)
Support they give to friends	0.294(**)	0.243(**)	0.305(**)
Current location	0.207(**)	0.140 (*)	0.157(*)
Possibilities to maintain good health	0.364(**)	0.350(**)	0.329(**)
Integration and equality at home	0.196(**)	0.244(**)	0.170(*)
Job possibilities	0.263(**)	0.403(**)	0.288(**)
Material welfare	1	0.733(**)	0.550(**)
Work environment	0.323(**)	0.413(**)	0.271(**)
Personal income	0.733(**)	1	0.648(**)
Size of pension	0.550(**)	0.648(**)	1
Level of education	0.316(**)	0.203(**)	0.211(**)
Help from social services	0.205(**)	0.161(*)	0.331(**)
Ability of political involvement	0.210(**)	0.272(**)	0.261(**)
Ability to carry out goals in the family	0.318(**)	0.337(**)	0.335(**)
Ability to carry out personal goals	0.408(**)	0.405(**)	0.340(**)

(**) – correlation with 99% credibility

(*) - correlation with 95 % credibility

Source: Graph drawn by the authors on the basis of the results of the survey.

The obtained correlation table allows us to conclude that there is a statistically significant

correlation between wellbeing, income, pension, and all other given aspects of life. According to Spearman's correlation coefficient, the closest is the correlation between the satisfaction with income and wellbeing ($r=0.733$), satisfaction with pension and income ($r=0.6480$), as well as pension and wellbeing ($r=0.550$). Rather high correlation coefficients show the connection between wellbeing and ability to carry out personal goals ($r=0.408$), income and ability to carry out personal goals ($r=0.405$). There is a correlation between all other aspects shown in the table, but the correlation coefficient ranges from 0.3 to 0.2.

The research data shows that the most part of pensioners (65%) are completely dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the size of pension (see Figure 8), but a little less than half (42%) are dissatisfied with their income. General level of material welfare is assessed more optimistically, because a third of respondents are satisfied and a third of them are dissatisfied with it. Even though dissatisfaction with the income level dominates, almost half of the interviewed pensioners admit that they are able to carry out their personal goals, which shows a tendency that pensioners' goals are not connected only to the increase of income.

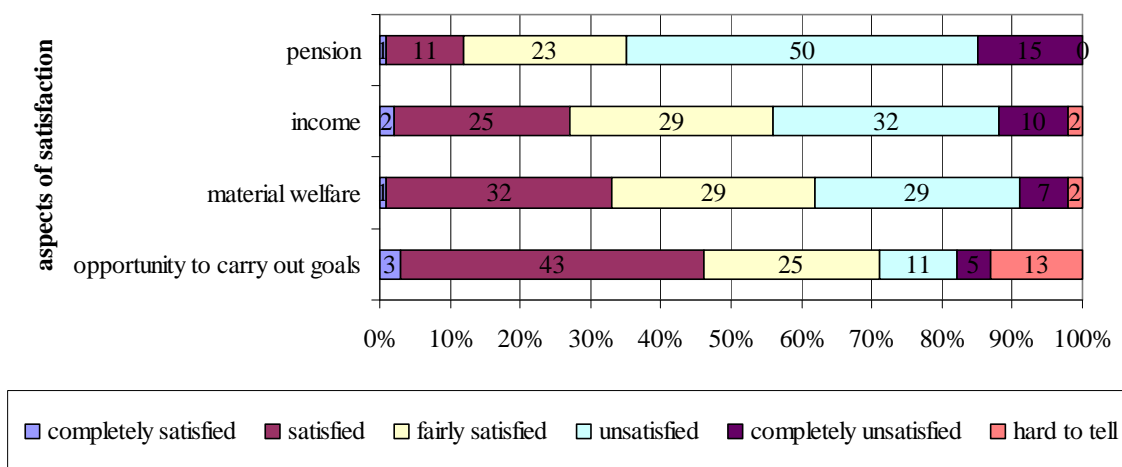


Figure 8. Self-assessed pensioners' satisfaction with different aspects of life (number of respondents in per cent)

Source: Graph drawn by the authors on the basis of the results of the survey.

Based on the qualitative information obtained by the study "People's Quality of Life Index in Latvia", the authors considered it to be important to learn opinion on the different statements connected to pensioners' welfare and social isolation from our society. The interviewed pensioners were asked to either agree or disagree with six very distinct negative statements (See Figure 9). The results are surprising and show a trend towards pensioners' sheer dissatisfaction with size of pension and its annual indexation. More than a half fully agree and more than a third tend to agree with the statements that "low pensions for the whole life's work shows state's disrespect towards pensioners" and that "annual addition to pension is a mockery, not an improvement". A third of pensioners do not see it possible to continue holding a job. The situation is made worse by the fact that a fourth of pensioners fully agree and another third more agree than disagree with a statement that "pensioners in this country are unwanted" and that "they are outcasts". The previously mentioned subjective opinion show pensioners' depressive and hopeless mood at the time of interview, because every fifth of them fully agree and every fourth of them more agree than disagree with a rather radical statement that "pensioners have been taken away their rights to grow spiritually, to be well and full".

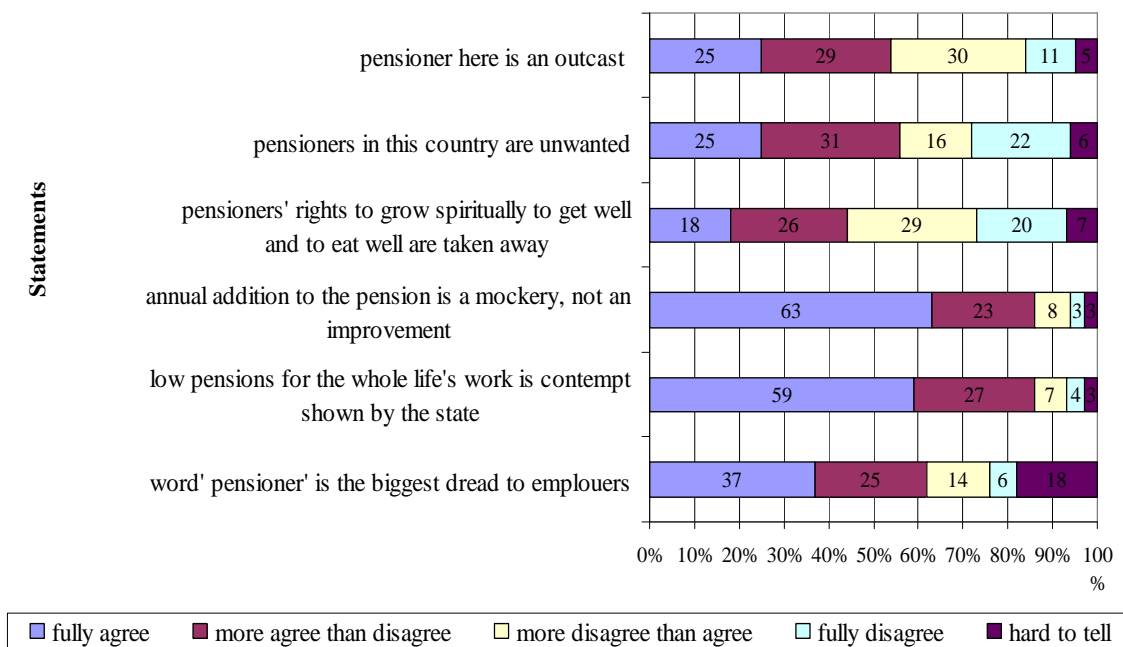


Figure 9. **Statements concerning wellbeing and social isolation of pensioners based on self-assessment** (number of respondents in per cent)

Source: Graph drawn by the authors on the basis of the results of the survey.

Such a negative assessment by pensioners leads to the hypothesis that there is a correlation between pensioners' income level and subjective assessment of life satisfaction. For this reason the questionnaire included estimates of pensioners' income level, and answers to the question "How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your current life as a whole?" could be graded from 1 to 10, where "1" means "deeply dissatisfied" and "10" means "fully satisfied". The results were processed using Crosstabs. From perspective of mathematical statistics, the number of expected observations in each cell of contingency table must not be smaller than 5. Thus, aspects, which were chosen by less than 5 respondents, must be combined. In our case a solution was found and grades up to 5 points and grades 9 and 10 were combined into one group. As a result there are 5 life quality estimate groups.

Since the survey provided rather approximate data on pensioners' consumption and regular monthly income level, the authors first tried to test the compliance of total consumption expenditure with the regular monthly income level. By the means of pair correlation with credibility of 99%, it can be stated that there is a correlation between level of income and consumption ($r=0.491$). There is also a correlation between consumption and assessment of quality of life, but it is a significantly weaker correlation ($r=0.151$) with the lower credibility (95%).

Going back to the study of correlation between income and life satisfaction (see Table 4), it can be stated with credibility of 99% that a correlation exists and that pensioners' income level affects their quality of life. Analyzing subjective assessment of life satisfaction in more depth and in connection with assessment of income level, it must be concluded that just like in case of assessment of objective income, an adaptation occurs; pensioners assess their life more positive, even having insufficient income.

Table 4

Compliance of pensioners' monthly income level with assessment of satisfaction with life (number and percentage of respondents) 1LVL=1.42 EUR

Level of regular monthly income (LVL)	Satisfaction with the current life situation in general (1- the lowest estimate ... 10 – the highest estimate)					Total
	1 to 5 points	6 points	7 points	8 points	9 and 10 points	
45-80 LVL	18 56.3%	3 9.4%	7 21.9%	3 9.4%	1 3.1%	32 100.0%
81-115 LVL	25 33.8%	17 23.0%	22 29.7%	8 10.8%	2 2.7%	74 100.0%
116-150 LVL	16 26.7%	9 15.0%	15 25.0%	19 31.7%	1 1.7%	60 100.0%
above 150 LVL	4 11.8%	5 14.7%	9 26.5%	12 35.3%	4 11.8%	34 100.0%
Total	63 34.5%	34 17.0%	53 26.5%	42 21.0%	8 4.0%	200 100.0%

Chi- square test p value is 0.01.

Source: Graph drawn by the authors on the basis of the results of the survey.

Table 5

Key words of the most often mentioned pensioners' answers (number of mentioned cases in the summary of qualitative data)

What 'a good life' means personally to you?"	When do you get a sense that you have 'a good life'?	What does the realization of future plans depend on?	What do you plan to do to improve quality of your life?
When there is enough <u>money</u> (123)	On special events, being with the <u>family</u> (106)	<u>Health</u> (53)	Make more <u>money</u> (32)
When the <u>health</u> is good (84)	When the <u>health</u> is good and there is no pain (40)	<u>Financial</u> situation (49)	Improve my <u>health</u> (25)
When there is harmony in <u>family</u> (24)	On days when I receive my <u>pension</u> (19)	<u>Own strength and ability</u> (36)	<u>Redecorate my home</u> (20)
Whatever it is, it is (3)	When there is good health, money and harmony in family (15)	Government support (25)	Improve housing conditions (13)
When someone needs you (2)	I never get such a sense (8)	Support of grandchildren (13)	Nothing, I'm too old (8)
If I could live like in EU (2)	When I'm happy about my accomplishments (7)	God (4)	Read and grow spiritually (6)
	When attending special events (3)	Myself, government and finances (4)	Try to be useful (5)
	In summer doing the gardening (2)		Save money (3)

Source: Graph drawn by the authors on the basis of the results of the survey.

Nevertheless, the studied correlation is evident: more than half of pensioners with the lowest income give an estimate of lower than 5 points. More than a half in the group of income level of 81-115 LVL estimate their life by more than 6 points. More than a half of the next group (116-150 LVL) give 7-8 points. Finally, a fourth of pensioners in the group of the highest income grade their life with 7 points, but a half - by 8-10 points. It must be mentioned that average estimate of pensioners' satisfaction with life is 7 points according to Median and the estimate given most often is 7 points. The whole scale of grades (1 – 10 points) was used in the estimation.

The fact that there is a correlation between pensioners' income and satisfaction with life was also supported by the respondents as they were giving answers to the open questions, which were coded to make the summary of qualitative data more clear. (see Table 5). Expressing their opinion on the definition of "a good life" in the context of future plans on improving life, pensioners most often use following key words: income (242); health (217); family (158); one's own strength (40); housing (33); government support (29). While interpreting their feeling on sense of "good life" pensioners also gave very painful opinions, such as: "I only have a sense of a good life when I'm asleep" or "when I will be dead", which testify of their hopelessness. Answer to the question about sense of "a good life" – "when I see that life is even harder for some other people" – demonstrates the need to compare the quality of life with acquaintances, including other pensioners.

The empiric research shows a tendency that top influencing factors of the quality of life are, first of all, income and then (assuming it is spent) consumption, health, relations with the family.

3. Conclusions

Previous life quality studies in Latvia prove that there are differences between different socio-economic groups, and pensioners in particular are the second group after unemployed that give a negative estimate of their quality of life. Pensioners themselves also agree that research in this area is very topical.

Using the information obtained by standardized interviewing of pensioners and Latvian Household budget studies, it can be concluded:

1. There have not been any substantial changes in pensioners' household income structure, but it is important to note that:
 - the most of income comes from pension, and most of additional income comes from support from the family or from sales of self-made products;
 - the main consumption priorities are food, housing and health;
 - the most part of pensioners are not satisfied with size of pension and its annual indexation;
 - it is essential that about 10% of pensioners have bought goods on credit, but about 30% have savings, for the most part to support children or grandchildren or for funeral.
2. Pensioners give mostly negative self-assessment of aspects of quality of life connected to income and consumption:
 - pensioners assess their economic situation as negative and consider themselves poor more often than average member of a household in Latvia, however most of them find ways to carry out personal goals;
 - income level does not guarantee pensioners' satisfaction with life, nevertheless, the study shows a tendency that the higher the income level, the bigger the chance to meet one's needs;
 - the study shows a contradiction between ideals and needs. Pensioners'

understanding of a good life associates with sufficient income, combined with good health and ability to spend time with family; all those factors are main determiners of pensioners' quality of life.

3. There is a correlation between pensioners' income level and consumption, as well as between consumption and satisfaction with life. The hypothesis about the correlation between pensioners' income level and subjective assessment of satisfaction with life, which highlights a trend for pensioners with a higher income level to be more satisfied with their life, is validated.

Serious concerns arise from pensioners' low assessment of the economic situation, which asks for more in-depth studies of pensioners' quality of life. In perspective it would be useful to do a serious comparison of pensioners' quality of life in time and social space. It is possible that by comparing life in past and present and comparing pensioners' life with life of people of the working age, things that hinder our movement towards human goals of a better life would emerge. An important role in improving pensioners' quality of life is their own initiative and activity, so in the future more studies should be done in these areas as well.

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Why does less housework for women not (yet) lead to an equal division of housework between men and women?

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ABSTRACT

This paper draws on the 2001/02 German Time Use Survey to evaluate couples' time-use behaviour, most especially the equal division of household work. It aims to explain both the time allocation on housework and persisting gender differences in household time-use behaviour. The theoretical foundation for this empirical analysis is Chiappori's (1997) collective model. It also incorporates the alternative econometric method of structural equation modelling (SEM) to provide more detailed insight into the factors affecting housework decisions. We find that even if the characteristics measured for the individual are given the same values, the division of housework is still unequal because these variables impact housework differently for each sex. We also find that instead of the wage rate being responsible for the gender gap, it is the presence of children, housing characteristics (e.g. living space), age and paid or unpaid household services that influence the time spent on housework more strongly for women than for men.

1. Introduction

The widespread discussion on gender equality and laws against discrimination has attracted public attention to family and household behaviour and the compatibility of job and family. The division of housework plays a substantial role in this discussion. According to data from the German Federal Statistical Office's 1991/92 and 2001/02 German Time Use Survey, women living in partnerships (with or without children) reduced the time they spent on housework (i.e. informal work) substantially in the decade between the two surveys, but their partners increased the time spent on housework only marginally. Hence, despite a slight reduction in the disparity of housework division between the sexes, a large inequality still exists (Statistisches Bundesamt 2004).

Researchers have long been interested in time use for housework, especially the division of work within the household. The applied models used by recent studies to examine this issue range from extended Gronau time use models (Connelly, Kimmel 2007) to common Nash bargaining models (El Lahga, Moreau 2007) to bargaining models with integrated consideration of social norms (Burda, Hamermesh, Weil 2007). The primary finding of such studies is that while the spouse's role has less influence on the share of housework over time (Connelly, Kimmel 2007; El Lahga, Moreau 2007), the individual economic situation is important (Breen, Cooke 2005). Most of these authors admit to the limited explanatory power of eco-

conomic approaches for this phenomenon and fall back instead on sociological constructs like gender ideology (Breen, Cooke 2005; Álvarez, Miles 2003; Burda, Hamermesh, Weil 2007).

By following an alternative approach, this study enhances the explanatory power of the economic approach with regard to differences in time-use behaviour, especially in respect to the division of housework between men and women. Specifically, the use of Chiappori's (1997) collective model allows simultaneous consideration of individual utility and housework issues because it integrates household production. Moreover, the econometric method of structural equation modelling (SEM) provides more detailed insight into the effects of diverse factors on housework decisions. The aims of the present study are twofold: to understand why individual household members – male and female – spend a certain amount of time on housework, and where and why gender differences in household time-use behaviour persist. This latter may help explain the reduced but persistent specialization that still seems to rule household behaviour.

Following a brief review of pertinent literature in section 2, section 3 outlines the applied theoretical approach. Section 4 then provides relevant information about the 2001/02 German Time Use Survey and the empirical implementation of SEM. Section 5 first contextualises and then presents the empirical results of the two path models for men and women in partnerships in 2001/02, including some explanations for the gender gap. The final section summarizes the results and provides suggestions for future research.

2. Previous Research

Several recent studies address the phenomenon of the unequal intra-household division of work. Of these, some international studies find that despite a modest increase, cross-nationally, men only do about a third of the housework that women do (Gershuny 2000; Sousa-Poza, Schmid, Widmer 2001). Nevertheless, most such studies deal with the female labour supply or household behaviour in general; fewer authors directly investigate the sharing of housework between partners. Thus, rather than offering a holistic survey of the extant literature, this review gives an impression of the different theoretical and econometric approaches taken by researchers and the corresponding results.

First, in their cross-sectional analysis of the persistence of the gendered division of housework in 22 countries, Breen and Cooke (2005) apply a game model of marriage to the 1994 International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), which provides a wealth of comparable international data. The results of their ordinary least squares regressions indicate that the unequal share of housework between the sexes will persist as long as women's economic situation does not equal that of men and as long as men do not change their gender ideology.

This gender aspect was earlier studied by Álvarez and Miles (2003), who used data from a 1991 Spanish time-use survey to analyse gender's effect on housework for Spanish two-earner couples. Because they isolate gender-specific factors through an Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition, they explain the unequal division of housework primarily by unobservable factors that are assumedly gender-specific differences rather than by observable spousal characteristics.

The effect of spousal characteristics on domestic work activities for American couples is also addressed by Connelly and Kimmel (2007), who develop an extended Gronau-type model of time use for individual household members and measure non-market time choices by a seem-

ingly unrelated regression (SUR) Tobit model. They conclude that spousal influence on housework is minimal or even nonexistent.

Another recent study by El Lahga and Moreau (2007) uses the 1984 to 2004 German panel data sets (SOEP) to explore the effect of marriage on a couple's allocation of their time between market and domestic work. Basing their approach on a Nash bargaining model and using a generalized method of moments (GMM) to estimate their empirical specifications, they find that marriage results in increasing specialization of housework and decreasing leisure time for women.

In contrast, the Burda, Hamermesh and Weil (2007) study, based on the 2001/02 German Time Use Survey data, refutes the idea that gender differences arise from marital bargaining power. Rather, in their initial analysis of work behaviour, which ignores gender roles because it is wages that are traditionally assumed to indicate within-household bargaining power, the effect of market earnings on gender differences turns out to be very small. This finding may result either from men's altruism towards their partners or from the incorrectness of the economic models (i.e. the men get more utility out of their work than the women). The authors therefore develop a bargaining model that includes social norms through "gender differences in the valuation of marginal changes in time spent in market or housework" (Burda, Hamermesh, Weil 2007; p.24). However, this approach has yet to be tested empirically.

Addressing the issue from a sociological perspective, Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer and Robinson (2000) examine time-use behaviour in American couples from 1965 to 1995 in terms of time availability, relative resources and gender. Although their regressions provide more evidence for the time availability and relative resource perspectives, they are unable to totally reject gender ideology.

Despite their various approaches, most of the above studies recognize the importance of an individual's economic situation. They also show that even though marriage still influences the division of work within households, spousal effects have become less important. Nevertheless, even though economic approaches can explain the division of housework between the sexes to a certain extent, their power is restricted and various questions remain unanswered. Therefore, to address these questions, studies often revert to sociological constructs like gender identities, cultural aspects or social norms (see Breen, Cooke 2005; Álvarez, Miles 2003; Burda, Hamermesh, Weil 2007; Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, Robinson 2000).

3. Theoretical Framework

To explain the unequal division of housework between both spouses, we use the microeconomic theory of the household. Therefore, the subsequent discussion first outlines the primary theoretical tenets and then introduces the implications of that underlying theory and the resultant hypotheses.

3.1 Theoretical concepts

Conceptually, this approach is a collective model of labour supply with simultaneous consideration of the Beckerian household production approach (Chiappori 1997), both of which have specific advantages for the measurement of housework supply. This methodology is selected because of identified weaknesses in alternative models. For example, the so-called unitary models are criticised for taking the household as one rational agent without considering the interests of individual household members. In contrast, the collective approach assigns

each spouse an individual utility function that should be maximized. The outcomes of the decision process are therefore assumed to be Pareto efficient¹, but no assumptions are made about the determinants of both partners' bargaining power. In addition, despite the realization of separate utility, efficient models imply that spouses do care about one another in a non-paternalistic way (Phipps, Burton 1998, p. 600). The Chiappori model is optimal in that it delivers labour supply functions that are empirically testable, as well as recoverable individual preferences and the outcome of the decision process (Donni 2003, p. 2). Moreover, several recent empirical studies (e.g. Fortin, Lacroix 1997, Donni 2003, Browning, Gortz 2006, Orefice 2007) show this approach to be worthwhile. For instance, to remedy the absence of household production in earlier models (Apps, Rees 1997), Chiappori integrates the household production approach into his collective model.

This household production approach is important because it considers basic commodities and therefore housework time, which alters the results of efficient time allocation. That is, households and their members not only consume, specialize and exchange, they also produce like a small economy (Apps, Rees, 2002, p. 17). Thus, household production, as an alternative perception of consumption, is defined as buying market goods and combining them with time to produce so-called basic commodities that are then consumed (for time use and consumption, see Jalas 2006). Such basic commodities including reading books, enjoying pleasant living conditions, eating self-prepared food or rearing "high-quality" children.

The productivity of these household goods is determined by market goods, housework time, household technology and know-how. In this context, housework is comprised of activities for producing goods and services that could have been provided by a third party (Reid 1934), meaning that individuals can substitute market goods and services with their own housework. In addition, such housework is not market work, and we exclude voluntary service. Hence, housework includes the following activities: meal preparation, clean-up, laundry, shopping, maintenance of residence, childcare, gardening, pet care or even bookkeeping related to household management (Bryant, Zick, Srisukhumbowornchai 2006, p. 2).

Because these domestically produced commodities are also assumed to be marketable (the "complete market" case), the market price of domestic goods is exogenous for the household (Chiappori 1997). Such an assumption is reasonable because meals can either be prepared at home or bought in a restaurant while children can either be cared for at home or in public childcare facilities. Accordingly, consumption is more than the purchase of market goods and the enjoyment of leisure time.

From this perspective, each partner's utility function – based on domestic goods, market goods and leisure – is assumed to be maximisable and preferences are assumed to be egoistic. This latter means that the welfare of each spouse does not depend on the partner's consumption (Oreffice 2007, p. 185), as in, for example, the case of a household budget constraint to which both spouses are subjected.

Obviously, even separately, both approaches are very useful, but if combined in one model, they are especially valuable. Specifically, the collective approach opens the door to an analysis of the labour supply of each spouse in a multi-person household, while the household production approach introduces basic commodities, of which housework time is one input.

¹ The Pareto-efficient process can be interpreted as follows: "members agree on some efficient production plan and some intra-household distribution of resources; then each member chooses his or her own leisure-domestic production-consumption bundle subject to the specific budget constraint he or she faces" (Chiappori 1997, p. 193).

3.2 Methodological rationale

Combining the two approaches enables measurement of the demand for basic commodities and the demand for housework time, both of which depend on several latent variables. Measuring these variables allows conclusions to be drawn about their dependencies on housework demand.

First, primarily because of ease of estimation, we consider a Stone-Geary utility function that comprises market goods x_i , basic commodities z_i and leisure l_i and also captures substitution between these categories. Preferences are assumed to follow this functional form even though it is restrictive. The individual choice problem may thus be represented more formally as follows:

$$\max u^i(x^i, z^i, l^i) = \alpha \cdot \ln(x^i - x_0^i) + \beta \cdot \ln(z^i - z_0^i) + \gamma \cdot \ln(l^i - l_0^i)$$

$$\text{whereas } \alpha + \beta + \gamma = 1$$

For the sake of simplicity, the model is static: that is, because the data are cross-sectional, incomes and wages vary across households, but all other prices are kept constant over the sample. As a restriction, in the case of household production, we assume a household budget constraint to which both partners are subjected. Housework is therefore introduced through full income, and, as an output, must be distinguished from basic commodities, which are an output. This distinction means that, depending on individual productivity, the commodities produced individually through a certain amount of housework time must not equal the consumed volume of commodities. In addition, commodities, being defined by third party criteria, are also obtainable by other household members and external persons and from the market.

Hence, the allocation of time – which can be categorised as housework, market labour or leisure – depends on the composition of the respective household and the position in the household that a family member adopts. This dynamic can be seen in the resulting demand for housework, which is determined by several latent variables:

$$t^i = T^i - l_0^i - \frac{x_0^i}{w^i} + \frac{V + (y^j - x^j)}{w^i} + \left(\frac{\alpha + \gamma}{\beta} \right) \cdot \frac{z_0^i}{w^i} + \left(\frac{p \cdot h^{ij}(t^i, t^j, x^i, x^j)}{w^i} - \frac{1}{\beta} \cdot \frac{p \cdot z^i}{w^i} - \frac{p \cdot z^j}{w^i} \right)$$

i:	i th household member	j:	partner of household member i
t:	household work	T:	available time
l_0^i :	aspiration level of leisure	x_0^i :	aspiration level market goods
w:	wage	V:	public income
y:	income	x:	market goods
z_0^i :	aspiration level of commodities	p:	price of z
h(t,x):	production function of z	z:	basic commodity
α, β, γ :	marginal propensity to market goods, basic commodities, leisure		

Thus, the model includes interrelated variables like available time, wage, public income, the consumption of market goods and basic commodities by both spouses, as well as household production issues² and the level of consumption and commodities to which the spouses aspire.

Such aspiration levels are not defined here as a margin of subsistence that must be fulfilled for survival but rather as a satisfaction of psychological needs. That is, an individual is content if the aspiration level is achieved (Simon 1978). In principle, these levels permit model differ-

² We make no assumptions about the household production function.

ences in individual and household characteristics, beliefs and satisfaction (Deaton, Muellbauer 1980, p. 95).

The resulting demand function permits the following hypotheses about the effect of the variables on the amount of housework:

- The more time available (T), the more time can be allocated, meaning a person can do more housework.
- Public income (V), as well as partner's income (y^j), increases the amount of housework done, and both variables are equivalent to an individual's non-labour income. That is, theory posits that a higher non-labour income will reduce the probability of participation in the labour market (Seel 1991, p. 204), which in turn allows allocation of more time to housework and leisure time. This dynamic reflects the coherences between the incomes of each partner and public incomes.
- A high aspiration level of consumption (x_0) demands more market goods than a lower level, meaning that more income is needed and less time is available for housework.
- A high aspiration level of commodities (z_0) leads to more housework because of a higher demand for basic commodities. However, the strength of the effect of the aspiration level of commodities on housework depends on the time intensity of commodity production.

Other relations between variables are not as clear cut. Thus the relation between wage and housework is unpredictable. If individuals follow a normal labour supply, the relationship should be negative, but other reactions may be empirically observed. Additionally, the relations between the variables themselves cannot be predicted in advance because more than one effect direction is feasible (e.g. that between the aspiration level of commodities and wage could be positive or negative). Thus, this study aims to gain more information about these relations between the variables and housework, and among the variables themselves.

4. Data and Methodology

The link between theory and evidence is assessed using SEM; most particularly, by the partial least square procedure (PLS3), which allows the theoretical foundation to be combined with the empirical analysis. The Federal Statistical Office's 2001/02 German Time Use Survey⁴, the second of its kind, covered a representative sample of 5,400 households that included over 12,000 individuals. Every person over the age of 10 completed a diary during two weekdays and one weekend day that recorded both individual and household details. Thus, this data source not only provides information about the everyday life of diverse population groups but also demographic data like age, sex, employment status, level of education, engagement in volunteer work and economic status (Gwozdz 2007, p. 37). Nevertheless, even though this dataset provides uniquely rich data on time-use behaviour, some variables of the demand function are not directly observable. We therefore address these non-observable variables by path modelling a set of observable factors that are linked to each of the corresponding latent variables.

One major advantage of SEM is that, by maintaining the theoretical structure of the housework supply, it allows us to gain more information on the relations between the latent vari-

³ The PLS analysis is a covariance-based technique of SEM, which simply converts "theoretical and derived concepts into unobservable (latent) variables, and empirical concepts into indicators, which are linked by a set of hypothesis" (Haenlein, Kaplan 2004, p. 286).

⁴ After the data are cleansed, 2,497 couples remain in the analysis.

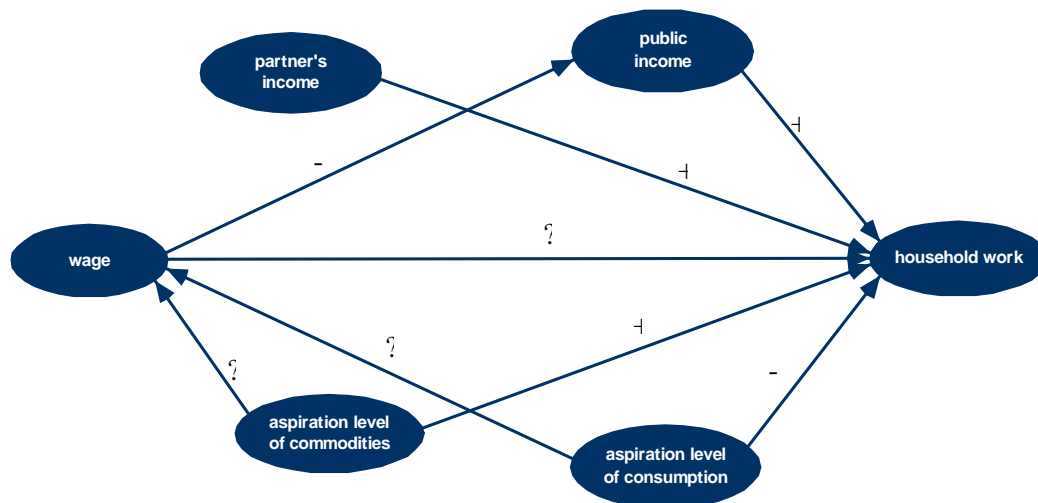
ables, assess these variables' impact on the housework supplied and extract the significant factors that determine them. Thus, the path model has two parts: an inner model that forms the theoretical structure and an outer measurement model that obtains the latent variables through the observed variables. The PLS procedure takes both the inner structure and the measurement model into account simultaneously (Cassel et al. 2000, p. 902).

4.1 A structural model

The structure of the housework supply can best be illustrated by a graphic translation of the theoretical dependencies between the latent variables (the inner model of the SEM approach). Thus, we extend our earlier premises by trying to predict the effect of the latent variable wage on housework.

However, because of restrictions inherent in the underlying theoretical assumptions and the dataset, we cannot measure all latent variables of the demand for housework. Rather, Figure shows the latent variables included in the model and their connective paths, whose algebraic signs are derived directly from the hypotheses presented in section 3. Because we cannot predict the effects of the other paths, this structural model is a partial demand function for housework.

Figure1: Structural model of the analysed demand for housework



It is reasonable to assume that aspiration levels influence an individual's realized wage. Thus, because the aspiration levels are assumedly exogenous, the arrows of the paths considered point towards wage and not vice versa. Moreover, we can argue that wage has a negative effect on public income in that government does not pay public benefits to those earning high wages.

Because SEM can provide knowledge about these paths, we must find reasonable factors for measuring the latent variables.

4.2 Measurement procedure

Such measurement is conducted in the outer model, using exactly the same measurement models for both spouses to allow the comparison that enables a closer look at gender differences. However, because showing all the measurement factors for the latent variables would go beyond the scope of this paper, we report only the paths for the variables of most interest – housework, wage and aspiration level of commodities.

The latent variable housework, which is the only latent variable whose level can be scaled (in minutes per day), is measured directly as the housework time entered in the diary. The mean is then weighted by weekdays and weekend based on an assumption of different behaviour in each.

The variable wage is directly measured by net income, weekly hours of work and type of job. The latter is important because part-time work is precarious and so pays less hourly than does full-time employment (Keller, Seifert 2006; Brinkmann et al. 2006). Additionally, even though the dataset does not record job experience, we can measure human capital – which plays a major role in earned wage – in terms of school graduation, vocational training and on-the-job training. Other variables, like working status, turn out not to be significant. In addition, because the different scales produce a large number of factors, the wage level becomes uninterpretable, although it is possible to compare the wage levels of different groups (e.g. men and women).

The aspiration level of basic commodities, although quite abstract, can be approximated by several factors. First, based on the definition given earlier, consumption of commodities arises from the aspiration level of commodities, which depends on individual and household characteristics. In addition, children, which are assumed to be commodities, imply a certain aspiration level (Säntti, Otva, Kilpio 1981, p. 4ff) and have a major impact on the division of housework between the sexes. Specifically, different investments must be made in housework according to the number and age of children, so children are divided into several subgroups: those aged 0–1, those aged 2–6 and those aged 7–15.

Because housework is a basic commodities input, housework done by others (paid or unpaid) could also be important. Thus, the claim on commodities can be satisfied in two ways – self-producing more basic commodities or obtaining or buying commodities elsewhere (i.e. social networks or the market). Our earlier research finds that the more housework done by one spouse, the more done by the other. Therefore, the relationship is more complementary than substitutional, and partners seemingly match each other in their appreciation for commodities and preferences for commodities. In addition, housework may be done by non-household members, although instances in this dataset are so few that we cannot identify differences between paid and unpaid external housework. Nevertheless, where this factor is measured in minutes a day, the support received is also measured by the use of external childcare, meaning that the higher the aspiration level of commodities, the higher the level of housework done by others. Thus, a high aspiration level may lead to a higher use of non-self-produced commodities.

Another very important factor for aspiration levels is individual age because demands and perceptions change over the lifecycle (Säntti, Otva, Kilpio 1981). Indeed, we find age to be a better performance factor for the aspiration level of commodities than wage. Nevertheless, aspiration level still affects wage, which is also influenced indirectly by age.

The final important indicator of aspiration level is housing characteristics. Specifically, a large living space implies a high aspiration of commodities that is likely to lead to commodities such as a large domicile or the housing of several children. Likewise, we expect home occupants (who inhabit houses and not apartments) to attach importance to commodities, because domestic appliances can also be seen as an indicator of aspiration level.

Overall, aspiration level is measured by the number and age of the children, the housework being done by others, the person's age and the housing characteristics. An overview of the composition of the latent variables is presented in table 1 (see appendix).

All the factors presented above have a significant impact on the latent variables of housework, wage and aspiration level of commodities for at least one of the groups studied (men or women).

5. Empirical results

This study's goal was two-fold: to understand why individual household members – male and female – spend a certain amount of time on housework, and where and why gender differences in household time-use behaviour persist. To assess whether the latent variables selected for study play a major role in the gender-specific allocation of housework and evaluate which explanations for inequalities are most reasonable, we first trace both the development of time use in certain areas and the division of housework, and then outline the results of the structural models for men and women. Finally, we identify the differences in time-use behaviour between the sexes.

5.1 Descriptive analysis

Because understanding the results of the housework path models requires prior knowledge of German couples' time use behaviour, we first assess the shift in time spent in the main activity fields by comparing data from the 2001/02 German Time Use Survey, which polled 2,500 couples, to the 1991/92 survey, which observed nearly 3,900 couples. This comparative analysis, which is restricted to couples only, looks primarily at the division of housework and observes the following time-use changes:

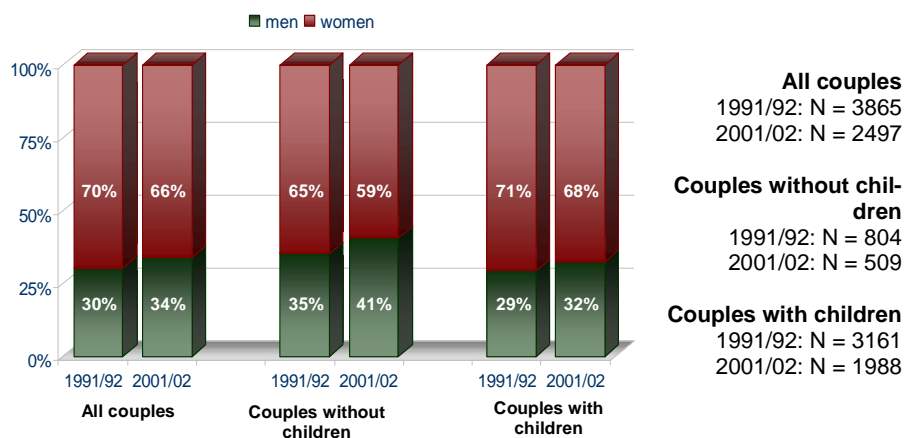
- Personal sphere and regeneration:
Not surprisingly, most of this time is used for private activities like sleeping, eating and drinking, and body care. Men and women spent about half an hour more for their privacy in 2001/02 than in 1991/92.
- Leisure:
Similar results were found in the field of leisure, which covers social life, sports or consumption of mass media. In 2001/02, men and women in partnerships reported allotting nearly five hours of their spare time to such activities.
- Market work and on-the-job training:
Even though men still spend more time on market work than women, there has been a reduction on both sides since 1991/92 that is also recorded in recent studies (e.g. Statistisches Bundesamt 2006, p. 81). Given that the 2005 Gender Report of the German Federal Statistical Office finds that increased unemployment affects more men than women (Cornelissen 2005, p. 42), this development may well have been strongly influenced by increasing unemployment between 1991/92 and 2001/02. Indeed, based on a closer look at time worked in the market, our results seem to support this assumption.
- Housework:
Not only do women still spend far more time in this activity than men, but the time shift in housework is completely different than that for other activity fields. Specifically, between 1991/92 and 2001/02, men slightly increased the time they spent on housework by 6 minutes a day, but women reduced the amount of time for this activity by an enormous 42 minutes a day.

One important aspect of the above shifts in time use is that over this decade, couples reduced their housework by more than 30 minutes a day, which is in line with findings for other countries like the U.S. (see Bianchi et al. 2000, p. 205). Earlier analyses provide some explanations for this phenomenon:

- There has been a structural change in the number and age of children in households. In 2001/02, the number of younger children up to the age of 10 was smaller than in 1991/92, which reflects the reduced birth rate (Statistisches Bundesamt 2006, p. 42). As a result, less housework and less childcare is needed.
- The significantly heightened number of household appliances like laundry dryers, microwaves or dishwashers or the marketization of housework itself may have contributed to the shift.
- Household goods may have become devalued.

Whichever the case, even though women reduced and men increased their time spent for housework, as figure 2 shows, housework is still not split equally.

Figure 2: Division of housework chronologically per type of couple



Intuitively, it might be argued that children have a great impact on the division of housework. Indeed, the figure 2 breakdown of housework share by couples with and without children supports this assumption. Thus, women in partnerships with children contributed a 68% share of the collective housework in 2001, compared to a 59% share for women without children. Among all couples, in 2001/02, 66% of all housework was done by women, which equates to about 5 hours and 20 minutes a day, relinquishing approximately 2 hours and 45 minutes a day to partners. For both sexes, total work hours – for market work and housework – are about the same, meaning no difference between genders in total work hours. Nevertheless, irrespective of household type, despite the convergence in the amount of time men and women spend on housework, there is still a gender gap.

5.2 Results of the path models for men and women

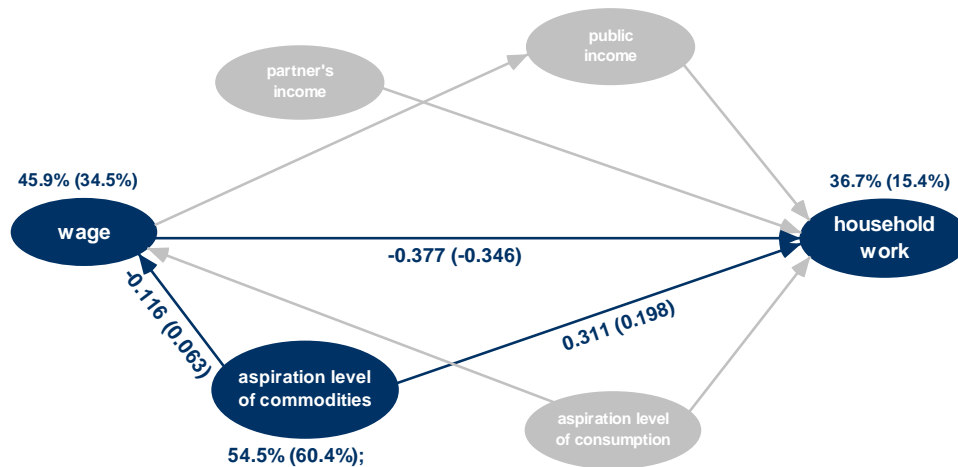
The results for housework are dependent on the tendency of each latent variable and the strength it exerts. Because these tendencies and strengths differ somewhat between the sexes, we carry out separate path analyses for men and women. Given our current focus, we specifically extract the paths of the latent variables of most interest – wage, aspiration level of commodities and housework.

In figure 3, which shows the relevant path coefficients for the structural model, latent variables measured in the model but not currently of particular interest are coloured light grey. The first coefficients on each path are for women; those in brackets are for men. These path

coefficients can be interpreted as standardized regression coefficients, and the R^2 s given for each latent variable selected equal the coefficients of determination in regression analyses⁵ (Chin, Newsted 1999, p. 316). A quality criteria summary for the path models of men and women is given in the appendix, to be more precisely in table 2 and 3.

The latent variables considered are measured by the factors introduced above. For women, we can identify 55% of the aspiration level of commodities and about 46% of the latent variable wage. The explained variance of aspiration level of commodities and wage for men is about 60% and 35%, respectively. This structural model also explains about 37% of women’s housework in partnerships, but only about 15% of the variance in men’s housework, meaning it has less than half the explanatory power of the women’s model. According to accepted practice, a predicted R^2 of about 60% is substantial, about 30% is good and about 15% is weak (Chin 1998, p. 232). Thus, as discussed below, our values are quite reasonable for this model.

Figure 1: Path coefficients of the structural model of housework for women (men) [extracts]



Results for the path coefficients help explain the amount of housework done by spouses. Specifically, we address the following three aspects: (a) the relation between the aspiration level of commodities and wage, (b) the relation between the aspiration level of commodities and housework, and (c) the path between wage and housework.

For women, there is a significantly negative association between the aspiration level of commodities and wage, meaning that women with higher aspiration levels of commodities realize a lower wage than women with lower aspiration levels. Nevertheless, aspiration level of commodities has a somewhat strong positive effect on housework, which means that either women have a more time- than goods-intensive household production technology or women’s aspiration levels tend to be defined by time-intensive commodities. Indeed, in their analysis of the time and goods intensity of certain commodity groups (e.g. lodging, eating or childcare), Hamermesh and Gronau (2006) find that goods and time expenditures differ within groups of commodities and with a country’s prevalent standard of living.

The results for men are quite different: the association between the aspiration level of commodities and wage is significantly positive but small. As in the results for women, a higher

⁵ The authors justify this equality based on the fact that “the case values of latent variables are determined by the weight relations” (Chin, Newsted 1999, p. 316).

aspiration level leads to more housework. Thus, men's production of basic commodities seems more goods than time intensive. As theoretically predicted, a higher aspiration level of commodities generally leads to more housework for both men and women. Presumably, the individual can offset the high demand by consuming commodities produced by the partner or by others whether paid or not.

For the impact of wage on housework, which is not directly predictable theoretically, several possibilities appear reasonable. In the structural model, as measured in figure 3, wage has a negative effect on housework for both spouses, which mirrors Gronau and Hamermesh's (2006) statement that the goods intensity of produced commodities generally rises with education and therefore with income and wage. As the effect is negative, the substitution effect and the normal income effect (due to the more expensive housework) assumedly surmount the total income effect that arises from the re-evaluation of available time. This dynamic also means that women and men earning higher wages do less housework than women and men with lower wages, which, as here, reduces time intensity.

In sum, these results show the importance of the interdependencies between latent variables in explaining the amount of housework. Specifically, even though a high aspiration level of commodities increases the housework for both sexes, there still seem to be differences in strength. Moreover, even though wage has a stronger effect than any other path for both partners, the relation between aspiration level and wage points in different directions for men and women. The significance of such differences is discussed below.

5.3 Gender differences

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of this analysis is the inter-sex comparison of latent variables and their effect on housework. In terms of the descriptive differences in the levels of latent variables between partners, it has already been shown that the women studied did significantly more housework than their partners, spending an average of 5 hours 20 minutes a day on domestic work to men's 2 hours 45 minutes. How, then, can such differences be explained?

To begin answering this question, we first compare the wage levels of men, who at 4.9 (unscaled) realize a higher wage than women (at 2.4). Given that, except for education (for which no significant discrepancy is found in 2001/02), all wage factors for German couples are significantly lower for women than for their partners, the discrepancy in housework allocation is not surprising. That is, because men in partnerships achieve a higher grade job, are more likely to be employed full time and work more hours a week, it seems reasonable that they also spend less time in housework than women.

However, not only can path modelling distinguish between latent variables (e.g. men's wage levels versus women's), it also enables interpretation of the different effects that an equal level of a latent variable has on the two sexes. For example, aspiration level of commodities, being measured primarily by household characteristics, is, not surprisingly, the same for both spouses. Only age and the partner's housework times differ for the individual aspiration level; on average, men are 2.7 years older than their partners.

Yet, even though the latent variable levels are about the same for both sexes, the effect of the aspiration level, which is assumed to be exogenous, on wage is positive for men and negative for women (see figure 3). This difference is highly significant, with a t-value of -8.592⁶.

⁶ Structural differences across gender groupings, which are not automated in PSL, can be examined by taking the standard errors for the path coefficients provided by bootstrapping output and hand-calculating them. Until non-

Moreover, the same level of aspiration increases domestic work time for women more than for men. Taken together, these results imply that men realize a more goods-oriented commodity production than women. In addition, because the aspiration level of commodities influences housework directly and indirectly through wage, its total effect on women is even higher – and that for men even lower – than the path coefficients presented above⁷. This finding supports the assumption that women follow a rather time-intensive household production, whereas men prefer a goods-intensive household production.

Wage has a negative effect on housework for both men and women. The roughly equivalent path coefficients indicate no significant difference. That is, in contrast to the theoretical prediction of different reactions for men and women, if both sexes realize the same wage, both react in the same way and hence reduce their time spent on housework by an equal amount. According to theory, women should react more strongly because the amount of time for good housework in their portfolio share (i.e. time available for allocation to market work, housework and leisure) is much greater than men's. In addition, theory assumes that women's wage has a greater impact than men's wage on individual domestic work because of a stronger income effect on women than on men (Seel 1991, p. 199). Given that, in this study, several latent variables could not be measured because of data unavailability, the reaction might have been even stronger if all variables had been included in the model. Blau and Kahn (2000) offered several explanations for their finding that women's wage labour supply elasticities adapt with men's; for example, women's increased participation in the labour market or the rising divorce rate may make the labour supply of women less sensitive to their own wages. In such cases, they do not completely allocate their time anew, which makes their housework supply less sensitive to wage.

Overall, our model explains 37% of the amount of housework done by women in partnerships. We attribute the undefined part to the unmeasured latent variables of the demand function and other non-observable influences. One interesting finding is that the explained variance of housework found for men is much smaller than that observed for women, less than half the R^2 for men (about 15%) compared to the structural model for women (about 37%). Either the unobserved latent variables can explain more of the housework done or the underlying model is not as suitable for men as for women.

In addition, this analysis identifies several behavioural differences between men and women. Specifically, it finds discrepancies in the values for the latent variables and also in effects that wage and aspiration levels of commodities have on housework. Clearly, some variables that might alter results are missing, but in all we would expect the tendencies identified to remain the same.

Where the influence was predictable, our empirical results support economic theory in that, for both men and women, the aspiration level of commodities increases the amount of housework, whereas wage reduces it. Nevertheless, we find differences in the strength of the aspiration level's relationships to wage and housework that we attribute to the different household production behaviours of time versus goods intensities.

6. Discussion

parametrical methods are developed, Chin (2000) advises that the estimates be treated in a parametric sense via t-tests. It is this method, available on Chin's homepage that we use here.

⁷ The total effect of the aspiration level of commodities on housework for women is 0.355; that for men is 0.176.

The most important finding of this paper on shifts in couples' time use between 1991/92 and 2001/02 is that even though over this decade women reduced and men increased the amount of housework they engage in, the difference between partners' domestic work hours – while converging – is still large.

To explain this phenomenon, we propose a collective model of labour supply that incorporates a household production approach and allows analysis of the behaviour of individual household members as well as consumption not only of market goods but also basic, individually produced commodities. At the same time, our exploration of time use in housework allows simultaneous consideration of theory and data, while at least partly preserving the structure of the demand function in the empirical model (i.e. it measures the latent variables themselves before calculating their impact on housework). In addition, our approach not only provides valuable information about the relations between the latent variables and housework but also about the relations among the latent variables themselves.

We identify aspiration level of commodities and wage as latent variables that help explain why individual household members spend a certain amount of time on housework. Specifically, we find that

- The higher the aspiration level of commodities, the more housework is done.
- The higher a person's wage, the less housework is done.

Additional influences on housework, not discussed in this paper, are partners' income and the aspiration level of consumption.

Even if men and women realize the same levels for the latent variables, division of housework will be unequal because these variables have different impacts on housework for both sexes. This gender differences in household time use may occur for several reasons:

- As widely acknowledged, women earn lower wages than men.
- Women's aspiration levels have a negative impact on wage, whereas men's have a positive one.
- The effect of the aspiration level of commodities on housework is significantly higher for women than for men.
- The total effect of aspiration level on domestic work differs significantly between men and women.

These last three results are interconnected and can be explained by men's rather goods-intensive household production versus the rather time-intensive production technology of women.

Finally, because of the gender-specific effects that latent variables have on housework, even if all the individual and household-specific characteristics of men and women measured were equal, there would still be differences in the time each sex spends on housework. Therefore, this study's most important contribution to the research stream is its distinction between the goods- versus time-insensitive production of basic commodities by men and women, respectively, in household production. This finding extends the work of Gronau and Hamermesh (2006), whose U.S./Israel comparison not only shows that goods intensity varies over cultures and categories of commodities but identifies coherences between a rather goods-intensive household production and education and wage. In terms of culture and realized wage, we find

a gender difference that may also relate to women's higher preference for time-intensive commodities and men's rather higher preference for goods-intensive commodities.

By doing so, this study raises the explanation of gender differences in time allocated for housework to another level. By isolating latent variables and their indicators (e.g. wage), we identify differences in the levels and effects of these variables; most particularly, men and women's different modes of household production. These latter are partly explainable by economic factors like wage: a higher wage leads to an increased shadow price of housework time, which results in rather goods-intensive production behaviour. Such gendered wage differences and different investments in human capital may be explainable by sociological constructs like gender identities (see e.g. Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, Robinson 2000; Burda, Hamermesh, Weil 2007; Breen, Cooke 2005). That is, "people's economic and social circumstances shape how they live their family lives." (Woolley 2000, p. 21)

In sum, the still persistent division of housework between men and women can be attributed to the idiosyncratic gender-effects of latent variables that determine its amount. Gender-specific household production technologies could be a solution to such inequity.

Nevertheless, several questions remain unanswered that further research on the 1991/92 path models might address. For example, has reduced housework for women resulted in different effects and levels of latent variables on housework since 1991/92? If so, to what amount and in which direction? In addition, future research might longitudinally compare structural models to test the finding of other scholars (e.g. Kahn, Blau 2005; Connelly, Kimmel 2007) that the influence of wages and spousal characteristics on housework activities reduces over time. This present study has laid the foundation for such research by proposing an alternative, and more explanatory, methodology.

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Appendix

Table 1: Description of the measurement models and descriptive statistics of men and women in partnerships in 2001/02

Latent variable	Measurement model	Scale	Women in 2001/02			Men in 2001/02		
			Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Household work	Household work	Minutes per day	2,497	319.26	139.54	2,497	164.16	115.84
Wage	Net income	13 classes	2,487	2.64	2.98	2,489	7.44	3.64
	Weekly hours	Hours per week	2,486	16.08	16.98	2,483	37.23	16.55
	Type of employment	0 'not employed' 4 'full time'	2,497	1.50	1.12	2,497	3.63	0.94
Human capital	Graduation	0 'no graduation' 4 'baccalaureate'	2,474	2.34	1.09	2,484	2.29	1.20
	Vocational training	0 'no degree' 7 'university degree'	2,481	3.76	1.73	2,489	4.40	1.77
	On-the-job training	Index	2,497	1.33	2.67	2,497	2.16	3.25
Aspiration level of commodities	Children (aged 0-1)	No. of children this age	2,497	0.06	0.25	2,497	0.06	0.25
	Children (aged 2-6)	No. of children this age	2,497	0.27	0.55	2,497	0.27	0.55
	Children (aged 7-15)	No. of children this age	2,497	0.71	0.86	2,497	0.71	0.86
Work other	Housework partner	Minutes per day	2,497	164.16	115.84	2,497	319.26	139.54
	Child care	Dummy	2,466	0.20	0.40	2,466	0.20	0.40
	Housework (paid or unpaid)	Hours per week	2,497	3.96	8.98	2,497	3.96	8.98
Age	Age	In years	2,497	42.23	7.77	2,497	44.93	8.07
	Age squared	Years ²	2,497	1,843.31	665.54	2,497	2,084.41	729.095
Housing characteristics	Living space	10 square meters	2,469	11.89	4.09	2,469	11.89	4.09
	House occupants	Dummy	2,490	0.60	0.49	2,490	0.60	0.49
	Dishwasher	No. in household	2,497	0.84	0.39	2,497	0.84	0.39
	Dryer	No. in household	2,497	0.56	0.50	2,497	0.56	0.50

Summary statistics for the manifest variables, which are presented in this study, are based on the observations of path models for men and women in 2001/02.

Table2: Structural Model: overview over the quality criteria of men's path model in 2001/02

Latent variable	AVE	Composite Reliability	R Square	Cronbach's Alpha	Communality	Redundancy	No. of manifest variables
Housework	0	0	0.154	0	1	0.0006	1
Wage	0.8364	0.9387	0.345	0.9018	0.8364	0.0555	3
Human capital	0.596	0.8155	0	0.666	0.596	0	3
Aspiration level of commodities	0	0	0.604	0	0.3558	0.0727	3
Work others	0.4617	0.7106	0	0.4248	0.4617	0	3
Age	0.9974	0.9987	0	0.9974	0.9974	0	2
Housing	0.4102	0.7315	0	0.5311	0.4102	0	4
Aspiration level of consumption	0.3843	0.6244	0.2593	0.2171	0.3843	0.0236	3
Social infrastructure	0.4297	0.6514	0	0.2335	0.4297	0	3
Communication (equipment)	0.4802	0.7785	0	0.6417	0.4802	0	4
Perception of on-the-job time use	0.694	0.8181	0	0.5753	0.694	0	2
Partner's income	0	0	0.7601	0	1	0.113	1
Work time (partner)	0.9406	0.9694	0	0.9369	0.9406	0	2
Human capital (partner)	0.5103	0.7561	0	0.548	0.5103	0	3
Public transfer	0.4253	0.666	0.3124	0.3819	0.4253	0.1256	3
Average			0.348		0.5480	0.0676	38
Goodness of Fit-Index (GoF)					0.437		

AVE is the average variance examined, which should be above 0.5 (Chin 1998, p.321).

The composite reliability is measurement of the internal consistency and describes the reliability of latent variables like Cronbach's Alpha. Both are supposed to take a value of 0.7 and higher (Tenenhaus 2005, p164).

The R^2 is the explained variability as is known in regression analyses. Its values should be as high as possible.

The communality index measures the quality of the measurement model for each latent variable. It is

defined as: $communality_j = \frac{1}{P_j} \sum_{h=1}^{p_j} cor^2(x_{jh}, y_j)$ (Tenenhaus 2005, p. 173).

By consideration of the measurement model, the redundancy index measures the quality of the structural model for each endogenous latent variable. Redundancy is defined as:

$redundancy_j = communality_j \cdot R^2(y_j, \{y_j \text{ 's explaining } y_j\})$ (Tenenhaus 2005, p. 173).

Redundancy and R^2 are obviously not computable for exogenous latent variables.

GoF is calculated by the square root of the average communality multiplied with the average R^2 . The average communality is computed as a weighted average of the different communalities with the weights being the number of manifest variables per latent variable. GoF is a way of comparing model validity like a goodness of fit, which is defined by $GoF = \sqrt{communality \cdot \bar{R}^2}$ (Tenenhaus 2005, p. 180).

Table3: Structural Model: overview over the quality criteria of women's path model in 2001/02

Latent variable	AVE	Compos- ite Reli- ability	R Square	Cron- bach's Alpha	Commu- nality	Redun- dancy	No. of manifest variables
Household work	0	0	0.3672	0	1	0.0168	1
Wage	0.901	0.9647	0.459	0.9452	0.901	0.1351	3
Human capital	0.4933	0.7405	0	0.548	0.4933	0	3
Aspiration level of com- modities	0	0	0.5449	0	0.3552	0.089	3
Work others	0.4202	0.6381	0	0.3174	0.4202	0	3
Age	0.9969	0.9985	0	0.9969	0.9969	0	2
Housing	0.4096	0.7307	0	0.5311	0.4096	0	4
Aspiration level of con- sumption	0.3558	0.3147	0.3446	0.2171	0.3558	0.0071	3
Social infrastructure	0.2879	0.3778	0	0.2335	0.2879	0	3
Communication (equip- ment)	0.4543	0.754	0	0.6417	0.4543	0	4
Perception of on-the-job time use	0.8556	0.9222	0	0.8321	0.8556	0	2
Partner's income	0	0	0.6025	0	1	0.1027	1
Work time (partner)	0.9137	0.9549	0	0.906	0.9137	0	2
Human capital (partner)	0	0	0	0	0.5994	0	3
Public transfer	0.4106	0.6531	0.0944	0.3819	0.4106	0.0363	3
Average			0.326		0.5384	0.0658	38
Goodness of Fit-Index (GoF)					0.419		

Backcasting energy conservation in everyday life; new and persistent patterns of time use

A paper prepared for the Nordic Consumer Research Conference and for the workshop on 'Families and patterns of time use'.

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1 Introduction

Backcasting is a futures study method that has been introduced to plan and devise radical changes in the patterns of everyday life. It is a method for building alternative scenarios from a 'desired future' point of view rather than extrapolating future developments based on current trends. The backwardness of the forecasting process helps to conceive of disruption in current trends, it is claimed. The method, when successful, also points to important leverage points for public policy making. Hence, it has been used to develop visions of how to achieve, for example, radically less energy- or carbon-intensive societies (e.g. Quist and Vergragt 2006). Furthermore, back-casting appears as a promising way to engage non-experts in decision-making and create possibilities for participative planning (Carlsson- Kanyama et al. 2007)

In this paper we tentatively merge the backcasting-methods with time use survey data that record the quantitative use of time across different activity categories in representative national surveys. These surveys have been carried out systematically since the 1970's. What emerges out of them is that patterns of time use change very slowly and that national patterns are very similar. Against such rigidity, *the core question of this paper is whether sustainable, low energy futures can be conceptualised as changes in the allocation of time in everyday life.* In other words, we ask whether time use data makes an illuminating material to project energy-related scenarios and potential new innovations in households.

So, what would the organization of average day(s) be like in a society that has reduced energy consumption by 50%? One might argue that the patterns and the trajectories of time use may remain little affected. Buildings and food provision remain the major sites of energy consumption, and vegetarian diet or passive houses are perhaps not decisive innovations for the rhythm of one's day. Even if, as Lindén and colleagues (2006) argue, potential behavioural effects on residential energy use equal to technological improvement potential, it is not obvious what such behaviour changes imply. Is energy conservation a matter of daily organisation of human activity, and is time use data hence of importance for energy policy?

Our attempts at building scenarios of less energy-intensive structures of daily life are informed by two different perspectives. On the one hand, we perform this back-casting exercise with an eye towards the literature on energy use and conservation in and by

private households. This literature is rich in suggestions of the ways that everyday life 'should' change in order for significant reduction in energy use to take place. On the other hand, this exercise is theoretically informed by the tradition of time-geography and the notion of practice-complexes (Shove and Pantzar 2005), which imply that everyday life activities are nested in a web of systemic interdependencies. Such a theoretical perspective makes our exercise more challenging; it is all the more obvious that one can not simply devise isolated and partial changes in the patterns of time use, but that such changes are conditioned by other changes in the time budget as well as in the socio-technical system as a whole.

This paper is not aimed at estimating reduction potential of residential energy use. Rather, we take a 50% reduction target merely as an indicative starting point that emerges from the literature. The focus of this paper is on the cross-roads of time use survey data and energy conservation scenarios. We first elaborate on energy conservation and then consider time use data as a specific medium for the performing of forecasting and backcasting.

2 Energy conservation in households

2.1 The range of energy conservation

Energy use, energy conservation and energy efficiency are issues that have received interest during the price peaks of energy carriers such as oil. Currently, the debate around CO₂-emissions is revitalising the interest in energy use on various policy levels and sectors. While individual product innovations may lead to increased energy efficiency of appliances and vehicles, policy interests also span the changes in the spatial and temporal organization of societies and the related implications of energy use. In Finland, research programs have been devoted at eco-efficient societies and infrastructures¹. It is also commonplace to question and query for life-styles and ways of living that might contribute to the lowering of the aggregate demands of energy.

Energy use of private household is typically divided between direct use of energy carriers such a fossil fuels, electricity and district heat, and indirect energy, which is embodied or has been used in the manufacturing and provisioning of the market goods and services that are bought by households. Rough figures of the energy use in industrialised Western countries resemble each other. In such climates that require heating, direct energy use and indirect energy have close to equal shares. On the other hand, when both direct and indirect forms of use are summed together, simply rule of thumb is that mobility accounts for 30%, housing for another 30%, and food provisioning for yet another 30%. All other consumption items fit into the remaining 10% share (Lorek and Spangenberg, 2002).

¹ The cluster programs of the Ministry of Environment.

2.2 Driving forces: technology, values and practice

The debate on energy conservation in households has been centred on technological changes such as improved insulation and more efficient household appliances. Less so, the interest has been on activity patterns or 'behaviour' of the actors. Behaviour is mostly discussed as an implementation gap; the policy-related problem appears to be the fact that the diffusion of more efficient household technologies is slow, and that such innovations are resisted or not taken into use in the first place.

Behaviour appears in this literature also in a different meaning while denoting a value- or preference-driven pattern of energy conservation. Behaviour hence refers to life-style changes. However, the concept of life-style change is used broadly and remains vague. Most problematically it refers simultaneously to a value change as well as to a consequent (new) set of activities noted as behaviour. For our particular point of view in this paper, the role of values is much weaker. We consider the reproduction and change of activity patterns as a negotiation between various demands and constraints of everyday life rather than presuming values from which the activity patterns would emerge.

Hence, our interest bears on the notions that energy conservation is not a mere technical issue neither something that directly result out of personal 'values' or disposition. Rather, like Kirstin Gram-Hanssen and Lindén and colleagues (2006) have argued, energy conservation, or patterns of energy use, are coupled with different ways of going about in everyday life. Laundry practices, cooking and showering are examples where significant amount of energy is used in activity patterns of humans. Even more passive forms of energy conservation, such as energy efficient houses, include active action such as using the blinds. Along these authors, *we perceive the household members as active users of energy and energy conservation technologies.*

The notion of a user has a further implication on our methods. We call for a time use perspective in order to grasp the interconnectedness of activities, and attempt to connect energy use to various forms of time use. In other words time use data constitute the canvas on which we paint our future images on.

2.3 Projecting futures on different kinds of empirical material

What could or should the life be like in future societies is a question that we frequently entertain us with. Such speculation of future is intertwined with more or less grounded views on possible future developments, the depiction of relevant trends and the creation of alternative future scenarios. A visible format of this work is science-fiction. Future studies, on the other hand, aims at more grounded processes of extrapolation and more solid, internally compatible and feasible views on alternative and desirable futures.

Energy-related development scenarios have their own particularities. Projecting possible futures on technology results in technological trajectories. Most commonly these projections concern the changes in the price of a technology (economics of scale), penetration rates, technological development (in fuel efficiency of cars). For example, the trends in photo-voltic power generation is perceived to depend on the unit cost of manufacturing. In wind energy, steps such as off-shore generation or high-altitude

generation are perceived as decisive steps for those particular technologies. Yet, other technology forecasts may involve questions of the application of a particular technology. For example, the predictions about the application of information and communication technology has varied greatly (Geels and Smit, 2000). Another relevant issue for technological predictions is the range of various secondary effects. ICT, for example, offers apparent possibilities for more efficient logistics, but at the same time generates a host of secondary impacts that contribute to higher energy demands (Heiskanen et al 2001).

Alternatively, the future changes may be represented as changes in the way people spend their money. There is a tradition of using input-output tables to estimate or test the impacts of specific changes in consumption expenditure. Input-output tables refers to a system of accounting in which all intermediate consumption of energy in the economy is allocated to final consumption. In this tradition, for example Biesiot and Noorman (1999) start from a similar overall task of wondering how to bring about a '50% reduction' in the aggregate energy consumption of Dutch households. They forecast or speculate with structural changes in the expenditure patterns of households (as well as with the rate of overall economic growth). In addition the forecasts of purchasing patterns frequently draw on the ongoing demographic changes (Nurmela 1996, Rood et al. 2003, Weber and Perrels 2000). The projection of the changes in household expenditure is thus a blend of extrapolating on demographic changes and taking more or less wild 'expert guesses' on other more independent changes in consumption behaviour.

In this paper, I suggest that time use data can serve as an alternative for the economic data to forecast, speculate or prescribe behavioural changes in private energy consumption (also Rood and colleagues (2003) acknowledge such time based modelling). Instead of the annual household expenditures and structural changes in their composition, the current paper maintains that one could build scenarios against the diary data on time use. It is hence the time budget of the 24 hours against which we try out our scenarios. In such an exercise, the demographic data provide one solid point of departure. Aggregate trends can and do change partly because of the changes in the underlying demographic mixture of the society

The forecasts that operate with the monetary budget constrain have obvious benefits. They connect to the economic forecasting of growth rates. Furthermore, representative data series abound. The time budget approach does not share these benefits. However, we maintain that such data can illuminate a different set of questions. Consider, for example, a suggestion the increase in the time spent watching TV will continue to increase. Such a change is difficult to place in the forecasts of changes in the expenditure patterns (since most expenditures are fixed). On the time budget, the effect is much more vivid: we may ask what the activities are that will make room for TV watching.

Furthermore, there are tempting issues of the rhythm, coordination and sequencing of activities that only become apparent when using time use data. One might for example wonder the everyday life in which human activities are more compatible with the daily and annual cycle of temperature and lightning. Abundant supply of fossil fuels has

contributed toward harmonization of the temporal structure of social life. The breaking of this rigid structure may involve a wide re-establishment of a siesta-practice. On the other hand, sun bathing in the middle of the winter for northern Europeans may become less frequent. Even if presuming a stable energy supply and technological progress, the increasingly supply of renewable energy prompts alternations in social rhythms. What is the day like in a technically advanced society that quickly transforms collective energy consuming patterns depending on the speed of wind, level of water reservoir, or the supply of solar energy? While we claim no expertise in answering such questions and abstain from a prophecy, it is obvious that patterns of time use and collective rhythms of the society underlay changes in consumption expenditure.

3 Sustainable visions of everyday life

Extrapolation of current trends either in the form of technological continuities or in the form of monetary changes in consumption frequently do not deliver radical views on future possibilities. On the other hand back-casting and related scenario-building exercises often presume more radical need of change and deliver more striking visions of future developments. In the following, few of the items of the list of future wishes will be selected and treated in terms of the time budget data

Mobility:

Åkerman and Höjer (2006) test the possibilities of achieving 60% reduction in transport related energy consumption by 2050 in Sweden. They envision technological improvements as well as a 30% reduction in structurally enforced travel (commuting, shopping). This, in the scenario, takes place alongside with network organisations who's members work either at home or in nearby office-buildings. However, part of the vision is also an increase in non-motorized modes of transport, and thus transport related time will remain rather stable. Delivery services replace trips for shopping. On the other hand weekend-trips will increase, while daily commuting decreases (Åkerman and Höjer 2006).

Food:

Concerning food it is commonplace to prescribe a change in diet that would shift consumption from animal protein to a vegetarian diet. In addition, what is more relevant from the point of view of the organization of everyday life, the scenarios frequently include a shift from convenience to fresh food (e.g. <http://www.brass.cf.ac.uk/uploads/271005ACRFP2.pdf>). Finally, increased local production and self-production in new household-greenhouses (e.g. http://www.sustainable-everyday.net/labsint_polimi2005/?p=15) appears as an relevant item to consider in the time budgets.

Living:

- Passive houses. Adjustable heating and lighting.
- Shared spaces (saunas ect.) within housing units

Clothes:

- Reduced washing and customised cleaning of clothes
- Outsourcing of washing

The new rhythms of energy supply:

- Micro-generation, peak-load management, wind-peaks, water shortages

4 Patterns of time use and scenarios on time use

The original purpose of this paper was to present scenarios of how the patterns of time use might change in relation to increased efforts at energy conservation. Albeit we ended up not constructing these scenarios, such an endeavour can be feasible. However, few provisions are to be made. Scenario building is a political and 'progressive' way of theorising about social life. Scenarios manifest desired futures and ideas of how to reach them. Hence they are interest-laden, and paint our social landscape as manageable and controllable. There are, no doubt, academics that would not share our inclination to participate in scenario building. However, we argue that scenario-building may coincide with theory-building. Hence, we regard the building processes of scenarios as relevant for academic enquiry.

The second and related provision we want to make concerns any quantification of the scenario variables or desired outcomes. We regard the targets for energy reduction as indicative of the kind and the scale of changes that might become politically feasible. Hence, the rough agenda of crafting activity patterns that manifest 50% reduction in energy use are nothing more. We do not aim at accuracy of the selected 'target' levels neither of the outcomes of the scenarios.

Finally, we perceive a need to make the scenarios of the most mundane and ordinary days. It would be relatively more easy to develop alternatives for such slots of time that occur in relative independence (for example leisure trips). Rather, we argue for a focus at the way in which the ordinary, routine-like, highly structured days may get reorganised.

Hence, the scenarios that we refer to are different from simulations. Whereas simulations are a predominantly economist theorising, scenarios are less formal. Working from a simulation point of view might fix preferences and test the effect of for example energy taxation or lowering the VAT of household services. However, we suggest to capture everyday life as more complex phenomenon. There are downsides to such an endeavour, but equally there are some upsides. Most importantly, we paint the scenarios with more open speculation and wonder what a normal routine-like day might resemble in a selected context, for example in Finland in 2030.

In the following we first present a glint of everyday life from 1999. Tables 1 and 2 represent the time use diary inputs of two Finnish couple living in a semi-detached house and having children of which the youngest is below school age. The tables record the time use of both parents in one weekend day and one weekday.

Table 1 Sunday, August 14th and Monday August 16th in a family with children living in a semi-detached house

		1	1	2	2
		Sunday	Sunday	Monday	Monday
		2	2	1	2
		6	7	2	7
		Main income earner	Second adult	Main income earner	Second adult
		14081999	14081999	16081999	16081999
6	0	Sleeping	Sleeping	Sleeping	Sleeping
6	10	Sleeping	Sleeping	Unspecified personal needs	Sleeping
6	20	Sleeping	Sleeping	Organizing	Sleeping
6	30	Showering & dressing up	Unspecified personal needs	Preparing snacks	Sleeping
6	40	Showering & dressing up	Childcare	Coffee and snack	Sleeping
6	50	Childcare	Coffee and snack	Coffee and snack	Sleeping
7	0	Coffee and snack	Coffee and snack	Travel to work and home	Sleeping
7	10	Coffee and snack	Preparing snacks	Travel to work and home	Sleeping
7	20	Reading newspaper	Childcare	Breaks at work	Sleeping
7	30	Visiting friends	Childcare	Breaks at work	Sleeping
7	40	Visiting friends	Childcare	Travel at work	Sleeping
7	50	Travelling	Travelling	Travel at work	Childcare
8	0	Travelling	Travelling	Breaks at work	Childcare
8	10	Travelling	Travelling	Breaks at work	Unspecified personal needs
8	20	Travelling	Travelling	Work	Coffee and snack
8	30	Travelling	Travelling	Work	Coffee and snack
8	40	Travelling	Travelling	Work	Coffee and snack
8	50	Travelling	Travelling	Travel at work	Childcare
9	0	Travelling	Travelling	Travel at work	Childcare
9	10	Travelling	Travelling	Travel at work	Childcare
9	20	Travelling	Travelling	Travel at work	Preparing snacks
9	30	Travelling	Travelling	Travel at work	Discussion with children
9	40	Travelling	Travelling	Travel at work	Discussion with children
9	50	Coffee and snack	Coffee and snack	Travel at work	Dishwashing
10	0	Travelling	Travelling	Travel at work	Showering & dressing up
10	10	Travelling	Travelling	Travel at work	Childcare outside
10	20	Travelling	Travelling	Travel at work	Childcare outside
10	30	Travelling	Travelling	Work	Childcare outside
10	40	Travelling	Travelling	Work	Childcare outside
10	50	Travelling	Travelling	Telephone conversations	Childcare outside
11	0	Travelling	Travelling	Work	Childcare outside
11	10	Travelling	Travelling	Work	Childcare outside
11	20	Travelling	Travelling	Work	Childcare outside
11	30	Travelling	Meal	Work	Childcare outside
11	40	Meal	Meal	Work	Childcare outside
11	50	Meal	Meal	Work	Laundry
12	0	Meal	Meal	Work	Laundry
12	10	Meal	Meal	Work	Childcare outside
12	20	Meal	Meal	Work	Childcare outside
12	30	Other goods and services	Other goods and services	Work	Childcare
12	40	Other goods and services	Other goods and services	Work	Cooking
12	50	Other goods and services	Other goods and services	Work	Childcare
13	0	Travelling	Travelling	Work	Childcare
13	10	Travelling	Travelling	Work	Childcare
13	20	Travelling	Travelling	Work	Childcare
13	30	Travelling	Travelling	Work	Childcare
13	40	Travelling	Travelling	Work	Childcare
13	50	Travelling	Travelling	Work	Dishwashing
14	0	Other goods and services	Other goods and services	Coffee and snack	Maintenance work at home
14	10	Culture&amusement events	Culture&amusement events	Coffee and snack	Maintenance work at home
14	20	Culture&amusement events	Culture&amusement events	Coffee and snack	Childcare
14	30	Culture&amusement events	Culture&amusement events	Work	Childcare
14	40	Culture&amusement events	Culture&amusement events	Work	Childcare
14	50	Culture&amusement events	Culture&amusement events	Work	Reading a book

15	0	Culture&amusement events	Culture&amusement events	Work	TV watching
15	10	Culture&amusement events	Culture&amusement events	Work	TV watching
15	20	Culture&amusement events	Culture&amusement events	Work	TV watching
15	30	Culture&amusement events	Culture&amusement events	Work	Children; reading & playing
15	40	Cafe's and restaurants	Cafe's and restaurants	Work	Children; reading & playing
15	50	Cafe's and restaurants	Cafe's and restaurants	Work	Children; reading & playing
16	0	Culture&amusement events	Culture&amusement events	Travel at work	Cooking
16	10	Culture&amusement events	Culture&amusement events	Travel at work	Cooking
16	20	Culture&amusement events	Culture&amusement events	Travel at work	Childcare
16	30	Culture&amusement events	Culture&amusement events	Travel at work	Childcare
16	40	Culture&amusement events	Culture&amusement events	Travel at work	Cooking
16	50	Culture&amusement events	Culture&amusement events	Travel at work	Cooking
17	0	Culture&amusement events	Culture&amusement events	Travel at work	Cooking
17	10	Culture&amusement events	Culture&amusement events	Travel to work and home	Cooking
17	20	Culture&amusement events	Culture&amusement events	Travel to work and home	Cooking
17	30	Culture&amusement events	Culture&amusement events	Socialising with the family	Cooking
17	40	Culture&amusement events	Culture&amusement events	Socialising with the family	Meal
17	50	Culture&amusement events	Culture&amusement events	Reading newspaper	Meal
18	0	Travelling	Travelling	Meal	Meal
18	10	Travelling	Travelling	Meal	Meal
18	20	Travelling	Travelling	Meal	Dishwashing
18	30	Travelling	Travelling	Childcare	Dishwashing
18	40	Travelling	Travelling	Children; reading & playing	Coffee and snack
18	50	Travelling	Travelling	Children; reading & playing	Coffee and snack
19	0	Travelling	Travelling	Children; reading & playing	Sauna
19	10	Coffee and snack	Coffee and snack	TV watching	Sauna
19	20	Coffee and snack	Coffee and snack	TV watching	Sauna
19	30	Travelling	Travelling	Childcare	Sauna
19	40	Travelling	Travelling	Reading; periodicals	Sauna
19	50	Travelling	Travelling	Reading; periodicals	Sauna
20	0	Travelling	Travelling	Sauna	Sauna
20	10	Travelling	Travelling	Sauna	Childcare
20	20	Travelling	Travelling	Sauna	Childcare
20	30	Travelling	Travelling	Sauna	Childcare
20	40	Travelling	Travelling	Coffee and snack	Childcare
20	50	Travelling	Travelling	Coffee and snack	Childcare
21	0	Travelling	Travelling	Cleaning at home	Childcare
21	10	Travelling	Travelling	Unspecified personal needs	Children; reading & playing
21	20	Travelling	Travelling	Children; reading & playing	Children; reading & playing
21	30	Travelling	Travelling	Children; reading & playing	Children; reading & playing
21	40	Travelling	Travelling	TV watching	Children; reading & playing
21	50	Travelling	Travelling	TV watching	Childcare
22	0	Travelling	Travelling	Lectures and classes	Childcare
22	10	Visiting friends	Visiting friends	Lectures and classes	TV watching
22	20	Visiting friends	Visiting friends	Lectures and classes	TV watching
22	30	Visiting friends	Visiting friends	Lectures and classes	TV watching
22	40	Children; reading & playing	Childcare	Sleeping	TV watching
22	50	Children; reading & playing	Childcare	Sleeping	TV watching
23	0	Coffee and snack	Childcare	Sleeping	TV watching
23	10	Coffee and snack	Visiting friends	Sleeping	TV watching
23	20	Visiting friends	Visiting friends	Sleeping	Sleeping
23	30	Visiting friends	Visiting friends	Sleeping	Sleeping
23	40	Visiting friends	Visiting friends	Sleeping	Sleeping
23	50	Visiting friends	Visiting friends	Sleeping	Sleeping
0	0	Visiting friends	Visiting friends	Sleeping	Sleeping
0	10	Unspecified personal needs	Unspecified personal needs	Sleeping	Sleeping
0	20	Unspecified personal needs	Unspecified personal needs	Sleeping	Sleeping
0	30	Sleeping	Sleeping	Sleeping	Sleeping

Table 2: Saturday, December 18th and Monday December 20th in a family with children living in a semi-detached house

		Saturday	Saturday	Monday	Monday
		1	1	2	2
		Main income earner	Second adult the family	Main income earner	Second adult the family
		18121999	18121999	20121999	20121999
6	0	Sleeping	Sleeping	Sleeping	Sleeping
6	10	Sleeping	Sleeping	Sleeping	Sleeping
6	20	Sleeping	Sleeping	Sleeping	Sleeping
6	30	Sleeping	Sleeping	Sleeping	Sleeping
6	40	Sleeping	Sleeping	Sleeping	Showering & dressing up
6	50	Sleeping	Sleeping	Sleeping	Showering & dressing up
7	0	Sleeping	Sleeping	Showering & dressing up	Showering & dressing up
7	10	Sleeping	Sleeping	Showering & dressing up	Preparing snacks
7	20	Sleeping	Sleeping	Showering & dressing up	Coffee and snack
7	30	Sleeping	Discussion with children	Showering & dressing up	Childcare
7	40	Sleeping	Discussion with children	Socialising with the family	Childcare
7	50	Sleeping	Discussion with children	Socialising with the family	Childcare
8	0	Sleeping	Sleeping	Telephone conversations	Showering & dressing up
8	10	Sleeping	Sleeping	Organizing	Dishwashing
8	20	Sleeping	Sleeping	Childcare	Organizing
8	30	Sleeping	Sleeping	Childcare	Organizing
8	40	Sleeping	Sleeping	Childcare	Showering & dressing up
8	50	Sleeping	Sleeping	Telephone conversations	Travel - child-related
9	0	Preparing snacks	Sleeping	Coffee and snack	Travel to work and home
9	10	Preparing snacks	Sleeping	Coffee and snack	Travel to work and home
9	20	Coffee and snack	Sleeping	Laundry	Travel to work and home
9	30	Coffee and snack	Sleeping	Cleaning at home	Work
9	40	Coffee and snack	Showering & dressing up	Organizing	Work
9	50	Coffee and snack	Showering & dressing up	Organizing	Work
10	0	Showering & dressing up	Showering & dressing up	Organizing	Work
10	10	Showering & dressing up	Coffee and snack	Organizing	Work
10	20	Showering & dressing up	Coffee and snack	Organizing	Work
10	30	Cleaning at home	Reading newspaper	Organizing	Travel; family business
10	40	Cleaning at home	Reading newspaper	Organizing	Other goods and services
10	50	Cleaning at home	Dishwashing	Organizing	Travel; family business
11	0	Childcare	Cleaning at home	Organizing	Travel at work
11	10	Childcare	Organizing	Organizing	Travel at work
11	20	Childcare	Childcare	Cooking	Work
11	30	Showering & dressing up	Organizing	Cooking	Travel; personal business
11	40	Showering & dressing up	Childcare outside	Telephone conversations	Meal
11	50	Childcare outside	Childcare outside	Telephone conversations	Meal
12	0	Childcare outside	Childcare outside	Children; reading & playing	Meal
12	10	Childcare outside	Organizing	Laundry	Travel; personal business
12	20	Travel; social activity	Travel; social activity	Cleaning at home	Work
12	30	Visiting friends	Visiting friends	Cleaning at home	Work
12	40	Visiting friends	Visiting friends	Children; reading & playing	Work
12	50	Visiting friends	Meal	Children; reading & playing	Work
13	0	Meal	Meal	Meal	Work
13	10	Meal	Meal	Meal	Work
13	20	Meal	Coffee and snack	Meal	Work
13	30	Meal	Coffee and snack	Resting	Work
13	40	Meal	Visiting friends	Resting	Work
13	50	Meal	Visiting friends	Resting	Work
14	0	Meal	Visiting friends	Resting	Work
14	10	Meal	Visiting friends	Resting	Work
14	20	Meal	Visiting friends	Resting	Work
14	30	Showering & dressing up	Showering & dressing up	Resting	Work
14	40	Travel; social activity	Travel; social activity	Telephone conversations	Work
14	50	Child escorting	Child escorting	Organizing	Work
15	0	Travel - child-related	Travel - child-related	Organizing	Work
15	10	Other goods and services	Other goods and services	Discussion with children	Work
15	20	Other goods and services	Other goods and services	Preparing snacks	Work
15	30	Other goods and services	Other goods and services	Cleaning at home	Work
15	40	Other goods and services	Other goods and services	Childcare	Work

15	50	Travel; family business	Travel; family business	Coffee and snack	Work
16	0	Päivittäistavarat	Päivittäistavarat	Children; reading & playing	Travel to work and home
16	10	Päivittäistavarat	Päivittäistavarat	Children; reading & playing	Travel to work and home
16	20	Päivittäistavarat	Päivittäistavarat	Cleaning at home	Child escorting
16	30	Päivittäistavarat	Päivittäistavarat	Cleaning at home	Travel - child-related
16	40	Päivittäistavarat	Päivittäistavarat	Showering & dressing up	Travel - child-related
16	50	Travel; family business	Travel; family business	Showering & dressing up	Travel - child-related
17	0	Child escorting	Child escorting	Cooking	Organizing
17	10	Travel - child-related	Travel - child-related	Meal	Meal
17	20	Travel - child-related	Organizing	Meal	Meal
17	30	Organizing	Organizing	Meal	Dishwashing
17	40	Cooking	Children; reading & playing	Childcare	Dishwashing
17	50	Cooking	Organizing	Showering & dressing up	Childcare
18	0	Organizing	Organizing	Travel - child-related	Travel - child-related
18	10	Organizing	Organizing	Child escorting	Child escorting
18	20	Organizing	Organizing	Child escorting	Child escorting
18	30	Organizing	Organizing	Child escorting	Child escorting
18	40	Organizing	Organizing	Child escorting	Child escorting
18	50	Organizing	Organizing	Child escorting	Child escorting
19	0	Organizing	Organizing	Child escorting	Child escorting
19	10	Organizing	Organizing	Child escorting	Child escorting
19	20	Cooking	Organizing	Child escorting	Child escorting
19	30	Cooking	Organizing	Travel - child-related	Travel - child-related
19	40	Meal	Meal	Discussion with children	Cleaning at home
19	50	Meal	Meal	Discussion with children	Childcare
20	0	TV watching	Maintenance work at home	Discussion with children	Dishwashing
20	10	TV watching	Maintenance work at home	Childcare	Dishwashing
20	20	TV watching	Maintenance work at home	Children; reading & playing	Organizing
20	30	TV watching	Maintenance work at home	Children; reading & playing	Children; reading & playing
20	40	TV watching	Dishwashing	Children; reading & playing	Children; education&advice
20	50	TV watching	TV watching	Childcare	Childcare
21	0	Children; reading & playing	Childcare	Preparing snacks	Childcare
21	10	Showering & dressing up	Maintenance work at home	Coffee and snack	Reading; unspecified
21	20	Maintenance work at home	Maintenance work at home	Coffee and snack	Preparing snacks
21	30	Maintenance work at home	Maintenance work at home	Reading newspaper	Coffee and snack
21	40	Maintenance work at home	Maintenance work at home	Reading newspaper	Coffee and snack
21	50	Maintenance work at home	Maintenance work at home	Reading newspaper	Coffee and snack
22	0	Maintenance work at home	Maintenance work at home	Reading; periodicals	Coffee and snack
22	10	Preparing snacks	Maintenance work at home	Reading; periodicals	Reading; unspecified
22	20	Coffee and snack	Maintenance work at home	Reading; periodicals	Reading; unspecified
22	30	Coffee and snack	Maintenance work at home	Reading; periodicals	Reading; unspecified
22	40	TV watching	Maintenance work at home	Reading; periodicals	Dishwashing
22	50	TV watching	Maintenance work at home	Reading; periodicals	TV watching
23	0	Organizing	Maintenance work at home	Showering & dressing up	Showering & dressing up
23	10	TV watching	Maintenance work at home	Socialising with the family	Organizing
23	20	TV watching	Coffee and snack	Socialising with the family	Sleeping
23	30	Dishwashing	Coffee and snack	Sleeping	Sleeping
23	40	Showering & dressing up	Showering & dressing up	Sleeping	Sleeping
23	50	Organizing	Organizing	Sleeping	Sleeping
0	0	Sleeping	Sleeping	Sleeping	Sleeping

These families have spent their sets of two days very differently. In the former case, the leisure day includes travelling of eight hours. In the same diary, the workday of the main income earner on Monday extends to 10 hours. On the other hand, in the latter family, the leisure days include much more limited travelling. Almost non of the travelling tasks exceed the reporting period of 10 minutes and the commuting time for the income earner is within 20 minutes. Interestingly, this couple also spends time in repair and maintenance activities

Now, can we build scenarios based on such data? What would the Monday December 20th look like if the family lived in a passive house with 80% less energy use than the

house they lived in 1999. How might local food production be reflected in their time budget? What are the activities they have outsourced and what services do they buy from commercial providers. What kind of co-operation takes place among neighbours and friends?

This is an exercise that proves difficult. It is much easier to prescribe and normatively call for more efficient technology than to start reorganising the course of everyday life of these two families. In this paper, we therefore reside to note some differences in the families; the first family engages in extensive travelling, while in the second case maintenance work, visiting friends and other forms of socialising substitute for travelling. It is also important to note that in the second family, the main income earner worked only five hours during his/her working day, which is significantly less than in the case of the first family.

A conclusion that one might thus make is that rewriting the courses of everyday is difficult. However, time use diaries exhibit variation in different feasible (i.e. real!) ways of organising one's life. Scenario work might thus also be more feasible by comparing different diary days. In our case example, it seems that the way the second family has organised their day would probably facilitate many of the sustainability innovations that feature in the future scenarios.

5 Discussion

Time use data have not thus far been systematically used in backcasting and thus their contribution remains unclear. We do not claim that the patterns of time use are the single best media to project future changes. To their benefit, they expose the interconnectedness of everyday life activities; an increase in one must correspond with decrease in others. On the other hand such data leave important technological changes in energy efficiency in the background. Yet the most important aspects of time use data may be their close relation to everyday life shuffling and struggling in households. Such a view on everyday life contributes to better understanding of the conditions and obstacles of changes in everyday life.

This feature is apparent in our empirical data. The example days of August 14th and 16th and December 18th and 20th in two randomly selected Finnish families do not appear in any particular way unsustainable. What is obvious is that time use data exclude much of the moralising critical thoughts about modern consumption. When looking at the course of the day, the activities seem to make a coherent whole in which consumption decisions follow, constitute and legitimise each other

The related important aspect of time use data is whether it contributes to the participation of lay people in the making of sustainable futures. Do the time use data communicate the idea that sustainability will imply changes in the everyday life? Moreover, does such an approach invite people to formulate desirable futures from the point of view of their

everyday life? If so, and we tentatively do support the idea, time use data can make a contribution in a reconfiguration of societies towards sustainability.

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Time Use Database in Analysing Consumption Patterns

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Abstract

The aim of this presentation is to demonstrate the contents of the Harmonised European Time Use Database and describe the possibilities it offers for analysing shopping behaviour. Statistics Finland and Statistics Sweden developed the database and the tabulation system with the help of a grant from Eurostat. One of the 49 main activity codes is called “Shopping and services”. The activity can be analysed using a vast number of background variables, e.g. age, sex, family cycle and composition, housing, activity status, and income. Time spent on shopping shows a gender-based division of labour among persons in active age. After retirement women increase time spent on shopping only slightly, whereas men become much more eager to engage in shopping activities. This phenomenon leads to almost equal time spent on shopping by women and men.

1. Harmonisation of European time use surveys

The time diary method has its origin in family budget surveys. In addition to studying the use of money in terms of income and consumption, human behaviour was measured by allocation of time already in the end of the 19th century.

Time Use Surveys have been carried out in Europe by several national statistical institutes since the 1970s. Even where countries have developed their own methods and classifications these have mainly been based on the methodology set up by the Multinational Comparative Time-Budget Research Project carried out in 12 countries in the 1960s (Szalai 1972).

In the early 1990s Eurostat recognised the need for increased comparability between national Time Use Surveys. In December 1994 the Statistical Programme Committee representing national statistical institutes in Europe reached a conclusion for the proposal of harmonised and co-ordinated time use surveys. A series of pilot surveys were conducted in 1996–1997 in several European countries and Guidelines on Harmonised European Time Use Surveys were published in 2000.

2. Harmonisation approach

Population and sample design

In the Guidelines common rules and instructions were given to countries participating in the survey. Household samples were recommended. It was recommended that each person aged 10 and over in a household be requested to fill in the individual questionnaire and the diary. Although most of the countries had drawn household samples, some countries used the individual as the sampling unit.

Survey forms

The chosen harmonisation approach was a mix of input and output harmonisation. On the input side, it was recommended that the countries should apply a diary format and a common activity coding list. Output harmonisation meant that exact definitions of the concepts were given for background variables but countries had freedom to decide the wording of the questions, e.g. in employment status, occupation and income.

The Guidelines contained definitions and explanations concerning the survey forms, i.e. the household and individual questionnaires, and the time diary. Interviewers were trained in collecting data with face-to-face interviews.

- A family member familiar with the circumstances of the household answered the questions of the *household questionnaire*.
- The *individual questionnaire* was filled in for each household member.
- The *diary* was introduced by the interviewer and left with the respondents. It was self-administered and to be filled in at fixed 10-minute intervals during two randomly designated diary days, one weekday and one weekend day. The respondents recorded the activities in their own words.

The dimensions to be measured with the use of the time diary were:

- Main and simultaneous activities.
- With whom time was spent.
- The location of the activity.

The aim of the time use survey

The time-diary method is used for studying the daily pattern of a person's time use, including such everyday activities as gainful work, education, housework, taking care of personal needs, and free time. Activities are recorded in chronological order over the entire day.

Time as a common measurement unit offers a variety of possibilities for analysing methods of different degrees of complexity. Limiting the study to the 24 hours of the day allows enough sensitivity for exploring changes: time removed from one activity (e.g. because of reduced working hours) is unavoidably transferred to other activities. The measurement units

of hours and minutes are the same in all countries, which is a clear advantage in cross-national comparisons.

3. The database

Around 20 European countries conducted time use surveys according to harmonised guidelines at the turn of the millennium. Based on these surveys, Statistics Finland and Statistics Sweden developed the Harmonised Time Use Database and the tabulation system with a grant from Eurostat.

In the first phase the database included microdata from eight countries: Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. During the second phase of the project data from Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovenia were added to the database.

The data for the database was asked from the countries in three data files. The background variables on households and individuals were in a separate file. The preliminary list of background variables provided by Eurostat was supplemented by Statistics Finland together with Statistics Sweden. This list was based on the feasibility study done by the University of Essex. The variables to be used mainly as background variables were selected.

The diary day file has background information about the day the diary was filled in: day of week, calendar day, month, year, day weight.

The diary information is in the so-called episode file. The episode file is in a “calendar format”. There are 144 variables for the diary variables, one for each 10-minute time slot.

The countries were asked to send their data at the harmonised 3-digit level, except for the data concerning secondary activities. As all the countries were not able to produce all the comparable codes needed for the 3-digit level, Statistics Finland converted national codes to the aggregate classification. This classification contains 49 categories.

A limited categorisation for secondary activities was created including activities known to be reliable. A combination of “with whom” variables was produced for the database. This included eight categories.

The participating countries sent their draft documents for meta-information to Statistics Finland. For some countries this information was completed from other sources (e.g. web documents).

The files transmitted by the countries were checked with an SAS program designed for checking permissible variable values (e.g. missing values) and lists of errors were printed out. The lists were sent to the countries. Consistency of the individual and household information files and the diary day files was checked by comparing the frequencies of the variables between countries.

The episode files were checked by producing control tables based on previously published tables in the Pocketbook “*How Europeans Spend Their Time*”. The tables were then sent for

checking and approval to the countries. If the checking revealed deviations from the recommendations, the deviations were corrected in co-operation with the NSIs concerned.

The harmonised SAS data files were packed and equipped with passwords, saved on CD-ROM and then sent to Statistics Sweden. File specifications and metainformation documents were sent by e-mail.

Statistics Sweden developed the web-based tabulation tool and maintains the database. The database includes main and secondary activity codes, location codes and “with whom” variables for each 10-minute slot. Time use variables can be analysed using a vast number of background variables, e.g. age, sex, family cycle and composition, housing, activity status, and income.

The tabulation application is used with a web browser. The results can be exported into a word-processing or spreadsheet programme for further processing. Even though the tabulation tool is based on an SAS programme, the user does not need to have this programme installed on his/her computer. Compiling tables requires a user ID, which is requested from Statistics Sweden.

Figure 1. The starting page of the database web application

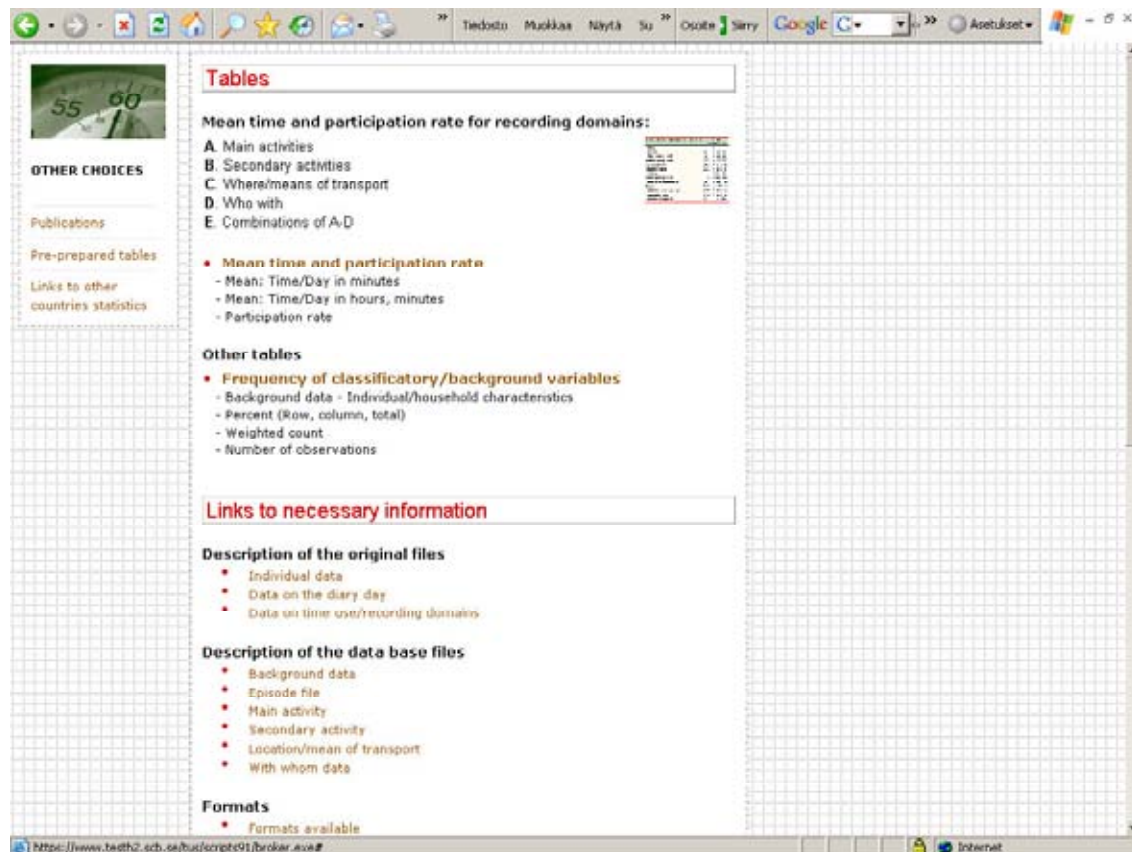
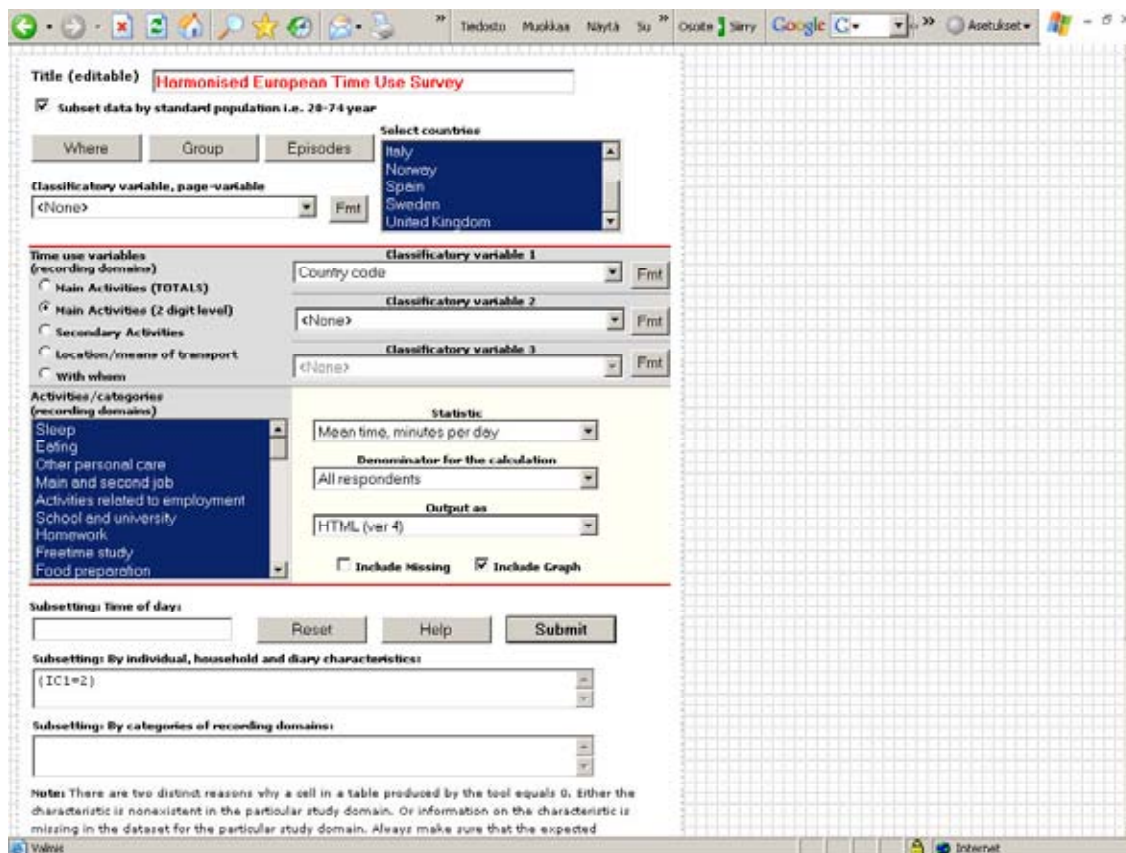


Figure 2. The menu page of the database web application



Shopping and services can be analysed in the database as one summarised category including the following national subcodes

- 36 *SHOPPING AND SERVICES*
- 360 *Unspecified shopping and services*
- 361 *Shopping*
- 362 *Commercial and administrative services*
- 363 *Personal services*
- 369 *Other specified shopping and services*

The related travel is separated like in the original code

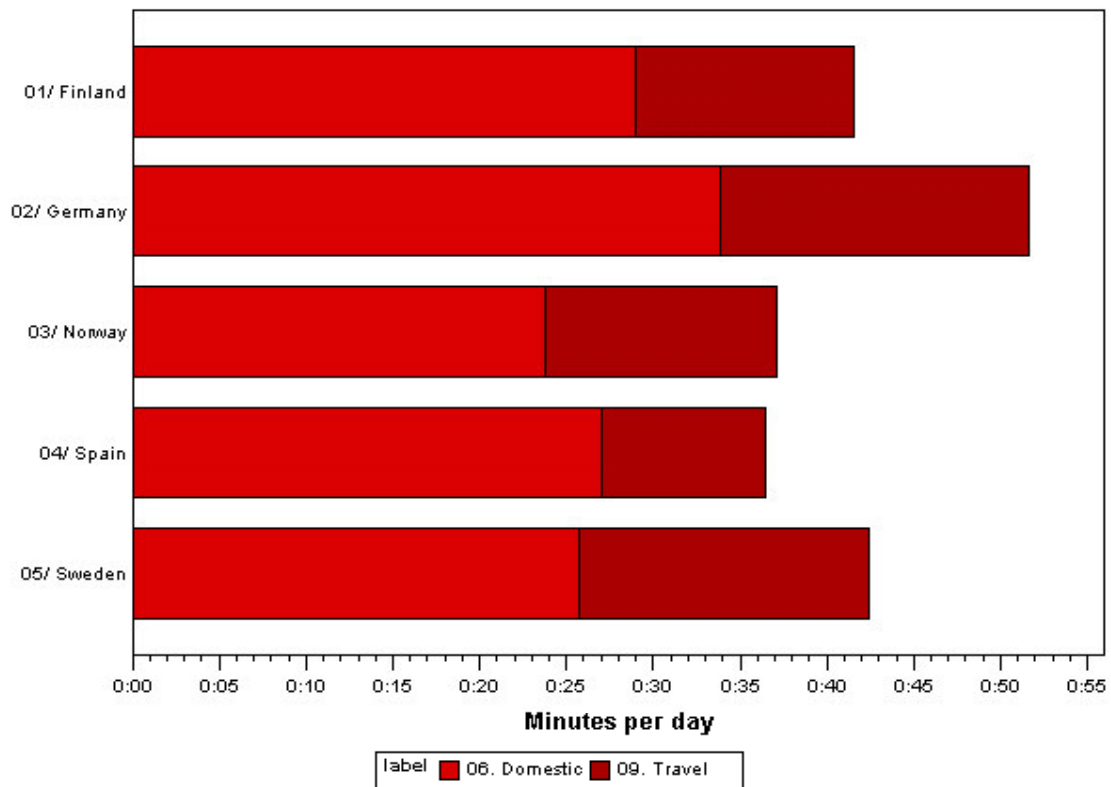
- 936 *Travel related to shopping*

Shopping is not available as a separate category in the secondary activity or in the daily rhythm. The social context (with whom) can be connected with shopping behaviour.

4. Results on time use regarding shopping and services

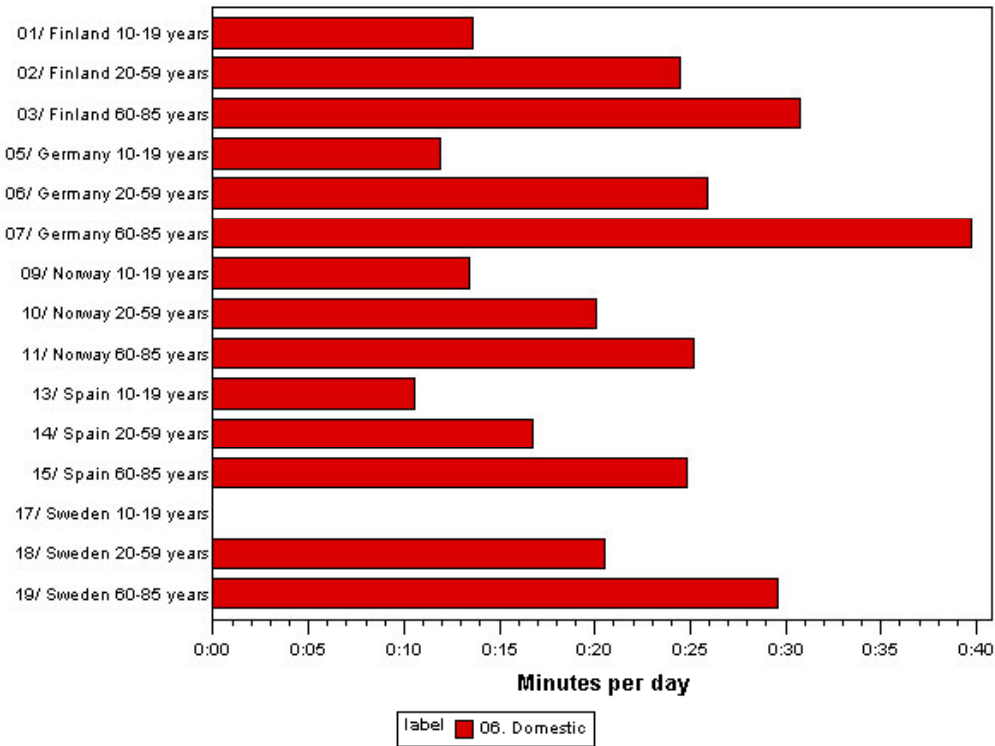
In the following the kinds of analyses the database allows regarding human behaviour connected with shopping and services are described with the help of some examples.

Figure 3. Time spent on shopping and services incl. travel, persons aged 20 to 74



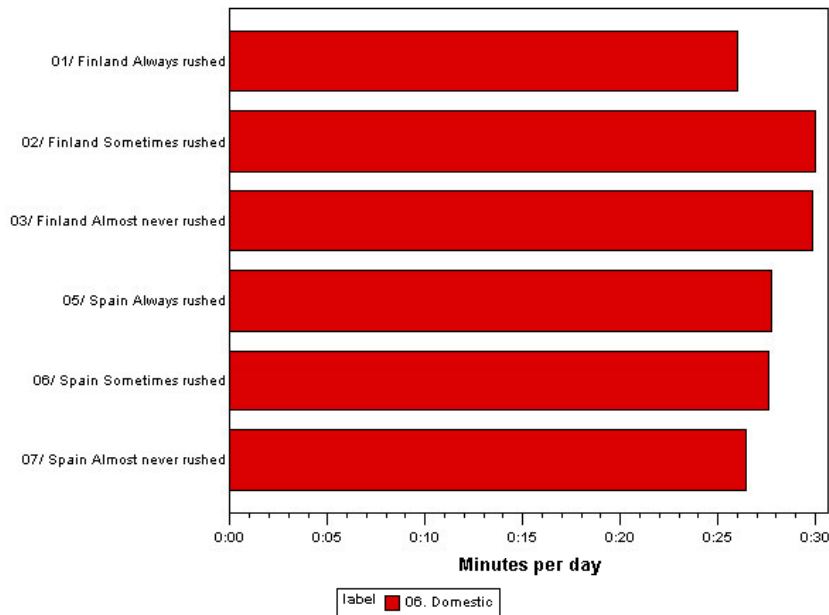
Source: Harmonised European Time Use Survey [online database version 1.0]

Figure 4. Time spent on shopping and services by age, men



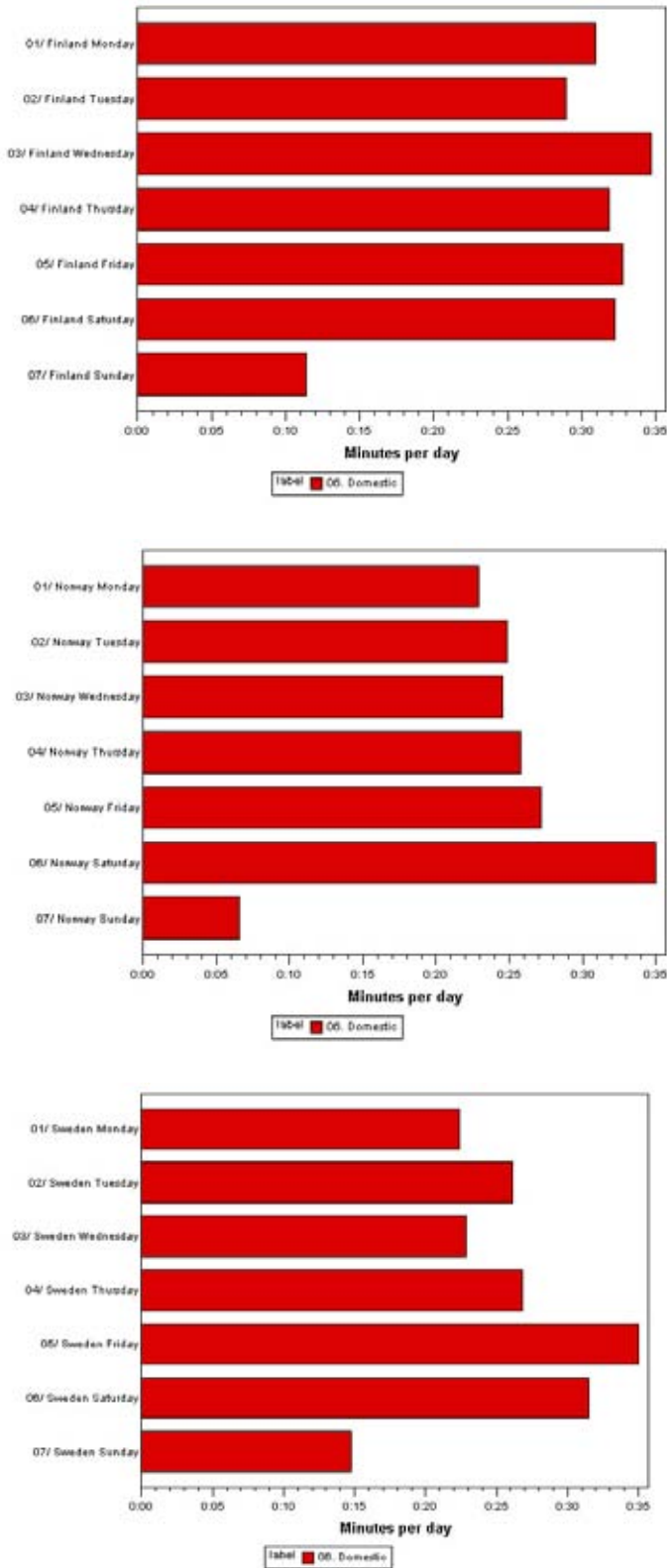
Source: Harmonised European Time Use Survey [online database version 1.0]

Figure 5. Time spent on shopping and services by feeling rushed in Finland and Spain, persons aged 20 to 74



Source: Harmonised European Time Use Survey [online database version 1.0]

Figure 6. Time spent on shopping and services by day of the week in Finland, Norway and Sweden



Source: Harmonised European Time Use Survey [online database version 1.0]

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Combining time and money for family well-being – life cycle perspective

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Abstract

Our paper examines methods used by households in providing life care services. Life care services are defined as services that are indispensable for living: meals, accommodation, care, and clothing. These services are the responsibility of the household, which organizes their provision by choosing and combining available alternatives in view of the wellbeing of the household members. We examine how households in different life cycles behave in this respect. The methods examined are self-provision, partial outsourcing (use of convenience goods), and use of services from outside the household. The results show that the life cycle plays a key role in decision making on resource allocation. Allocation may depend on the availability of time and money but also on household practices in service provision. The supply and availability of alternative methods is found to be an important factor for people's well-being.

1. Introduction

The work-life balance is an extensively discussed topic in western developed countries where it is common for both spouses to be gainfully employed. Problems in combining paid work and child care is regarded as a major reason to postpone or give up having children in case both spouses have careers. This, in turn, is often seen as non-sustainable development in terms of the culture and economy of these societies. The double burden of paid and unpaid work is not a new problem. Already in the 1960s the use of household technology and division of household work between spouses was much debated, and studies were conducted to find ways of easing the situation. From the 1970s onwards, outsourcing of housework through the use of semi-prepared foods and, most recently, of purchased housework services has grown more and more common. Obviously both old and new means are needed as families try to balance their time pressures.

Research on time poverty has focused mainly on families with children. However, the need to balance work and life occurs in all ages and life cycles, yet differently. Research on the subject has been boosted by time use surveys which have provided data on daily use and allocation of time to domestic work and paid work. Several study approaches have been applied to see how families and individuals organize their life. Economic approaches have focused on people's rational choices

between paid and unpaid work. These have largely drawn from Becker's theory, which is based on a hypothesis of rational behavior and utility maximization in time allocation. Time and money are defined as total substitutes. Variables such as spouses' disposable income, paid working hours, education, number and age of children, etc., have been analyzed to explain the allocation of time to paid and unpaid work. Research results indicate that rational behavior explains time allocation to some extent, but much has remained unexplained. Becker's theory has also been tested with time use data and household budget data. (e.g. Bonke 1992)

Another group of studies have attempted to explain the various housework time saving methods used by households. Their results show that, contrary to expectations, ownership of household appliances does not reduce unpaid housework time (Robinson 1980, 63, Bittman, Rice & Wajcman 2003). The assumption is that the use of household appliances has simultaneously raised the standard and amount of the outputs (better meals, more laundry washed, bigger areas cleaned). More recent research has investigated the replacement of self-provided household services by market services. These studies are mostly based on household expenditure data (Bittman, Meagher & Matheson 1998, Alcón, Quiñones & Bermejo 2002). Bittman et al. (2003) report a strong increase in outsourced food preparation in Australia as people eat out more frequently and buy take-away meals. They found that child care is another increasingly outsourced activity, while the use of gardening services has grown only slightly. A Spanish study (Alcón et al. 2002) shows similar results: expenditure on services has risen notably, with family income, women's participation in paid work, educational level, and the life cycle stage of having children being the main explanatory factors. Particularly the growing number of women in gainful employment increases the use of purchased domestic services.

The third category of studies reviewed here are those which consider all possible alternatives of reducing housework time, including household appliances, convenience goods (such as semi-prepared meals), purchased housework services, and use of volunteer help (Van der Lippe, Tjijdens & de Ruijter 2004, van Ours 1991). The starting point for these studies is not the actual time used for domestic work but, rather, they look at household services as elements of life care. This approach examines housework from another direction: from the output side of household production, in which housework is viewed as one of the inputs. What people consume are the outputs, the services, and not the inputs as such. The concept of life care services was originally developed within the field of forensic economy (Ireland & Riccardi 2003). These are services that are necessary for living; they are not like other goods or services that one can decide whether to buy or not. Households have to provide them constantly, in one way or another. The choices they make with respect to the mode of provision can vary widely. It is more a question of combining alternative means rather than focusing on just one practice. Bonke (1992) applied this type of approach in his study on food choice and allocation of time and money, household production and market services. His research, however, also drew on Becker's theory in seeking to find out if households behave rationally in choosing between alternative ways of providing meals and snacks.

In our study we, too, have applied the life care services approach. The aim is to see what alternative practices Finnish households use in providing life care services for themselves: meals, laundering, dwelling maintenance, and care for children and adults in need. This covers their ways of organizing their domestic activities and combining their resources such as time and money in order to gain a balance between inputs and outputs to achieve good life quality. We do not take time and money as total substitutes but rather as elements which households combine differently in different life cycles. Theoretically, our research is based on the life cycle approach. Previous research has shown that a household's time use and the amount of services it needs vary depending on its life cycle; in particular, the number and age of children in the household has an enormous effect on this.

The paper is organized as follows. In chapter 2 we describe the research setting, define the concepts and classifications we have developed, and present the data. Chapter 3, in which we describe our results, has two parts. The first part describes households' resource allocation to all life care services by life cycles, and the second part goes into more detail on meals and care services. Finally, in chapter 4 we discuss the results and draw conclusions.

2. Research method and data

2.1 Research setting

For the analysis we categorized life care services into four groups: 1) meals and snacks, 2) care (for children, adults, pets), 3) dwelling maintenance, and 4) clothing and clothing care. We identified three main means of providing them: 1) self-provision, 2) buying convenience (ready-to-use goods that reduce the need for domestic work) and 3) purchased services (total outsourcing). All three alternatives are available in categories like meals and clothing, but in some, like in the care category, not so many market substitutes exist. With respect to meals our categories are very similar to Bonke's (1992, 32), although we have named them differently. Bonke classified meals into non-convenience, semi-convenience, and convenience foods, where semi-convenience meant the use of ready made foods as a part of a meal.

In order to describe how households use alternative methods of providing life care services in different phases of life, we divided households by life cycles as follows:

- single-person households (three age groups: under 45 years; 45–64 years; 65+ years),
- couples without children (three age groups: under 45 years; 45–64 years; 65+ years),
- families with children (single-parent families; two-parent families with children under 7 years; two-parent families with children 7–17 years).

Household consumption expenditure was not corrected by equivalence scales, because we examine time use and expenditure together. At least so far there are no "time units" for comparing households of different sizes. Thus, the number of households for singles is 1, for couples 2, and the average for families with children 2.6 in single-parent families, 4.1 in small-children families, and 4.0 in school-age children families.

2.2 Data

Three sets of data are used for the study. The first data are drawn from the national time use survey of 1999/2000 (traditional diary method) collected by Statistics Finland, and the second from the national household budget survey of 2001, also collected by Statistics Finland. The third survey data were collected for the National Consumer Research Centre concerning purchased household services in 2005. These data are based on a nationwide sample of Finnish households over 25 years of age. The two first data sets were used to compile the Finnish Household Satellite Account, and these calculations are partly used for our analysis as well.

Information on *self-provision* is represented by the required inputs: namely, time and intermediate consumption, with intermediate consumption referring to the ingredients and raw materials used in the production process. Purchased household durables needed for self-provision are also included (instead of capital consumption) under the self-provision category. Ready-to-use goods illustrate the second category, *convenience*, as one way of reducing housework time. Expenditure on these

products is taken from the household satellite account like the data on durables expenditure. We approach the third category, *services*, from two perspectives: expenditure on services and intensity of service use. Consumption expenditure on services is drawn from the satellite account calculation. The data on the intensity of service use (how many times per year a service was bought) are derived from the household service survey (for a list of services covered by the survey see Appendix 1). This information is not directly comparable with the other data, but it does show the differences in service use between different household types and life cycle stages. The research setting is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Empirical research setting

	Meals and snacks	Clothing and laundry	Care for children, adults, pets	Dwelling maintenance and upkeep
Self provision inputs: - Time used for housework - Intermediate consumption (ingredients, raw materials) - Household durables	Meals prepared at home	Clothing care and laundering at home	Care at home	Housecleaning, repairs, heating, gardening and yard work, etc.
Convenience: - Purchase of goods for final consumption	Ready-to-eat foods	Purchased clothing		
Services: - Purchase of services (total outsourcing)	Eating out	Clothing care and laundry services (dry-cleaning, laundering)	Maid at home Care services from outside the home	Cleaning services, reparations
Intensity of market service use (See Appendix 1)	Home-delivered meals (pizza taxi, etc.) Kitchen help Home delivered groceries Catering services for family parties	Dry-cleaning and washing in laundry Linen washing in laundry Laundering or ironing help at home Sewing and textile repair services	Babysitting (occasional) Care for adult or disabled person Pet care	E.g. carpet cleaning in laundry Repairs of home or summer house Garden or yard work Housecleaning Window washing Minor repairs and e.g. installing of paintings, lamps

The time concept used in the calculations is the total time used by a household – that is, the time use of all family/household members is added together. Time use on unpaid work here includes the time spent on meal preparation, dwelling maintenance and housecleaning, care functions, and laundering and other clothing care. Child care time includes transportation for children and adult care transportation for adults. Other travel time related to domestic work and time used for shopping are excluded from the figures. Time use on volunteer work and on informal help to other households was also left out. We decided to omit these activities for the sake of simplicity, even though they are inputs to life care services. This decision may have reduced domestic work time and the need for

market services to some extent. Elderly households and families with children usually receive more informal help than other households. However, the time used on informal help is relatively small¹.

Consumption expenditure is divided into intermediate consumption and expenditure on household durables related to household production, and into final consumption. For meals it was possible to separate between ready-to-eat foods consumed at home (convenience) and eating out (services). In the case of other life care services the only alternatives were self-provision and outsourcing by using purchased services. Final consumption for the clothing category covers shoes and ready-to-wear clothes, as well as laundry and sewing services. Final consumption for care includes purchases of care services from the market or the public sector.

3. Results

3.1 Domestic work time

The time used for housework varies widely between life cycles. The workload in a family with children is largest, it is twice as heavy as in a family without children. Mothers do more than half of the work, fathers do one fourth, and children take care of the rest. The more children over 10 years there are in a family, the bigger is their share of housework (Aalto & Varjonen 2006). In the case of single-person households and couples domestic work time varies a great deal by their ages. The elderly use more than twice as much time as the young. For example, couples over 65 years spend about as much time on domestic work as families with two school-age children. (Figure 1)

What could explain the amount of time elderly people spend on housework? We assume it is because they also spend more time at home. Over 65-year-olds prepare most of their meals themselves, work in the garden, and own summer cottages. Of course, they may also work more slowly than younger people.

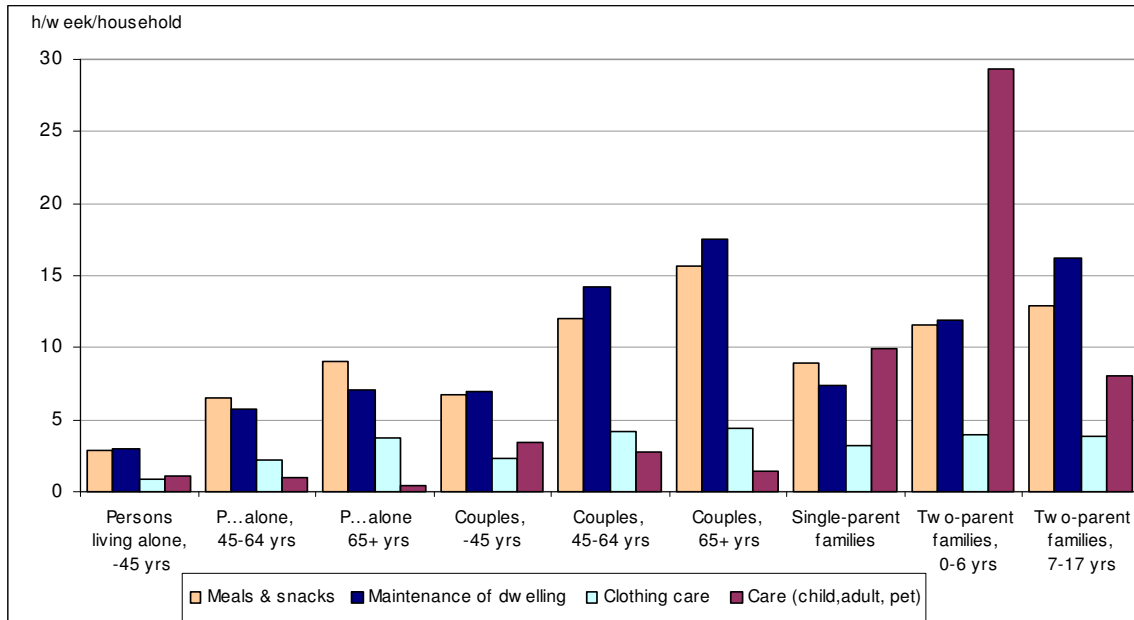


Figure 1 Time use on life care services by household type

¹ Statistics Finland. Time Use Survey 1999–2000. Survey and diary data.

There are also differences in time use between type of services. Dwelling maintenance and meals are the services take up the largest share of domestic work time in most stages of life. It represents about one third of all time inputs in nearly every household type, except in elderly households where it takes up an even bigger part. About 40% of the time input in families with small children goes into child care.

Time pressure is felt both by families with small children and single-parent families (Pääkkönen & Niemi 2002). There is much housework to do but only one or two persons for it. Most families, however, manage to divide the workload between family members. According to a Finnish study 73% of families organize their domestic work in this manner, while 18% leave the work to only one person and others ease the load by buying services from the market. Outsourcing appears to grow along with the age of the household members, especially if they live alone (Varjonen et al. 2007). Elderly households and families with children also receive help from other households or from the market in all four categories of life care services¹.

3.2 Consumption

Consumption expenditure on the different life care services varies both between household types and types of services. Expenditure is highest in families with school-age children and lowest in households of elderly singles. Meals and snacks take far up more money than all other services combined. The second largest share of expenditure among the elderly goes into dwelling maintenance, in families with children into child care, and in other households into clothing. (Figure 2)

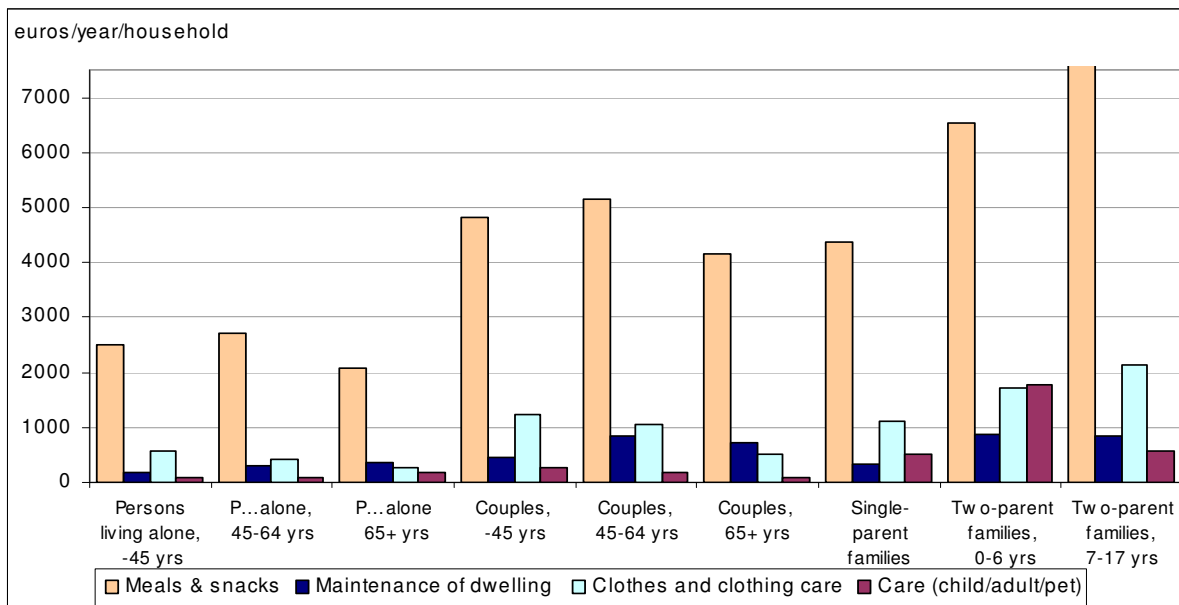


Figure 2 Consumption expenditure on life care services by household type

3.3 Household services

After seeing how much time and money households use on life care services we move on to look at life care services that are purchased from the market. This information is based on a Finnish national survey concerning the year 2005 (Varjonen et al. 2007). Respondents to the survey were asked what services they had purchased and how often. Also here significant differences were found between households. Families with children and couples under 45 years buy services more often than other households: nine out of ten had used at least one paid service during the year. In contrast, only one in three households over 65 years had bought any services. However, this changes again in over 75-year-old persons' households: 15% of them use market services intensively (Varjonen et al. 2007). These results are similar as obtained by the National Public Health Institute (Sulander et al. 2004).

Many households purchase services related to dwelling maintenance and housecleaning. This was the case especially among families with children as well as among middle-aged (45–64 years) singles and couples. Younger couples and families with children outsourced their meal preparation by buying home-delivered meals, mostly pizzas. One of five families with small children had used paid babysitting services in 2005.

The proportion of households that buy services gives information about the prevalence of service use, but the picture sharpens when we look at the intensity of the use of services, as shown in Figure 3.

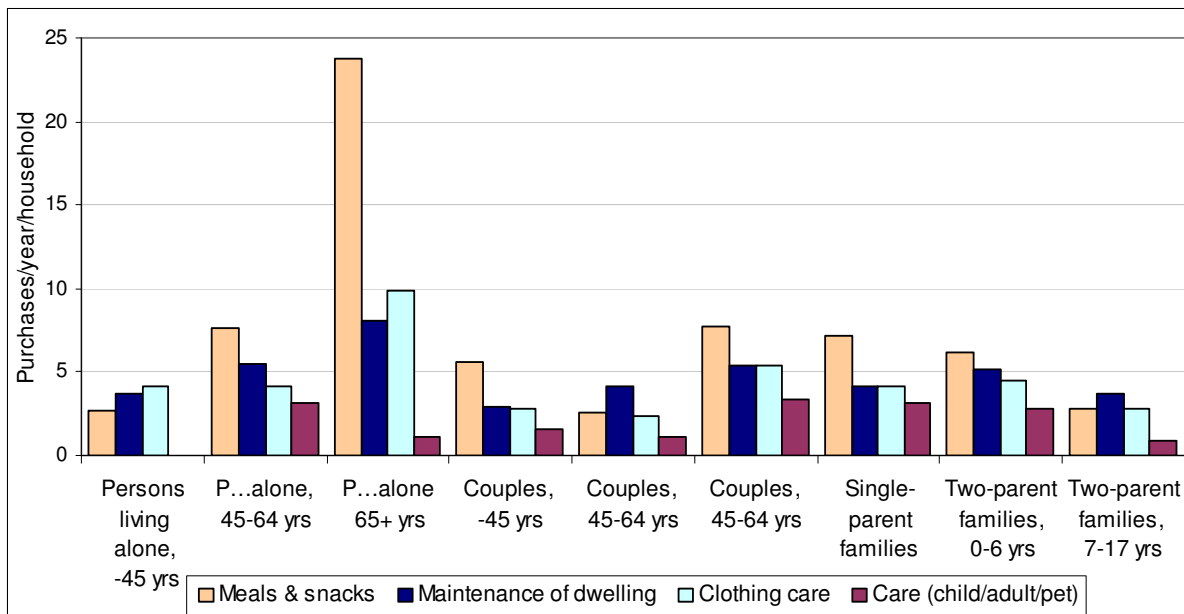


Figure 3 Intensity of service use by household type in 2005

Home-delivered meals are purchased more frequently than other market services in all phases of life. Persons aged 65+ and living alone need meals and also other life care services most intensively. Although eating out was not included in the survey data of household services (see Appendix 1), its share of expenditure is discussed and presented later (in Figure 6).

Next, we go on to look in more detail at time allocation, consumption expenditure, and intensity of service use in providing meals and snacks, and care.

3.4 Resource allocation to life care services

Meals and snacks

Households’ methods of providing meals and snacks differ somewhat in different life cycles. Where persons older than 45 years rely mostly on self-provision, younger people eat out more often than other groups and families with children buy convenience meals and ready-to-eat foods from supermarkets more frequently than others. The time used for meal preparation increases with age. Middle-aged couples use as much time to meals preparation as families with children (Figure 4).

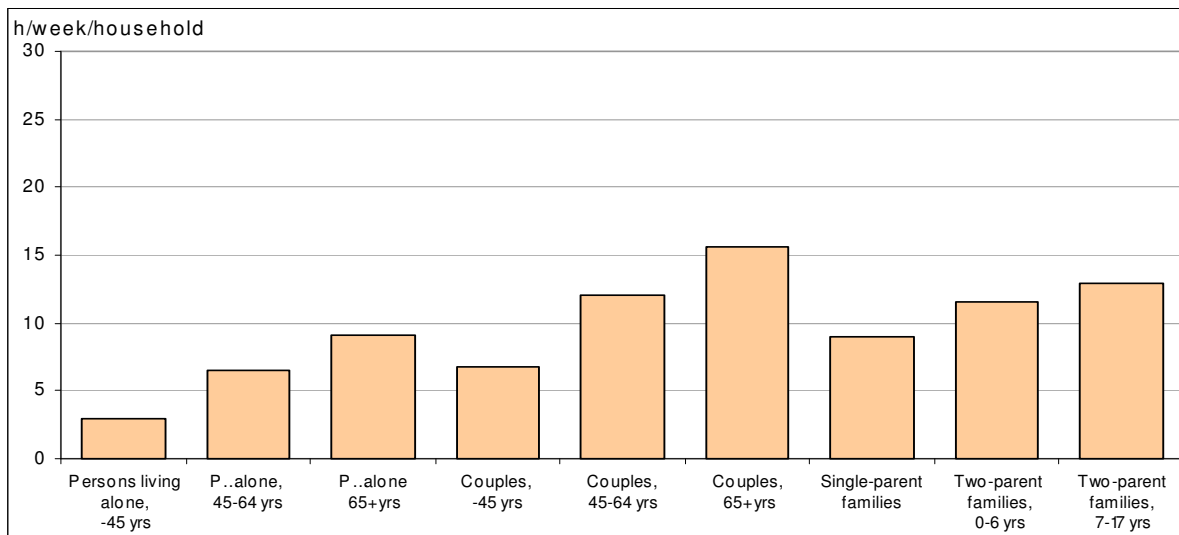


Figure 4 Time use on preparation of meals and snacks by household type

Time is only one of the inputs into the self-provision of meals. To prepare food the household needs various ingredients and other intermediate consumption products as well as kitchen appliances (capital goods). Figure 5 describes household expenditure on these products by different types of households. It is interesting to note that time use and expenditure do not quite go hand in hand in all life cycle stages. The use of time is higher compared to expenditure on ingredients in the oldest age groups. The opposite is true in families with school-aged children. Expenditure on investment goods is smaller in oldest age groups. (Figure 5)

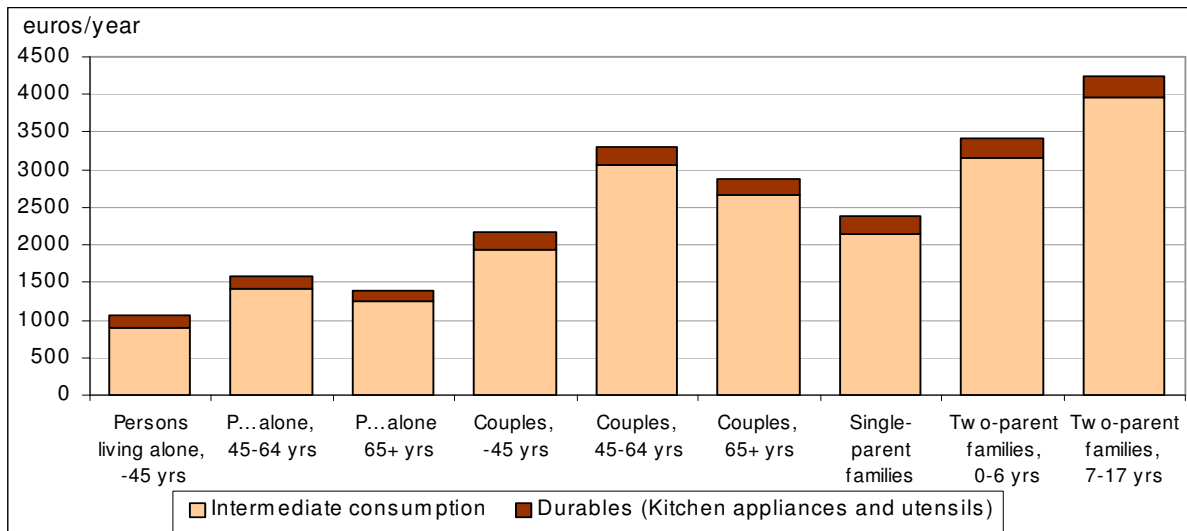


Figure 5 Consumption expenditure on meals and snacks by household type

Total outsourcing is described by expenditure on eating out and on ready-to-eat meals and foods (ice cream, yoghurt, sweets, etc.). Figure 6 shows that, again, age is a critical factor when it comes to eating out, but this is not so in the case in convenience, ready-to-eat foods. Convenience products are used most in families with children. Other studies also indicate that young people more often have their lunches and dinners outside the home whereas older people tend to eat at home¹.

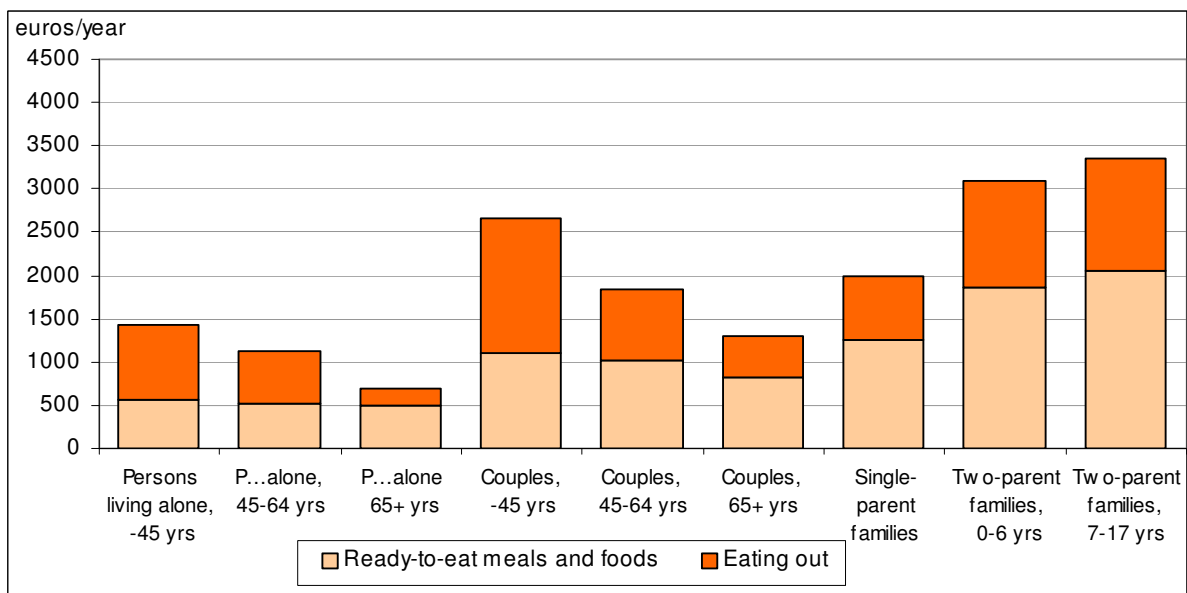


Figure 6 Consumption expenditure on outsourced meals and snacks by household type

We have now looked into household expenditure on the various alternatives of providing meals and snacks and noted differences between household types, but expenditure for households of varied sizes was given without using equivalence scales. Therefore it is useful to examine the relative distribution of expenditure among the alternative methods of food management. In Figure 7,

¹ Statistics Finland. Time Use Survey 1999–2000. Survey and diary data.

durables and intermediate consumption illustrate self-provision, while the share of outsourcing is divided into ready-to-eat meals and eating out.

Younger singles and couples both outsource their meal preparation by eating out more than other groups; eating out accounts for 35% of their food expenditure compared with 20% for other household types. Families with children use more ready-to-eat foods than other households, with a share of about 30% of food management expenditure. The share of self-provisioning is largest in oldest couples' households, over 60%, when its share in other households is from 40 to 50%. (Figure 7)

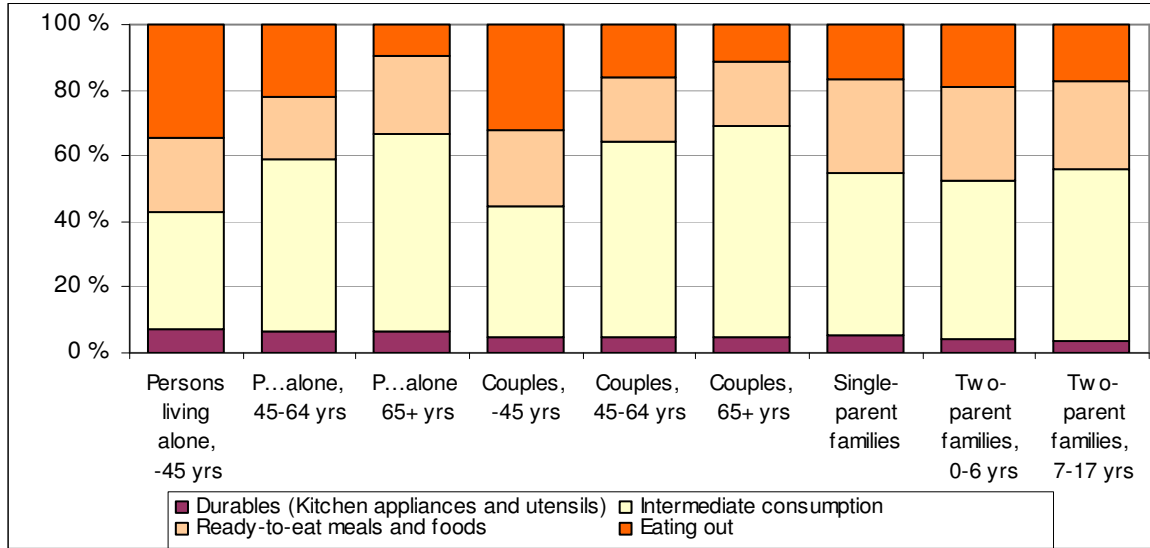


Figure 7 Distribution of purchases for meal and snack products and services by household type, %

The survey data from 2005 give more information on the intensity of service use. We divided meal services into two groups: home-delivered meals and help in meal preparation. Home-delivered meals, mostly pizzas, are most intensively used by younger couples' households. Their average number is low, however, as only 24% of all households had purchased home-delivered meals at least once in 2005 (Figure 1 in Appendix 1). Figure 8 shows that kitchen help and catering services are used mostly by the elderly. They are persons that are not able to manage cooking by themselves. Some families with children had a maid at home, which explains paid kitchen assistance in these families. Nearly half of families with children had bought home-delivered meals, although not very frequently.

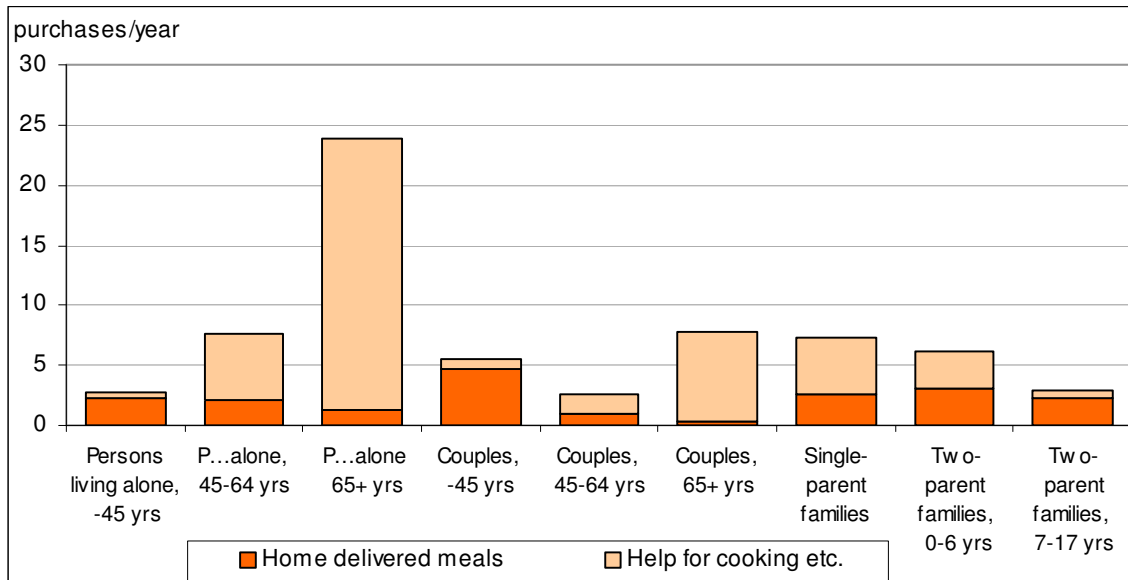


Figure 8 Average number of purchases of home-delivered meals and kitchen help by household type

Care for children, adults, and pets

The care sector is a field of services that is widely discussed in Finland as in other ageing societies. Care services have been divided mainly between the public sector and private households, and several government policy programs have been established to economize the costs of children’s day care and care for the elderly. Market services have also emerged lately. Obviously child care and care for adults only relates to certain specific household types. In households with small children the time used on child care is immense but decreases as children grow older. Time used on adult care is marginal even in couples over 65 years. There are at least two reasons for this: care given to other households is not included in the figures because it by definition refers to informal help and second, care is only included if it is a primary activity. (Figure 9)

The reason why this paper also deals with pet care is that pets need constant care after arriving in a household. More than 40% of Finnish households keep a pet (a dog/dogs in 23% and a cat/cats in 19%), and consequently, market services for pets is a rapidly growing industry. Pet care is much more evenly distributed between household types than other care functions. Younger couples and families with school-age children spend somewhat more time on pet care than other households. Note that of the walking the dog for only 10 minutes per walk is included as pet care time.

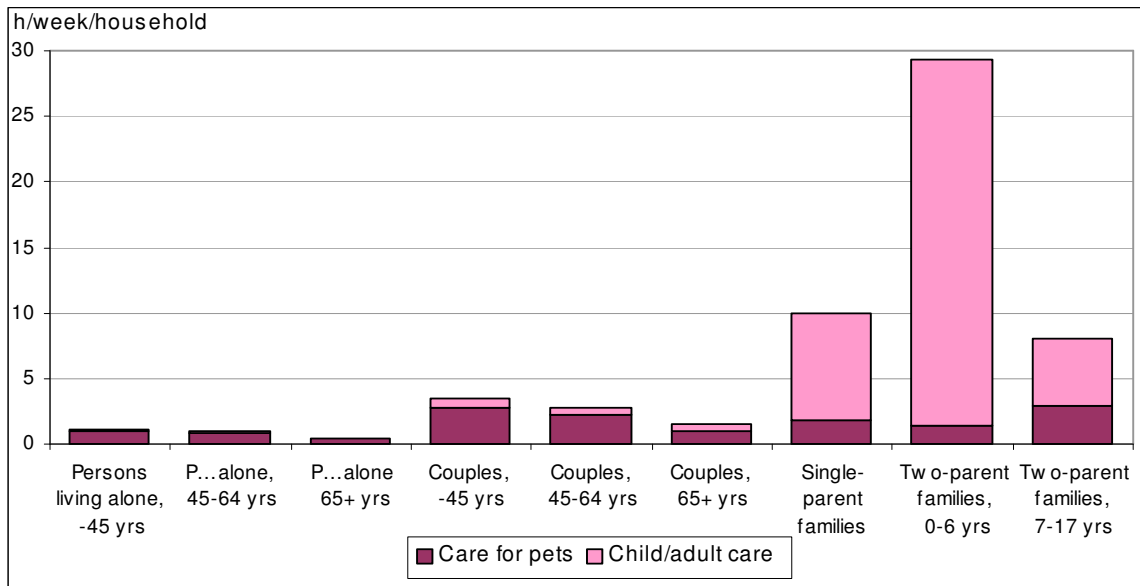


Figure 9 Time use on care and care-related transport by household type

Expenditure on care seems to go nicely hand in hand with time use (Figures 9 and 10). In Finland, children’s day care is a subjective right for every child under school age; its costs are highly subsidized, and care is free for low-income families. About half of children under 7 years are in public, government-organized day care.

Day care services for pets are included in other expenditure on pets in the household budget survey data. It is quite interesting is to note that pet expenditure in families with school-age children is higher than expenditure on child care. Figure 11 shows that consumption expenditure on pets takes up a bigger share than child care in all other household types but small-children and single-parent families, respectively adult care dominates in old single person households.

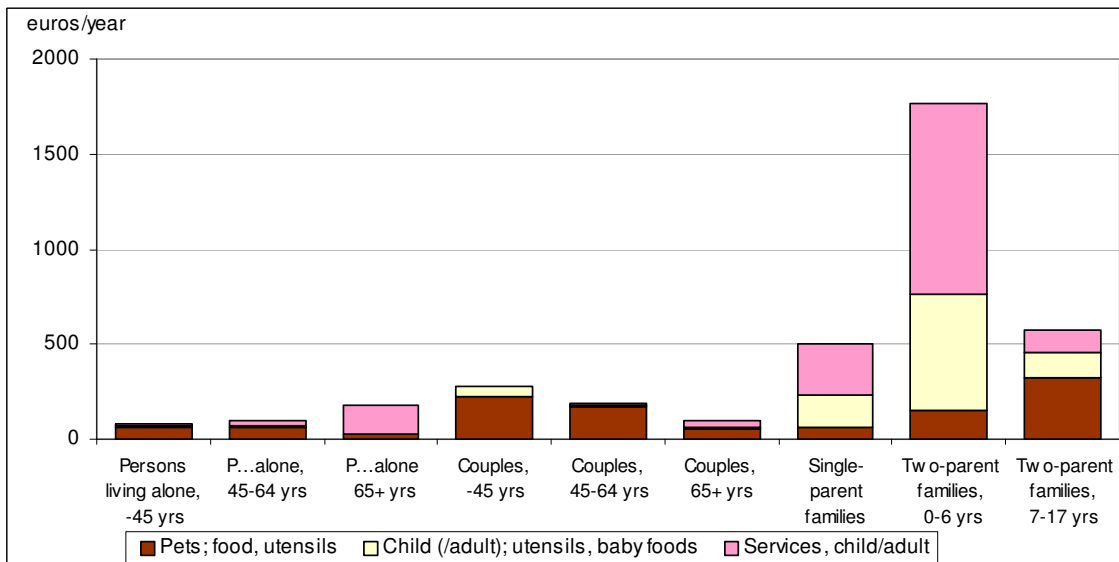


Figure 10 Consumption expenditure on care by household type

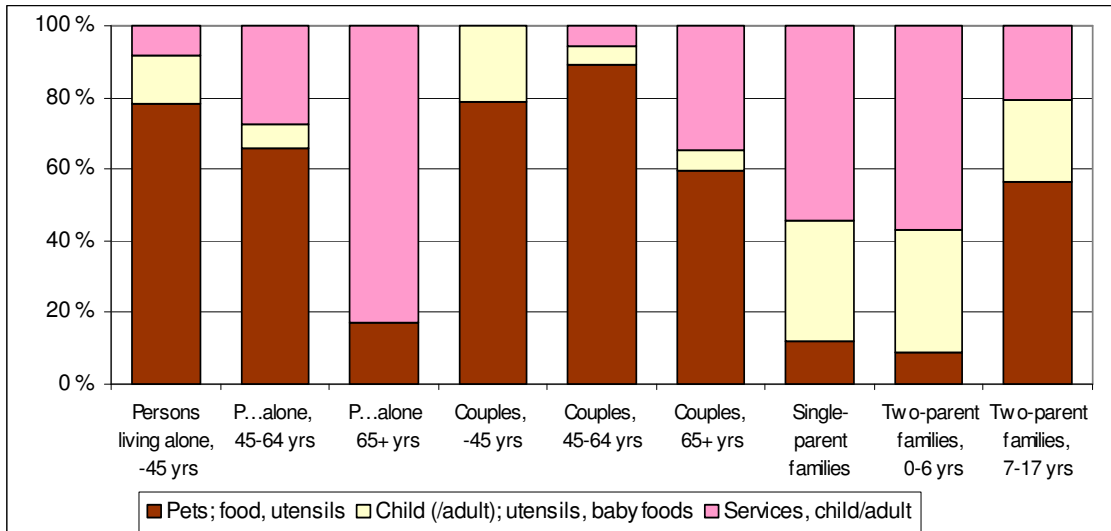


Figure 11 Distribution of purchased care products and services by household type, %

Regular day care services account for the majority of expenditure on care. Our survey data from 2005 about frequencies of purchased market services shed light on another aspect of service use, namely occasional care services. In the case of child care these refer mainly to babysitting services.

Use of private care services was concentrated in single-parent and small-children families (Figure 12). One in five of these households had bought child care services occasionally. However, informal assistance, which is not included in the care figures, is very much the preferred alternative whenever available (Varjonen et al. 2007). For the elderly care there is more need for private services because public services are very scarce, and they are only allowed for the weakest people. The couples over 65 years old use more private care services obviously because they are too capable for public care. In single households aged 45–65 the frequency of service use is surprisingly high. We tend to assume that some of these may be divorced parents who pay for their children or they may be handicapped persons who need help in daily living. The use of pet care services obviously also depends on the possibility to get informal help when needed. This is the case especially in the young single households.

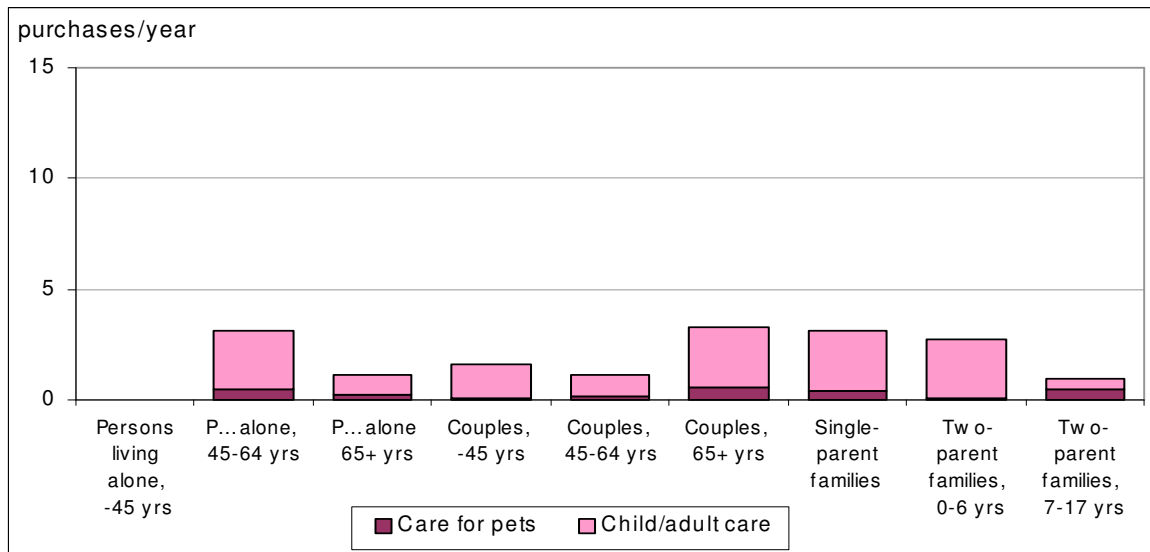


Figure 12 Average number of purchased care services by household type

4. Conclusions and discussion

We have now examined the various ways in which households provide life care services for themselves. These were defined as services that are indispensable for living: meals, accommodation, care, and clothing. It is the responsibility of the household to secure such services for the well-being of its members. Households organize their provision by choosing between different methods and combining available alternatives. We studied how households in different life cycles behave in this respect. The examined methods were self-provision, partial outsourcing by use of convenience goods, and use of services from outside the household.

Our results indicate that the life cycle is a key factor in household decision making on resource allocation. The differences may depend on the availability of time and money but also on the households' practices of service provision.

Balancing of time and money requires rational behavior, and people are believed to allocate them optimally. It would imply that consumption expenditure and time would move in opposite directions: the less time, the more money spent. This seems to hold true as to the provision of meals in single-households and households without children. But families with children do not follow this logic: they use more time and also more money on life care services than other household types. We did not apply consumer units per household for households of different sizes because we considered the use of both time and money, and so far no "time units" have been developed to allow for comparison. It might also be irrelevant to develop such measures at this point as it seems that housework time is not shared evenly in households – mothers still do the most of the work.

People representing different age groups and different life cycles apply different practices in life care service provision. These practices are related to the context of production and consumption, and also to people's individual preferences. The differences in practices are most clearly visible in the ways in which households provide meals. Younger couples follow a similar pattern: all three

alternative methods are used almost evenly. Purchased services (mostly eating out) represent one third and ready-to-eat foods one fourth of total food expenditure, while the remaining 40% is allocated to self-provision (meal ingredients and kitchen durables). In middle-aged couples' households the majority of meals are self-provided. Self-provisioning also dominates (50%) in families with children, which additionally utilize more convenience foods (30%) than other households.

Our results further show that practices vary by the type of service: meals, care, dwelling maintenance, and clothing. The more alternatives are available for a service, the more varied the practices and organization of service provision.

The responsibility for child and adult care is divided primarily between private households and the public sector, but the supply of market services is increasing, although still marginal. This is likely to affect the provision of care in the future. Care activities do not involve any major inputs into goods or other facilities: care giving is mostly about work, even though new technological innovations are being developed to reduce the human input into care. The care category also includes pet care, which is a service type for which only private services are available. This is an emerging industry which is expected to replace at least some of the informal assistance in pet care in the future.

It would indeed be desirable for households to have more alternatives available for the provision of life care services. In the case of meals there is already a decent amount of alternatives available on which to base diverse practices, but new innovations are needed for the other life care services. This would enable households in different life cycles to select those practices that are best suited for each family and family member.

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Table 1. The categories of household services according to principal functions of household production (% of households)

<p>MAINTENANCE OF DWELLING</p> <p>Carpet cleaning or washing of other household textiles in a laundry 29 %</p> <p>Repairs of dwelling or summer cottage 19 %</p> <p>Service for central heating, etc. house maintenance 10 (11)² %</p> <p>Garden or yard work 9 (12)² %</p> <p>Housecleaning 8 %</p> <p>Window washing 7 %</p> <p>Minor repairs and e.g. installing paintings, lamps 4 %</p> <p>Fixing furniture 3 %</p> <p>Interior planning 2 %</p> <p>Garden planning 2 %</p> <p>Caretaker service 1 %</p>	<p>FOOD MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Home delivered meals (pizzataxi, etc.) 24 %</p> <p>Cooking help 3 %</p> <p>Home delivered groceries 4 %</p> <p>Catering services for family parties 12 %</p> <p>CARE</p> <p>Baby sitting (occasional) 4 (8)³ %</p> <p>Care for adult or disabled 2 (8)⁵ %</p> <p>Pet care 4 (8)⁴ %</p> <p>CARE FOR CLOTHING</p> <p>Dry-cleaning and washing in a laundry 24 %</p> <p>Linen washing at laundry 4 %</p> <p>Laundry help at home 3 %</p> <p>Sewing and textile repair services 20 %</p>
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The figures in the table 1 show the part of Finnish households (%) which have bought the service from a private enterprise or a private person/worker in 2005.

The figures in parenthesis show the part (%) of households, living in one-family house², families with children³, households with dog or cat⁴ and households of 65 years of age or more⁵.

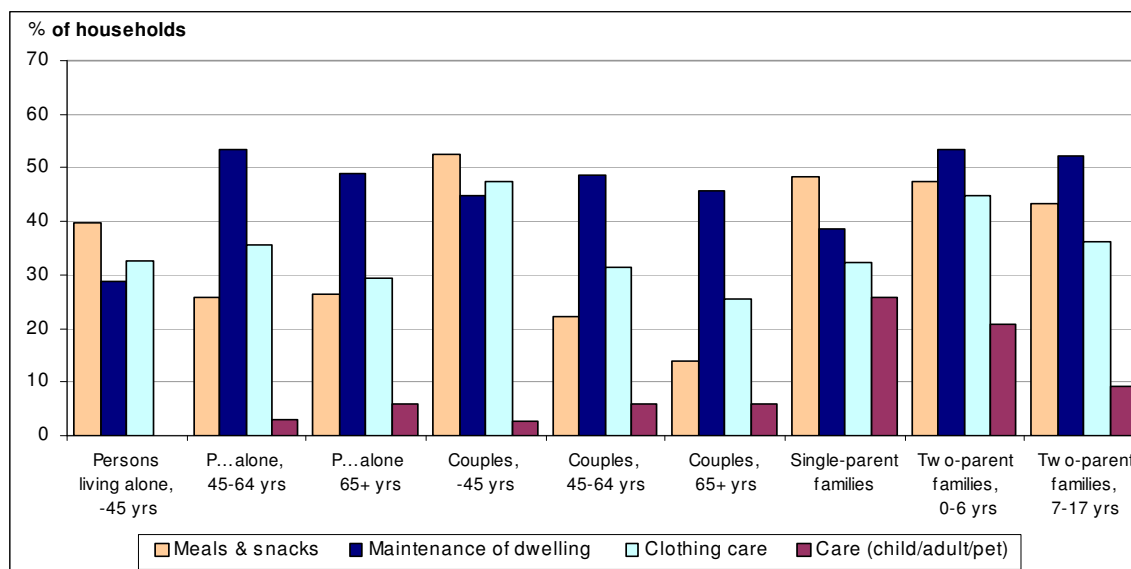


Figure 1 Frequency of purchased life care services by household type in 2005, %

Theme 10. Food, market and politics

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Papers

Bellner, Hanna & Maria Nyberg: "The empty nest" – food, meals, health and the life course

Boye, Heidi, Torben Hansen & Thyra Uth Thomsen: Engender mental accounting: How cultural and social spheres affect the justification of hedonic food consumption

Denver, Sigrid, Tove Christensen & Signe Krarup: How vulnerable is organic consumption to information?

Forsman-Hugg, Sari, Juha-Matti Katajajuuri, Johanna Mäkelä, Jaana Paananen, Inkeri Pesonen & Päivi Timonen: Enhancing corporate social responsibility in the food chain with a stakeholder dialogue

Jacobsen, Eivind, Svein Ole Borgen & Arne Dulrud: Towards a theoretical taxonomy of food labelling

Linden, Anna-Lisa & Maria Nyberg: A dining room at work. An arena for multi-cultural eating

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Nordström, Jonas & Linda Thunström: The Impact of Tax Reforms Designed to Encourage a Healthier Grain Consumption

Roos, Gun: Consumers, nutrition policy and simplified nutritional labelling of foods

”The empty nest” – food, meals, health and the life course

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Abstract

The purpose with this pilot study is to enhance our understanding of how transitions in the life course are influencing individuals' relationship to food, meals and health. Specifically, the focus is how parents' relation to food, meals and health may change during the phase in the life course when their children leave the nest. Qualitative in-depth interviews have been conducted with parents living in an empty nest. In the analysis, *adjustment* as well as *freedom* and *release* emerged as main themes. The parents adjust by changed food consumption patterns as well as time spent on food preparation and eating. Freedom and release are discussed in terms of no longer being obligated to structure the daily meal on the basis of children's preferences. The parental role in the empty nest is considered to be complex since they do not feel free from their role as parents, even though it changes.

Introduction

When the youngest child moves away from home, the whole family, the parents, as well as the child enter a new phase in their lives. The parents are left in the so-called empty nest (Clausen, 1986; Nock, 1979; Spence & Lonner, 1971) where it is just the two of them in the household, experiencing a similar situation like they had before getting children. The child is adjusting to the new situation of having an own household, with new responsibilities that comes along with this phase. What we examine in this pilot study is how parents' relationship to food, meals and health may change during this child-leaving phase of the family cycle. By interviewing parents that recently have entered the empty nest phase of the life course we have attempted to find tentative themes in the data answering the following question; how do parents experience and characterize this new phase in their lives regarding food, meals and health? Hence, the focus in the study is solely on the parents' accounts and does not deal with issues around the ones of the child. The study is both applying a life course perspective (Clausen, 1986; Backett & Davison, 1995; Hareven, 1978; Elder, 1978) as well as using literature concerning how different phases in the life course affect individual's food choices and eating habits (Falk *et al.*, 1996; Furst *et al.*, 1996; Devine *et al.*, 1998, 1999). The

background for our interest in this area is that previous research has only to a limited extent focused on the way parents' relationship to food, meals and health may change when recently have been left in an empty nest household. Furthermore, earlier studies have mainly focused on the experiences of the mother during this empty nest phase, and have not included the view of the father. Additionally, when not having children living at home anymore, this group of consumers is often characterized by an ability and willingness to spend more money than before, which is also evident in the results from this study. To examine the potential changes that occur concerning the relationship to food, meals and health during this phase in their lives may give valuable information on how to approach this group of consumers, to for example marketers within the food industry as well as health professionals.

Theoretical Perspectives

A life course perspective

This study is theoretically inspired by a life course perspective (Clausen, 1986; Backett & Davison, 1995; Harevan, 1978; Elder, 1978), which we believe can contribute with an understanding of different transitions and phases in a person's life, relevant in studying food behaviour. According to Clausen (1986:2): "*The life course is, by definition, a progression through time. Aging or life time is the most obvious dimension in the study of the life course, and it is difficult to imagine any treatment of the course that does not in general follow the individual chronologically, from birth to death*". In describing the life course, he identifies several phases, including *infancy and early childhood, later childhood, adolescence and youth, the adult years, the middle years and the later years*. The adult years, according to Clausen, may include phases such as *occupational careers, marriage and the family cycle*. Of interest for this study is to examine how the relation to food, meals and health may change during the phase labelled "*the family cycle*". This cycle in turn is described to include several phases, where our focus is on the phase where the youngest child departs from the home, which is referred to as "*the empty nest*" (Clausen, 1986:130; Nock, 1979; Spence & Lonner, 1971). The empty nest is seen as the closing stage of "the family cycle"; "*... with adulthood and marriage comes a sequence (often called the family cycle) of stages as children are born to the married couple, grow from dependency to autonomy, and finally depart from the home (now an 'empty nest'), ending with the married couple alone again*" (Clausen, 1986, p. 30). Therefore, the empty nest can at the same time be regarded as a starting point for a new phase, seen from a life course perspective.

It is important to acknowledge the life course as a dynamic concept differing between individuals as well as between groups and families. Elder (1985) emphasises the importance of using transitions instead of stages in analysing the life course. Life transitions and life events have in common the change from one state to another. However, these changes can take place over a substantial period of time (p. 32). This also implies the importance of using a non-static view in applying a life course perspective. Elder also stresses the importance of recognizing not only the overlap of transitions, but also the interplay of trajectories and transitions and their relation to each other. This is especially the case in relation to family members and kin. Using "stage typologies" in trying to understand the family cycle, as well as the life course in general, its history and experience, has been criticized by Elder as well as in other research (e.g. Harevan, 1978). Harevan (1978) makes a distinction between family cycle and the life course in approaching changes in the family: "*The family cycle measures changes in the family as it moves from stage to stage as a collective unit. The life course, on the other hand, encompasses both individual and collective family development.../... Rather than*

identifying stages, the life course approach examines transitions: It follows individuals' movements through different family configurations and analyzes the determinants of the timing of such movements" (p. 2). The adaptation to, as well as the experience of the same event or transition may differ between individuals, which leads to the importance of not applying a static perspective when analysing events using a life course perspective. Our intention in approaching the life course in general, and the transition to an empty nest in particular, is to focus on a transition in life that, although it may differ in character as well as in time, meaning and importance, it involves important changes in the family and its constitution.

In the literature, although both men and women are a part of the phase when their children leave home, the empty nest concept has often been used in relation to the experiences of the woman, the mother, when her children leave home (Spence & Lonner, 1971; Hogg *et al.*, 2004). These experiences of the mother have in earlier research been referred to as "*the empty nest syndrome*", which implies a certain loss for the mother and that she feels that her role as a mother is being questioned. In their article, Spence and Lonner (1971) explore the changes that occur in the role of the mother in the empty nest, and the father's role is not considered. The mother is described as being in a phase where she has to reorganize her role as a mother and her expectations on the new situation. Hogg *et al.*, (2004) also focus on the new motherhood role in their discussions about women's re-positioning in their role as mothers. However, the experience of, and the adjustment to, the new role differs among women. Some may experience a sense of freedom, while others have feelings of loss and confusion. Spence and Lonner (1971) found in their study that the women most often worried about their children not being on the right track or being able to take care of themselves. Some found it hard to let go while others adapted easier. Although the mother was still concerned of the children's well-being, the period of immediate motherhood had come to an end. In the article it is described how changes took place in a variety of areas, in attitudes, values, behaviour and goals. Yet, these changes could be more or less profound.

This also imply that the empty nest is an ongoing process as children often continue to be very much a part of their parents' lives after they leave home. This is also described in research by White and Edwards (1990) where they have investigated the effects of parental well-being when children leave home. Their results show that "*the end of co-residence has a generally positive effect on parental well-being, resulting in a modest post-launch honeymoon*" (p. 241). These positive effects are described to support the hypothesis that the parental role is stressful and that parents to some extent are relieved when children leave their nest. Also, even though there initially may be minor negative empty nest effects on parental well-being, foremost experienced by women, research by Harkins (1978) shows that these feelings have mainly disappeared two years after the event. Similar results are reported by Lowenthal and Chiriboga (1972) where they argue that the transition to the empty nest is neither experienced as a crisis for the parents, nor a serious challenge. Additionally, White and Edwards (1990) did not find major effects in parental well-being when being left in an empty nest household and one plausible argument they give is that children continue to a great extent be part of their parent's lives after they have moved out. A further example of the on-going nature of the empty nest transition is evident in research by Clemens and Axelson (1985), where they investigate the consequences for parents and children in a household where adult children returning home to live with their parents, also called "*fledging adults*". The results indicate possible negative consequences for parents when having a fledging adult in the household. Most parents do not welcome the return of their children and tend to see their stay as a short-term arrangement. In this pilot study we argue that it is of importance to look at the empty

nest as a transition and as an ongoing process in order to get an understanding of the new phase in the parents' lives as well as their attitudes to food, meals and health.

The Life Course, Food and Eating Habits

Earlier research has emphasised the importance of including a life course perspective when studying individual's relationship to food, as transitions in the life course are seen to have an impact on food choice and eating habits (Falk *et al.*, 1996; Furst *et al.*, 1996; Devine *et al.*, 1998, 1999). For example, in a qualitative study, Kemmer *et al.* (1998) examined changes that occurred in couples' eating habits and food related activities when they started living together. The results indicate that the activities around food, such as shopping, as well as eating habits became more regular and organized in the joint household. The evening meal was seen as the most important meal of the day and especially the structure and content of this meal underwent significant change. For almost all of the informants there was a desire to eat what they referred to as a proper evening meal, something that was not as important for them before they lived together.

Sociologist Deborah Lupton (2000) has investigated everyday food habits and preferences of cohabiting couples, with and without children living at home. The results show that entering into cohabiting was a transition in the life course that could result in major changes in food habits; many people report that they started to eat more home-cooked and balanced meals in comparisons to when they were single. Additionally, parents felt responsible to ensure that their children ate a healthy diet. Similar results are reported in Brown's (2006) study of intra-family influences on food choices at mid life by the following statement: "*Entry of children into the family can spark re-examination and re-adjustment of food choices*" (p. 264-5). Ethnologist Sören Janson (1993) also describes the importance of social transitions in life, especially from single to cohabiting in his analysis of food habits and eating patterns (p. 34ff). Attitudes towards food and meals are a consequence of its social setting, he argues, and food patterns often change as a result of changes in social relations and family structure. How newly married couples negotiate and establish food choices were examined in another study, conducted by Bove *et al.* (2003). The result indicated that both convergence and conflict were important components in the negotiation over joint food choices.

To conclude, earlier research has mainly focused on food consumption and eating patterns in family settings where couples recently have entered a joint household or when children are still living with their parents. Thus, the way parents' food consumption and eating habits may change as a result of their children moving away from home, has not yet been deeply dealt with. The intention with this pilot study is to shed some light on this important group of consumers and their reasoning and relationship to food, meals and health.

Method

A pilot study is usually conducted when there is a lack of knowledge concerning a specific subject. The approach is most often flexible and explorative, and attempts to detect new phenomena (Berg, 2001, p. 230). For this pilot study, three qualitative in-depth interviews have been conducted with parents whose children recently have left the nest. The qualitative in-depth interview (Trost, 1997, p. 23) is characterized by a small amount of structure as it takes its starting-point in the story of the person being interviewed. In this way the interviewer should not interfere with the arguments made by the interviewee (e.g. Bryman, 1997, p. 59).

When possible, both parents were participating during the interviews as we were interested in both the mother's and the father's view on this matter. We were interested in the story of both parents as well as the dynamics and internal discussions between them that also took place during the interviews.

In trying to evaluate the questions being asked in the interview we both participated during the first interview. The two following interviews were made separately by one of us. The interviews took place in the participants' own homes and lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. Different themes, such as expectations compared to actual experiences of the empty nest household were discussed, as well as attitudes towards food and health and changes in food and eating habits. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

When searching for participants for this study we used what is usually referred to as a convenience sample (Berg, 2001; Holme & Solvang, 1997). Our intention was to find parents interested in talking about food and eating habits when their children recently had left home. Based on the idea of using the family cycle and the empty nest transition in studying food behaviour, the concept of "the family" must be clarified. All couples interviewed were married, and they were also parents to all the children in the family. Our purpose of interviewing nuclear families was not to imply that this is the only family constitution possible, or even the most common (Murphy & Staples, 1979), but it is a starting point in approaching the issue of transitions and food choices in an empty nest. The parents interviewed were between 49 and 60 years old. All couples had their own houses, located near a city or on the countryside in the South of Sweden. In this pilot study these aspects are considered, although not deepened in the analysis at this stage.

For the analysis, we were inspired by guidelines given by Silverman (2001) and Spiggle (1994) when approaching the qualitative material. As a first step in the analysis, each transcript was read repeatedly as a way to get an understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Thereafter, in order to find similarities and differences, the material was compared and contrasted. The aim was to identify different tentative patterns in the data. Due to the limited amount of interviews conducted in this pilot study, it is of course difficult to find clear patterns in the material. Yet, important in a pilot study is to acknowledge differences in the material as important varieties and as representatives of different ways to handle the new empty nest situation. This is also essential for the continuation and deepening of the study later on. In the analysis we have tried to show the diversity as well as important similarities according to meal-patterns in the empty nest household.

Results

In the analysis, several interwoven tentative patterns were identified in the parents' relation to food, meals and health in the empty nest. Changes in food choices were described in the interviews, although expressed differently. New meal structures were also identified partly as a result of the children no longer lived at home. Even though the children had left the nest, they continued in different ways to be important actors in the choice of food, which strengthen the argument of the empty nest being an ongoing process, with no definite beginning or end.

Food choice in the empty nest

When living in an empty nest household, parents express a sense of freedom when it comes to the choice of food. No longer do they have to prepare food suitable for the whole family, instead they have the chance to choose food just the two of them feel like eating. It was commonly stated by the participants that living in an empty nest household enable the parents to choose more expensive food or food that is viewed as more enjoyable, tasty and especially healthy;

“We eat more expensive food now. We spend more or less the same amount of money on food today as we did when all three of the children lived at home.../... healthy food is expensive...”. (Monika)

Monika claims that healthy food is expensive, but that it is worth it. She and her husband are both interested in trying to eat healthy, which include much vegetable and fruit, less sugar, and they almost never eat potatoes, rice or pasta. They are influenced by diets such as Atkins and they try to reduce their intake of starchy food. Monika says that even though they tried to eat healthy when their children lived at home, it was not so easy to accomplish since the children preferred other types of food. Monika’s description of how her and her husband’s food choices and patterns changed when the children had moved out is similar to the results presented in Jansson’s (1993) study of how changes in social relations and family structure leads to changes in food patterns. Another difference is that they now buy other food products than before. Monika gives an example when describing what she likes to put on her sandwiches;

“... we only buy ham now, different kinds of ham.../... but before we only had marmalade and cheese, and maybe once in a while, ham.../... it was a money issue”.

The issue of money frequently comes up when motivating or explaining their new food habits. It is about allowing oneself something that has not been possible before. When choosing meat, Monika also points out, she almost never buy minced meat nowadays. That was the kind of food that they frequently bought when the children were young and she expresses a sense of relief that she now is able to buy other kinds of food.

Anne and Fredrik, like Monika, describe how their food habits have changed after the children have left home. They tell us that they eat more enjoyable things now, when they are alone in the nest;

“Of course we eat more enjoyable food now, you eat what you feel like eating”, Anne says.

The feelings of being able to eat whatever you feel like, without having to consider children’s preferences and also have more money to spend on food, is further described by Fredrik and Anne as being special and cosy and that they enjoy spending time together, just the two of them;

“You could say that the last couple of years Fridays have been especially cosy, when we both sit here .../... we drink some wine and we sit and talk for a long time.../... that’s cosy”, Fredrik says.

He continues: “... *you want that little special.../... and you don't have to think about the costs as before, two salaries and no kids.../... when there are five people to fill, you have to do some economic calculations*”.

Earlier research has indicated that especially mothers tend to experience negative feelings, the so-called “*empty nest syndrome*” when children leave the nest (Spence & Lonner, 1971; Hogg *et al.*, 2004). However, the results from this study show that this transition in life tends to represent the start of a more enjoyable period for the couples interviewed, for example in terms of having more time to spend with their partner, as well as the possibility to eat together and to choose more, as described, expensive food. Thus, these statements can be viewed as an indication of what White and Edwards (1990) have described in their research as “post-launch honeymoon”, where the empty nest stage is positively experienced by the parents.

A different meal structure

When children leave their family home, a new meal structure sometimes takes place for the parents. As mentioned earlier, more expensive foods are bought during this phase. Also the way the parents structure their food intake during the day may change. A sense of freedom and release is described by the parents living in an empty nest household. Monika points out the pleasant feeling of not having to cook every day;

“The cooking took so much of our time since we always ate together, so when the children moved out we thought “this is so nice, we won't cook any more” and the result was that we only ate a lot of salads and yoghurt for a while. It was such a good feeling not having to do all of this cooking when they moved away from home”.

This sense of release not having to cook and plan the meals when the children have moved was also described in a study made by Lupton (1996, p 61). Eating later in the evening is another example of a new meal structure taking place when there are no longer children involved in the household (Hogg *et al.*, 2004, p. 247). In our study, Monika tells us that when the children moved, the common meal around the table at the end of the day, was not that important anymore. Instead she and her husband usually have tea together later in the evening as a new way of meeting and talking to each other. In a way, the tea symbolizes some of the aspects that the former daily meal represented. Christina and John tell us that now, when the children are no longer living at home, they most often eat together again after work, in the evening, something they were not able to do before since they had to drive their children to their different sport activities, which we will discuss later on.

The meal structure often changes not only when the children move from their childhood home, but also during the earlier phases in the family cycle. When the children were small the parents often set the rules for mealtimes as well as what the family should have for dinner. Before having children, Monika describes her and her husband's eating patterns as unstructured since no regular meal times were followed. However, this changed radically when they got children;

“You didn't eat at eight o'clock in the evening, and you didn't eat at four o'clock either, you ate at six o'clock” (Monika says with a firm voice).

Now, when Monika and her husband are alone in the household, their eating patterns have once again become more unstructured;

“If I come home from work around four, four thirty and he comes home two hours later, then I won’t sit and wait for us to eat something together. Instead, if I’m hungry I eat right away, and then he can eat when he comes home.”

Anne and Fredrik also describe their eating as much more spontaneous now in terms of what to eat, when to eat it and so on;

“We are not structured, not at all”, Anne notes.

In the study by Hogg *et al.*, (2004), many women describe how their time was organized around the activities of the children when they still lived in the nest. Meals were arranged at certain times in order to accommodate to the schedules of the children. In our interviews it is also described how the activities of the children most often dictated the conditions under which the meal could be arranged. As expressed by Fredrik;

“Parent are more like taxi-drivers nowadays, I really think it’s like that, it’s hockey among many other things which makes it impossible to have common evening meals, it doesn’t work, it’s always someone on the run and heading somewhere. If you were to arrange common meals, the kids wouldn’t be able to do the activities they do.”

Christina tells us that they often ate on a very irregular basis when the children lived at home, and that they as parents had to adjust to their activities. Their daughter swam and their son played football and that influenced the way a common meal could be arranged. Christina and John say that the children had training sessions more or less every evening and competitions and matches during the weekends. This situation for the family, not being able to have a common meal was evident specifically during the period when the children were active in their sports. Before that, when the children were younger, Christina notes, they almost always ate together in the evening. During the interview it becomes apparent that a common family meal still is an ideal for the family, at which they strive. This ideal is recurrent in different descriptions of the meal and the family (DeVault, 1991; Lupton, 1996), but often difficult to accomplish in the daily life. Anne and Fredrik also found it difficult to arrange for a common family meal when the children were living at home, especially during workdays;

“You could say that we didn’t eat together in the evening since we had so different schedules, Eva says, but in the weekend we did, on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays we did”.

“... so, it didn’t work with common meals in the evening”, Fredrik adds.

He continues: *“... when the children were small we were five instead of two at the table, and then it was a common activity and you as a parent had control over the times and everything, and then, when the children became teenagers you totally lost the control...”.*

The weekends are described as the period of having time to spend together, which also involves eating together. Weekdays differ from the weekend in many ways, for example in the perception of what food is appropriate to eat and what is expected from the family meal.

When the children are young, the parents are expected to structure the meals and their food intake. Meal times where the whole family is gathered are at this point not only common, but is also considered to be a way of acculturate the children into rules, norms and values of eating behaviour (Lupton, 1996, p 39). Common meals are everyday activities in the families,

which occur at certain times, and are planned in advanced. As the children becomes teenagers, the possibility to structure the common meals is considered more difficult. Activities of the children, as well as different time schedules in school and at work, sometimes make it complicated to coordinate the meal. When the children leave the nest, new routines are taking place. For Anne and Fredrik, as well as for Monika and her husband, the relief of not having a strict food structure in the family and being able to be more spontaneous, are pronounced. Their food intake is now characterized by less structure and more flexibility. For Christina and John, on the other hand, the common meal between those two has after the children have left the nest, become a opportunity. They do not have to act taxi-drivers anymore, and in combination with an interest in cooking and the importance of taking into account John's risk of developing diabetes, they try to cook every day and to have a common meal.

The children as important actors

The children can be important actors in decisions about what to eat and when. As discussed earlier, when the children become teenagers, they frequently have opinions about the food, as well as there are activities that interfere with the possibility of having a common meal for the family. Also as small children, they may be considered as actors in a more unspecific way. Norms and values when it comes to expectation of what food to give the children and at what time, are also crucial in understanding food intake in families. Asking the children what they would like for dinner, is a way of involving them as actors in the family decisions (Campbell *et al.*, 2006). Anne and Fredrik explain how their children to a large extent decided what they should eat when they lived at home. Thus, the parent's food preferences stood back as a means to make food that the children would like;

"We resigned ourselves to that, we can say that we followed the children's wishes, and that ruled". (Anne)

Fredrik expresses that the children had too much influence over the food being served, and Anne agrees to a certain extent. However, as she was a housewife when the children lived at home, she felt that she got valuable ideas for what food to prepare if she involved the children. Now, when Fredrik and Anne are left in the empty nest household they experience a sense of release as they now feel like they have more time to prepare food they enjoy and that they are in charge of the menu for the day.

Food in the ongoing empty nest

In earlier research concerning the life course, there has been a discussion about how this concept should be comprehended. Some authors argue that the life course should be viewed as static and rather constant, which implies that it always takes place and that it has a beginning and an end. Others claim that the life course instead needs to be seen as an ongoing process which does not always go in just one direction (e.g. Elder, 1978, 1985; Harevan, 1978). The results from this pilot study indicate that the life course should be seen as a process, without a definite beginning or end, as evident in the following examples.

Children travelling as teenagers and young adults but still living with their parents is one of those examples, which is referred to as fledgling adults by Clemens & Axelson (1985). Christina and John describe the situation where their daughter was travelling around the world for a couple of months and then came home for a few months before leaving again and so forth. The parents have a difficult time just deciding when she actually moved. The empty nest transition could then be seen as sometimes temporary. Anne and Fredrik also describe how their children not only moved out at different times but also that their daughter came

home to stay with them during the summers, especially during the first years. Anne also states that their daughter lived at home as a young adult and that she, during that time, was doing her cooking herself. In that sense, Anne and Fredrik got the chance to gradually get used to living in an empty nest household; it was not a dramatic change for them. In comparison to the results presented by Clemens & Axelson (1985), the accounts above indicate that instead of experiencing negative consequences when having a fledging adult living in the household, the participants see this period as a chance to, in a stepwise fashion, adjust and get used to living in an empty nest.

Even though the children physically have left the nest, some of the interviewees assured that this does not imply the end of their parenthood. These results are similar to research by Spence & Lonner, (1971, p. 374) where they state that the child leaving home does not necessarily imply leaving the parent role, but that it takes a new direction. Concerns of what and when the children eat, are parts of their new parent role. *“Once a mother, always a mother, no matter what”*, Christina says. She still cares about her children’s food habits, especially when it comes to her son. *“Are you getting enough to eat?”* or *“Don’t forget to eat a proper meal”*, Christina often says. This also enhances the idea of an ongoing empty nest. Anne means that it is a different kind of responsibility now. She sometimes asks her children if they have had dinner and what they have eaten, *“but I do not comment on it”*, she points out. The balance between being a caring mother and not interfering is difficult, especially in the beginning, Anne claims. Monika, on the other hand, explicitly states that she stopped feeling any responsibility for her children’s eating habits as soon as they moved from home.

The family meal is another aspect of the ongoing empty nest, an activity where the family meet and eat all together again. Home-cooked meals are often described as an essential event in trying to maintain the sense of the family. Jansson (1993) states that the family meal is a way of manifesting the family unit (p. 43). Sociologist Majorie DeVault (1991) argues that family meals are about constructing the family. *“Part of the intention behind producing the meal is to produce ‘home’ or ‘family’”* (p. 79). DeVault emphasises the centrality of the family meal when the children are living with their parents. In our study it is obvious that common family dinners also take place when the children have left the nest. They still play an important role in constituting the family. The traditional Sunday dinner is one example of this. Monika tells us about the recurrent family dinner on Sundays when the children had left the nest;

When the children had moved out we had Sunday dinners for many years. Every Sunday, always.

Now their children have kids of their own and it is difficult to arrange for a common Sunday meal where everyone can attend. The common family meal could be described as a ritual symbolizing the family. At Christina and John the children usually come home for a meal on Fridays;

They have always been used to that there’s food on the table. But of course, we ask them what they would like to eat.../... sometimes on a Friday evening when we both have eaten dinner during the day, and it has been stressful, we decide to eat some shrimps and eggs instead.../... but when Daniel comes home he can ask “What’s for dinner”. He often visits us on Fridays and he may ask “Aren’t you going to have real dinner... and of course you want to do something they like.

The children expect a proper meal when they visit their parents. This is also evident when the children are coming home for dinner and the parents are cooking the food they like. This can also be seen as a way of manifesting the family, according to DeVault (1991). Hogg *et al.*, (2004) found in their study that the women loved to make their children's favourite dish when they came for a visit. In this way the mother maintains a sense of the family as well as her own role as a caring mother, even after the children have left home.

Conclusions

Life is full of changes, some bigger than others, some more meaningful than others. In trying to enhance the understanding of the influence of life course transitions in general, and the empty nest in particular, this paper has focused on relationship to food, meals and health among parents where the children recently have left home. Earlier research has mainly focused on changes in food habits as a result of young adults leave their parental home, cohabiting or having children (Brown, 2006; Bove *et al.*, 2003; Lupton, 2000; Kemmer *et al.*, 1998), and a lack of knowledge in the empty nest transition and its relation to food and eating, was apparent. Therefore, this pilot study should be viewed as a starting point for future studies concerning food habits in the empty nest households.

In focusing on the empty nest as a change in the family constitution, it is not to imply that it has the same meaning for all families, or that it is interpreted in a similar way, but that it is a transition that often involves new considerations, in this case regarding food, meals and health. Changes in life often occur simultaneously, which makes it difficult to ascribe one factor all importance. The children leaving home may occur at the same time as other changes, for example that new ideas about food and health are acquired from for example the media, friends and colleagues, or that different health complications force the couples to make other considerations than before. These are also important factors in an empty nest household, but they do not necessarily involve the actual departure of the children.

When children leave home apparent changes in the family structure occur, although the influence of the children leaving the nest varies between families. The parents being interviewed described how they *adjusted* to their new life situation in terms of changed food consumption patterns as well as time spent on food preparation and eating. Additionally, in trying to maintain a sense of the family, home-cooked family meals were often referred to as an essential activity. This also indicated that the children in many cases still were important actors in the families' food choice. In the descriptions of the new situation, the parents also expressed feelings of *freedom* and *release* in terms of not being obligated to structure the daily food and meal activities on the basis on children preferences. They also reported that they now were able to be more health conscious than before. However, the parental role in the empty nest was considered to be complex due to the need to re-position themselves as parents. Some parents still felt responsible for their children's food habits even though they have left the nest, indicating that the empty nest has an emotional dimension emphasising the ongoing process. Regular family meals in the nest, as well as children leaving their parental home and sometimes move back again, even though it is for a shorter period of time, strengthen the argument of the empty nest as an ongoing process and a sometimes extended transition in life.

Further research is needed in order to deepen the understanding of the parental role in the empty nest household. *Adjustment*, *freedom* and *release*, important themes that emerged in this pilot study, should be explored further in order to understand parents' relation to food,

meals and health when children move away from home. By using these results as a starting point, a broadening of the study, including a larger sample of interviewees would be beneficial in investigating the relevance of these tentative themes as well as be open to new ones that may emerge.

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Engender mental accounting: How cultural and social spheres affect the justification of hedonic food consumption*

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how consumers ‘justify’ consumption of indulgence as unhealthy food products and how the creation of a mental balance is culturally and socially influenced. The study is based on 16 in-depth interviews with Danish food consumers. A hermeneutic analysis of consumers’ stories revealed that rationales for hedonic consumption of food products are embedded in mainly four themes; (1) Time limitation and increased complexity, (2) Everyday versus weekends, (3) Socialisation and (4) Taste and pleasure before health.

Key words: Justification of hedonism – mental accounting – cultural and social anchoring – food consumption.

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INTRODUCTION

A lot of attention has been placed on health related issues worldwide, especially since World Health Organisation declared obesity epidemic in many countries. Overweight and obesity impose a serious threat to economic welfare and the health and quality of life of the individual consumer. In Sweden, the total yearly costs of overweight and obesity has been calculated to around EUR 1.7 billion (in 2003), corresponding to 0.7% of GDP (Nordic Plan of Action 2006). Similar estimates have been reported for the US and UK (Suhrccke et al. 2006). Paradoxically in continuation of the increased overweight, obesity and nutrition related diseases research stresses that there is an escalating concern about health issues such as eating and living healthy (ATV, 2007; Smed and Jensen, 2005; Nordic Plan of Action, 2006). However consumers find many different obstacles for being able to implement the healthy food products in their daily lives. Among these obstacles are the compelling needs for hedonic food consumption which often involves less healthy or unhealthy food (Loumala et al., 2004, 2006). Thus, in this paper, we will focus on hedonic food consumption and explore how consumers 'justify' their behaviour when it deviates from the authorities guidelines for healthy living.

Consumer choices can be driven by two considerations - utilitarian and hedonic (Dhar and Wertenbroch, 2000). Hedonic decision making is motivated by the consumer's desire for fantasy and pleasure, and hence provides a more affective and experiential consumption where fun, pleasure and excitement are central compared to the more utilitarian choices that are mainly cognitively driven, instrumental, goal oriented and often accomplishes a practical and functional task (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Dhar and Wertenbroch, 2000). In regard to food consumption utilitarian considerations often concern the functional satisfaction of hunger whereas hedonic food consumption encloses a lot more. Today, hedonism and pleasure is assumed to be a central part in consuming food. Individuals buy to a greater extend than before products that make them feel good at the expense of what might be best for them (Gabriel and Lang, 1995). The emotional part of consumption has become increasingly vital to consumers where the pursuit for pleasure and indulgence contributes to the establishing of the good life that individuals in all aspects of life manifest. Research suggests that 'the consumer as hedonist must be able to derive pleasure from every item with, which he or she comes into contact and everything must be orientated to that end' (Gabriel and Lang, 1995, p. 116).

Along with the prevailing need for buying hedonic food products the negative feelings as guilt and sin interfere which quite often associate hedonic consumption (Lascu, 1991). Guilt

refers to the painful experience of regret, remorse, self blame, and self-punishment experienced upon committing or contemplating committing a transgression (Lascu, 1991). Synonymous to the feeling of guilt are emotions as sin, duty and morality which as guilt often limit consumers in buying hedonic products, since it may be difficult for individuals to mentally 'justify' hedonic behaviour and rise above the negative feelings (Lascu, 1991). For many consumers it makes more sense to spend money on necessities than indulgence, where consumers feel a compelling reason for pleasurable consumption – like earning the right to indulge subsequent to hard work, good behaviour etc. (Lascu, 1991; Prelec and Loewenstein, 1998; Cheema and Soman, 2006; Kim, 2006). This limitation is discharged by the individual's mental accounting, which works as a self-control device that may 'justify' behaviour and prevent a state of cognitive dissonance, which is the impact of a mental imbalance (Cheema and Soman, 2006; Thaler, 1985). The construction of the mental account or mental balance is used as a metaphor to simplify the individuals practice to keep track of the intake unhealthy and healthy food products.

In contrast with prior research on mental accounting and justification of behaviour (i.e. Thaler 1985, 1999; Prelec and Loewenstein, 1998; Cheema and Soman, 2006; Kim, 2006) this paper emphasizes how consumers' cultural and social environment contributes and influences consumers' justification of indulgence. As such, the paper contributes to the existing literature about food consumption and justification but within a theoretical framework that views justification and indulgence as social processes, in which the consumer draws on a pool of socially embedded rationales and sensations.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Cultural and social anchoring

Many researchers have been occupied with the development and entitlement of hedonism in relation to consumption (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Kivetz and Simonson, 2002; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Wertenbroch, 1998; Gabriel and Lang, 1995; Campbell, 1987; Okada, 2005). Campbell (1987) proposes that the concept of hedonism is ambiguous and distinguishes between two distinctive consumer approaches to hedonism, which is traditional and modern hedonism. Traditional hedonism is very basically associated with the senses as taste, smell, hearing, sight and touch. It is controlled by stimuli occurring in connection with a certain sensation and the quest for pleasure is a quest for sensory stimuli which become the ultimate scarce commodity for the traditional hedonist. Dissatisfaction and boredom is the contrast (Campbell,

1987). The modern hedonist, on the other hand, seeks pleasure in a variety of different emotional stimuli associated with all kind of experiences and thereby maximizes the pleasurable feelings by the power of imagination. The imagination is created and not taken for granted. as in the traditional view (Campbell, 1987). The modern hedonist is driven by emotional – positive as negative – experiences, which among other things include daydreaming and fantasizing. The latter is much in accordance with postmodern theories that describe the consumers' everyday life as one big eldorado where consumers find or create pleasure in all possible situations (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Firat and Schultz, 1997; Thompson, 2000; Gabriel and Lang, 1995).

While according to Campbell (1987), pleasure is basically subjective, still other perspectives on pleasure and hedonism focus on social embeddedness. For instance, Bourdieu (1984) stresses that hedonism is socially and culturally constructed, with taste being the crucial factor of pleasure. A certain taste qualifies the individual's belonging and distinction between social-classes. Bourdieu (1984) refers to taste as a socially accepted characteristic that defines what hedonistic and pleasurable food consumption is and more important - what it is not. In the light of these different socially constructed criteria for hedonic consumption it is obvious that though there seems to be an increased interest and concern for eating healthy far from all food products are socially accepted to serve. For Bourdieu (1984) the different approaches to the concept of hedonism differ across social classes but he agrees that consumer pleasure lies in the emotional experience and not so much in the physical sensation as in Campbell's theory of traditional hedonism. Hence the individual controls the pleasure derived as a social regulation of consumption, which is ranging from implicit routines, institutionally enforced manners in form of learning evoked by cultural transmission to highly formalized rules and the implementation of social policy (Sassatelli, 2001; Rozin, 2005; Warde, 1997). The social construction of hedonism is structured systems of practices which defines the latitude for the individual. Within these systems of practices the individual has free options available for actions and it is within this latitude the individual engenders a mental accounting system – a system which is individualistic but in accordance with the social and cultural sphere (Sassatelli, 2001).

So, sociality and food are closely linked as food serves a lot of other functions than simply nutrition. Eating is a social event that allows people to establish social linkages by sharing food but also distinct themselves from other social groups, as food preparation, distribution and consumption reveal both social order and aesthetic beliefs and values (Rozin, 2005; Bourdieu, 1984). In every society food is highly symbolic in the sense that certain qualities of food are related

to sentimental, moral, religious, and health-related meanings. The symbolic meaning is crucial in regard to food and eating among different people and social groups, which a number of studies have shown (Bourdieu, 1984; Douglas, 1975; Salvy et al., 2007; Mintz and Du Bois, 2002). The symbolic function of food is also powerful and ranges widely from religious symbolism as Hindus that don't eat beef, Muslims and Jews that don't eat pork till the aesthetic expression where elaborate food preparations and cuisines cannot be 'justified' solely in terms of nutritional factors (Rozin, 2005; Blades, 2001). But regardless of social group or culture, food in social relations operates as a symbol of care, though it differs within and across social groups in relation to participation, setting, duration, food items, food sequences, and attributed significance (Ochs and Shohet, 2006). This means that whatever pleasure the consumer derives from the indulgence of food products may be seen as not only a matter of individual taste but also social taste and socially embedded sensations. The consumer navigates in the social sphere to find socially acceptable food pleasure and socially constructed ways of accounting for the acceptability of these pleasures. In the following a closer look at the consumers' account for acceptability will further illustrate these issues.

Mental accounting as justification

When buying food products in supermarkets, consumers are often faced with decisions between healthy and unhealthy food products, which may create a mental conflict for many consumers (Hansen and Thomsen, 2006; Hansen, 2007). In these cases a state of cognitive dissonance is the result unless the consumer finds conceited arguments so a mental balance is maintained. The mental account or mental balance is used as an expression to simplify the individual's argumentation process with pros and cons that eventually will establish some kind of balance (Thaler 1985, 1999; Prelec and Loewenstein, 1998). However, it is worthwhile mentioning that the mental account of course is individual based and a dynamic system that changes continuously according to the trade-off-rationales. But it also differs among individuals. For instance, consumers may 'justify' eating unhealthy food after they have been doing sport or in the weekend, but the trade-off-rationales differ as some consumers allow themselves to eat a chocolate bar after thirty minutes of sport while others have to do 3 hours of sport until earning the right to chocolate. Some call Friday to Sunday weekend and time for pleasurable food consumption and for others only Saturday is the day that legalises the intake of unhealthy food.

As most consumers have experienced, some types of food products are more likely to evoke pleasure than others. When selecting between indulgence and necessities it is established very

deeply in the individual to prioritize necessities, as it is founded in the nature of the individual like a way of survival (Dhar and Wertenbroch, 2000). But this behaviour seems to have changed as an increased intake of many hedonic and unhealthy food products has resulted in obesity epidemic in many Western countries (ATV, 2007; Nordic Plan of Action, 2006). And this is despite the fact that many educational campaigns made by authorities are pointing out what to eat in what amount and thereby helping consumers make healthy chooses (ATV, 2007; Smed and Jensen, 2005; Nordic Plan of Action, 2006). Research indicates that a considerable consumption of hedonic items explicates that the individual has preferences for the present at the expense of the future which frequently is the case affecting food products where instant gratification of pleasurable and often unhealthy food is chosen on expenses of the health choice and the prolonged consequences of the health (Kivetz and Simonson, 2002).

As consumers find it hard to legalize the intake of hedonic food, research shows that given the opportunity to choose between necessity and hedonic in an award situation, hedonic products have a higher choose share than necessities (Kivetz and Simonson, 2002; Okada, 2005). In this situation the justification and the mental pain associated with selection and consuming of hedonic is likely to be reduced as the guilt inherent in such situations seems less transparent and salient. The same mechanism applies when receiving a gift which corresponds with the widespread use of hedonic food products like delicious chocolate, good wine and other delicacy as presents (Thaler, 1980; Kivetz and Simonson, 2002; Okada, 2005). Individuals find it easier to select and consume hedonic products when the guilt associated is reduced and the total expenses are not recognized (Kivetz and Simonson, 2002; Thaler, 1985). Consumers can not begrudge themselves the pleasurable feeling without a good reason and hence, the harder it is to get hold of a hedonic product, the longer time perspective and the more uncertain the situation is the more preferable is the hedonic product (O'Curry and Strahilevitz, 2001). These specified situations create a balance in the mental accounting system and qualify as legitimate excuses for indulgence which reduces guilt and self-blame feelings.

Consumers' mental accounting principles unfold in many different ways (Kivetz and Simonson, 2002; Thaler, 1985; O'Curry and Strahilevitz, 2001). Besides having indulgence legalised by the abovementioned gift or award concept consumers seem to 'justify' pleasurable decision making by having earned the right and therefore deserve the right to pleasure. Go for a run and you have earned and deserve the right to chocolate. Concurrently with the fact that more hedonic gifts are changing hands, increasingly consumption of hedonic food products, it is very

likely that the pursue for pleasure has become more and more socially accepted in the modern food market. This could evidently be ascribed to an effect of the marketers increased transparency, where they try to keep the guilt in check by diminishing its impact and keep a focus on consumers' right to pleasure (Lascu, 1991). A good example is the advertisement made by L'Oreal where the punch line is: 'Because I am worth it'. A state of guiltless hedonism is obtained causing that consumers increasingly take delight in the enjoyment and consume more and more hedonic food products without the same subsequent guilt as self-control and self-retains is suppressed (Lascu, 1991).

When mentioning guiltless hedonism, the juxtaposed expression tamed hedonism is introduced by Lascu (1991) and emphasizes that pleasure is only viable as long as pleasurable consumption does not conflict with the individual's autonomy, self-control and self-retains which is defined and conditional on the individual (Sassatelli, 2001; Lascu, 1991). The self is the controlling power of pleasure and works as organising principle for legitimating contemporary practices (Sassatelli, 2001). However, the organizing principles and practices are formed and realized through an interactive learning process enabling people to social interaction according to codified manners and appropriate choice of food and behaviour in different social situations (Sassatelli, 2001; Warde, 1997; Rozin, 2005). Thus, the consumption of hedonic food products might be more socially accepted if they contribute to a pleasant, relaxed and enjoyable gathering moving more towards a state of guiltless hedonism.

Construction of good and bad behaviour

The authorities in the Nordic countries have for a longer period of time done a massive effort to enable consumers to make healthy choices and protect them from an environment that encourages unhealthy choices (Nordic Plan of Action, 2006). A close corporation in Nordic countries will stimulate EU policies and initiatives at the international level to support the ambitions and efforts done in the area, hoping that it will provide the general public and decision-makers with adequate and updated information on correct nutrition (Nordic Plan of Action, 2006). And research indicates that it is paying off as the general health involvement is ascending, showing that 78% of all women strive to eat healthy every day compared to 58% of all men (AVT, 2007). The extensive focus on healthy nutrition seems to pay off as almost 80% of all adults are familiar with the official dietary recommendations though they might not live in accordance with them. The number of overweight adults is increasing and now exceeds 40% in the Nordic countries. A similar tendency is

found among children where the overweight corresponds to around 15-20% (Nordic Plan of Action, 2006).

The marketers and authorities have a great influence on consumers' categorisation of good/bad or healthy/unhealthy food products and play a part in the individual mental process of legalizing behaviour where the desired state of mind finds its equilibrium. The negative feelings connected to hedonic food consumption can be eliminated if the right to pleasure is earned so the pleasurable consumption convey to equilibrium. If you have been working hard for a period of time you might take indulgence in fast-food, candy etc. as a self-reward that will serve as moral rationalization for consumption. The same pattern often applies if you have exercised a lot, eaten healthy for a period of time, weekends, stressful weekday, festivals, mood or even the weather seem to 'justify' self-indulgence behaviour (Luomala, 2004, 2006; Blades, 2001; Kivetz and Simonson, 2002; Blades, 2001; Garg et al., 2007; Wansink, 2006). Consumers find various ways to moralize a consumption pattern in order to 'justify' it as being sufficient and decent. Thus, the balance seems necessary in obtaining a stable mind with no feelings of guilt, sin, duty and morality.

For many consumers a hectic and stressful life is a reality. Some may imply that this conduct of life might lead to a bad state of mind. Research in the area suggests that individuals in a bad mood are inclined to consume more hedonic food products referring to more unhealthy food products than individuals with a happy state of mind (Garg et al., 2007; Wansink, 2006). This implicates that individuals in a bad state will try to move away from an unpleasant and undesired state whereas individuals in a happy mood conversely try to maintain the positive state by refraining from consuming unnecessarily rich, unhealthy hedonic food products or overeats, which might make them regret their consumption afterwards (Garg et al., 2007). This point of view stresses that happy individuals do not need hedonic food products to a similar extent to make them feel better because apparently they do not want to deal with the consequences if the food products make them feel worse (Garg et al., 2007; Wansink, 2006). In contrast, sad individuals will more frequently strive to repair their negative state for example by consuming more hedonic food products and evade the feeling of guilt by claiming the right to pleasure in the attempt to obtain a happier state of mind.

This brief review illustrates how justification of hedonic behaviour in various manners is being processed in establishing a mental balance, even though consumers regularly are being reminded and educated in nutrition recommendations. The creation of a mental balance may be ambiguous as it relies on multiple sources, including the individual and the social and cultural

context surrounding the individual. It is necessary to emphasize that the ongoing adjustments of individuals' mental accounts often are caused by external influences as communication from marketers and authorities, social relations as family, colleagues and friends. Also, as demonstrated, the rationales applied in the mental justification process are embedded in a pool of socially constructed arguments. In the following, based on an analysis of how consumers categorize their behaviour in good/bad in order to create equilibrium, some of the most significant rationales are highlighted.

Methodology

The approach used in this study is a hermeneutical framework (Thompson, 1997) that discerns the key patterns of meanings expressed by a given consumer in the text of his or her consumption stories in regard to a few guiding themes as lifestyle, food, health and shopping behaviour. The key patterns of meaning that emerged during the interviews across the consumption stories were identified and will be unfolded in the present analysis. The hermeneutic framework interprets consumption meanings in relation to both consumer's sense of personal history and a broader narrative context of historically established cultural meanings. Thereby proposing that the human understanding is organized in terms of shared narrative forms such as stories and myths that emanate from the subjacent culture (Levi-Strauss, 1963; Levy, 1981). The cultural background provides the social categories, common sense beliefs, folk knowledge, and interpretive frames of references from which personalized meanings and conceptions of self-identity are constructed (Thompson, 1997; Holt, 1997). Thus, the hermeneutic interpretation of the patterns of meanings is derived from the situational details and the context-specific stories, which are grasped to engender a holistic understanding of consumers. Therefore, the hermeneutic interpretation seeks to be open to possibilities afforded by the text rather than projecting a predetermined system of meanings onto the textual data (Thompson, 1997).

For the study reported in this paper in-depth interviews were conducted among sixteen participants with an equal participation of women and men. Eight of the interviewed people were randomly selected undergraduate business students and the rest were selected with a focus on getting a variation among the participants in regard to gender and educational background expecting that the variety will contribute to a wider perspective on the subject matter. The semi-structured interviews (McCracken, 1988) employed relatively few preplanned questions as the intention of the interview was to get a broad insight in the consumer's attitude, behaviour and perception of the

earlier mentioned themes; lifestyle, food, health and shopping behaviour. The participants brought along receipts from their latest grocery shopping, which made the participants talk about more specific shopping experiences. The interviews lasted on average 1-1½ hour and took place in relaxed surroundings. The interviews were conducted by an academic researcher and a trained assistant associated with the Department of Marketing at Copenhagen Business School.

Hermeneutic research is based on the 'text' of consumers stories, which in this case is stories expressed in long in-dept interviews with consumers. The first step – the intratext interpretation – in analysing the textual data is a holistic approach aiming to gain a sense of the whole by reading the textual interviews entirely (Thompson, 1997; McCracken, 1988). This stage is an immersion in background research concerning the historical and cultural conditions relevant for the domain of interest. The next step – the intertextual interpretation – develops an integrated understanding of the consumption meanings and looks for differences and patterns across the interviews (Thompson, 1997; McCracken, 1988). It is important to notice that the interpretive process is a cycle where a shift between the intratextual and intertextual approach is a sustained process as previous interpreted texts are reconsidered in the light of newly developed understandings. In analysing the interviews in this paper the main focus will be on the intertextual approach trying to highlight some of the patterns and consistent stories told by the consumers when trying to explain how they 'justify' their hedonic consumption. However, these emerged results will emanate from a shared socio-cultural understanding that underpins the interpretation.

Findings

A key facet when using hermeneutic analysis of consumers' stories is discerning the construction of personal history that underlies the consumer's goals and his or her interpretations of desirable attributes and outcomes (Thompson, 1997). When going through the interviews and interpreting the text some interesting stories and patterns showed up. In general the interviewed consumers are very aware of their behaviour when it comes to health and consumption of health-related food products. For many interviewees the 'healthy life' seems to be just around the corner but a lot of obstacles are preventing some of the very basic and well-known dairy guidelines and unwritten health-rules to be outplayed. These obstacles are expressed as explanations that seek to justification certain behaviours made in discrepancy with the health-rules. Across the interviews several shared beliefs became visible during the interpretation on how consumers legalize hedonic consumption. Overall the outcome of the intra- and intertextual interpretation process can be placed

within four themes with these themes embedding different perspectives or arguments for hedonic consumption; (1) Time limitation and increased complexity, (2) Everyday versus weekends, (3) Socialisation and (4) Taste and pleasure before health.

(1) Time limitation and increased complexity

The first consistent pattern across the interviews is the perception of healthy alternatives as being time consuming and in many ways complex. The complexity in the modern food marketplace has increased since more and more refined products find their way to the shelves in supermarkets and meanwhile consumers' resources – mental and physically – are limited in a busy weekday. Consumers' scarce resources in relation to an increased complexity pursuant to nutrition information may also result in some kind of stress-situation since consumers do not have the necessary insight to solve the task (Wansink, 2006; Hansen, 2007). A long come influences from media, marketers, authorities etc. that play a big part, but the information is often fragmented and diverging making it difficult for consumers to elaborate on.

Consumers do not have unlimited amount of time for planning, shopping and preparing as it is a general belief that life has become more and more hectic and stressful for consumers. The complexity becomes a reality in the supermarket when choosing among the big variety of food products but also in the kitchen as many consumers find preparation of a high-nutrient meal a challenge. As a result this has created a natural demand for convenience food in form of fully or partially prepared food, take-away meals, eating in restaurants etc. (Luomala, 2004, 2006). In the interviews the complexity is exposed in many different ways.

Louise: Health. I wish I cared more about it or had more energy to care about it. But also more financial surplus, so I don't have to think about prices. But always be able to buy good quality. Something ecological or something that is really good, so I also get some variation. Or just more energy to make healthy food and think of health in that direction [...] I don't believe I have the imagination or inspiration when cooking and what is healthy and not? You hear things in the television or somebody talks about artichokes or something odd but what should I do with it? And then I need a recipe and a lot of other ingredients, and before I make it so far I drop the idea. Not to forget that I want to be out of the supermarket

within ten minutes. The consequence is that sometimes I choose one product and next time another because I don't want to make an effort when I have no chance of knowing what is good or bad. There is no reason to spend fifteen minutes in front of the refrigerated display counter when you don't have the essential requirements to choose the right product and then I just pick something.

In Louise's story, the lack of time and overriding complexity prevent her to have the energy to think about what she buys and eats. Despite her wish to be more involved in buying healthy groceries and prepare delicious and varied meals she cannot find the extra resources to do it. Several different issues like not enough money, fantasy or time complement her argument. The increased fragmented information from the media adds to the confusion and ensues, that Louise feels she does not have the sufficient knowledge to make the right choose. She adopts the role of a victim that has: 'No chance of knowing what is good or bad'. The key issue in this hermeneutic analysis is to understand the patterns of meanings that would allow this feature to assume a significant role in Louise's consumption situation. Thus, Louise's specific story must be understood in relation to the broader picture outlined in her interview. As her interview narrative unfolds, it becomes evident that Louise holds on to lots of the food products' information provided by the media, which makes the confusion bigger as she tries her best to navigate in the food jungle with limited resources as a single mother with a two-year old daughter. In many ways she has given up on pursuing living by the rules and uses her deficient resources and energy as justification. Because of her lack of trust in many products she has surrendered and sticks to the products she already knows and in that way trying to reduce the complexity.

When going through the interviews Louise's main characteristics become visible in fragments among several consumers. Several interviewees illustrate how a general mistrust to food information provided by radio, consumer-magazines or consumer-programs on television is a crucial factor for not bothering to care about what you eat. In one of the interviews a clear statement supports this argument. Kasper says: 'It is all healthy until otherwise indicated'. Implying that there are too many conflicting information and as a result the consumers don't know what to rely on and end up legalizing their shopping with a lack of knowledge or lack of time. Shopping and cooking has low priority in contemporary consumers' busy everyday where time is a limited factor. And

though the intentions and thoughts are leading in the right direction there is still a gap between intended action and actual action when it comes to shopping healthy groceries.

Jannie: I have to admit that my weekday at the moment is very stressful. It always is. You don't have time for anything and especially right now it is very stressing. The result is that I don't shop as much as I want to and buy too much ready-made meals which I am not quite satisfied with. But that is the way it is. It is a vicious circle. I think a lot about it, but it is not that often I do something about it. I don't eat as much vegetables as I should, which might be because it is too inconvenient or too unexciting to eat vegetables.

For Jannie living healthy is synonymous with surplus of time. She joins the attitude that achieving a healthy life is not something you just do. It takes time and requires that you live by the rules. In interpreting Jannie's interview, an issue that stands out is her high awareness of what is good for you and your body and what is not, and the big gap between wanting to do something and actually doing it. She notes that she is always on a healthy diet, read nutrition labels when shopping and several times expound the importance of eating healthy and how it affects her level of energy and mental state. The interview is riddled with this focus and hence, you expect that these statements are more than envisioned, but Jannie puts her effort into thinking at the expenses of acting.

(2) Everyday versus weekends

After a hard week with many working hours you deserve some indulgence. Weekends seem to give consumers a permission to relapse into unhealthy food indulgence and hedonism and the health-rules of weekday's changes to the pleasure-rules of weekends (Luomala et. al. 2006, 2004). On holidays the same pattern is observable (Williams, 1997). This is also a prominent rationale in the study at hand. For instance, one of the interviewees accounts for his shopping receipts in the following way.

Niels: This one is quite clearly Friday shopping – a candy receipt and still with some everyday commodities. But that is incidentally because I was there.

But the receipt bears the stamp of Friday shopping, where there is no rush... Coca Cola and some milk, though. Also some biscuit for the children but there is absolutely nothing rational on the receipt. I would say that the Coca Cola is the new one with lime taste and I just passed it in the store and took it, because it was Friday and we like it. But we didn't really need it. I just thought: What the hell [...] I also bought some Marabou chocolate and some white chocolate snowballs. I thought that I didn't have to feel guilty about the Marabou chocolate because apparently it's not that unhealthy.

Interviewer: How do you know that?

Niels: I can't remember where I got it from. I think my wife said it, I think it is something they have talked about at the hospital (her work). But I can't remember why; so instead I could have looked at the nutrition label. Right? [...] A couple of years ago, or something like that, we started not to use butter and then we had a discussion about margarine being healthier than butter because of the larger amount of unsaturated oleic. [...] We committed a few sins this weekend but we make up for it the rest of the week. Somehow 'sin' is a fucked up expression...

Niels, who is in charge of half of the family's grocery shopping, frequently visits several different stores in order to get all the specific products he wants. During the interview Niels constructs himself as a political consumer (Gabriel and Lang, 1995) who seeks out food product information and on this basis takes a stance, which is critical as he finds lot of product information untrustworthy. Hence, he has a well-founded opinion about almost everything in regard to food and health. No food choice is random. Niels and his family (wife and twins) prioritize the weekends, where it is time to relax and be together which legalizes the distinct food habits in weekends unlike weekdays. Ironically Niels is very aware of what is healthy and unhealthy but as he puts it: 'At some point we commit a little sin this weekend and then we make up for it the rest of the week'. In that way engendering mental balance and justifying a behaviour which bucks the health-rules.

The same pattern is explicated in other consumer stories where a split between everyday food and weekend food is apparently.

(3) Socialization

What creates a good atmosphere when gathering? And can serving of healthy food degrade the good atmosphere? Obviously food plays a central part in social arrangements as we meet for dinners, coffee, and a snack and so on. Planning, preparing, and enjoying food have always had a role in maintaining and developing social relationships (Luomala et al., 2004). Consumption of hedonic food products and socialization go together as it is cultural embedded that togetherness 'justify' indulgence and don't leave much room for healthy eating.

Michael: Sometimes you are not in a place where you can get all the healthy stuff. Then you have to eat the something unhealthy. I don't have the creativity to vary the food as I should. And sometimes you are in some social relations where you cannot sit and eat carrots. You have to play along, and there have to be moments for that as well. Sometimes you are forced into it, geographical or socially and then you cannot escape the situation. Then you put something on one scale pin and later you will be better to align. Be healthy when you have time for it [...] I would not sacrifice a good evening or else. In that case I will put friendship and sociality higher than health. I don't know how I should measure it, but in the long run I try to pursue some health.

Interviewer: How about the nan-bread (Indian bread) on your receipt?

Michael: That is a kind of bread which has got some southern touch. There is something exotic about eating it. My girlfriend loves it. And it does taste good but it is baked in garlic oil so you can taste it is not normal bread. It is stuffed with various things. You know it is unhealthy but it is enjoyable to eat with my girlfriend.

A conventional issue in Michael's story is the apparent inconsistency between social togetherness and health. The intertextual interpretation across the interviews shows a through-going pattern emphasizing that sociability means bending the health-rules and letting go of your pursue for pleasure. There seems to be a social understanding of healthy food as being less exciting and enjoyable to eat and in some way healthy food doesn't contribute to the good atmosphere in a social gathering. Through the interviews it became clear that when eating and preparing food in a social setting other rules come into play. For instance when having guests for dinner and preparing a healthy dinner, which includes light or fat reduced products it may signal that you are compromising the quality of the meal. For instance, Tina gives an account of her troubles in choosing the right cream for a sauce she wanted to make. The recipe contained full-fat cream and yet she was indecisive when she went shopping for it.

Tina: I had better chosen the fat reduced product, but it was for a good sauce...
On the one hand you think about what you ought to do and on the other hand you think about the good taste. Is there any reason to buy the most fat and unhealthy one? Does it really taste better or is it something you pretend? Sometimes the fat reduced product is a bit more expensive and then you are compromising too much, so I ended up buying the full-fat variant. I also think the price matters and then I make up excuses like I am having guests for dinner and I only buy it this one time.

(4) Taste and pleasure before health

An increased focus on healthy versus unhealthy food among consumers does not necessary result in a reduced intake of unhealthy food products, although consumers are faced with overweight and obesity. And why not? According to several of our interviewees it is because healthy food simply does not taste as good as unhealthy food does. While interpreting consumer stories different perspectives on the binary opposition - healthy and unhealthy food products - were revealed. In several of the interviews the social construction of good taste is linked to less healthy food, whereas food categories like light, fat free and healthier food products are perceived to be less tasteful. As a consequence, consumers may feel they are compromising good taste when making a healthy choice.

The following illustrates this gap between the categorisation of healthy and unhealthy food products.

Michael: MorningCrunch. It is a cereal. I actually stood and looked at the different variants and de-selected the one with chocolate. I thought that chocolate is definitely not healthy but afterwards I found out, that the one I bought wasn't healthy either.

Interviewer: How did you feel when you returned home and figured that your MorningCrunch wasn't all that healthy after all?

Michael: I thought: 'Wow this tastes good, it can't be healthy'. You could taste that it was stuffed with sugar and you could see it almost only contained carbohydrates [...] The manufacturers have to sell it and they have a hard time making something that is healthy, because then it does not taste as good. That is their problem, they are more interested in making it seem healthy and taste unhealthy.

In Michael's story the binary opposition 'good taste and bad taste' is very closely linked to the healthiness of the food. Choosing rich and unhealthy food products might be found very rational and logical for the consumer as this action can be ascribed to an overactive 'love life gene' which 'justifies' certain behaviour. These patterns of justification are essentially linked to passion for life. And especially the pursuit of indulgence can be seen as some kind of biological force that instinctively takes over. As the following passages shows these anticipatory considerations could take precedence over the well-known health-rules as choosing unhealthy and thereby tasty food products is legitimized as your body is craving it.

Tina: Let's say, I want a cake. I can shop for a rich chocolate cake or I can try the cake blend with only 9% fat. If you buy the fat reduced cake blend you pretty often regret it. If I want a good cake I might as well buy a good one because the fat reduced might not taste as good [...] I know it is unhealthy but I think it is the love life gene.

Lone: I actually eat quite unhealthy. I eat what I feel like and then you have to work out if you become to overweight. I have a zest for life when it comes to eat – and eat well.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The authorities and marketers are facing a big challenge when coping with increased overweight and obesity and trying to enable consumers to make healthy choices and protect them from an environment that encourages unhealthy choices (Nordic Plan of Action, 2006). The many educational health campaigns in interaction with an expanded general focus in the society regarding health were intended to provide the general public and decision-makers with adequate and updated information on correct nutrition (Nordic Plan of Action, 2006). Presumably, the effort has resulted in an upward move in health involvement among both women and men, showing that 78% of all women strive to eat healthy every day compared to 58% of all men (AVT, 2007). But although this should lead to healthy lifestyles among consumers the reality is different. Indulgence in pleasurable and unhealthy food products is an essential part of consumers' life and the striving for healthier food may be found less enjoyable. The pleasure and motivation are not deduces from the physical intake of healthy food but from the satisfaction of acting out the healthy life which is more a mental construction of all the compounded information the individual have obtained. Consumers stress that eating healthy is the right ting to do because it is good for your health and not necessarily because it tastes good. The social construction of the good taste appears to be an issue that needs stringent attention and further research should be made in analyzing the good taste in connection to healthy versus unhealthy food. Such research may provide the authorities with new and adequate information and thereby improve their communication with consumers.

The cultural and social settings seem to impact consumers' approach to food and eating, and how the balance between healthy and unhealthy food consumption is constructed. But earlier research suggests that especially the constellation of people eating together is of decisive importance. Eating with close friends and family is one situation but eating with unfamiliar colleagues or strangers make you behave differently as conveying a good impression during your interactions with strangers (Salvy et al., 2006; Clendenen et al., 1994; Wansink, 2006). Clendenen et al. find that people eat less unhealthy food products like dessert, when eating with strangers than with friends (Clendenen et al., 1994).

Additionally the composition of people with different size and gender has been shown to have a great impact of individual's consumption of food. If you want to stay slim, eat with small eaters or start dating. Eating in a group where everyone eats a lot makes you eat more compared to eating with people who eat small portions (Clendenen et al., 1994). But also the presence of a thin person makes obese people become more self-conscious and eat less (Clendenen et al., 1994; Roth et al., 2001). Furthermore a date between a man and a woman contains several scripts for correct behaviour when it comes to food. First of all both males and females eat less in the presence of a stranger of the opposite sex, but overeating is seen as healthy appetite for a man whereas for women it is perceived less feminine and unattractive (Salvy et al., 2006; Wansink, 2006). In contrast, women who eat minimally are viewed in a more positive light than are women who eat a lot (Bock and Kanarek, 1995). This clearly indicates the importance of taking environmental and social settings into account in the attempt to understand individuals' consumption of food. Additional research concerning what is socially reputable and not in regard to healthy versus unhealthy food consumption could further clarify specific areas where authorities and marketers may wish to make an effort in trying to change fundamental cultural perceptions.

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How vulnerable is organic consumption to information?

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Abstract

In order to sustain consumers' support and trust in organics in the future, it is essential to understand what motivates consumers to pay extra for organic products. Only then is it possible to design effective information campaigns and to supply products which successfully meet consumers' expectations. The purpose of this study is to elicit the relative importance that consumers place on various organic attributes and to estimate the monetary significance of these. As an integrated part of the study, consumers' susceptibility to new information and the effect of information on the willingness to pay (WTP) for different attributes are investigated. These objectives are realised through Choice Experiments (CE).

The paper is based on work in progress.

1. Introduction

Background

Consumers trust and willingness to pay for organic food are reflected in the rapid increase in demand for organic foods in many European countries as well as in the USA. Earlier research suggests that many consumers perceive the organic rules and regulations as more comprehensive than they actually are (Wier *et al.* 2004). In order to sustain future developments in organic markets, it is essential to understand what motivates the consumers to pay extra for the organic products. Only then is it possible to design campaigns and to supply products which successfully meet these expectations.

Purpose

To this end, the overall purpose of this study is to improve our understanding of consumer perceptions of organic products. In particular, we

- Estimate the WTP for organic products
- Identify how information concerning the relationship between organic and conventional productions influences consumer perception of and willingness to pay for organic products
- Identify how perceptions and the effect of information changes across consumer types.

These objectives are realised through Choice Experiments (CE). CE has become a very used technique for revealing preferences for goods and services that are not identified through ordinary monetary transactions. Of course, organic products are traded in ordinary markets but using CE, allows us to focus on specific attributes of organic products – and providing information as integrated part of the experiment.

Organic consumption patterns elicited through market versus stated behaviour

Since 2003, Statistics Denmark have provided general market data on the turnover of organic foods in retail shops by commodity and unit showing an increased turnover in organic foods of 31% in the time period 2003-2006. This tendency is also seen in the purchase data from the market institute GfK ConsumerScan¹. However, next to the data from Statistics Denmark the advantage with the GfK data is that they contain detailed information on a selected number of households, their actual purchases at product level and their socio-demographic background. These data are therefore very suitable for analysing the relationship between actual consumption and household characteristics.

However, one of the shortcomings of using such market data, is that they contain information about consumption of goods, but not consumption of the attributes of paying or consuming the products. It is therefore impossible to say anything about how important the different attributes that a product consists of are to consumers.

One way to estimate consumers' WTP for different attributes is by using an alternative to the traditional consumer theory; namely the hedonic pricing techniques set forth in the 1960s by Lancaster (1971). The central idea behind this approach is that goods are defined and characterised by the types and levels of the embodied attributes. A lemon can be defined by being yellow, sour, juicy, etc. The consumers are assumed to have preferences for these specific attributes rather than for the whole bundle which constitute the lemon. However, attributes can seldom be bought independently but are obtained in more or less pre-fixed bundles as goods. The highest price a consumer is willing to pay for a certain good is thus the sum of the prices he is willing to pay for each involved attribute. If this subjective valuation is exceeded the consumer chooses not to purchase the product. A situation where the consumers actually have the possibility to buy a single, specific attribute is in the presence of differentiated goods which are highly similar, as they share many attributes, but yet different. As an example consider different varieties of shell eggs. They are all fragile, yellow and white when cracked, an essential ingredient in omelettes, etc. But varieties of shell eggs also

¹ The data consist of records of purchases done by members of the GfK-panel. In average 1800 households return a shopping diary to GfK each week containing daily registrations of purchases of a large variety of food types covering approximately 80% of total household grocery budget. An appealing feature is that the data set encompasses background variables making it possible to analyse how consumer behaviour depends on household characteristics such as age, education, etc. The data set is unbalanced and spans the five years period from 2002-2006.

differ in some attributes as some are produced from free range hens, others from battery hens and yet others are from organic eggs farms. Baltzer (2004), Jensen *et al.* (2004), and Smed (2005) are examples of studies using market data to reveal the willingness to pay for quality attributes embedded in various food products.

Another of the shortcomings of using market data, is that we can observe what consumers shopping baskets contain - but not why. The 'why' can be addressed using qualitative data (in depth interviews, focus groups, large representative surveys, etc). A survey of the literature on Danish consumers' motives for buying organic food is given in Torjusen *et al* (2004). Moreover, the Danish organisation Økologisk Landsforening (2003; 2004; 2007) frequently carries out surveys and focus groups in order to make a segmentation of organic consumers from their perception and preferences for organic food and their shopping motives.

Consumers preferences for attributes can also be elicited using hypothetical experiments where consumers are asked to value specific attributes. Advantages include the direct focus on what research question is formulated and that the analysis is not restricted to existing products or product attributes. In particular, CE are suitable for an attribute-based analysis.

In an ongoing research project (see <http://www.akf.dk/projekter/sub/oekologi/>), we analyse how consumers perceive organic food, and in particular the different attributes related to consuming organic foods. In one part of the project this is done by making use of focus groups and a survey on how consumers perceive organic foods. This questionnaire is sent to the households in the GfK panel allowing us to analyse the relationship between consumer demand, their conceptions of organic products and household characteristics. Another part of the project is the CE described in this paper, which should be seen as another way to elicit consumers' preferences for organic food. However, the advantages with the CE are that it is a better method to estimate consumers' demand for each specific attribute related to the consumption of an organic product.

The paper is organised as follows. First, the need for public intervention and the policy relevance of the paper are described. Next, organic consumption and the organic consumer in Denmark are described using GfK data. The findings provide very useful inspiration and also direct input to the formulation of the actual CE. Previous studies on stated preferences are then described. Finally, as the paper is based on work in progress, we illustrate our ideas to how the CE will be designed and analysed.

2. Public intervention in organic markets

Organic products are associated with a long range of attributes. Many consumers consider organic products to be healthier than their conventional counterparts just as organic production contributes to improve the environment and provide better living conditions for farm animals. These attributes can be characterized as public goods meaning that many consumers might benefit from one consumer buying a good containing that attribute². This unintended effect that one consumer's choice might have on others is often called an externality. In addition, organic products are often associated with better taste, being fresher,

² The health aspect must be considered a private as well as a public good.

etc. These attributes can be characterized as private goods meaning that only the person consuming the good obtains utility thereof³.

From an economic policy point of view, the distinction between private and public goods is very useful as they are associated with different needs for public intervention. Socially optimal allocations of private goods can typically be provided by market demand and supply assuming that the markets are informational efficient. Socially optimal provision of public goods on the other hand requires public intervention as consumers' decisions do not include the positive/negative effect that their choices have on others. Therefore, positive externalities will be undersupplied when relying on market behaviour whereas negative externalities will be oversupplied. In example, the improved environment related to organic production can be considered a positive externality of organic farming or a negative externality associated with conventional farming.

Organic products include attributes with both private and public goods characteristics. Basically, public intervention might improve social welfare by improving informational efficiency for private as well as public goods – and in addition, by reducing externalities associated with the public good characteristics. The exact public role is rather complex. We will focus on only the role of information provision as a policy tool (or marketing tool) for increasing organic market shares.

There are potential welfare improvements associated with having informational efficient organic as well as conventional food markets. In the short run, one might think that organic markets might benefit from consumers associating more benefits with organic products than can be scientifically documented. However, in the longer run, the viability and trust in organic markets depends on consumers' perceptions of organics being based on available facts.

3. Description of organic consumption and the organic consumer using market data

Organic consumption in Denmark increased through the 1990s to an average household food budget share of around 5%, which makes Denmark the country with the highest organic consumption (Willer & Yuseffi, 2007). The following description of the organic demand in Denmark is based on the purchase data from GfK ConsumerScan. The organic budget share is defined as the shares of the expenditures on 32 products that are used to purchase organic varieties. Figure 1 illustrates that the average organic budget share for the households in the panel has increased from 4.5% in 2002 to 6.5% in the last quarter of 2006.

³ A private good is also characterized by being exclusive meaning that *only one person can* obtain utility from consumption.

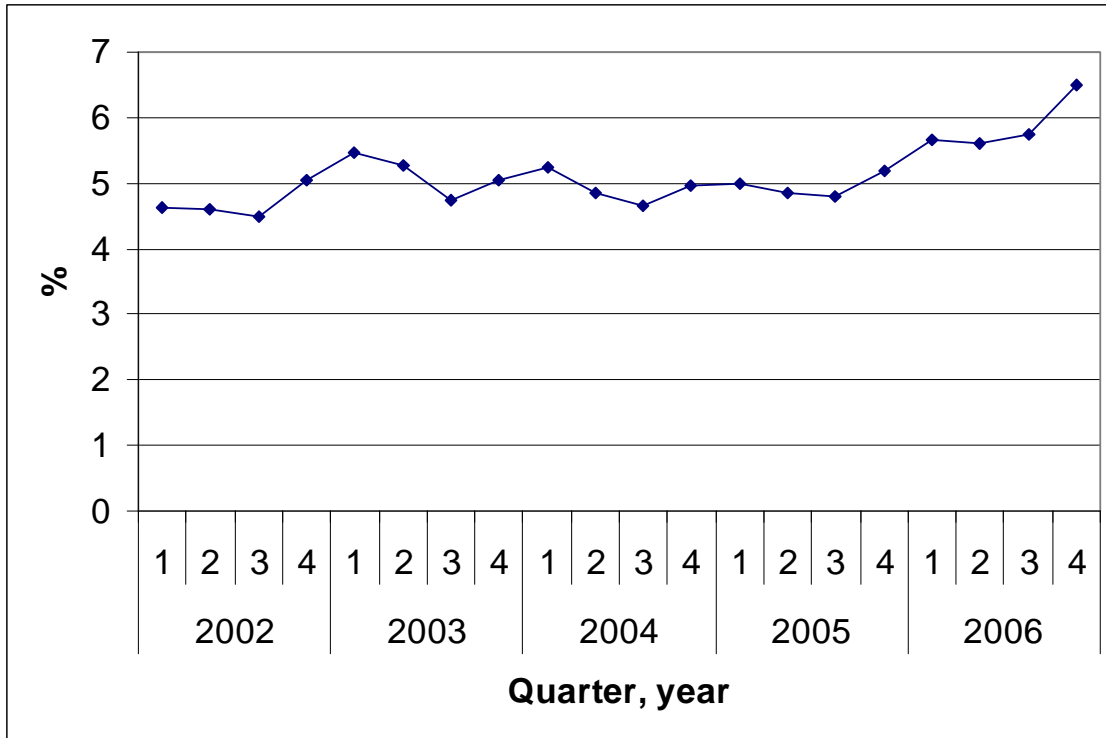


Figure 1. Average organic budget share

The detailed consumption data allows us to describe the organic consumption and the organic consumer in greater detail. The descriptions of organic consumption and the organic consumer using market and socio-demographic data are used to generate the specific hypotheses for the CE. In particular, we are interested in variations in consumers' organic budget shares. First, we investigate variations in the overall budget shares. Thereby, we can identify whether in example, the main part of the panel households have organic budget shares close to 5% or whether the panel covers large variations in budget shares ranging from zero to a small group with very high organic consumption. Next, we investigate variations in product specific budget shares. As the design of the choice experiment requires specification of a particular product which attributes are valued, we need to know as much as possible about differences in demand across products. Third, by investigating differences in budget shares across socio-demographic groups, we obtain indications of where to expect differences in WTP. Fourth, we investigate the stability of different user groups which will be used as input to formulate our hypothesis concerning differences in the effect of information. Finally, as the choice experiment aims at eliciting WTP estimates, an illustration of the observed price premiums for the main product categories is very useful as input to the choice of price variables as well as for validating the results.

Consumer groups

The household specific character of the data allows us to divide households into groups according to budget shares. The 1,359 households which are active throughout the entire period are divided into four subgroups. Households with no organic consumption are categorised as *non users*, households with an organic budget share less than 2.5% are *light users*, households spending between 2.5-10% are *medium users*, and households spending more than 10% of their food budgets on organic varieties are denoted *heavy users*. Table 1 shows the relative size of the different user groups in the panel.

Table 1. Distribution of user groups in the panel, 2006

User group	Non	Light	Medium	Heavy
Share of the panel	9%	51%	25%	15%

Around 9% of the 1,359 households did not buy any organic products in 2006 and could thereby be categorised as *non users*. Approximately half of the panel was in 2006 *light users* and one out of four was *medium user*. 15% of the household spend more than 10% of the food expenditures on organic varieties.

Product groups

Are the organic consumption equally distributed between different products? No, some variation in the demand exists between both products and user groups. For each user group figure 2 shows product specific organic budget shares for 11 broadly defined product groups: Bread (rye, wheat, crisp), eggs, fruits, vegetables, coffee, meat, flour (cereals, flour, and pasta), milk, butter, fermented milk (yoghurt, cheese).

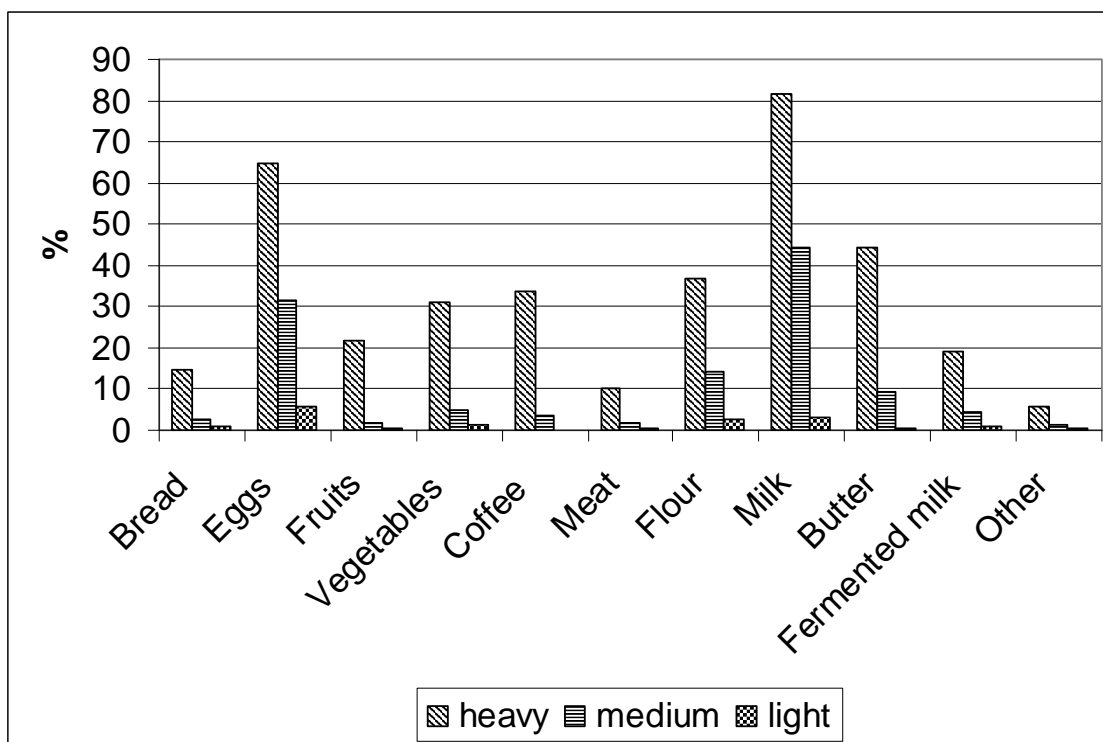


Figure 2. Product specific organic budget shares

Figure 2 shows that the group of heavy users holds the highest organic budget share for all product groups and actually spend more than 10% of the budget for all product groups (except other) on organic varieties. Opposite, both medium and light users can be either heavy, medium, or light users of the different product groups. Besides, all three user groups relatively often choose the organic versions of milk and eggs. Heavy and medium users have a remarkable high demand for milk and eggs – 80% of the milk purchased by heavy users are organic and 40% of the milk bought by medium users is organic. Similar, 65% of the eggs demanded by heavy users are organically produced against 30% for the medium users. For

the product group other the organic share is below 5%, indicating that the main part of the organic consumption is captured by the ten narrower defined product groups.

In particular, it is worth noticing that medium and light users have much higher organic budget shares in vegetables than in fruits despite the fact that those groups often are considered very close (in example, in recommendations for healthy eating, one of the recommendations is formulated as 'many fruits and vegetables'). Digging into differences between consumer perceptions of organic fruits and vegetables would therefore be interesting to pursue.

Socio-demographic characteristics and organic consumption

The demand for organic products is not equally distributed between different demographic groups but varies with factors as education and family structure. Households with a high organic consumption are thus often inhabitants of Copenhagen while light and non users are more likely to live in more rural areas. Furthermore, differences in the consumption can be related to the level of income and education. Organic products are mainly demanded by households with higher levels of both income and education. Regarding family structure households with few adults, mainly single women, are more often heavy or medium users, while no effect of the presence of children can be observed in the GfK data set.

Dynamics

While the overall variation in the number of households in the different user groups is relatively limited, the demand is far from stable at household level. Many households wander between the four user groups and might very well be categorised as e.g. non users in 2002, heavy users in 2004, and light users in 2006. In order to get an overall picture of the wandering between the groups from 2002-06, the households are categorised according to their change in the organic budget share. A *stable* household remains in the same user group; an *increaser* wanders to a user group with a higher organic consumption and does not return to the lower level again. Opposite to this a *decreaser* wanders to a user group defined by a lower organic budget share and does not return to the initial level. A *fluctuator* is a combination of an *increaser* and a *decreaser* as the organic budget share fluctuates between a higher and a lower level. The degree of wandering and the starting point is illustrated on figure 3.

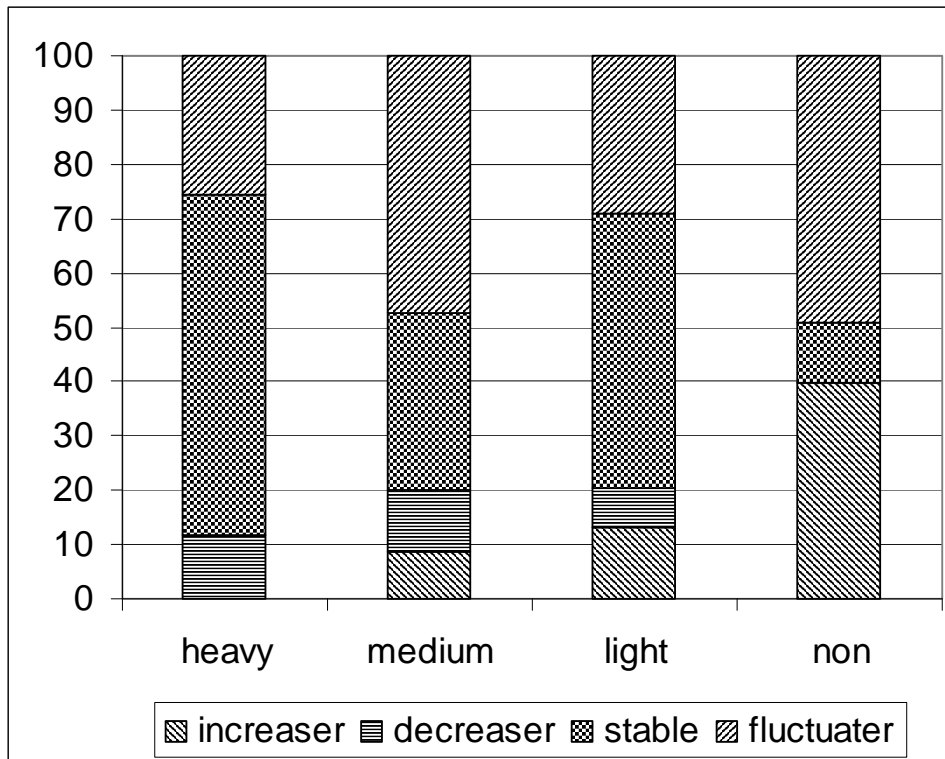


Figure 3. Dynamics in the four user groups

As shown in figure 3, 10-60% of the consumers remained in the user group where they initially were placed in 2002. Heavy and light users were more likely to have a stable demand than medium and non users. For all user groups a relatively high proportion of the households were fluctuaters while relatively few constantly increased or decreased the organic consumption.

Price premiums

The organic budget share reflects both quantities purchased by the households and the relative prices of organic and conventional products. The observed increase in the organic budget share can thus be a result of both a higher demand and an increase in the price premiums paid for the organic varieties. Figure 4 shows the magnitude and development in organic price premium for five selected products; namely fruits, vegetables, meat, milk, and egg. Milk and eggs are relative homogenous products and no distinction is made between different types of milk and eggs in the calculations. Meat, fruits, and vegetables are on the other hand very heterogeneous products. Some varieties are recoded in pieces, e.g. apples, and others in grams, e.g. strawberries. Furthermore differences in quality and prices of cuts of meats necessitates a distinction between different types. The price premium for these products therefore represents the average for a randomly chosen variety within each product.

The price premium paid by the households for a randomly chosen piece of fruit or vegetable is 35-70 % and 20-45% respectively. The corresponding figure for meat is 20-60%. The price premiums for all three products exhibit some variation but neither has increased or decreased during the period. The price premiums for milk and eggs have on the other hand increased from respectively 10 to 30% and 40 to 50%.

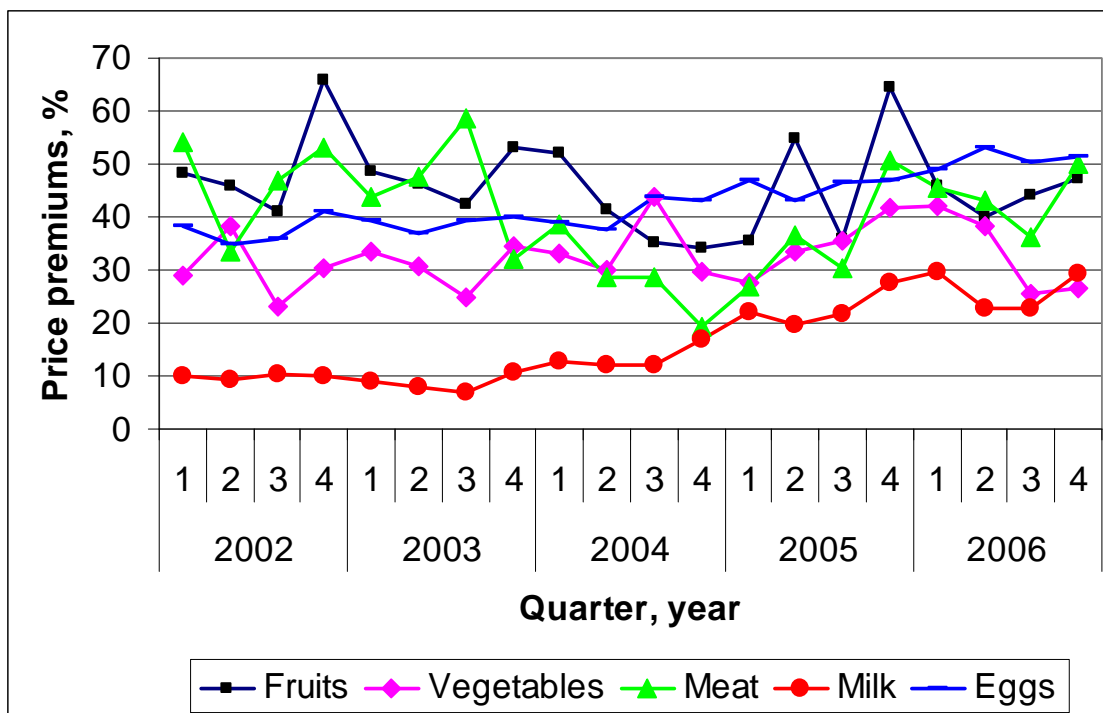


Figure 4. Price premiums for organic fruits, vegetables, meat, milk, and eggs.

In relation to the observed differences between organic budget shares of fruits and vegetables, figure 4 indicates that the price premium is higher for organic fruits than for vegetables – which might be one (of many?) reasons for the differences in demand. However, as the increase in price premiums has been relatively limited this factor alone cannot explain the higher average organic budget share.

4. Stated preference studies

For the reasons argued earlier in this paper, stated preferences have become widely used to elicit consumers’ preferences for non-marketed goods. Common for all types of stated preference methods is that a representative panel of respondents is asked to elicit their economic valuation of certain well defined goods. In example, in the pioneering contingent valuation method, respondents were asked to place the maximum amount he would be willing to pay for one or more particular goods. In CE, the respondents are presented with a number of choice sets, varying in prices and product attributes. In each choice set, the respondents are asked to choose the most preferred alternative. Through multiple answers it is possible to estimate the underlying demand function for the involved attributes and substitution patterns between attributes. CE has become increasingly popular partly because it is much easier for respondents to choose between pre-specified bundles of attributes with given prices than to place a value on an attribute-bundle.

Originally, the techniques were used in environmental and transport economics but during the last decade they have been increasingly applied within other areas such as food economics too. There is a growing literature on consumers’ stated preferences for different types of food attributes. Many of these food attributes is considered as credence attributes since the quality

of credence goods cannot be determined either before or after the purchase of the good. This covers studies on consumers' preferences for food safety in terms avoiding *growth hormones* (e.g. Alfnes & Rickertsen (2003) and Nayga (1996)), *avoiding pesticides* (Kontoleon & Yabe (2003), Batte *et al.*(2007), James & Burton (2003), Buzby *et al.* (1998), Boccaletti & Daniele (2000), Huang *et al.* (1999), Underhill & Figueroa (1996), Nayga (1996)), *avoiding pathogens* (Rozan *et al.* (2004), Goldberg & Roosen (2005), Christensen *et al.* (2006b), Meuwissen & van der Lans (2004), Hayes *et al.* (1995), Latvala & Kola (2003), Cao *et al.* (2005), Wandel & Bugge (1997), Shin *et al.* (1992), Miller & Unneverhr (2001), McCluskey *et al.* (2005), Wessells & Anderson (1995), Buzby *et al.* (1998), Latouche *et al.*(1998), Henson (1996)), *avoiding GM products* (Carlsson *et al.* (2004), McCluskey *et al.* (2001), Carlsson *et al.* (2005), Kontoleon & Yabe (2003), Hu *et al.*(2004), James & Burton (2003), Heiman *et al.* (2000), Loureiro & Hine (2004) and Burton *et al.* (2004)). Stated preference studies focusing on *place of origin* include Meuwissen & van der Lans (2004), Alfnes & Rickertsen (2003), Carlsson *et al.* (2005), Skuras & Vakrou (2002), Dransfield *et al.* (2005), Batte *et al.* (2007). Stated preference studies focusing on *animal welfare* include Kontoleon & Yabe (2003), Christensen *et al.* (2006b), Carlsson *et al.* (2005), Meuwissen & van der Lans (2004), Dransfield *et al.* (2005), Armah & Kennedy (2000)) or focusing on environmental concerns (Meuwissen & van der Lans (2004) and Wandel & Bugge (1997)) and there are also a number of studies focusing on private attributes such as taste, appearance, tenderness and freshness.

Reviewing the literature on consumers' stated WTP for organic products, it seems as there only exists a limited literature on consumers' WTP for organic products. In the studies on consumers' stated preferences for organic foods, it is usually the contingent valuation method that is used to reveal consumer preferences. The studies can be divided into the following three groups:

1) *WTP for organics without information*. Studies eliciting price premiums that consumers are willing to pay for organic products as compared with conventional food and/or other production systems *without* further information concerning the organic products. This type of experiment might reflect a typical shopping situation where consumers face products with or without organic labels. Two examples of such studies are found in Gil *et al.* (2000) and Batte *et al.* (2007).

In Gil *et al.* (2000) the contingent valuation method is used to reveal consumers WTP for different organic products (red meat, fruits, vegetables, potatoes, cereals, eggs and chicken). Consumers were asked whether or not they were willing to pay a premium for an organic food product as compared to a conventional one. Four premiums were offered to consumers. Only consumers with some knowledge of organic products were included in the survey. This study shows that only likely and actual organic consumers showed positive attitude towards organic food and had positive WTP for organic foods. Consumers were willing to pay higher premiums for meat, fruits and vegetables than for potatoes, cereals, and eggs). Batte *et al.* (2007) use a payment card method to estimate consumers' WTP for several food characteristics including the level of organic content in the product. Respondents were presented with a hypothetical adult breakfast cereal product including a price. They were asked to note the extra price they were willing to pay additional for eight specific characteristics. These included different levels of organic content, whether the cereal was locally grown, free of pesticide or GMO, or with enhanced flavour. The study showed that traditional grocery shoppers had the highest WTP for pesticide free ingredients, followed by 100% organic ingredients and locally grown ingredients. For specialty grocery shoppers the

WTP was highest for 100% organic ingredients, followed by pesticide free and locally grown ingredients.

2) *WTP for organics with initial information.* Studies eliciting price premiums that consumers are willing to pay for organic food as compared with conventional food and/or other production systems *with* additional information concerning the organic products provided before the actual choice experiment are carried out. The drawback with these studies is that they do not measure the effect of providing information to consumers which makes it difficult to evaluate to what extent consumers' consumption of organic food is influenced by this information. This type of experiment might reflect a shopping situation after a public information campaign.

This type of studies dominate the literature on WTP for organics and include Corsi & Novelli (2002), Loureiro & Hine (2002), Loureiro & Lotade (2005), Williams & Hammit (2000), Christensen *et al.* (2006a) and Hearne & Volcan (2005). Corsi & Novelli (2002) study consumers' WTP for organic meat by using a closed-ended CV questionnaire. Prior to answering the questionnaire, respondents were informed about the prospective availability, the characteristics and the certification process of organic meat. They found that respondents are willing to pay for organic meat. Loureiro & Hine (2002) use payment cards to reveal consumers' WTP for GMO-free, organic and locally grown potatoes. Information on these production methods were provided to respondents in the beginning of the survey. They find that the mean WTP is higher for locally grown potatoes than for organic and GMO-free attributes. Loureiro & Lotade (2005) look at consumers' preferences for different labels on coffee (fair trade, shade grown, organic). Information on the meaning of the labels is provided to respondents. They find the highest WTP for coffee with the fair trade label, followed by coffee labelled shade grown and organic.

Open-ended contingent valuation questions were included in Williams & Hammit (2000) to evaluate whether organic buyers were more willing to pay higher prices for fruits and vegetables to reduce perceived food and health risks than non-organic buyers. Information on these attributes was given to respondents in the beginning of the survey. This information included the definition of organic and conventional food and the different risk types (pesticide residues, microbial pathogens and natural toxins). The study showed that organic consumers value labels, safe food, and perceive organic food as posing fewer health risks, having less impact on the environment and being more nutritious. A similar study was performed by Christensen *et al.* (2006a) using a CE to elicit consumers WTP for animal welfare and for avoiding campylobacter risks in chicken (not organic). They found that organic consumers had a significantly higher willingness to pay for both attributes than non-organic buyers.

Hearne & Volcan (2005) use a CE to elicit consumers' preferences for conventional and organic vegetables. The attributes included in the experiment are label, appearance, size and price. The attribute level for label was "without label", "pesticide residue free" and "organic production practices". For appearance the attribute level was "with insect marks and/or presence of insects", "absence of insect marks and presence of insects", where as the attribute level for size was "small" and "large" and for price is was "no price premium", "10% increase in price" and "20% increase in price". Information on the certification labels was given to respondents prior to the experiment. They find that consumers' marginal WTP was highest for vegetables labelled with "organic production practices" followed by "pesticide

residue free”, “absence of insect marks” and “increased size”. This demonstrates a positive WTP for certified and organic production practices.

3) *The effect of information on the WTP for organics.* Studies eliciting the price premiums consumers are willing to pay for organic food and/or other production systems *with and without* information. None of the cited literature above on organic foods tests how the provision of information to consumers may influence their behaviour. This, despite the fact, that earlier findings within the stated preference literature show that expert information presented in contingent market reduce respondent uncertainty and thereby increased validity of WTP statements. This also suggests that the outcome of a stated preference survey highly depends on the amount of information presented to respondents in the survey. These findings have changed the standards for describing stated preference studies in the international literature as today information provision is a necessary part of a design description.

We found a few studies on the effect of information – but not focusing on organic products. Hayes *et al.* (2002) estimate consumers’ demand for irradiation of food and find that negative information on irradiation of foods influence peoples demand more than positive information. Rozan *et al.* (2004) analyze the effect of providing information to respondents on food safety and how this influences their WTP for certified and non-certified products. They found a reduction in the WTP for non-certified products when negative information on non-certified products is provide to respondents. Both studies use a second price auction to estimate the information effect. Christensen *et al.* (2006b) use CE a two-split design to elicit the effect of information on chicken welfare and for avoiding campylobacter risks. They found that information concerning animal welfare significantly increased WTP for animal welfare whereas information concerning campylobacter risks did not affect the average consumers WTP for avoiding campylobacter risks.

We only found a single study where the effect of information on consumers’ WTP for organic products is analysed. Underhill & Figueroa (1996) analyse consumers’ preferences and WTP for organically labelled products where only half of the sample is provided with information on the considered labels (Organic, Certified Organic, Certified Pesticide Residual-Free, and Grown with integrated pest management practice). This allowed them to test whether respondents’ preferences for these labels were influenced by their knowledge of these labels. The likelihood of purchase and the WTP questions were asked such that the respondents answered on a scale ranging from “very likely” to “very unlikely” whether they were willing to pay from 0% to 20% more for a labelled product. Building upon two-stage utility maximization and using an ordered logit model to analyse the data, this method provides information concerning consumers’ WTP. They found that for informed as well as uninformed respondents, the WTP for organically labelled produce was highest and highest for the informed group of respondents. This suggests that information on labels can be used to influence consumer behaviour.

5. Our study and expected results

Hypotheses

The description of market behaviour revealed significant differences between products – both in terms of different consumers buying different products and in terms of differences in price premiums. We note that differences in price premiums can be due to differences in

production costs as well as differences in demand. In the questionnaire, we can elicit information only about the demand side.

Preliminary results in our research project show that consumers' perceptions of the importance of different attributes vary across products. In particular it was remarkable that consumers perceived animal welfare to be very important in shell eggs but not in chicken meat. These findings indicate the importance of choice of attribute and product.

The review of stated preference literature suggests that only few studies use CE to reveal consumers' WTP for individual attributes associated with the consumption of organic foods. Moreover, only a single study was found that focuses on testing how information concerning organic versus other production systems influence organic consumption. These findings suggest the following hypotheses to be tested in our CE:

- 1) Consumers' WTP for certain attributes are product specific.
- 2) Information about production methods, country of origin, etc. have different effects on consumers' valuations of different products.
- 3) Consumers being loyal users of organic products are less sensitive towards negative information regarding organics than more occasional users.

Econometric method

The theoretical framework for the empirical analysis is based on the characteristic-based modelling and on random utility modelling (RUM). The characteristic-based model is a consumer theory suggested by Lancaster (1971) where goods are characterised by the attributes they embody. RUM is the outset for the modelling of discrete choices and is based on the assumption that the consumers make choices according to deterministic characteristics as well as on some underlying random factors.

Due to the stochastic component in the utility function, a choice cannot be predicted with certainty, but only as a probability (Garrod & Willis 1999). An important step in the analysis of the CE is, therefore, to link the utility that individual i obtains from a given choice n (U_{in}) with the probability that this choice is made (P_{in}). The RUM provides a theoretical foundation for linking the CE data with consumer behaviour based on utility maximising behaviour. The probability that individual i prefers alternative n to any alternative j in the choice set, can be expressed as the probability that the utility associated with alternative n exceeds the utilities associated with all other alternatives s (McFadden, 1973):

$$\begin{aligned} P_{in} &= P\left[(U_{in} > U_{ij}) \forall j \neq n\right] \\ &= P\left[(V_{in} + \varepsilon_{in}) > (V_{ij} + \varepsilon_{ij}) \forall j \neq n\right] \end{aligned} \quad (1)$$

Equation (1) links the observed characteristics of the chosen alternative (V_{in}) and the not-chosen alternatives (V_{ij}) to the probability that alternative n is chosen. The exact appearance of the above equation depends on the distribution of the random component/error term $f(\varepsilon_n)$ (Train, 1986; McFadden, 1973). A random utility presentation of a discrete choice model is typically analysed using either a logit or a probit type model. These include binary logit, multinomial (also denoted conditional logit), nested logit, mixed logit and probit⁴ models. The simplest logit models (binary, multinomial and, to a certain extend nested logit) allow only very restricted substitution patterns between alternatives. Their popularity in earlier

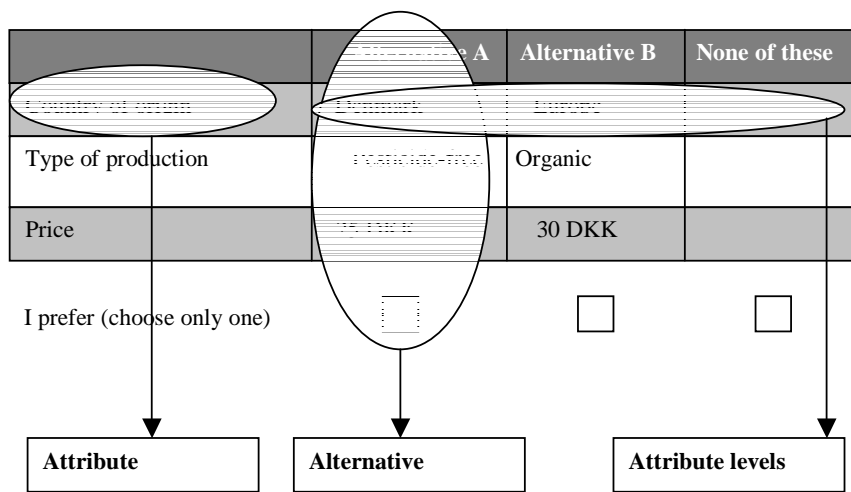
⁴ When referring to probit, multinomial probit is actually meant, as opposed to binary probit since the choice sets involve more than 2 alternatives.

discrete choice surveys is mainly due to the closed form solution of the probability density function. Over the last two decades, however, a rapid increased focus and research in discrete choice models has resulted in a much wider range of models being used (including mixed logit and probit models) that can be used to estimate more complex consumer behaviour. These can allow for heterogeneous consumers and more complex substitution patterns between alternatives.

Description of the choice experiment

The basic terms involved in CE include *choice sets*, *alternatives*, *attributes* and *attribute levels*. An example of a choice set is provided in figure 5. Based on the preliminary analysis of the market data, we have chosen apples as an illustrative example of one of the products whose attributes are to be valued. In particular, a bag of 10 apples is to be valued. The choice set consists of three alternatives: Bag A, bag B, and neither of these (i.e. an opt-out alternative). The two real alternatives are characterised by 3 attributes: country of origin, production method, and price. These attributes can assume different values (attribute levels). Country of origin might be Denmark, another European country or a country outside Europe. Type of production might be conventional, pesticide free, or organic. The price attribute might assume a number of realistic levels.

Figure 5 An example of a choice set (10 apples)



The questionnaire consists of a CE and questions concerning respondents attitudes, knowledge concerning organic production, socio-demographics etc. Basically, the CE is used to elicit estimates of the average WTP for the attributes *and* the average effect of information. In addition to the possibility of directly focusing on specific characteristics of organic products, the survey approach allows us to link qualitative statements about underlying motives as well as socio-demographic characteristics with choices involving monetary trade-offs in the experiments. The structure of the questionnaire can be roughly divided into 5 parts:

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Choice experiment without information
- 3) Information provision

- 4) Choice experiment with information (4 splits)
- 5) Attitudinal questions regarding foods in general, importance of attributes, and attitudinal questions regarding foods and socio-demographic variables.

The extent and effect of (mis)perceptions of organic attributes are studied by providing information about specific differences between organic and conventional products as an integrated part of the experiments. Information concerning differences between types of production and/or concerning differences in production practices across countries will be provided. By randomly dividing respondents in separate groups (splits) and providing separate pieces of information to each group, we are able to test the effect of information on choice behaviour. The following types of information are presently under consideration:

- Information concerning the attribute levels of the first attribute (country of origin): Higher use of energy associated with transportation from other European countries and in particular, countries outside Europe. Other European countries have different rules even for organic farming (specific examples will be provided). Generally cheaper as the climate is more suitable for growing apples and labour is cheaper, the risk of pesticides in DK and imported apples – conventional as well as organic.
- Information concerning the attribute levels of the second attribute (type of production). The average size and average profits of a Danish apple grower (conventional and organic), information concerning alternative pest management used in organic apple industry, the size of imports and exports for organic and conventional apple industry, etc.
- No information concerning the attribute levels of the third attribute (price) is provided. Randomly chosen prices within a realistic range are included in the choice sets.

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Enhancing corporate social responsibility in the food chain with a stakeholder dialogue

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Abstract

The paper is concerned with the content of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the food supply chains. The objective is to analyze and develop CSR of the food supply chains and to study to which extent responsibility issues and elements can be incorporated to the product level. The research project takes an action oriented approach and is based on case studies. The project draws on three different case food products and their supply chains: rye bread, broiler chicken products, and margarine. The content of CSR is constructed and analysed in cooperation and through interaction between researchers, consumers, companies and their interest groups. The research

project combines the compilation and analysis of extensive information sources, action research, constructive technology assessment and stakeholder workshops. The paper presents how the research process is proceeding in a dialogue with researchers, representatives of case companies, consumers and other stakeholders and provides preliminary results on CSR issues in the food chain.

1. Introduction

Food markets are becoming more and more global also in the Northern Europe. Domestic food chains are facing tightening price competition, which challenges food companies to find more sustainable sources of competitive advantage in order to improve long-term competitiveness and financial performance. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) may provide elements to build new types of resources and competence that may serve as a foundation for a competitive advantage in relatively mature markets with, among others, slow growth potential, increased international competition and limited room for new product innovations (Barney, 2002). Accordingly, more and more companies also in the food sector are aware of consumers' and stakeholders' interest towards CSR issues and have taken initiatives and made serious efforts to consider their values and actions from the CSR point of view. In many companies responsibility aspects have already been integrated into the strategic management.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become a widespread topic in business and public discussion. It is increasingly acknowledged as an important business issue (Prescott et al., 2002) and as a critical success factor in the long term (Wilenius, 2005). CSR brings new dimensions and challenges to the management and development of food companies. As argued by Wilenius (2005), it is no longer enough that companies ask their customers, stakeholders and other interest groups just simply to trust them but where they need to proof and show that they have put their values and principles into action. A special challenge is to build more content and description of how responsibility is generated as a result of dialogue with stakeholders.

To increase the interplay about production and consumption regarding CSR issues between food chain actors, consumers and stakeholders, a joint enterprise of two research centres, MTT Agrifood Research Finland and National Consumer Research Centre, and five companies – Fazer Bakeries, HK Ruokatalo, Kesko, Raisio, and Suomen Rehu – in the food chain was established. The objective of the project “Enhancing corporate social responsibility in the Finnish food chain with a stakeholder dialogue” is to analyse and develop CSR of the food production chains and to study to which extent responsibility issues and elements can be incorporated to the product level. The expected outcomes of the project include: a shared understanding of CSR between chain actors, NGOs, policy makers, consumers and scientists; a set of CSR criteria and indicators for Finnish food chains and products; and identification of development options of production chains from CSR point of view. The project is funded by the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Finnish Ministry of Environment, the participating companies and research institutes. The research project started in 2006 and will be completed in December 2008.

The research project is based on three case products and their supply chains and takes an action oriented approach. The case products are rye bread by Fazer Bakeries, broiler chicken products by HK Ruokatalo, and margarine that is a private label product marketed by Kesko and manufactured by Raisio. Data are collected by means of interviews, discussions and using company documents, statistics and other data sources on CSR issues concerning the entire production chain of the case products. During the research project six intensive workshops with food chain actors and

stakeholders such as consumers and NGOs are organized. The role of the workshops is to provide an open, inspirational and interactive forum for a stakeholder dialogue.

The paper will be divided into four sections. First, the relevance and challenges of defining and measuring CSR especially from the supply chain point of view are argued. Second, an entire research process is described. This includes research questions, types of data collected and, in particular, how the research process is proceeding in a dialogue with researchers, representatives of case companies, consumers and stakeholders. Third, the paper will provide preliminary results on two stakeholder workshops. Finally, the paper will end up with discussion towards CSR criteria and measurements.

2. Challenges and relevance of defining and measuring CSR of products and their supply chains

CSR can only be anchored in the organisation if those involved can develop a meaningful concept of CSR (Cramer et al., 2004) and build more concrete content to it (Wilenius, 2005). Defining CSR is in a particular context, for example in the food supply chain is, however, a challenging task. The widely accepted approach to CSR is based on the traditional triple bottom line with three dimensions: economic, social and environmental responsibility (Elkington, 1997). CSR implies a wider perspective than the view that companies act in compliance with the legal norms and produce safe products that meets the basic quality criteria. Constructing a commensurate set of concepts for CSR is made difficult by the fact that CSR is not an absolute concept, but its objectives and perspectives evolve and change over time. One of the main questions also includes who should participate to this defining process. Moreover, constructing the content of CSR in the food chain is particularly difficult because the actors in the chain, including consumers, have no uniform perception of what CSR basically means. CSR in the food chain is a multidimensional issue, which often involves conflicting interpretations between different chain players or stakeholders and conflicting values especially between the economic responsibility and other aspects of responsibility (Forsman-Hugg et al., 2005).

Building content to CSR becomes even more complicated if we look at CSR issues from the point of view of supply chain. Responsible food production means that the whole supply chain takes account of the impacts of its actions on the society (Katajajuuri et al., 2007). For most large companies the publication of an annual CSR report has become a routine. Companies in both food industry and retail have also been active in reporting not only environmental issues but also issues relating to economic and social responsibility. Commonly accepted visions and objectives concerning CSR do not, however, guarantee that companies put their values and principles into real actions. Nor are the CSR reporting initiatives a guarantee of responsibility. One slight problem in those reports is that they tend to bring out, quite selectively, the positive aspects concerning the company. CSR is, however, also concerned with managing the unwanted impacts. The CSR reports do not tell how responsibility is constructed in the everyday operations of the company – not to say anything about the chain perspective. This means that it is impossible to assess the responsibility of the entire production chain based on CSR reports of single companies. The GRI (Global Reporting Initiative) has become a commonly accepted approach to the reporting of CSR. According to the GRI reporting guidelines, the CSR reports should address all the stages of the production process that have relevance to the CSR.

Some consumers and citizens would like to have access to information on all parts and stages of the food production chain, not only on the quality and price of the final product. They would like to

know about the origin of the raw material, animal welfare, and working conditions of farmers and staff of food companies. Some reflect on how fair and just the distribution of income in the food chain is, while others are concerned about pollution and the environment. The possibilities of consumers to make ethical or responsible food choices are, however, quite limited, because suitable information for this from the entire supply chain point of view is not available. In our view, supply chain approach should be highlighted more in the CSR discussion since the manufacturing of the food product requires several steps and processes from raw materials to the ultimate product. When it comes for example to the environmental impacts, the studies (e.g. Katajajuuri et al., 2005) have shown that in the food chain a significant share of total environmental impacts are often caused by agricultural production and not the production of final product.

Carrying CSR in the chain can thus be approached as a part of the effective supply chain management where efforts are made to bring suppliers and customers together in a business process (Omta et al., 2001; Tan, 2001). One of the functions of the effective food supply chain management is to break down barriers which exist between each of the links in the supply chain (Fearne, 1996). To this end, CSR could be integrated as a more visible part of the effective supply chain management. Paying more attention to responsible practices from the supply chain point of view companies in the food chain could increase trust throughout the entire chain. The approach and challenges of our approach is also close to the life cycle management that has been defined, for example, as flexible integrated framework of concepts, techniques and procedures to address environmental, economic, technological and social aspects of products and organizations to achieve continuous improvement from a life cycle perspective (Saur et al., 2003).

In addition to defining CSR, a central question is how to measure CSR. Measuring CSR is of utmost importance since only by measuring CSR issues a company or supply chain can develop its CSR practices. Measuring CSR has its roots in environmental accounting and reporting. In measuring CSR most of the focus has traditionally been at the community level. The efforts to implement and measure sustainability practices at the company level, let alone the supply chain level, have been scarce (Veleva & Ellenbecker, 2000). It is a challenging task to develop a set of both quantitative and qualitative indicators that can be used to measure all the three dimensions of CSR. Based on a review of many studies there is a wide variety of theoretical approaches to define CSR, and this disables the measurement of CSR (McWilliams et al., 2006). There is especially a lack of comparative, sector-specific and empirical studies (Salzmann et al., 2005). From the business perspective the relation between CSR and financial performance is not clear at all; many studies have tried to present the relation but these studies have been insufficient and inconclusive (McWilliams et al., 2006; Salzmann et al., 2005).

3. Research process and methods

The content of CSR is constructed in cooperation and through interaction between researchers, companies and their interest groups (e.g. citizens and NGOs). The research project combines, among other things, the compilation and analysis of extensive data sources, action research, constructive technology assessment (CTA) and stakeholder workshops as presented later on. The execution of the study is based on grounded theory.

The project draws on three different case food products. They are rye bread, broiler chicken products and margarine (Table 1). The first two are produced by a leading Finnish bakery and a meat processing company. The last one is a private label product by a big Finnish retail company.

The products and their supply chains are different, which may lead to a different content of dialogue.

Table 1. Description of the product and companies involved and typical characteristics related to the product and its supply chain.

Product	Description
Rye bread	<p>Manufactured by Fazer Bakeries, a leading Finnish bakery company</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A traditional Finnish product with strong cultural heritage - Fazer Bakeries belongs to Oy Karl Fazer Ab, a family-owned company established in 1891 - 6,800 employees - About half of the rye used in production originated from Finnish farms, the rest imported from Poland and Germany - Non contract-based rye cultivation
Broiler chicken products	<p>Manufactured by HK-Ruokatalo, which belongs to HKScan, a leading food company in Northern Europe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - convenience products - broiler housing based solely on contract production (altogether 145 broiler farms) - broiler farms located close to the slaughtering and processing site - 480 employees in the poultry slaughtering and processing - The life cycle analysis of a volume broiler chicken product carried out by HK Ruokatalo and their chain partners: the main environmental impacts are known <p>Suomen rehu, one of the main industrial feed producer in Finland supplying feed for the broiler farms</p>
Pirkka Margarine - Margarine with 60% of fat - Margarine with 25% of fat	<p>Private label products by Kesko, a big Finnish retail company</p> <p>Margarine 60 is produced by Raisio, a food company and specialist in plant-based foods in Finland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - turnip rape used in production originated from Finland Margarine 25 is produced by Raisio Polska Foods in Poland - turnip rape used in production originated from Poland <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - both products are new in the market - palm and coconut oil used in production originated from Malaysia and Indonesia

The overall strategy of the research project is based on cooperation and dialogue between researchers; chain actors, environment, food and agriculture policy makers; experts and other interest groups. The researchers' role is to evaluate the existing data and bring to the process their knowledge of recent theory and information regarding CSR issues (e.g. life cycle assessment, LCA, concerning environmental information) and user involvement in innovation. The policy makers bring to the process experience in enacting current policies as well as the instruments and the knowledge of practical policy implementations. The chain actors bring to the process the existing chain practices.

The project is proceeding as an iterative process and it builds on several steps as presented in Figure 1. The project started with intensive data collection on CSR issues throughout the chain (see more details in Chapter 3.1.). Workshops play a central role in the project as a forum for stakeholder dialogue (Chapter 3.2.). There are two workshop rounds for each case. The first round has a focus on the production chain and the second one on the consumption side. After the first workshop

round, a first draft of the content of CSR for the case product and chain is generated. All workshop memos are published in the blog of the project (<http://ktkblog.kuluttajatutkimus.fi/vastuu/>). The purpose of the blog is to open co-operation and dialogue between the researchers, chain actors, policy makers and citizens. The blog acts as an interactive window for the project. On the one hand, the research group writes about current developments and results of the project. On the other hand, the stakeholders are part of the dialogue. There is a monthly column for various stakeholders and the blog is a forum for discussion as it is open for comments.

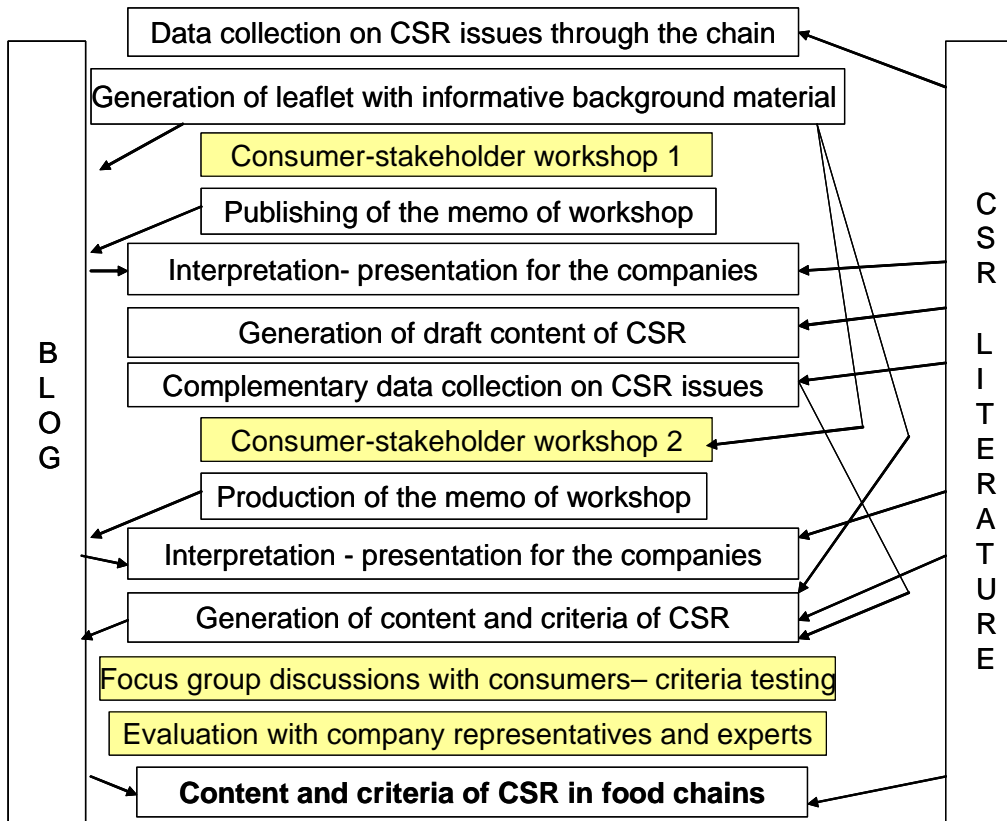


Figure 1: Main steps of the research process (Katajajuuri et al., 2007).

After the first workshop round, complimentary data will be collected on those themes raised by workshop participants. In the second workshop round the purpose is to get deeper and more detailed ideas about the content and criteria of CSR. At the end of the research process, consumer focus group discussions will be used in testing the developed CSR criteria and measures.

3.1 Data collection as a foundation for stakeholder dialogue

In the first step, chain-specific data was collected for each of the case products. The purpose of the chain data and respective CSR issues is to give a detailed description of the production chain and current business models and, first of all, to reveal which CSR dimensions and issues are relevant and connected to the different steps and operations of the chain. Data are collected and generated by means of detailed inquiries and interviews of company representatives along the production chain, interviews of experts, discussions with key persons of the companies and using company documents, CSR reports, industry reports, statistics and other data sources on CSR issues concerning the entire production chain of the case products.

The frame for the data collection in each of the case was basically the same but depending on the product and its production chain there were some case-specific differences. For example, animal welfare issues were naturally brought out in the case of broiler chicken products while they were irrelevant issues in the rye bread and margarine cases. From the data collection point of view, the margarine case was the most challenging, since in this case we had most dimensions. First, we had two main chain actors: the retail company that have manufactured the product and the food company that manufactures the product. Second, we had two margarine products, one made in Finland and the other made in Poland. This led the research group to visit the production site in Poland and to collect data on margarine production process and productions chains of the raw materials related to the margarine product manufactured by Raisio Polska Foods. Third, compared to the two other case products, the manufacturing of margarine includes more steps and processes such as production and refining of rape-seed oil and margarine production. Fourth, both margarine products include several main raw-materials – rape-seed oil, palm oil, cocoa oil/fat, water – originated from different suppliers, which made the CSR data collection and analysis even more complicated.

All data collected during the process has been documented in order to ensure the transparency of the research process itself. All the interviews of company representatives, stakeholders and experts have been tape-recorded and transcribed. Discussions in meetings between company representatives and researchers have also been documented in memos. The data include also a lot of different documents from the case companies. A reference list on literature, studies and other data sources has also been kept up.

For each of the case, the entire production chain and processes were described as detailed as possible. This description also included origin of raw materials and products as accurately as possible as well as quality, human resource management and other management standards and systems in the companies through the chain. Main focus in data collection was in CSR issues that were classified and reported under the TBL dimensions. Table 2 shows a summary of what kind of concrete CSR data we obtained related to each case. Some of the issues are common to all cases while the others are relevant only in the specific case. When it comes to content of CSR dimensions, most data were obtained under social responsibility. Economic responsibility was in some respect a sensitive issue to some actors. They did not want to reveal their detailed financial key figures, and in some cases we had to use overall industry statistics.

Table 2. CSR data collected from the case supply chains.

	Rye bread	Broiler chicken products	Margarine
Economic responsibility	Financial indicators for profitability of crop farming in Finland Share of agricultural subsidies Profitability of the bakery business Cost structure and profitability in bakery industry Price margins of the actors in the production of rye bread Producer prices History and strategy of the rye bread Fazer Oululainen brand	Financial indicators for profitability of broiler production and grain growing in Finland Share of agricultural subsidies Profitability of the company Value added, cost structure, and investments in the meat sector Producer price Consumer prices History, strategy and consumer segments of the Kariniemi broiler chicken brand	Financial indicators for profitability of turnip rape farming in Finland and Poland Share of agricultural subsidies Profitability of the margarine business in Finland and Poland Sales volumes of margarine Retail prices History, strategy and consumer segments of the Pirkka (private label) brand
Social responsibility	Origin of raw materials Product safety issues (HACCP) Quality policy Product healthiness, contribution to R&D Well-being of farmers in the production chain Wages in the bakery industry Well-being and satisfaction of employees of the company Equality issues Work safety Employee accidents Employee training Employment effect of the chain Customer satisfaction and feedback	Origin of meat Requirement and implementation of animal welfare and health care Product safety (HACCP) The national control program of Salmonella Product healthiness Well-being of farmers and workers in the production chain (breeding, despatch and transportation) Wages in the production chain Well-being and satisfaction of employee of the company Equality issues Work safety Employee accidents Employee training Regional employment effect of the chain Customer satisfaction and feedback	Origin of raw materials Product safety issues (HACCP) Specification of the products Risk analysis Product healthiness, contribution to R&D Wages in the margarine production in Finland and Poland, buying power comparison Well-being and satisfaction of employee of the companies Equality issues Human rights Image of employer Employment effect of the chain (excl. palm and coconut oil production) Customer satisfaction and feedback
Environmental responsibility	Environmental impacts of the case company LCA-based environmental impact data on production chain of the rye bread Comparison of environmental impacts of crop farming of different origin (Finland, Poland, Germany)	Environmental impacts of the case company LCA-based environmental impact data on production chain of the broiler chicken product	Environmental impacts of the margarine companies (in Finland and Poland) An estimation of environmental impacts on the margarine production chain (exl. coconut oil) Comparison of environmental impacts of turnip rape farming of different origin (Finland, Poland) Comparison of environmental impacts of different oil plants (palm oil, turnip rape, soya bean)

From environmental point of view, all the main environmental impacts and related actions were described and documented. In addition, different environmental related acquisition and production

criteria and managements systems were reported. In all the case studies following environmental impacts were assessed: climate change, acidification, eutrophication, energy demand and photochemical ozone formation (smog). Finnish Eco-Benchmark (Nissinen et al., 2007), developed for illustration of environmental impacts, was used to assess the contribution of different environmental impacts for total impact. This information was needed when comparing roughly environmental impacts of different raw materials alternatives for the production of final product.

Based on the intensive data collection process, a detailed CSR chain report was written for each of the case. In the next step of the process, based on the CSR report, a leaflet with informative background material was generated based on the CSR chain report. This leaflet was written in popular language and its purpose is to give the participants of the stakeholder workshop a compact description of the production chain of the case product and an idea of how the chain is functioning from the CSR point of view. The main aim of the background material is to act as a stimulus for the workshop.

3.2. Workshops as a forum for stakeholder dialogue

One part of the interactive and participatory dialogue between stakeholders built in the project is the implementation of workshops. They are inspired by a constructive technology assessment (CTA) type approach (e.g. Heiskanen, 2005) to the question of CSR in the food chain. The aim is to promote the transfer of ideas and the encounter of representatives from different stakeholder groups in order to ponder dimensions and content of CSR. The participants are recruited from three main groups that are the production chain actors of each case, consumers from National Consumer Research Centre panel, experts and interest groups. There will be two rounds of workshops for each of the case product. The first ones executed in 2007 focused on the viewpoint of production chain. The second round of workshops, to be held in the beginning of 2008, will draw upon the results from the first round but concentrate on the viewpoint of consumption.

The workshops were conducted in the following manner. A variety of actors were gained together to these workshops. In each workshop about 30 people were invited to participate. One third of the participants was business people representing supply chain, about one third was consumers selected from National Consumer Research Panel, and the rest were experts and representatives of important stakeholders specific to each case. A one evening workshop of the case rye bread was organized in April 2007, with 27 participants, and of the case poultry chicken products in June, with 31 participants present. The margarine workshop will be held in September. A booklet of background information that summarised the findings of CSR issues of each case supply chains about ecological, economical and social dimensions involved were sent to participants a couple of weeks before the workshop.

A large share of the time in the three hours workshop was devoted to group sessions concentrating on the three themes specific to each case study. The themes chosen for the rye bread case were 1) raw materials of rye bread, 2) people in the production chain and 3) the responsibility of the value chain of the rye bread. In the case of poultry chicken products themes were 1) environmental impacts of broiler production, 2) animal welfare and food safety, and 3) the responsibility of the value chain of the poultry chicken products. In the margarine case, the themes will be 1) Raw materials of margarine, 2) manufacturing of margarine, and 3) the responsibility of the value chain of the margarine products.

The group sessions consist of three phases: the production of CSR ideas in relation to the topic of the group, the organisation of these ideas under different dimensions of CSR, and the valuation of ideas. The course of the workshop was strictly scheduled. In the beginning of the workshop, participants wrote ideas into pieces of paper about which issues they consider important related to CSR when, for example, raw materials of rye bread are discussed. All the ideas were collected on the charts. After that ideas or topics were organised under the TBL dimensions. The moderator picked up every written topic and asked participants to evaluate in which dimensions of responsibility (environment-social-economic) it belongs. A spatial triangle was used as a representation of CSR. Both topics and their place in triangle were discussed widely in groups. When all topics were laid in the triangle participants were asked to weight ideas they prefer important. Each participant had three ++ votes and three + votes, altogether nine votes. The ideas that get most votes were collected on summary charts. At the end of the workshop findings from summary charts were shown in a short general discussion.

The workshops are carefully documented, including: (1) tape-recordings and of all working group sessions, (2) the ideas produced by the participants in the workshop, different assemblies of these (photographs), and summary charts of the most important ideas, (3) notes taken by group facilitators (4) notes taken by group clerks, and (5) a memo compiled of notes and other documentations. Right after the workshop a workshop memo is written on the outputs of the discussions of the group sessions and a course of discussion.

4. Preliminary results

In this paper we reveal some summary results based on the stakeholder workshop held for the case rye bread and poultry chicken products. In the case of rye bread, participants wrote a total of 172 ideas, the majority of which related to the entire production chain. Table 3 reveals, which ideas in each group session were collected on the summary chart based on votes given. What was interesting is that irrespective of the theme of the group session, similar CSR dimensions were highlighted. The following issues were to some extent common to all groups: 1) environmental issues and ecology, 2) product safety and clean environment and 3) moderate living or profitability concerning all the actors of the chain. Especially economic conditions of farmers were seen to be quite critical in spite of a relatively high share of agricultural subsidies in grain growing.

When it comes to the CSR ideas raised by the workshop participants, different sub-groups explained and interpreted same issues in very different ways and from different angles. Environmental issues and ecology, in particular, were approached from totally different perspectives. Although environmental impacts of rye bread production such as climate change and eutrophication were reported and described in the background leaflet, quite many participants described environmental issues to be more linked to the cleanness of soil and toxicity issues.

Table 3. Summary of the most important ideas in the case of rye bread. (Number of votes in parantheses).

The group session 1: Raw materials of the rye bread	The group session 2: People in the production chain	The group session 3: Responsibility of the value chain of the rye bread
Ecology; sustainable cultivation (18)	Adequate margins (13)	Environmental issues (12)
Cleanness and healthy (14)	Safe products for consumers (10)	Fair price distribution in the chain (9)
National identity (12)	Take care of environmental issues (9)	Healthy / health products (9)
Continuity of farming (9)	Labour welfare	Flow of information (8)
	Livelihood and wages	Safe products (7)

In the case of the poultry chicken products, participants produced a total of 82 ideas. The number of ideas was significantly lower compared to the rye bread case. Table 4 shows which ideas in each group session were collected on the summary chart based on votes given. If compared with the ideas of the rye bread case, there was more diversity in this case. Among the most important ideas, there was no idea that would have been shared in all group sessions. An interesting observation was that when it comes to the dialogue of environmental issues, the business representatives and experts used economical terms such as eco-efficiency. Consumers, by contrast, used more environment-related terms such as pollution of the water system. In this group, consumer behaviour aspect received also backing in the discussion on total environmental impacts of the chain.

Table 4. Summary of the most important ideas in the case of poultry chicken products. (Number of votes in parantheses).

The group session 1: Environmental impacts of broiler production	The group session 2: Animal welfare and product safety	The group session 3: Responsibility of the value chain of the poultry chicken products
Efficiency of processes; eco-efficiency (11)	Treatment of animals (15)	Environmental issues (13)
Sustainable future (10)	Animal conditions (13)	Cleanness of products (12)
Domestic energy and food (10)	Open information flow (13)	Fair income distribution in the chain (10)
Consumption concerns (10)	Welfare of farmers	Employment effect of the chain based on Finnish broiler production (10)
Animal welfare (9)	Cleanness in the production chain (10)	Transparency and traceability of the chain (9)
Using best technique and competence	Food control (9)	Hygiene issues, zoonosis control (7)
Low environmental impacts (8)	Responsible consumption (8)	

Analysis of the workshop data reveals some similarities and differences between the two cases. Participants in both workshops shared the view about environmental concerns. Environmental issues ended up to the summary chart in all group sessions including the one with the theme “Animal welfare and product safety” in the case of broiler chicken products. In both cases, it was ranked top one issue in the group session focusing on the overall responsibility of the value chain. Environmental concern was also shared by the business representatives, consumers and other

stakeholders and experts. In addition, fair income distribution in the chain gained importance in both cases. Especially, economic conditions of farmers were viewed quite critical from chain responsibility point of view. Moreover, transparency of the entire chain was connected to the overall responsibility. In the rye bread case this was related to the flow of information in the supply chain.

There were also some differences in dialogue between the cases. In the rye bread case, the dialogue between the workshop participants was more intense and value-oriented. This may be partly due the fact that case products are different by nature. For the Finns, rye bread is a national product with strong cultural heritage. Although it was told in the background leaflet that the share of raw material (including rye) in the cost structure of the rye bread is only about four percent, some participants (excluding business representatives) argued that domestic rye should be used from the national identity point of view. Broiler chicken products, by contrast, represent modern convenience products without strong cultural roots.

Workshop participants were asked to organize issues and points raised in the workshop into three categories based on the traditional triple-bottom-line (TBL) dimensions. However, in all sub-groups there were some issues that were discussed quite a lot but which the participants found difficult to organize according to the TBL dimensions. In fact, we faced a similar problem during the writing process of the CSR chain report and the workshop leaflet. Of course, the organisation of CSR issues under the TBL is not a key issue at all, but numerous CSR aspects have to be somehow classified in order to outline CSR discussion and to make CSR more concrete for consumers and stakeholders. Our research project may also result in suggesting an alternative way to organize CSR, especially when it comes to consumer and stakeholder communication.

5. Discussion: towards criteria and measurements

We have found the task of defining CSR and how it could be measured a challenge. First of all, the CSR seems to be difficult to define in terms of concrete content and criteria in the workshop. Moreover, as a starting point the actors in the chain have no uniform understanding of what CSR means. The various interest groups of the case production chain have their own perception and ideas of what CSR is. In the workshop, all the interest groups were keen to bring their approach and ideas to the basis of discussion. This, however, strengthen the view that stakeholder dialogue is really needed but that a consensus may be difficult to find and, at least, this requires several rounds of workshops and discussions. It is also important that dialogue is taken place on several levels as is the case in our project. There is dialogue between different chain actors, between the companies involved in different case studies and between consumers, experts and researchers, as well as between different standpoints, views and issues.

Based on the results presented, it seems that environmental issues play a central role in CSR. Still, the ideas produced by workshop participants were largely very general, which makes a way towards CSR measurements challenging. Especially in the case of broiler chicken products, life cycle assessment (LCA) approach received backing, also from consumers. To build concrete criteria and measurement, more product-specific quantitative and comparable information would definitely be needed. In addition to environmental impacts, this relates also to social and financial criteria. What is for example employment effect of production chain if raw material with different country of origin is used?

Anyhow, the two stakeholder workshops held have produced a lot of material, on the one hand, on the content of CSR in the food chain and, on the other hand, on the discussion, argumentation, and rhetoric on CSR issues between food chain players, consumers and other stakeholders. The entire research process has so far turned out to be a unique learning process for both researchers and company representatives. CSR of companies is often criticized to be a matter of high-sounding phrases rather than concrete action. However, it seems that the case study companies are very committed to the project and its goals and are keen to consider the possibility of providing product-specific information on the CSR issues based on the results of the research project. The companies have already started to use ideas and results from workshops in their management process.

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Towards a theoretical taxonomy of food labelling

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Abstract

Labelling seems to have become the standard solution to all kinds of problems in the food sector, from obesity to regional development to animal suffering and decreasing profits. In this paper we start the work of developing a theoretically based systematization of labelling in the food market in order to enhance our understanding of the dynamics of this development. We try to link a discussion of competition strategies with theories of governance in value chains and labelling strategies. We aim to develop a theoretical framework to use in a study of food labelling in Norway.

Introduction - welcome to the jungle

Walk into a supermarket these days and you enter a veritable jungle of visual symbols and signs. Most of the products for sale, even a lot of the fresh produce, are equipped with distinct, formal, recognisable representations containing combinations of pictures, letters and numbers. Such labels, directly printed on the wrapping or on adhesive tags put directly on the product, are used as signalling devices for the purpose of identifying the products and/or certain features of them, thereby differentiating them from other similar products. According to prior research, successful product and market development depends on clear communication of core product attributes and the acceptance of these by consumers (Aaker 1999; Blackett 1998). Hence, in a market evermore abundant with product alternatives, various kinds of quality labeling tend to be of increasing importance.

In the following we will refer to labels as visual, symbolic or textual information about the product and/or its history that literarily follows the product or in other ways are available in other ways. Such information can be related to e.g. price, quality, content, nutritional qualities, health effects, the environment or the history of the product, the production method or the producer. This information may be directly available on the product or through

references to booklets, telephone numbers, web-sites etc. In this paper and the study¹ of which it is part of, we focus especially on quality attributes and the communication of these to consumers. Prior research has shown that labeling strategies may provide considerable gains to whoever decides to put them on products, though there are multiple challenges and potential problems, of which we will come back to later in this paper (van Trijp et al. 1997; Norberg & Myrland 2003). At the same time the sheer number of labels and the complexity of their messages may become overwhelming to consumers as well as to social scientist.

In this paper we will try to sort a way through this jungle by starting on the job of developing a theoretically based taxonomy of labels. We aim, in principle and in due time, to cover the whole range of brands and collective labels within the Norwegian food market (agricultural as well as seafood products). By means of the taxonomy, a systematic comparison of different brands and labeling schemes will then take place. However, in this paper we are not there yet, and our aim is more humble and limited. We start a discussion on how labeling strategies can be related to, or even matched with governance structures and competition strategies. To what extent can the success (or failure) of specific labeling strategies be linked to specific governance structures? And likewise, is certain competition strategies better suited for specific labeling strategies? In this paper we search for coherence and the possible lack of coherence between the three (labeling strategies, governance structures and competition strategies). Our intent here is mainly explorative, meant mostly to guide our attention in an empirical study to come.

Making sense of labels

Consumer trust is crucial for the effective functioning of food markets (Kjærnes and Dulsrud 1998). In the past ten to fifteen years, a number of food scandals have contributed to the weakening of consumer trust in food production (Hobbs et al. 2002; Sporleder & Goldsmith 2001). Even though Norwegian food production has only been weakly affected², confidence in food has emerged on the agenda among politicians, producers and consumers (Pope and Kjærnes 2003; Berg 2005). At the same time, economic concentration and market consolidation, increased cross-border trade and mass-media-based market communication strategies have all created more consistent brand-building efforts in food companies (Dobson 2003; Connors 2003) and have led to the establishment of labelling schemes in national food industries all over Europe (TemaNord 2001). However, these often involve competing schemes, variously controlled by branch organizations, private businesses and public authorities.

With the objective to build confidence and differentiate markets characterized by information asymmetry (Akerlof 1970; Darby and Karni 1973) and, thus, goods with credence attributes (McCluskey and Loureiro 2005; Loureiro et al. 2001), parallel and partly overlapping private and public brands and labelling schemes have emerged (Caswell et al. 1998). Related to this, a partly private, partly public certification/auditing industry have grown up, leaving its own

1 This paper is part of the Norwegian Research Council project: "Quality labelling and consumer responses in the Norwegian food sector" (Project nr. 178200/I10), a cooperation between The Norwegian Agricultural Economic Research Institute (NILF), The Norwegian Food Centre (Matforsk), The Norwegian Institute of Fisheries and Aquaculture Research (Fiskeriforskning) and The National Institute for Consumer Research (SIFO). The authors are indebted to other participants in the project for ideas used in this paper.

2 cf. this year's "bacteriological warfare" by the Norwegian meat industry, when one child died and a dozen fell severely ill from e-coli bacteria found in smoked sausages of the leading meat processor Gilde.

mark on the food industry as well as on its products (Busch 2004). Consequently, consumers tend to encounter a variety of brands and labels intended to inform them about the safety (Caswell 1998), quality (Caswell and Mojduszka 1996; Auriol and Schillizi 2002), nutritional (Nayga 1999; Variyam and Cawley 2005), national (Loureiro and Umberger 2003), regional/local (van der Lans et al. 2001; Loureiro 2003), ethical (De Pelsmacker et al 2005; TemaNord 2003), organic (Barrett et al. 2002), environmental (Asche et al. 2001; Jaffry et al. 2004; Stø and Strandbakken 2005) and possibly other qualities related to the product (including its production, distribution and sale). Collective labels may vary with regard to message (e.g. organic, origin, speciality) or label owners (e.g. private, semi-private and public); they may refer to different kinds of auditing regimes and certification bodies (e.g. private, public) (Golan et al. 2001) and include different scopes of markets and products (e.g. international, national, regional; product category vs. single products). However, based on voluntary cooperation such labelling schemes may often be blocked by dominant actors in the distribution chain pursuing their own agendas (e.g. BBC 26. april 2006)³. The multitude of brands/labels may cause confusion and indifference (Laric & Sarel 1981; Jahn et al 2005). The later is an obvious problem when there exists parallel competing labelling and information schemes related to the same product qualities (e.g. nutritional information).

On the next pages we will look closer at how labelling strategies may be linked to specific competitive strategies and later to governance structures. In the last part of the paper we discuss the coherence and possible lack of coherence between these.

Labelling and competitive strategies

In a study of meat-product labelling, Dulsrud (2007) point to three different perspectives or rationalities often found in economic and marketing studies of labelling strategies. According to this literature labelling may be seen as instruments to be used

1. for strategic purposes to deter competitors (pre-emption rationality),
2. to generate loyalty among consumers (loyalty rationality), or
3. to build trust and confidence among consumers (confidence rationality).

Even though these rationalities tend to overlap, there is a lot to gain from holding them apart, at least theoretically. They stress different elements and follow different logics. The differences become more evident as we look closer at how problems are defined, what aims they follow, and what kind of tools they employ. In the following we will look closer at these three rationalities.

Pre-emptive rationalities have been described in studies of strategic competitive corporate behaviours. Strategies tend to vary according to whether firms are seen as established or challengers in a particular market. We would expect that, when possible, a well-established firm would try to deter the entry of new competitors in their market. Elements of product differentiation are often employed in such entry deterrence strategies (Scherer & Ross 1989). The incumbent firm often expect the challenger to launch new products or to enter market niches where the established firm is not present with own products. Hence, the incumbent firm may differentiate the product portfolio in order to deny the entrant open spaces. In this respect, labelling may be used by the incumbent firm to strengthen their market position.

³ Recently BBC announced that "Tesco rejects traffic light label", the government-backed scheme on health information to consumers (BBC 26 April 2005). Similarly the Norwegian company Gilde has not at all embraced Matmerk's PDO and PGI labelling schemes.

“If (...) established sellers can” crowd” product characteristics space densely enough, the amount of demand left over for any differentiated new brand will be too small to permit entrants to cover the cost of a full-scale launching campaign” (Scherer & Ross, ibid. p. 405).

In other words, the incumbent should hurry to fill up exposed market niches in order to raise the costs of entry for potential challengers. This strategy may be generic, aimed at preventing anyone from entering the market. Line-extension is such a strategy, where established brands are produced in several varieties, in order to occupy maximum shelf space in retailer outlets and thereby denying space to challengers. But pre-emptive strategies may also be more selective, directed at specific challengers. By regularly launching new branded varieties, the incumbent signals the determination to invest a lot in order to keep entrants out of the market.

Differentiation through labelling have been done e.g. through licence production of competing import brands, thereby deterring other potential foreign brands from entrance. Deterrence can also be achieved through the communication of unique product qualities like national or natural competitive advantages. Differentiation strategies like those here described, presuppose that markets are structured into niches.

Loyalty rationalities are also found in highly competitive markets. When companies choose not to be price-leaders⁴, but to sell on specific, unique product qualities, textbooks point to brandbuilding as the right strategy (e.g. Kotler 1999). Brandbuilding involves giving the product unique material and/or symbolic qualities, thereby distinguishing it from competitors. Labelling is vital to brandbuilding as it is “a name, term, symbol or design, or a combination of them, intended to differentiate them from those of competitors” (Kotler, ibid. p. 404). Labelling as part of brandbuilding is linked to the systematic communication of unique qualities where image, references to non-material aspects like values, traditions, culture and identities are central. Thereby they try to establish an emotional and affective relationship between consumer and product.

The aim of brandbuilding is to enhance consumers’ sensitivity to the label, thereby reducing brandswitching whenever cheaper competitors enter the market. That implies influencing consumers’ sensitivity to lower prices on competing products (Aaker 2000). Brandbuilding is often linked to detailed studies of consumer preferences and analyses based on consumer segmentation models. The last decade corporate branding has been given evermore attention. Focus has shifted from the product to the organization behind the product (e.g. Kotler and Lee 2005). Thereby reputation comes in focus. Organizations have to be able to communicate reliable and recognizable unique qualities, so called brand equity. Most of the literature on brandbuilding has focused on the processing industry. Lately, more attention has been given to relationships between retailers and the industry (Burt 2000), with a special focus on own brands (EMV)⁵.

Confidence rationality is of particular importance when there are big differences in the amount of information available to respectively sellers and buyers (Akerlof 1970). Even high quality products may fail to be sold if potential buyers have difficulties assessing their qualities. Such situations are often prevalent if consumers are left to base their judgements on experience attributes (Nelson 1970) or credence attributes (Darby and Karnai 1973). In the

⁴ Or simply are unable to be so.

⁵ EMV is “...consumer products produced or on behalf of, distributors and sold under the distributors’ own name and trademark through the distributors own outlet” (Morris 1979).

former case consumers have to use the product in order to assess its true qualities. Taste is a relevant example here. In the latter case, the consumer cannot assess the product qualities even after having used it, but have to rely on information from the seller or some 3rd party. Examples of such credence attributes are all the “hidden” aspects of products, like geographic origin, farming methods and nutritional content of food products. Reliable systems of labelling may serve to mend such market failures. Advertising may help building up confidence in products of specific producers. However, even more important are various forms of guaranties, product standards, and the right to redress. Relating to food, we find this kind of labelling strategies related to food safety (Caswell 1998), quality (Caswell and Mojduszka 1996; Auriol and Schillizi 2002), nutrition (Nayga 1999), ethics (TemaNord 2003) and organics (Barrett et al.2002). These kinds of labelling strategies may serve to build bridges between expectations and experiences. This discussion of such competitive labelling strategies is summed up in table 1.

Table 1: Three rationalities related to competitive labelling strategies (adapted from Dulsrud 2007)

Rationalities	Problems	Aims	Tools	Labelling strategies
Pre-emption	Loss of market shares	Create barriers to entrance	Product-differentiation	Niche labels
Loyalty attainment	Brand switching	Re-purchasing	Developing unique attributes	Individual labels/brands
Quality assurance	Risk and insecurity	Consumer confidence	Internal and external quality management	Generic labels, quality claims, guaranties, standards, collective labels

According to the table, we would expect collective labelling strategies to be most prevalent in situations where risk and insecurity is in focus. However, in such situations the strategies employed by single firms, may very much depend the actions of competitors. In generic markets, and especially with regard to credence goods, the perceived quality and safety of products may depend on the conduct of competitors, and consumer confidence may be regarded as a collective good (Olson 1965). Hence, opportunistic behaviour and free-riders may seriously deteriorate confidence across a market. In such situations, branding may serve as a way to ‘privatize’ consumer trust (Jacobsen 2004). Put in other words, what branders try to do is to build a reputation of their own, one that does not spill over on competitors. At the same time the branders don’t want to be associated with the wrongdoings of others, their potential sloppy conduct and cheatings. On the other side a bonus may be harvested if one manages to acquire a reputation as a serious alternative. However, such ‘privatization of trust’, have its costs: Brand building costs billions in €, \$ and £, and its effects are usually very hard to document.

Branding as the ‘privatization of trust’ also involves a parallel ‘privatization of risk’. Actually, it is the willingness of producers to take this risk that makes ‘privatization of trust’ possible. The logo, the brand name on the package declares to everybody that: ‘If anything is wrong, put the blame on me!’ Hence, labelling in the form of branding implies that producers have chosen not to hide among the generic producers, but want to be visible and ‘take responsibility’. In short: branding commits and represents a commercial risk to the brand owner. That is why they take measures to control, portion out and possibly reduce this risks, which leads us to our next topic, labelling and governance structures.

Labelling and governance structures

Quality labelling, whether it is done by means of collective labels or individual brands, involves making claims and promises about product attributes. As already mentioned, making such claims is by no means risk free, as the label or brand tells the consumer where to put the blame if expectations are not met. This is where governance comes in. In order to avoid consumer disappointments, blame and consequent losses, the user of the label has to set up arrangements to make sure that the promises are reasonably held. This involves managing inputs of capital, labour and the properties of natural ingredients (raw materials from plants or animals), as well as the production, distribution and marketing processes involved in bringing the products from farms and fishing nets to forks. Value chains vary considerably, organizationally as well as technologically, and may in some cases involve inputs from far away places. Hence, putting up adequate governance structures may be difficult. There are also obvious challenges related to finding trustworthy ways of documenting these attributes (Beck and Walgenback 2002; TemaNord 2001).

Governance has been studied in different ways within different social science disciplines. Here we have chosen to lean on transaction cost economics. According to this tradition, governance of value chains may be distinguished by their incentive intensity and administrative control, their adaptation mechanisms and the types of contracts employed (e.g. Williamson 1991). Usually governance structures are grouped in three according to how they combine properties on these variables. *Market governance* is characterised by high-power incentives, autonomous adaptation mechanisms and contracts. *Internal organization* (often called hierarchies) is characterised by low-power incentives, the employment of administrative controls, co-ordinated adaptation and relational contracts. However, in real life most cases fall in the middle, in hybrid forms combining characteristics of both hierarchies and markets. According to Williamson such *hybrid forms of governance* are characterised by both low-power and high-power incentives, both autonomous and co-ordinated adaptation mechanisms and mainly neo-classical contracts. In all hybrid forms power is delegated to an agency with specified authorities, but where the strength and scope of this authority vary considerably. Hybrid forms of governance allow firms to produce and market food products with a specific quality, without severely compromising their autonomy (Verhaegen and Van Huylenbroeck's 2002:157). According to Ménard (1995) such structures mainly develop when transactions are specific, but not specific enough to give reason for integration. They may also develop when personal relationships are involved.

Such hybrid governance structures were in focus in Verhaegen and Van Huylenbroeck's (2002) study of the governance of quality farm products in Belgium.⁶ Based on Belgian data, they came up with three distinct hybrid forms: framework, co-ordinating and participating (ibid. p. 112-113). Of the three framework hybrid governance is closest to market governance and participating hybrid governance is closest to internal governance. Verhaegen and Huylenbroeck found that all their cases somehow related to hybrid governance structures. Even when market governance is used, hybrid governance agencies are involved in standardisation and identification of certain non-tangible aspects (e.g. the use of public labels) (ibid. p. 157).

⁶ They made a classification of forms of value chain governance which they employed in a comparative study of 156 innovative cases in the Belgian food system (Verhaegen and Van Huylenbroeck 2002:24-29).

An adopted version of this model, concentrating on those aspects most relevant to quality, has been laid out by Jervell and Borgen (2004:111). This is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Classification of quality governance structure. From Jervell and Borgen (2004:111)

Governance structure					
		Hybrid			Internal
Market		framework	co-ordinating	participating	
Main function of authority		Organising a framework	Co-ordinate supply and demand	Co-ordinate and produce quality	
Decision power of the authority		Very limited: the functioning of the framework	Limited: the production method, time to sell and price negotiations	High: production method and planning, prices and marketing	
Quality objectives	Basic quality (tangible or clearly defined)	Individual producer quality	Unified producer quality	Unified total quality of the diverse products	Common total quality
Quality enforcement	Certification and third-party enforcement				Reputation and self-enforcement
Producers incentives	High	High	High	Moderate	Low
Adaptation mechanisms	Autonomous	Autonomous	Autonomous & co-ordinated	Co-ordinated	Co-ordinated

They applied the model to three Norwegian small scale cases⁷. They found that escaping transaction costs were one of the main motivations for taking part in hybrid forms of quality governance, helping them, among other things, to establish a pool of costumers for a relatively narrow product range. They also concluded that the more demanding the quality strategy, the stricter the governance form: “A relatively loose quality concept can function even with a relatively loose organization form. An ambitious quality strategy cannot work efficiently over time unless it is followed by a tight governance structure” (ibid. p. 117-118). They also concluded that higher ambitions with respect to quality governance may exclude a number of producers from participating. This is due to the cost of participating in the quality program as well as to the ability of small producers to deliver the specified qualities.

Discussion

We started out asking to what extent the success (or failure) of specific labeling strategies can be linked to specific governance structures? And likewise, whether certain competition strategies are better suited for specific labeling strategies? These are foremost empirical questions, and we are currently studying relevant cases in the Norwegian food sector in order

⁷ “Bondens marked” (Farmers market), “Beine vegen” – a regional local product initiative, and “Ostecompaniet”, a subsidiary of the farmers dairy cooperative helping small scale producers of cheese to develop and market cheese products of niche markets.

to answer them. The discussion in this paper is part of guiding our attention in the study of these cases.

However, it seems plausible to expect hybrid forms of governance to be more prevalent in cases where the competitive rationality we called quality assurance is dominant. For loyalty attainment and pre-emption we would expect more unilateral company strategies to dominate. However, as shown in the Belgian study, we should also expect to find elements of hybrid quality governance structures involved even in cases where market or internal quality governance structures dominate. Brandbuilding may in some cases be fortified by aligning the product to collective labels and quality schemes. Likewise, pre-emption strategies, e.g. when the potential intruder is foreign, may profit from alignments to some kind of national labelling system.

Based on the discussion it also seems reasonable to assume that in order to assure the credibility of a quality claim, there must be an efficient alignment between quality characteristics and the governance of the supply chain. In line with Jervell and Borgen it seems reasonable to suggest that the more demanding the quality strategy, the stricter the governance form (op.cit.). It also seems plausible that such alignments are more pressing when typical credence attributes are in focus.

This discussion will be extended in the oral presentation in Helsinki.

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A dining room at work. An arena for multi-cultural eating

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Abstract

Countries all over Europe have faced growing migration figures since World War II. Not least immigration from countries far away from European traditions and culture will make an impact in general and also when it comes to food, meals and eating. In this pilot study a dining room at a bus company served as a field studying preferences in food, meals and eating during lunch breaks. Workplaces outside the home are to a considerable extent melting pots for employed of all age groups and ethnic groups. The dining room at the workplace constituted a place for intercultural exchange around meals and eating. It was a place for discussions, getting knowledge about food preferences as well as attitude formation around nationalities, including Swedes. The methods used gathering empirical materials for the analysis were participant observation, in-depth interviews and a questionnaire.

Introduction

It is a well-known fact from sociological as well as anthropological research that food is an important marker of cultural identity. Differences in food consumption and the cultural meaning of eating and meals differ between countries as well as between social groups within a country (Douglas, 1975; Levi-Strauss, 1962). Social aspects of meals and food consumption differ between socio-economic groups in society. Less affluent families have to choose cheaper ingredients than better off families in the same manner as it is in other spheres of consumption (Simmel, 1903, 1904; Lindén, 2004). Weekdays are often characterised by lack of time for advanced cooking and a choice of cheaper ingredients than what normally characterise food and meals during weekends. The Sunday Steak with boiled potatoes, green peas and carrots, flavoured with brown sauce was earlier a very traditional Swedish Sunday dinner. Social aspects of food and meals have focussed aspects of class belonging and traditional dishes during weekdays as well as something more luxury during weekends.

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However, countries all over Europe have faced growing migration figures since World War II. Not least immigration from countries far away from European traditions and culture will make an impact in general and also when it comes to food, meals and eating. In 2005 13 percent of the Swedish population was born in another country (www.scb.se). An unknown share of the population was born in a family where at least one of the parents was born abroad. The estimation is that one out of five Swedes in now living generations has roots in other countries and cultures. Thus the socioeconomic dimension of food consumption has been much more intertwined with a cultural dimension than before (Borda, 1987; Jansson, 1991). Segregation from aspects of ethnic origin in housing areas makes it easier to sustain not only one's language, but also one's cultural traditions and not least cooking and eating. In extremely segregated housing areas the clashes between foreign cultural traditions and Swedish traditions in food consumption may not even appear, especially if ethnicity is closely connected with unemployment and low income. You live most of your time in the housing area.

Almost every inhabitant in the life-span between 20 to 65 years of age have a number of years working in workplaces outside the home. Workplaces are to a considerable extent melting pots for employed of all age groups and ethnic groups. Some professions and workplaces have an extremely high proportion of employed with an origin outside Sweden. Such is the situation for many bus companies. Swedish bus drivers, and especially drivers working in regular urban services, are in very high proportions immigrants. A bus company operating in a Swedish metropolitan area was chosen as a multicultural workplace in this pilot study. Drivers meet passengers daily. More important for this study is the communication with colleagues during breaks. A dining room situated in the city centre was a place every driver visited at least once during their working day, having coffee/tea, lunch or just a rest. The dining room served as a melting pot for intercultural exchange in discussions, bringing in food stuff, customs around meals and eating. It was an arena for getting to know Swedes and all other nationalities, what kind of food they liked, attitudes to different kinds of food, meal traditions and so on. The dining room constituted a platform for getting knowledge and attitude formation around nationalities, including Swedes.

Theoretical perspectives

Since World War II food cultures in several countries have changed in many ways. Holiday trips to foreign countries, immigrants from all over the world and information canalised by media have inspired testing of new ingredients, spices, and dishes with more or less success. Sometimes complete dishes, including drinks and table manner have been accepted by large groups of individuals. An example is hamburger meals including strips, Coca Cola, holding the whole meal in a hand while eating. A comparative parallel is a Swedish mashed beef served with mashed potatoes and cowberry jam on a plate eaten by knife and fork. The case of hamburgers has been fully accepted, including the whole meal, drinks and way of eating, especially by young people (Carlsson-Kanyama & Lindén, 2001). Swedish food culture has undergone a process of globalisation (Ritzer, 1993; Warde, 1997). A more common way changing traditional meals is to include new ingredients or spices in well known dishes (Douglas, 1996; Goody, 1982). Since several centuries ago spices, e.g. pepper, ginger and cinnamon, from the Far East have been included in Swedish cooking gradually so it is nowadays almost looked upon as typical national spices flavouring meals, cakes and puddings. Traditional cooking have been more or less internationalised during the run of several years or even centuries (Salomonsson, 1994; Warde, 1997). A more recent

phenomenon is a process of differentiation (Warde, 1997). Meals, representing several foreign traditions, are supplied by specialised restaurants or shops side by side with restaurants serving Swedish food. Good examples of such processes are the establishment of Chinese, Japanese, Greek, Russian, Italian restaurants just to mention a few examples (Salomonsson, 1992). When traditional cooking in a country is overwhelmed by impacts from other ways of cooking and eating it often comes to a turning point where traditional cooking becomes important to develop and protect in a traditionalisation process (Warde, 1997). Domestic cooking, meals and traditions become exclusive and topics for editing cooking books and establishing attractive restaurants.

However, food consumption has inter-cultural as well as intra-cultural aspects. The first aspect has to do with analysis of food consumption, meals and eating when cultures and processes meet disseminated by immigration, tourism or trade (Warde, 1997; Lindén et al., 2005). The second aspect has to do with communicating food-cultures on domestic arenas as for example in groceries, in dining rooms at school, at work or at other places outside the private sphere of a home. Food consumption in the meaning of choice of dishes, ingredients, table manners and eating differs between individuals in relation to generation, social class or ethnic and cultural belonging (Borda, 1987; James, 1996). What is appreciated as attractive and tasty in one cultural setting may be repulsive in another. Social and ethnic factors are important variables for integration processes, but also for keeping food consumption and meals as close to ones tradition as possible while living in a new country (Charles & Kerr, 1988; Hannerz, 1992).

Private meals are normally served and eaten at home. Insight in private food consumption is very rare, but a few occasions may provide a glimpse into private food strategies (Lindén et al., 2005). One place to get such an insight is the dining room at work. Many individuals in the staff prefer to bring their own boxes with food for lunch at work or buying take away meals in a nearby restaurant. The dining room provides a front stage for food intake, where private consumption, preferences and habits are revealed for visitors (Goffman, 1959). According to Goffman, the individual is trying to present a certain sense of self in front of an "audience" or to make certain impressions in different settings. In a workplace setting food choices, as well as meal patterns and attitudes to food, become visible as well as negotiable among the employed. Meeting people from different ethnic backgrounds also create meeting points around food. Food could be a way of distinguishing oneself from others, as well as making the cultural belonging visible (Lupton, 1996, s 94). Food has strong symbolic meanings important in communicating with other people (See for example Douglas, 1975, 1984; Mennell et al, 1992 m fl). Consuming food takes the role of indicating social and ethnic background in about the same manner as for example clothing (Borda, 1987; James, 1996; Counihan & Kaplan, 1998).

A dining room at work is surrounded by a number of restrictions having a meal. At Arriva Bus Company the lunch break had to fit into the timetable for bus services (Lindén et al., 2005). The work is governed by a strict time schedule where each minute is important. The clock-time (Adam, 1995; Zerubavel, 1981), where every minute is essential often stands in contrast with the meal-time, the time needed to eat a full meal or just to relax between different shifts. Thus the main break lasts between 30 minutes and one hour, usually located in time between 10.30 am till 14.30 pm depending on when the working day starts in the morning. A short walk to the dining room, buying or heating a home-made meal, toilet visits and a walk back to the bus stand has to be packed into that time span. Besides restrictions in time, there are restrictions in getting the meal on the table. When buying take away food

queuing, preparation and paying takes time. When bringing a meal from home there is often some waiting time for a free micro wave heating food. The drivers often start and end their working day at different destinations, making it difficult to bring food from home to work. Restrictions in the time span for lunch, supply of food and technical appliances are problems to be solved before a hot meal can be in place on the table. Especially restrictions in time assume good planning of fast food and fast eating to be managed during the break. As a consequence stress and digestive problems have been noticed by the drivers. A dining room at work as an arena for multicultural eating is surrounded by restrictions about when and how carefully intake of meals can be performed.

At the same time what you prefer to eat or bring from home are very visible for colleagues. Food consumption will be connected to individuals defined by gender, marital status, domestic, ethnic or religious origin in the same way as other products for consumption. Image formation processes will take place classifying colleagues into more or less stereotyped groups, which may be evaluated by positive, negative or ignorant attitudes. A dining room at work provides a stage for multicultural meetings where food serves as a mediating variable.

The research problem

The possibilities to get knowledge about colleagues and their food preferences including traditions are extremely good in a dining room you have to visit for lunch almost every working day. The meal and eating is a reason to speak about food, ingredients, traditions in the family or traditions during childhood or other countries. The dining room creates an arena disseminating knowledge, traditions and insights for establishing attitudes concerning dishes, traditions or foreign cultures. This is a pilot study of communication in a dining room at a bus company in a metropolis in Sweden². The bus company has more than hundred employed persons representing a number of nationalities, especially among the bus drivers. The aim of the study is to analyse

- a dining room as an arena framing the lunch breaks for the bus drivers,
- how meals are planned and chosen,
- communication around meals, and eating,
- attitude formation around food, meals and eating in relation to ethnic origin.

Methods

When the project started just little knowledge was available about eating, talking and integration in a dining room at work (Lindén et al., 2005). We had to assume that a number of important issues and questions could not be fully prepared in advance or according to Hammersly and Atkinson: *When one is carrying out research in settings in which one has little power, and of which one has little previous knowledge, the research cannot be fully designed in the pre- field phase*” (1989:28). Thus the field work collecting empirical material for this pilot study was organised in three steps.

During the first phase a number of observations were performed. The opening hours started in the early morning at 4 am Monday to Friday and ended at about 02.30 pm. The dining room

² A medical care centre for elderly people also participated in the pilot study. However, this paper primarily analyses the bus company.

and rest room in the city centre had almost 24 opening hours offering the bus drivers a quiet place during the breaks all around the day. The observations were performed in sequences of about 4 hours covering all hours around, weekdays as well as holidays. The aim of the observations was to get a view of how timetables and breaks led to restrictions in solving possibilities to have a meal but also to get a hint of different aspects in habitual patterns, communication, social relations and norms concerning meals and eating during working hours. The primary role of the observer was *taking in the physical setting* (Berg, 2001). The observations revealed a number of more or less hidden behaviours and norms, which were brought into the guidelines for interviewing the drivers.

The written material from the observations showed to be an important platform for the second step, interviewing drivers, during the fieldwork (Halvorsen, 1992). The interviews were performed as in-depth interviews, using a guideline reminding the interviewer to cover a number of important items. Observations in combination with in-depth interviews showed to be a good combination of data for analysing the complexity of social relations and intercultural understanding of eating and choice of food. The quantitative aspects of meals and eating were of less interest than understanding of complexity and knowledge formation around ethnicity, meals and eating.

However, the last step in the fieldwork was to collect quantitative data by a questionnaire. The data from observations and in-depth interviews were used as a good background to formulate a number of questions, which easily could be collected by filling in a questionnaire. Besides answering by making a choice among prepared alternatives the respondents were allowed to formulate their impressions, attitudes and experiences from the dining room in their own wording.

Arriva Bus Company has about 120 employed persons, including 9 women and 111 men (Lindén et al., 2005). 40 bus drivers were sampled for in-depth interviews and the questionnaire. 4 of them were women. 77 % were 35 to 55 years old. 85% of the bus drivers employed by the company and 63% in the sample were immigrants from countries in former Yugoslavia, Romania, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Thailand. 55 % of the bus drivers had high school or university education. 6 in-depth interviews were performed with employees of an ethnic origin both in and outside Sweden.

In analysing the research problem in this pilot study triangulating data from observations, in-depth interviews and the questionnaire were used to get an understanding of the organised complexity of timetables at work influencing meals, choice of food, social and intercultural understanding in a dining room used every day as an arena for rest and relaxation (Holme & Solvang, 1997).

Results

Food as fashion and trend is normally a weaker marker of identity than consumption which is more visible for other people. Food is consumed at home where normally just family members are present. However, there are more public arenas for food consumption, e.g. having a meal at a restaurant or in the dining room at work or just discussing food, dishes or ingredients one prefer with colleagues or friends. By using more public arenas for meals or discussing food the power of food as a social marker increases. For those involved in the activities at the same arena it becomes evident that individuals prefer different tastes and

dishes. Differences in consumption can easily be noticed for men and women, old and young people, social group belonging or ethnic origin. A dining room at work is not only an arena for eating meals but also a melting pot of impressions from domestic as well as from foreign traditions.

The dining room as arena for eating

Arriva Bus Company has a dining room for employed bus drivers situated in the centre of the city. It is just a few minutes walk from the bus stop to go there (Lindén et al., 2005). The dining room is exclusively used by around 70 drivers during weekdays and between 30 and 50 during the weekend. During a working day a driver has a number of short breaks, and usually one longer break of about half an hour to one hour. Due to delays and traffic jam, the breaks vary in time. The longer break is intended not only for rest, but also for having an opportunity for a full meal. Depending on the schedule, some drivers also have a splitted working day, with one shift during the morning and one in the afternoon with a “break” in the middle of the day of up to 7 hours. Lunch time varies according to the time table for bus services. A bus driver starting the working day very early in the morning may be eating his lunch at 9 am, when another driver has a cup of coffee before starting his work or is checking the latest news at TV. As there is almost a constant shortage of bus drivers in the company it is very difficult for individual drivers to plan having a hot meal at the same time over weekdays. Working days varies from starting very early in the morning or ending very late in the evening or at night even between days during the same week. Time schedules have impacts not only for the bus driver himself planning his lunch but also for planning dinner at home and for family members. Important spill-over effects between work and home are essential in analysing eating patterns and meal formations (Lindén et al, 2005).

The dining room as an arena for eating is surrounded by restrictions due to timetables for routes but also in getting time schedules for drivers to connect to each other. Bus drivers tell us they are eating because they have a break and not because they are hungry (Lindén et al., 2005). There is quite a short time scheduled for the lunch break and few chances to have lunch at the same time for most of the drivers. This also implies that the drivers meet different people during various breaks and also during different days, compared to those workplaces where same colleagues meet every day. The relaxed situation around a good meal is an utopia and there are a lot of people coming and leaving the dining room constantly. However, lunch breaks include several positive aspects like a place to meet colleagues after hours of just driving. *You feel at home. I am getting on well coming here, eating and listening to fellow drivers. There is always something to discuss (Faruk, a man from Bosnia).* At a medical care centre for elderly in the same metropolitan area lunch breaks for clients and employed nurses are scheduled at regular time over weekdays. Cooking, eating and discussions about ingredients and recipes were the most important issue at the lunch agenda (Lindén et al., 2005). Thus the situation at the bus company is very different.

The normal situation for the bus driver was lonely work during the routes. The dining room offered a chance to meet colleagues and chatting around several everyday issues. Eating was important but not the most estimated activity on the list during the lunch break. It is necessary to have some sort of meal to be able to provide passengers a professional and safe service but *if you want to have a well prepared meal you need time enough to sit down and enjoy just eating (Ahmad, a man from Iraq).* At work most drivers said they can not eat properly. *.. as a child I used to have breakfast in the morning, lunch at school, dinner at home in the evening*

and something extra later in the night. But since I begun as bus driver everything has changed (Anders, a Swedish man). Time is too short for preparing and eating what is appreciated as tasty, home-made and proper. It is always more or less stress around the lunch break as the driver has to be back at the bus stand exactly in time. Although the meal during lunch breaks are more or less improvised by buying fast food, or bring something from home observations and interviews revealed the importance of what kind of food was brought into the dining room (Lindén et al., 2005). Discussions were not lively when it came to dishes and recipes, but information about new fast food shops, prices and quality of food were more important. The choice of food and dishes revealed preferences rooted in traditions, ethnic origin or family background, which appeared to be important impressions for colleagues in describing meals and eating typical for ethnic groups that is to say attitude formation. The dishes from ones home-country are often filled with pride as part of a cultural tradition. At the dining room, it was common to see colleagues from other countries offering pieces of their home-made food to those colleagues not having anything to eat. This makes the dining-room an arena for opportunities not only to get information and knowledge about where to buy food etc, but also in trying new and different dishes. However, eating unknown and peculiar food, sometimes leads to rejections among the drivers in trying the new dishes. The principle of sharing food is often an essential part of the culture, where eating alone while other people are watching is considered humiliating (Borda, 1987, s 58).

The impressions from a variety of dishes could also inspire colleagues to test new ingredients and provide renewal of cooking in the family. Food exposed in the dining room during lunch breaks thus served an important arena taking in knowledge and news about eating and cooking in a wider sense than just being able to classify colleagues or for renewal of meals.

The dining room as arena for social communication

At Arriva Bus Company the dining room is a multi-cultural meeting place for drivers with a wide diversity in ethnic background. The ethnic aspect is very dominant although there are several age groups represented and a few women. At other workplaces more evident differences may belong to different generations as was the case in the medical care centre (Lindén et al., 2005). The supply of fast food and restaurants in a city centre are normally varied in specialities as well as in prices. That is the situation in the area where the dining room at Arriva Bus Company is located. There are plenty of shops selling fast food like kebab, falafel, hamburgers, hot dogs, sandwiches and restaurants providing take away food e.g. Chinese, Thai, Mexican, Turkish, Italian dishes or almost whatever other nationality you are asking for. Immigrants from all over the world and not least Southern Europe and the Middle East have settled down in a number of housing areas not far from this part of the city centre. Many drivers also bring their lunch box from home. However, sometimes drivers find it difficult to do so as there are no possibilities to keep the food chilled on board the buses. They prefer to buy their lunch just before going to the dining room. The supply of food is varied enough for them to find their choice, although they complain that many non-Swedish dishes in some way or another is adapted to Swedish consumers taste. Ahmad from Iraq told us about a nearby restaurant specialised in Arab dishes *I had a meal, soup with rice, chicken and salad, in his restaurant. I felt very bad afterwards, so I will never visit his place again (Ahmad). The way you eat at home (dishes from your country) is not possible to get here it is never the way you want although they try at best. There are several restaurants and a variety of dishes, but never the same as it was in my home country. It is better to take just a*

ham burger, falafel or Swedish frozen dishes. Well, it is quite OK (Faruk, a man from Bosnia).

The bus drivers coming from other countries act as socialisation agents for varieties of food traditions and dishes from several countries. At the same time Swedish drivers are socialisation agents disseminating Swedish traditions. Almost all male drivers prefer hot food for lunch, including meat, potatoes or vegetables. They plan their lunch meal in relation to when dinner is going to be served at home. *I can not have a big meal here when finishing my working day a couple of hours ahead. The dinner at home will be more or less destroyed if I am not hungry enough (Ahmad, a man from Iraq).* When starting the working day very early in the morning the hot meal is consumed early. During evening hours the hot meal is consumed late. Morning hours as well as evening hours many shops and restaurants are not open. You have to buy what is available. *One evening a driver had bought chipped potatoes and mayonnaise spiced with garlic in a nearby oriental restaurant. He did not long for meat that evening and at the same time he loved mayonnaise with garlic so he meant chipped potatoes was a good choice as he was going to work until midnight. He looked very full up after the meal.* (From an observation protocol 8 pm.). This man had a BMI over 30. The management had noticed several drivers with weight problems after some time of employment (Lindén et al., 2005). They arranged a supply of chilled water instead of soft drinks and Coca Cola in the refrigerators and tried to inform about healthy eating. However, restrictions in time for meals very often led to quick solutions for a necessary meal. These solutions were not always healthy alternatives and accompanied with cakes, chocolate or sweets in short breaks to keep hunger away.

Dishes from Asian countries have become very popular during the last decades. One of the drivers owns a Thai restaurant in companion with his family. He tells about healthy and fantastic Thai dishes available also packed in fast food boxes. There are several reasons preferring dishes from the home country. A man from Bosnia tells us about grilled meat, which tastes very different from meat grilled anywhere else (Lindén et al., 2005). Others mean that Swedish food is often too sweet. However, they often find it very comfortable to buy ready made frozen Swedish dishes heating them in a microwave. *It was a bit curious in the beginning and difficult to understand in advance how frozen dishes, heated in a micro will taste. They taste quite good. I will probably go on using frozen dishes (Ibrahim, a man from Kosovo).* At the same time they look forward to a real traditional meal with their family in the evening. They remind us about the fact that they are used to have a home-made meal as dinner in the evening from their home countries.

Swedish drivers have noticed that colleagues from former Yugoslavia or Asian countries several times a week eat dishes with chicken, grilled, cooked or stewed in some way or other. *Look at him, he always eats grilled chicken, sometimes three times a day, one of the drivers exclaim, or as another driver says 90% of them (his colleagues) only eat their chicken drumstick early in the morning... (Ibrahim, a man from Kosovo).* Chicken has been included in Swedish cooking during the latest decades. Traditionally chicken was looked upon as exclusive food. The hen had first to deliver as many eggs as possible before being slaughtered. An old hen had to boil for an hour or two to be good for eating. Thus when a dish with chicken was served e.g. at a restaurant it was priced higher than dishes including pork, fish or beef. A Swedish driver says he has noticed many drivers having chicken in different forms in their food. Cooking programmes at the TV have also demonstrated cooking using chicken. It has developed like a kind of trend he thinks. *I have never had so much chicken since I married, .. it is easy to cook, you can use chicken in a variety of dishes. I did not*

until recently know that chicken filets were available, but it may be fashion and trend (Per, a Swedish man). Ideas around ingredients and cooking can easily be communicated by just observing fellow drivers. Sometimes words are not necessary at all. A man from Bosnia tells us that chicken is a bit of his culture having dishes with chicken very often. Another aspect around having dishes with chicken are comfort (Lindén et al., 2005). Especially grilled chicken can be consumed with a wide span of table manner without using knife and fork. It is an important aspect when there is a lack of time, not only to get the food on the table but also a need of eating in a fast way. Chicken is an important ingredient in fast food cultures and not only in ethnic food cultures.

The ethnic dimension in choosing food and eating is very apparent at Arriva Bus Company. A vast majority of the bus drivers are men with a foreign ethnic origin. In the dining room at other workplaces other dimensions may be more important, e.g. gender, which was very important at the medical care centre (Lindén et al., 2005). At the bus company there are just a few female drivers. However, during observations we noticed differences in reflections around food and lunch among female drivers. They often brought some sort of salad or sandwiches, which were looked upon as sufficient for a lunch meal as they had to make dinner for their husband and children after working hours. Such differences could very easily be noticed among women employed at the medical care centre, where having a full meal were not prioritized (Lindén et al., 2005). As a consequence eating cakes, desserts, sweets and chocolates was a method to keep hunger away. The consumption of sweets was well anchored and accepted. A bakery located in the same building as the bus-drivers' dining-room offering cakes and biscuits, pastries, as well as sandwiches and baguettes, was also well-attended by the drivers. Some bus-drivers emphasized the importance of having a cake accompanying the coffee during their short breaks.

Attitude formation around ethnicity and eating

Although there are several restrictions due to time available for having lunch, communication around food and eating is a daily experience during every day at work. As was found from interviews and observations communication around food or eating lunch together was not prioritised in chats (Lindén et al., 2005). The drivers revealed a substantial amount of knowledge about food, eating and preferences about colleagues, especially in relation to ethnic origin. However, the impression of food and meals is patterned against a background where meals has to be bought, prepared and consumed quickly. Thus the information and knowledge transmitted is highly adapted to factors defining the stage for dining in the dining room.

Preferences and habits around meals very easily lead to classifications in we and they. Food tells the spectator who you are, preferences and attitudes to different types of dishes and ingredients. Eating in a dining room is a way to learn about each others. But dining behaviour in public is also constrained by knowledge of the presence of others (Lupton, 1996, s 99). Although food might not be actively discussed, our preferences are shown at an open and official stage. Starting an interview, a colleague to a driver from Bosnia exclaimed *Look at him, he always have chicken!* It is quite normal, there are many immigrants. Colleagues do not know each others name, although they know each other quite well. Symbols like food you eat and clothes you wear are sometimes more important than non-visible symbols, as words and names, in identifying and classifying each other (Douglas, 1982). Such classifications are sometimes generalised to be valid for a group of people but also a nationality. *We have some*

people coming from Arabic countries... They eat somewhat curious things which I think is .. I just do not like it (Faruk, a man from Bosnia). Food is often judged from expectations, what it should look or taste like. Irrespective of its nutritional value, the food is considered strange and sometimes inedible (Lupton, 1996, p 112ff).

All kind of fast food is popular for lunch, like pizza, chicken kebab, chicken falafel and hamburgers. *Particularly I do not like pizza. I just can eat falafel. If possible I keep hunger away by eating fruit or something ...very often we have meals at home. (Ahmad, a man from Iraq).* Many drivers with a foreign background told us if they can not get dishes reminding them of a taste they want, they may as well buy something very different and formerly unknown for them. Some of them prefer hamburgers, others prefer Swedish frozen complete meals, which mainly contains traditional Swedish dishes. Some drivers say *I do not know Swedish people, so I do not know what kind of food they eat. I know they buy meat balls (traditional Swedish dish), but what else they eat... I know nothing about it (Ahmad, a man from Iraq).*

The interviews indicate a strong feeling of national belonging, with little insight or at least more qualified knowledge about national preferences when it comes to meals and eating at home. *Honestly we have no Swedish recipes at home. But I eat the frozen boxes with Swedish meals at work (Ibrahim, a man from Kosovo).* Attitudes to Swedish food are often founded on mixture of sweet and salty flavours in some traditional dishes (Borda, 1987, s 65) . *Once when I visited a Swedish friend I was offered some sort of meat roll with some fruit rolled in it³. Ugh .. it was nothing for me...a mixture of salt and sweet. I do not like it. Either it should be sweet or not, absolutely not both (Faruk, a man from Bosnia).* The attitude is often that the main course should be salty and the dessert should have a sweet taste.

Several drivers have wives working outside the home. One driver tells us about his wife working at a dining room in a Swedish public school. She brings new ideas about cooking home. Now and then new ways of using spices are tested and sometimes new dishes are served and he finds it OK. However, sometimes their friends are commenting on the meals as a bit too Swedish. Other ways to get in contact with Swedish food is by their children. Sometimes the children do not like traditional meals, but prefer pasta and pizza they have been served at school.⁴ For them, pasta and pizza are usually considered as typical Swedish food. The children could be important “socializing agents” in cooking what they consider as Swedish food, at home. One bus-driver comments on Swedish food *I do not eat Swedish food. If I do, I eat two things, spaghetti or lasagne. We have learned that from the children. The children like it, they get it in school so we cook it sometimes as well (Ahmad, a man from Iraq).* Discussions about and attitudes towards typical Swedish food are therefore usually a mix of impressions from workplaces as well as from the children’s school. Both are important “contact-arenas” for cultural exchange about food and eating. Several drivers tell us about differences in taste between parents and children. Especially children born in Sweden seem to prefer “Swedish food”. Many of them have been served that kind of food in day care nurseries or during their preparatory school year. Special and often strong spices in cooking traditional meals, are not always appreciated by the children.

³ A traditional Swedish dish: Marshed meat roll with plums in it, served with boiled potatoes, brown sauce and redcurrant jelly.

⁴ Pizza and pasta is not traditional Swedish meals. They were introduced from Italy during 1960s - 1970s and have been very popular and are nowadays almost looked upon as Swedish by young generations (Lindén, 2001).

Thus a dining room is an undisputable arena for attitude formation. Attitudes may as well be conservative and stereotyped but may sometimes as well evoke curiosity for something different. In a multi-cultural arena like a dining room at work the knowledge available about others around food, meals and preferences are sometimes far from the real truth, especially when visible impressions are not followed by verbal communication. Restrictive factors defining the assumptions around meals and eating sometimes mislead spectators to incomplete and narrow minded conclusions.

Conclusions

Food consumption has for a long time been recognized as a marker of class belonging and status identification in the same way as consumption of leisure activities and clothing. As a consequence of increasing international migration the range of social groups with specific characteristics besides class and status are enlarged with markers as ethnic and religious origin. A number of more or less new criteria in identifying members of we-groups in relation to others have been added to classical criteria. When language fails as useful for communication visible signs becomes more important. Immigrants very often live for many years and sometimes generations in highly segregated housing areas. During several years in a new country hindrances in for example language skills is a handicap for introducing yourself on the labor market. Most immigrants have to accept a job which often is below their education and training. Being a bus driver is just one example of a job with a high representation of immigrants employed.

In this pilot study the dining room at a bus company served as a front stage and public arena for bus drivers of different ethnic origin outside the home. Many nationalities were represented including some Swedes. During their working day they had to visit the dining room at least once having lunch, a cup of tea, for a toilet visit or just for a rest. During the long break, 30-60 minutes, almost everyone took the chance to have a hot meal. Consuming a meal in the dining room showed your food preferences, pros and cons around different dishes. Cultural traditions and eating habits were openly exposed for colleagues. Although there were not much verbal discussions around food and eating the observations and interviews undertaken revealed a lot of knowledge of typical food and traditions for different nationalities. Food served as an identity marker, a non-verbal sign, for ethnic origin. Swedes identified typical dishes and traditions for Arab, Bosnian, Polish and other colleagues. Immigrants did the same concerning Swedes. Nobody had a fair possibility to check if chosen fast food and fast eating during quite a short and stressful lunch break provided a true impression or not. Attitudes were established in a stereotyped and absolute way, which showed to be at least in some cases misleading in understanding food preferences and cultural traditions.

The results from the pilot study shows the importance of analyzing non-verbal signs in processes identifying social groups in general and especially situations where verbal communication is not sufficient or highly restricted. The risk of stereotyping social groups is evident, when obstacles in language skills and segregation are more or less barriers for more insight and information. There is evidently a need for more research in processes of attitude formation and identification of others in situations when language fails.

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**The public as political consumer
- case findings from implementation of
organic procurement policies in public food
systems in Scandinavia**

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to study the organic procurement policies in a political consumer perspective. The paper is based on a case study of three Scandinavian public procurement initiatives. In addition, the purpose is to study to what extent organic procurement policies in the public can be said to demonstrate political consumerism and to discuss whether or not the power that the public holds through its procurement of substantial amounts of food could be used to pursue political objectives. We analyse the organic procurement initiatives in Denmark, Sweden and Norway using a music festival in Norway, the hospital and nursing home foodservice in Denmark and the school food service in Sweden as examples. The paper concludes that the Scandinavian case shows both similarities as well as differences regarding the role that organic foods play in procurement policies. However although political consumption is practiced in all countries, different impulses and rules of praxis have been applied. The Norwegian case shows a private initiative that by indirect and direct help from the authorities has gone further than the authorities by offering next to 100% organic for four days. The Swedish approach has in many cases been linked to the climate debate as the Malmö case illustrates. In Denmark, the idea that implementation of organic procurement might lead to health benefits in terms of healthier eating has been explored. In most cases political consumerism of food is translated to organic foods but in the case of Western Zealand a more broad definition that also involves local foods and fair trade has been applied. The development of organic procurement has shown that there are difficulties for the public in practicing political consumption since the public has not used their potential power in the food systems. Public food systems have not until now been the test site for such attempts and this means that the public has been forced into capacity building in this field. Public food systems are huge and complex systems that might be difficult to control since they involve a number of different stakeholders who might like to have a say.

It could be concluded that although national variations exist and the countries are at different development stages, organic procurement in the public have contributed positively to developing the organic sector and thus represents an example of public political consumerism

Introduction

The idea that consumers are able to influence the economic structure of a society through free choice and by demanding their favourite food products is a much quoted assumption. According to the political consumer, buying decisions are not only based on price and quality considerations but on a critical assessment of the suppliers' values, attitudes and behaviour in relation to current societal issues. The Brent Spar case in 1995 is a significant examples of consumers acting politically. Another example is the protests against the French testing nuclear systems in the Pacific, which resulted in widespread boycott campaigns of French wines. Since then there has been focus on the political consumer, both in the press and among scientists and politicians. However, the public has in comparison, only to a very limited extent, been portrayed as a political consumer. This, despite the fact that the public through its procurement of goods used in service provision, spend significant amounts of money as large scale consumers. For instance, the public operate large scale foodservice systems in municipalities and counties responsible for feeding patients in hospitals, children in schools and kindergartens and the elderly in nursing homes. In the Scandinavian countries the public expenditure on food for the institutional food service is 13,3 billion SEK/year (Delfi, 2002). Therefore, it is important to consider if the public act as a political consumer and, in that case, how it is in practise.

Consumption of organic foods might be viewed as one form of “political” consumption, although it is only a partly – but not fully – overlapping area. In organic procurement policies a specific mode of farming and production is supported through subsequent consumption. Organic farming is a priority in many European countries. As a result, organic products play a major role in agricultural policies across Europe due to the contribution it is expected to offer in relation to a sustainable agriculture. In Scandinavia, public organic procurement policies have been in operation since the beginning of the nineties and the public organic procurement wave in the Scandinavian countries seems to be an obvious observatory for studying this issue.

In this paper we will therefore draw on the Scandinavian case of public organic consumption. We have chosen three different cases in three different national contexts to illustrate the different approaches that could be taken to practising procurement policies. As a consequence it is assumed that different approaches, different procurement arrangements and different motivations create different outcomes. We will primarily use the term procurement because the concrete act of being political is taking place in the active procurement stage rather than in the consumption stage, which is more of a passive stage.

Public procurement of organic food primarily takes place at three different levels. Locally as a daily practice in public kitchens and institutions. This is systematic and horizontally coordinated between more kitchens through local or regional government initiated policies and nationally in *resort* policies where organic policies become integrated with specific sector policies, e.g. within environment, food and agriculture. However, in practice, these formal administrative categories are often interrelated.

The paper will discuss the purpose and methodology first. Thereafter, the three different cases will be described and in the discussion we will highlight similarities as well as differences in approaches. Finally we will conclude on whether the public act politically and, if yes, how this is done.

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is based on a case study of three Scandinavian public procurement initiatives to study the organic procurement policies in a political consumer perspective. In addition, the purpose is to study to what extent organic procurement policies in the public can be said to demonstrate political consumerism and to discuss whether or not the power that the public hold through its procurement of substantial amounts of food can be used to pursue political objectives.

Methodology

An analysis of public organic procurement cases initiatives in Denmark, Sweden and Norway was carried out. In Norway the Øya music festival, in Denmark the Western Zealand hospital and in Sweden the school food cases were chosen.

The cases draw on existing documents and the authors’ own empirical material relating to the cases. A template for describing each case was initially co-developed as a basis for the final analysis of the whole Scandinavian case. The template used the structure: policy environment, funding etc., as well as common checklists to collect data from each case

Case studies

1. The Swedish approach – the case of Malmö schools

Policy environment

Politically the majority in Sweden agree on sustainability as a comprehensive goal for society development. In order to achieve this, emphasis is placed on economical development, social welfare and solidarity combined with agreeable environment (SEPA, 2007). On the national level the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) is responsible for the ecological aspect of sustainability. It is adequately delegated to local and regional authorities to make intermediate goals for environmental protection related to the closest area. The task is not easy. To be able to eliminate the effects of harmful pollutants one has to be aware of and do something to diminish eutrophication, acidification and liming, quantity of heavy metals, nitrogen oxides, persistent organic pollutants, threats to the marine environment, as well as release pollutant from (mainly) transports. Most of these are global problems. Pollutants can harm the ecosystems connected to plants and animals, causing health problems in humans (SEPA, 2007).

The Malmö case

Malmö, the third largest city in Sweden, has almost 280,000 residents (total population in Sweden is nine million) and a goal for the dwellers to live their lives sustainable (Malmö, 2007e). In order to organise this political environment, goals are set, inter alia, for buildings, roads, energy, transports as well as for food. A large amount of food is handled in the city by public catering. The public catering serves free meals in schools and nurseries. The food is also organised publicly for patients in hospitals and service centres for elderly people. This gives the opportunity for the city to make sustainable decisions on food. The public catering system serves 35,000 school meals per day in Malmö (Malmö, 2007c), using food cultivated in Sweden or elsewhere in the world. Forty per cent of the food items are today imported into the country (Carlsson Kanyama & Engström, 2003; Naturvårdsverket, 1999), mostly from Europe but also from other places around the world. This causes long distance transports and increase the environmental impact (Johansson, 2005). Cooking and serving food also causes pollutant emissions but this is not yet calculated.

Sustainability relates to aspects of ecology, economy and social life. Malmö works with these ecological aspects when taking into account the climate changes caused from cultivating and breeding animals, from food production in the manufactories to transports of food. Sweden has 16 environmental quality objectives considerate physical environment created after the latest world summit (United Nations, 2006). Food, however, is related to these goals concerning water, air and earth (Regeringen, 2006). The largest food production areas in the country are the south of Sweden. Much emphasis is placed on environmental safeguards in growing food locally and regionally, as well as transport methods (Löfven & Asterland, 2006). The food is produced either organically or conventionally generally, where organic food is seen as less polluted (CUL, 2003; European Commission, 1999; Halweil, 2006). Controlling systems protecting plants and animal production like KRAV (Aranea, 2007) and SMAK (SLV, 2007) are authorised by the Swedish government and Svanen (Svanenmärkning, 2006) by the SIS (SIS miljömärkning, 2006). The marketing of such products are increasing by Ekocentrum [organic centre] in Stockholm (Ekocentrum, 2006a), Ekocentrum [organic

centre] in Göteborg (Ekocentrum, 2006b) and Ekologisk marknadscentrum [organic marketing] in Skåne (Ekologisktmarknadscentrum, 2006). In Malmö the social aspect of food is also taken into account, where the city has been committed to eco/fair trade since 2006 (Malmö, 2007a), although not further explained in this paper.

In order to change the impact of food on the climate, the Malmö city works with the established public guidelines for food in school canteens and nurseries. School meals are offered by Malmö skolrestauranger [Malmö School Restaurants], a division in the city organisation. Cooking, distribution and serving of six million portions per year or 35,000 portions per day is catered by 12 large scale kitchens distributing to 71 serving units (mottagningskök) with a turnover of more than 5.4 million Euro per year. Food, among other products, is financially procured by The Department of Procurement in the Service Division. The environment is provided for by The Environment Department, another division in the city organisation. The latter has mandated Malmö skolrestauranger to initiate a project shaping a model for serving 100% organic food in all school canteens by 2012. The project is called “Ekomat i skolan” [Organic food in the school] under the umbrella project of “Mat och klimat” [Food and Climate] in Malmö (Malmö, 2007a, 2007b, 2007d).

The example given in this case springs from years of planning with the catering unit on the one side and the city divisions on the other. The ideas seem to have been generated from interested employees (Kjellberg & Stridsberg, 2007) and politicians, resulting in project “Ekomat i skolan” (Malmö, 2007d).

Guidelines for procurement projects

City guidelines for the environment are drawn up from the national agenda 21 programme as an overall objective for protecting the physical environment (Malmö, 2007a). Malmö especially emphasizes on the releasing emissions of carbon dioxide 2003-2008, one fourth from the level of 1990. New strategies for 2007-2011 for reducing climate impact concerning food concentrates towards peoples’ lifestyle and consumption will focus on the emissions caused by commodities and food consumption (Malmö, 2007b).

Our example is a school canteen producing 500 meals a day is authorised to work towards less climate impacts in the project called “Ekomat i skolan” (Löfven & Asterland, 2006). The project is preparing a model of shifting from conventional to organic food, for the future, on behalf of all canteens in the Malmö skolrestauranger. The basic idea is that lunches at school meet nutritional guidelines and become a moment of sharing. The aim is also to facilitate the development of healthy habits among young people (Löfven & Asterland, 2006). A project group of five members was initiated with one member from the procurement department, one from the service division (project leader in charge of the environmental aspect of food and transport), the catering manager and the purchaser of canteen goods. To inspire the uses of organic products a member from the organic market was included. This project developed a food environmental policy to buy 100% organically produced food in 2007. Phase I of the project was from 2005-2007. Rebuilding of the kitchen was needed to get started, which was done in and 2005-2006. The next step was to change menus to use organic products and identify the suppliers of organic food (Kjellberg & Stridsberg, 2007). Most organic products are sold raw, which is one of the obstacles. In Sweden most public catering and large scale kitchens are equipped for

conventional food in the shape of washed, cleaned, chopped and precooked items, even wholly prepared by food manufactories (Post, Bergström, Jonsson, & Shanahan, 2004).

Furthermore, Swedish school lunches are nutritionally balanced considering protein, fat and carbohydrates for youngster in the school age (Hälsomålet, 2007). In this project the new menus were to be reorganised according to nutritional balance with less meat and more vegetables (Kjellberg & Stridsberg, 2007). The guidelines proposed that cost be kept at the earlier level in the canteen. This helped the financial aspect as menus planned with more vegetables and less animal products cost less, although organic products command higher prices. The project was concerned with the education of the kitchen staff, as new thinking and acting was needed to produce good meals to satisfy and promote healthy and sustainable food for pupils and their families (Löfven & Asterland, 2006).

Funding of procurement projects

The Swedish Protection Agency (SEPA) supports local and regional authorities when shifting towards less environmental impact and improved climate impact. Thus special “climate”- funding is allocated to programs. For Malmö this meant money to spend on “Food and Climate.” The funding was to be spent and reported on after three years. The first program was carried out from 2004-2007 (Malmö, 2007d). A second funding for the same program is to be given nationally in 2007-2011. Malmö has applied and has been granted funds for the second program (Malmö, 2007b).

The canteen has a budget of its own, developed by the catering manager. She is responsible for several canteens. Apart from budgeting, her job is to plan the menu and educate the kitchen staff and to be a member of the public procurement reference group. She works together with the project member from the procurement department to obtain organic food products that suit the new menu, the production facilities and equipment available in the canteen. The canteen also has a purchaser responsible for buying the correct produce as agreed in the written document related to the needs of the kitchen production and guest preferences. The canteen also has a staff of cooks, assistants and dinner ladies who serve the food. The different parts of the project was financially supported by 130,200 Euro nationally from SEPA and locally from the city of Malmö (Kjellberg & Stridsberg, 2007).

Supply chain implications

The city council and public procurement department work on a two year written agreement making the best choice for purchasing food for the canteens. Several criteria are looked into before the agreement is finalized, of which environmental criteria is only one out of ten to fifteen (Bergström, 2005). This means that if organic food is to compete with conventional products they must be in accordance with agreed size, preparation, taste and texture. For procurers economical and legal criteria dominate over ecological criteria (Bergström, 2007). The market for organic food is expected to use one fifth of agreeable land in Sweden by 2010, but has only used 6% to 7% at present (Regeringen, 2007). Public catering units serving a number of meals are dependent on reliable deliveries and procurers abiding to such agreements. Therefore, the procurers, by written agreement must guarantee the requested item and number of food when required for production. Supply and demand needs to be more balanced. Even the cost is of great importance, and the procurer must attempt to lower the cost as much as possible (Kjellberg & Stridsberg, 2007).

School canteens serve food 180 days of the year, cooking one meal per day. Planning generally takes place twice per semester. Milk, bread, vegetables and cereals are purchased organically produced, and meat, fish and eggs at times. The budget allows the canteen to buy more organically produced food than most canteens do, due to the changed menu with more vegetables and less meat. For 2006 the project members estimate an achievement of 70% (Kjellberg & Stridsberg, 2007). The “Ekomat i skolan”-project worked with the organic market in the region to satisfy organic food supply delivery.

Other implications

The service division together with the environment division calculated and measured the pollution from different transport sources. Especially carbon dioxide from transport was measured. Numbers and figures will be reported at the end of 2007 since lessening figures is one of the goals in Malmö (Malmö, 2007b).

Apart from changing menus and cooking food from raw organic products education of the kitchen staff takes place. A parallel is the education of the pupils and their teachers connected to the project when promoting healthy and sustainable food amongst the teachers, the pupils and their families (Löfven & Asterland, 2006; Malmö, 2007d). An extended promotion at the same time is the marketing of organic products in retailing (Kjellberg & Stridsberg, 2007; Löfven & Asterland, 2006; Malmö, 2007a; Regeringen, 2007). One of the concerns raised by the canteen was the unsatisfactory supply of organic food. Packaging size was of concern, where instead of large packages consumer package are offered, causing unnecessary package waste (Kjellberg & Stridsberg, 2007). Another problem was the lack or irregular supply of items such as meat and milk throughout the year, and fruits and vegetables in the late springtime (Löfven & Asterland, 2006).

2. The Norwegian approach – the case of Øya music festival

Policy environment

In Norway the food service sector has recently been turned into an arena for political involvement. The food service sector has been “discovered” as a potential arena where the authorities and others could reach its citizens and influence their actions. The special interest in the food service sector is related to the food service sectors’ significance in ‘size’, which is formulated as the sectors ‘potential’, and ideas of being able to reach goals of healthier eating and a further increase in organic production through this sector (Vramo, Dulsrud 2007).

The policy background in relation to the new interest in the food service sector is related to two objectives. Firstly, the goal set by the Norwegian authorities to increase organic food production and consumption to 15% by 2015¹; secondly, a concern for healthy and sustainable food consumption, with a focus on the importance of healthy meals at kindergarten, school and work,² as well as increasing organic and locally produced food.

Based on the goal of increasing organic- production and food, The Norwegian Agricultural Authority (SLF) has worked out an *action plan* concerning organic agriculture and sales.³ Strategies have been outlined based on detected bottlenecks in the whole food supply chain and an estimated market potential for organic products of 25%.

The action plan has three sub-goals which are related to:

¹ In the Soria Moria declaration: www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/lmd/dok/regpubl/stprp/20062007/Stprp-nr-77-2006-2007-/2/3.html?id=4

² www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/hod/tema/Folkehelse/Handlingsplan-for-bedre-kosthold-2007---2011.html?id=437326

³ www.slf.dep.no/iknowbase/Content/handlingsplan.pdf?documentID=2465

- increasing organic production and stimulating it to a development of quality- and product developments in the primary- and secondary part of the food chain;
- raising awareness of organic production and products through the whole value chain; and
- stimulating the flow of organic products from the primary producer to the market.

For 2006, 38 million NOK was set aside for these measures.

Funding of procurement projects

The Norwegian Agricultural Authority (SLF) has, for several years, applied policy measures in the food service sector by funding and supporting the conversion to organic food within different catering institutions and businesses. The first national pilot project was established in 2002 at the St. Olav's Hospital in Trondheim (Solemdal 2002). Today, SLF supports similar projects in workplace canteens, schools and food services at music festivals and sports events.

The authorities' policy has overall been flexible and has been adjusted to meet local needs. This is reflected in the wide variety of initiatives that have been funded by SLF. Here we are interested in the funding of 'organic,' in the food service sector in general, and in SLF's funding of the Øya festival, in particular. How do the authorities use Øya as a tool to reach their organic goal? And what role does Øya play as a political actor?

The Øya case

The festival is not public in the strict sense but serves as a huge public arena for five days, as well as being a public voice/role the rest of the year. In five days the festival serves 24 tons of organic food to 65.000 paying participants and also serves organic meals free of charge to volunteers, musicians and crew. We examined how public procurement policy and a strong private initiative work together to develop an arena for political consumption. How can we understand Øya as a political consumer?

Since 2003 the Øya festival⁴ has, in cooperation with OIKOS (National Organization for Organic Producers and Consumers) received funding from SLF for a project named 'ØkoRock' (OrganicRock). Its main objective has been to develop the festival as "an innovative arena for organic food." One of its goals is to give the Ø-label and organic food a high profile.⁵ To paraphrase their project plan funded by SLF, this includes marketing of organic food, getting as much "spin off" from organic food as possible, developing existing supplier networks and working towards new networks. The ØkoRock project aims at developing packaging of organic food to suit the food-service sector, promoting organic food produced in Norway as well as trying out new products. Further, the project aims at creating good dialogue among restaurants, suppliers and producers for further cooperation and better sales of organic products in the short and long run.

⁴ The data about the Øya festival is based on Internet, written documentation, interviews and observation

⁵ The Ø-label indicates that the products/menus are approved by Debio, the authority responsible for the control and certification of production, processing, marketing and import of organic products in Norway.

Even the price for buying an organic meal at the festival is set as an aim in the ØkoRock project; the price for an organic meal should not exceed NOK 50-60. The reason being to give visitors the opportunity to eat organic at a cheap price (project 1.6.13 ØkoRock).

Even though these aims might indicate that the festival is an overall organic event the reality is somewhat different. In an interview with the day to day leader he tells us that:

“Above all, this is a music festival where we book alternative bands” (14.06.07).

Through our observations of two days and nights at the Øya festival we agree with this statement. From our observations the festival is a *music festival*, where the audience does ‘ordinary’ festival tasks. The audience move to and from and between stages to listen to various bands for various reasons. During the festival the audience gets thirsty and hungry. For this paper the interesting part is not that the audience gets hungry, but what they get served when they need to get fed. The goal of Øya is to serve 100% organic food at the festival. To reach this goal, the organizers do not give any of the audience in the festival a choice on whether or not to eat or serve organic. Instead, the choice is taken off the organizers’ hands, as the project leader of ØkoRock says:

“We set the frames, that means we have made the choices. We wish to give the audience a good experience. I think trends are made through good experiences” (14.06.07)

The assortment of food and restaurants at the festival is what makes Øya unique in a Norwegian context, and is what we will examine further.

Øya is the largest music festival in Norway and has been held annually in the Oslo area in August since 1999. Approximately 65 000 participants/visitors and 200 concerts were organized for a period of five days this year. The organizers aim at giving the audience good experiences and providing Norwegian bands an arena to perform. The festival target group is young people (15-35 years).

Since 2002 Øya has had a special focus on environment and sustainability. First, this included recycling and garbage handling, and a year later the Øya organizers included organic food in their environmental profile. The environmental focus was to some extent a result of the placing of the festival in an area where they had to take environmental considerations into account, partly a result of wishing to make the festival the organizers had been missing and wanting to make.

As per Øya’s policy organic food should be served to “everybody,” including artists, audience, guests and volunteers. For example, the volunteers (approx. 1 600 in 2007) were served one hot meal per day with a vegetarian option and had free access to organic bread, yoghurt and fruit throughout the day. The goal is to serve 100% organic and in 2007 approximately 90% of the food served was organic. In comparison, St. Olavs Hospital has a goal of serving 30% organic and is struggling to achieve this goal (Knutsen *et al.* 2007).

Supply chain implications

The restaurants that provide food at the Øya festival are selected from among Oslo restaurants that could provide “quality” and “more than just pizza”. The menu includes mainly “hand food,” such as hamburgers, fish burgers, pizza, wraps, nachos, hot dogs, crepes and Thai food. Debio control all the menus that are served at the festival, and menus approved by Debio are marked with a green and yellow Ø-label. Øya was the first music festival that was certified by Debio in 2003. Restaurants are set a limit on how much they can charge for food. If sponsors want to serve food at their stands, it has to be organic. Øya functions as a wholesaler and orders the organic food for all the restaurants. The individual restaurants do not have to work with several different wholesalers as the festival takes care of the procurement and links the wholesalers and the restaurants. These contacts are also made through seminars arranged before the festival for the restaurants, wholesalers, and producers. In 2006, 50 000 portions of organic food made out of 13 tons of raw material were consumed at the festival. In 2007 these figures are expected to be approximately 24 tons.

Other implications

Øya is today viewed as a model or show window for festival arrangements on sustainability and organic food. They arrange seminars for other festival organizers, NGOs and organizers of sports events. Øya started with an organic festival food in 2003 and today several music festivals and cultural events have started serving some organic food. As a result, in 2007, OIKOS received funding from SLF to employ a full time festival coordinator for organic food.

The driving forces behind Øya have been environment, sustainability, grassroot action, innovation, as well as the setting of the festival itself. The area where the festival is situated needed environmental considerations, and this "pushed" the organizers towards an environmentally friendly direction and co-operation with the Norwegian Foundation for Sustainable Consumption (GRIP).

The organizers of Øya see their organic staking as individually initiated by themselves as idealistic entrepreneurs. We see the success of the Øya festival as a result of different factors. Idealistic entrepreneurs as well as funding from the authorities of a full time organic coordinator have been important for the position and success of Øya today. Without the overall organic aim of the government that has operationalized in funding several organic suppliers and businesses, it is unlikely that Øya would have been able to achieve its goal of serving 100% organic quality food at the event. In order to achieve the 100% organic goal, Øya has managed to link producers of organic food with central actors within the food service sector (restaurants and wholesalers), and contributed to product development and innovations in the production and distribution of organic food. By sponsoring Øya the SLF has contributed to the overall national political goals for organic food.

Today organic is an inherent part of Øya’s profile. This implies that Øya will continue with their organic aiming whether or not they receive future funding for the ØkoRock project from the authorities. Øya has directly and indirectly set standards for organic food in public places through its position and success. Øya plays a role as a large political consumer by serving 100% organic food at the largest music festival in Norway.

3. The Danish approach – the case of Western Zealand hospitals

Policy environment

In 1999 The Danish Organic Action Plan II (Økologiske fødevareråd, 1999) named public foodservice to be an important sales channel, which resulted in the funding scheme 'Grønne Indkøb' (Green Procurement). This scheme operated between 1998 and 2004, with approximately 8 million EUR granted to 43 conversion projects. About 2000 institutions or about a third of the public food-consuming institutions have been affected by the conversion processes that are a direct result of the GPP (Mikkelsen *et al* 2004). Primarily, the smaller municipal institutions participated in conversion and, to a limited extent, the larger county institutions, including hospitals account for a about a third of the institutions engaging in organic conversion (DFFE, 2004). About a fifth of the project has more than 100 food service units. A third of the project has engaged less than 30 food service units and the rest were projects involving 31-100 units. One of the local projects supported by this scheme is the Western Zealand County case (DFFE, 2004) through a grant in 2001.

The Western Zealand case

This project has been running for over two years and has now moved into a more stable management phase. The project builds on an environmental action plan that deals with 'Healthy Foods of Sustainable Origins.' The Western Zealand's county council consequently decided on an action plan for environmental work internally in the organizational entity of the county of Western Zealand in the years between 1999 and 2003. (Servicecentret, 2004). The plan's goal, regarding food and health, was to reorient the county's food production towards the application of '*healthy foods of sustainable origins*.' The formal goal was to reorient 50% of the total consumption during the project period. In practice, organic products would naturally become dominant in the county's kitchens after the reorientation and with the formulation of the dictum '*healthy foods of sustainable origins*' the perspective is widened beyond the red ecology sticker. The county's definition of '*healthy foods of sustainable origins*' means that the food must be healthy, fresh, and seasonal with a high content of flavor, smell, and nutritional benefits and a minimum amount of additives and medicine/toxic residue. This definition also means that sustainable foods have to be produced, handled, packaged, and transported using the least possible amount of non-renewable resources and pollution and that it has to be produced in a socially sustainable way which respects animal welfare. Finally, the definition raises the burden regarding the origin of the food, by demanding a declaration and potentially a recognized label which put the consumer in a position to assess whether the food is of a healthy and sustainable origin.

The participants in the project were primarily the county's three big hospital kitchens. In the beginning the project also included the kitchens in the psychiatric hospital, Nykøbing Sjælland and Kalundborg, but the participation of these hospitals was later terminated (Servicecentret, 2004). The project's other parties were the county of Western Zealand (the initiator), an external consultant who participated in the development, mapping, project planning, and counseling phase as well as a consultant who managed the education of the kitchens' employees. In addition, potential future suppliers participated. The project itself was anchored in the *Service Center – Sygehus Vestsjælland* which was responsible for the project, its finance and management. The formal decision to initiate the project was made by the county council and was an attempt to "contribute towards a qualitative, constructive, and critical contribution to the development of the organic sector" (Servicecentret 2005). The overall aim was to

further the consumption of foods which are good for the environment and are accommodative towards the sustainability of nature.

The county's definition of '*healthy foods of sustainable origins*' means, on the one hand, that '*healthy foods of sustainable origins*' as a rule are of organic origin or at least produced under similar conditions. On the other hand it also means that not all organically produced foods could be characterized as sustainable. An example of the latter is where products, while organic, have been transported too long in an inappropriate fashion, or had been produced with large energy consumption, or had been produced with large social costs (Servicecentret 2005)..

Despite the fact that the county's environmental action plan encompasses all the county's 120 institutions that buy and produce food, the main focus in the reorientation project was on the large foodservice units. The county's food production portfolio thus spans from small institutions with 15 residents to the largest hospital kitchens which produce about 700 meals each day. In order to secure a quick and the biggest possible effect, the county chose to commence the reorientation project in the five largest kitchens in the hospitals.

Funding of the project

The project was partly financed by a grant from the Green Procurement scheme (DFFE, 2004) in 2001. This funding was primarily used for the external consultant, project management and the establishment of in service training and capacity building among work staff. The rest of the funding was based on the assumption that reorientation of the food supply could be reconciled with the existing budget.

Supply chain implications

The five kitchens that participated as core partners cover more than half of the county's food purchase and these hospitals buy food for about DKR. 25 million annually (VAT excluded). In addition, the kitchens employ about 200 people and between 2500-3000 people have their food in the canteens on a daily basis (Servicecentret, 2005). Therefore, the food service sector in the county has a considerable buying volume and a close cooperation with the supply is important to make the project work. The county deliberately chose the hospital sector to begin the reorientation process since it was felt that the results would be most efficient in this area and also where a scatter effect towards the county's smaller kitchens could be expected. These small kitchens could, on a long term basis, draw on the expertise and subsequent experience. The intention has been to create a 'model-effect' for other large kitchens, both within and outside the boundaries of the county. The main perspective rests on the food supply and the securing of the largest potential relative quantity of organic products within the current economic framework.

On the face of it, it has shown itself difficult to build a network of smaller suppliers who also have the potential to meet the county's and the kitchens' collective demands. First and foremost it was the uncertainty of quantity and precision of the delivery that constituted a potential barrier. Consequently, as the final phases of the project progressed the range of relevant suppliers were the same small businesses that also supplied the kitchens when daily production was exclusively based on conventional products. Some of the small suppliers had difficulties meeting the collective demands from the county.

One of the goals for the project had been to enhance regional production of organic/sustainable food products through the county's demand for a stable and quality minded delivery. The interdisciplinary cooperation qualified the demands for external suppliers and it is assessed that there has been an indirect professionalisation of the cooperation with the external suppliers. From the kitchens' perspective, the awareness towards the price and quality conditions, that could reasonably be made to external suppliers has grown. The demands set by the county towards the suppliers will consequently further a direct or indirect qualification of the suppliers. In this way, an 'exchange relationship' is experienced between and on behalf of the demand and supply side. Another point in this respect is that the county, by being more qualified in its demand, can qualitatively strengthen the part of the supply side which has the potential to survive in the long run.

Other implications

Since under nutrition in hospitals is an important issue in hospital food service (Mikkelsen et al 2003), projects related to food supply cannot be carried out relating to this fact. In the current case the kitchens in *Sygehus Vestsjælland* have worked with the development of nutritional teams and on how to secure a larger quality of eating amongst the patients. The county has carried out an evaluation of the project in connection with the formal ending of the project. The intention has been to perform a recapitulation of the achieved project results and experiences. The aim has also been to point towards future methods of action which follow from the already obtained project results. The evaluation has been carried out on the basis of interviews with management and employees from the participating kitchens as well as the people responsible for the project at a central level.

The overall conclusion of the evaluation is that the project's aims to a large extent have been realized. Specifically, the project had a significant and positive effect on capacity building through the increased offer of qualification and in-service training and also in connection to the strengthening of a more general motivation for participation in different forms of development activities (Mikkelsen *et al* 2005).

It should be noted that the project has aimed towards the maximum use of organic products within the current financial framework. The minimum threshold level was set at 25%-30%; however the evaluation has not related to the extent to which it has actually been possible to reorient towards organic foods with the desired percentage share.

Discussion

Sweden has a long tradition for organic procurement policies and, in addition, there is a long tradition of state regulation of school meal provision. The Malmö case illustrates that although there is a public policy for promoting organic procurement, organic food is not the only criteria used. This is due to the fact that the whole idea of sustainability concerns a great number of other aspects for proactively impacting the climate. The rather ambitious goal that is proposed in the Swedish case is 100% organic food in all school meals in Malmö by 2012, and an intermediate targeting of 100% in 2007 in the portrayed school canteen. The Swedish case has particularly explored the possibilities of using written agreements and contracts as a way to influence the supply chain politically. The new rules introduced by the Swedish Environmental Management Council could be used when sending out inquiries to suppliers interested in sales of organic food to public catering (Miljöstylningsrådet, 2006). The Swedish case also illustrates the possibilities in linking food procurement and consumption to the

climate debate. In Sweden, funds are given from the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency to Malmö city to promote the umbrella project “Food and climate” and “Ekomat i skolan”, to prepare a model for the future shifting from conventional food to organic ones on behalf of all canteens in the Malmö public catering organisation and in the Malmö School Restaurants. The driving force in “Food and climate” has been the city politicians along with the local employees in divisions of the city and the canteen. The start for the city was environmental protection, but the action has increased to social aspects of sustainability today, not yet spelled out in the canteen. In the canteen health is used as one aspect of serving good food. Here also, one point is the promotion in retailing organic food at the same time as the project is promoted in the school for the pupils to take back such information to their families. The procurement policy seems to have been transformed to local procedures although a significant increase of organic procurement is not achieved yet. This is due to the fact it is still only one canteen out of 83 and only a few canteens in the city, mostly in nurseries, are reporting increased use of organic food (Malmö, 2007d). Nevertheless, for shifting to organic food the cooperation between the city divisions and the selected school canteen seems important as is the support given from top management to the canteen employees.

The Norwegian experience shows that the public sponsoring of organic foods promotion at Øya by the agricultural authorities (SLF) in several ways has contributed to the overall national political goals for organic foods, which is increased food production and consumption. The Øya case has managed to link producers of organic food with central actors within the food service sector, i.e. restaurants and wholesalers. The festival has contributed to product development and innovations in the production and distribution of organic food. The Øya festival possesses a certain amount of cultural capital that it has been able to convert into economic sponsorship. By doing so, the concept has set new standards that have been spread to other festivals all over Norway. This has undoubtedly had a positive effect on production and consumption of organic food at a local level. The general effect on the consumption of organic food in Norway is hard to estimate. At least organic food has gained good publicity from being profiled at Øya and other festivals, but the potential for consumers to transmit experiences with organic food out of home at extraordinary events and contexts such as festivals to the ordinary everyday consumption in the domestic context is yet to be explored. Øya has gone further than the authorities by being 100% organic. Øya is a ‘state in the state’, since it has made decisions for their audience and their public. In that respect the consumer has no other choice than choosing, to paraphrase Miller (1995). The consumer can make ‘ordinary choices’ according to the model of the market based on preferences: price, and what you see/ smell, concerns related to yourself as an individual. It is also a political act to free the consumers of having to make political choices in the market, it is convenient and the consumers do not need to be ‘super choosers’. Festival is a liminal opportunity to experiment with pleasure and meaning (Turner, 1997)

The Danish case reveals a number of interesting findings. First, that the organic procurement policies have been around for a long time and experiences exist in a wide array of public food service settings. Interestingly, despite the fact that there has been an ambitious funding scheme for organic public procurement for almost a decade, no national goals for the amount or the percentage of organic food in the public has been set. Partly as a result of this no monitoring system has been established on a national scale. Formal government policy has been not to recommend organic procurement but to leave that decision to regional and local authorities. The picture of a political state consumer is therefore

somewhat blurred. However, it is a fact that around 2000 public institutions have participated in government-supported projects aiming at converting the procurement of foods in public institutions. The explanation is that political consumerism in relation to public organic foods is taking place entirely at local and regional level, City of Copenhagen and Western Zealand county being the front runners. However, following the recent release of the UN climate report, the decision of the liberal government to focus on environmental and energy issues and the plan for the Copenhagen Environment Summit in 2009, a small change in focus can be seen. This is particularly visible in many of the upcoming new school food provision initiatives, which primarily develops from public health nutritional concerns but in many cases also tend to involve an organic food procurement part. Seen from a political consumerism point of view the emerging idea that the public should take a stand and favour certain types of healthy food products in its procurement policy instead of other more unhealthy alternative can be said to represent a political consumer standpoint. The Danish case also illustrates the differences among the different political levels involved in organic procurement policies. A significant change was seen when the liberal government took over power from the social democratic government in 2001. However, despite lack of national government support, the local government has to a wide extent continued their local projects. In this respect the idea of organic procurement is to a certain extent influenced by ideology.

Conclusion

The Scandinavian case shows that there are similarities as well as differences regarding the role that organic foods play in procurement policies. Denmark and Sweden have more than 15 years of experience of establishing public supported organic food service supply chains. In comparison, Norway has a relatively shorter experience. The similarities have been accentuated by the relative intense networking that has been practiced, both at a practitioner and scientific level (Mikkelsen *et al* 2001) over the past decade. This share of experiences through Nordic networks has led to synergy and also to development of genuine national approaches, as this paper clearly illustrates.

Although political consumption is practiced in all countries, different impulses and rules of praxis have been applied. The Norwegian case shows a private initiative that by indirect and direct help from the authorities has gone further than the authorities by offering next to 100% organic for four days. The Swedish approach has in many cases been linked to the climate debate as the Malmö case illustrates. In Denmark, the idea that implementation of organic procurement might lead to health benefits in terms of healthier eating has been explored. In most cases political consumerism of food is translated to organic foods but in the case of Western Zealand a more broad definition that also involves local foods and fair trade has been applied.

The development of organic procurement has shown that there are difficulties for the public in practicing political consumption since the public has not used their potential power in the food systems. Public food systems have not until now been the test site for such attempts and this means that the public has been forced into capacity building in this field. Public food systems are huge and complex systems that might be difficult to control since they involve a number of different stakeholders who might like to have a say. In this respect Øya is an interesting case. Øya functions as a wholesaler by ordering all the organic foods for all the restaurants that sell food at the four day event. This seems to be an effective way to organize the procurement of food, as well as a way of practicing political consumption. By buying large volumes Øya practice political consumption in their relations with

suppliers, as well as by deciding on an organic menu for the restaurants, the volunteers, the audience and the musicians. Øya is, in relation to organic, organized as a 'state in the state' by having made the decisions for their visitors food choice beforehand. To free the individual consumer of having to make political choices in the market, is one effect of *the public* practicing political consumption.

Food and food actors have traditionally been allocated with large symbolic capital and thus food has not been in focus compared to other public procurement issues despite the fact that food accounts for between 10% and 20% of the public buying volume. It is also clear that there seems to be a lack of coordination among the different levels of political consumerism. According to a study of Danish organic procurement projects (Kristensen *et al.*, 2007), the national level decision is likely to be tackled in inappropriate or sometimes even contra-productive ways, when implemented in local procurement policies.

It could be concluded that although national variations exist and the countries are at different development stages, organic procurement in the public have contributed positively to developing the organic sector and thus represents an example of public political consumerism. This development is also seen elsewhere across Europe (Morgan & Soninno, 2005; Peckham & Petts, 2003). In cities like Rome, London and Paris public procurement schemes are emerging aiming at building in the sustainability issue in food procurement contracts and thus underpinning the importance of public procurement in a political consumerism context.

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Consumer perception of animal welfare and the effect of information*

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Abstract

The motivation for the present study is to understand food choice in relation to animal welfare, and how choices and preferences are influenced by expert information. The focus is on the attribute “animal welfare”, which is represented by the method of producing chicken (indoor and outdoor production). To accomplish the analysis we have carried out a choice experiment. The results indicate that men have a significantly lower willingness to pay (WTP) for outdoor produced chicken than women, and that highly educated people have the highest WTP for outdoor produced chicken. Furthermore, the results suggest that once the respondents/consumers are given information about the production method, the higher income people have the more do they care about animal welfare in terms of WTP. Thus, economic progress is likely to have a positive effect on animal welfare, if the consumers are given information about the production methods.

1. Introduction

Consumers, public decision-makers as well as experts have shown an increasing interest in animal welfare issues. This interest first emerged in the 1960s (Harrison 1964), and has increased since. This can be seen as part of a general increase in attention towards food quality

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characteristics. Uncertainty with respect to food quality hinders consumers attempt to match food choices with preferences, and food quality issues have received intensive mass media coverage in recent years. This has led consumers and agri-food chain stake holders to change their beliefs, attitudes and behaviour. There has also been a growing interest, not only in the role and mechanisms of information, but also in the evaluation of the various techniques and vehicles for spreading information to the consumers.

The motivation for the present study is to understand food choice in relation to animal welfare, and how choices and preferences are influenced by expert information. The focus is on the attribute “animal welfare” represented by methods of producing chicken (indoor or outdoor production methods). For the typical consumer, this characteristic is a credence attribute. The pricing of such attribute is subject to informational problems and the attribute does not have a market price that can be used to reflect its value. Therefore a prospective analysis is performed, using the Choice Experiment (CE) method to measure consumer valuation of animal welfare in Denmark. Furthermore, by providing information as an integrated part of the experiments, the approach allows measurement of the way in which information on expert-based risk assessment influences choice and consumer behaviour.

More specifically the objectives of the study are: (a) to estimate the consumers’ Willingness-To-Pay (WTP) for animal welfare of outdoor production systems, (b) to identify the possible welfare gains of providing full information to consumers by public campaigns and/or labelling, (c) to investigate how the effect of information vary across consumer types.

Consumption of white meat has risen dramatically over the past few decades, driven by the availability of cheap, mass-produced chicken. Every year about 4 billion meat chickens are produced across the European Union (EU), the vast majority in intensive conditions. However, there are alternative production methods that are used. And even if the market share of outdoor produced chicken is relatively small in most EU countries, we find examples of outdoor produced chicken in most countries (CIWF Trust, 2004), such as France, Ireland, Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden and United Kingdom.

In France i.e., the Label Rouge standards were created in 1958 to oppose the rise in industrial poultry farming and to preserve more traditional farming methods. Today, different provinces of France have each created their own Label Rouge collectives consisting of independent farmers, slaughters and feed producers. However, the national Label Rouge label maintains the same welfare standards for all users of the label. Label Rouge has also developed a diversity of slow growing breeds, and these breeds are used on many free ranged and organic European farms.

Animal welfare has in previous studies been valued using the contingent valuation method (CVM) and choice experiments. Bennett (1996) used CVM to analyse consumers' WTP for increased animal welfare in egg production. He found that the main aspects of livestock production that people were concerned about, were (listed in decreasing order); housing and confined living conditions, feed and medicine, livestock transport and livestock markets and then slaughtering process. Bennett (1996) also concluded that there was a significant WTP for increased animal welfare in Great Britain. Bennet & Blaney (2003) use CVM to further elicit WTP for supporting legislation to phase out the use of battery cages for egg production in the European Union. They conclude that the estimated benefits of phasing out the use of battery cages outweigh the estimated annual costs over a 12-year period (see also Dransfield *et al.* (2005) and Burgess *et al.* (2004) for the value of animal welfare through the CVM approach). Carlsson *et al.* (2005) valued animal welfare for beef, pork and chicken production using choice experiments. They found price premiums ranging from 5 percent and 8 percent for beef and chicken production and to 70 percent for pork production. Kontolen & Yabe (2003), and Meuwissen & van der Lans (2004) also valued animal welfare using the CE method. They found price premiums for improved animal welfare in egg production and pork production of respectively 120 percent and 45 percent.

The paper is organised as follow. In Section 2 we describe the different production systems for broiler production. In Section 3 we present the choice experiment and the data, while Section 4 describes the econometric model. The following section presents the results and finally in Section 6 we conclude.

2. Animal welfare

The focus of this study is on poultry production in Denmark. There are two main types of production systems in broiler production, outdoor and indoor productions. No broilers are produced in batteries but there are other differences between outdoor and conventional indoor production systems – some of them are highlighted in Table 1.

Table 1. Broiler production in Denmark – different systems

	Outdoor production	Conventional (indoor production)
Live broilers per m2 indoor	10 broilers or 21 kg live weight	20-23 (or max 44 kg per m2). From 1. January 2006, it is max. 40 kg
Outdoor access	Yes from 6 weeks of age	No
”Life time”	At least 81 days	38-42 days
Requirement of organic food	At least 80% (if organic production)	No
Genetically modified fodder allowed	No	Yes
Light in barn	Daylight	Light program
Requirement of perches	Yes	No
Requirement for use of slow growing breed	Yes	No
Max. flock size	4,800	40,000 or no limit

As Table 1 shows, significant differences in the production systems are apparent – but the consequences for animal welfare are not clear. The breeds used for conventional broiler production can, under favorable conditions, grow to around 2 kg in 40 days. As a consequence of such rapid growth, more than 20 percent of the broilers suffer from leg problems. In contrast, slow growing races, such as the ones used in outdoor farming, grow to only a fourth of that weight in 40 days. In order to prevent too fast weight gain, the authorities introduced “*The light program*”. This program restricts the number of hours that light may be turned on in the broiler houses. This provides the broiler with a number of hours for rest. However, if the resting period is too long the animals may suffer from acid burns on their footpads, i.e. lesions/burns of the skin underneath the feet, because they stand in the same spot for too long. Approximately 30 percent of the birds experience feet-problems. Outdoor produced broilers have more space than

conventionally produced broilers. Genetically, there is also a difference between the breeds that are used for outdoor and indoor production, where the breeds used for outdoor production are slow growing races.

Overall, it is generally believed that outdoor produced chickens have higher welfare than conventionally produced chickens, taking into consideration the pros and cons in both production systems. Table 2 describes some of the pros and cons with respect to animal welfare of the outdoor production system.

Table 2. The welfare implications of outdoor broilers

	Pros (advantages) of outdoor production	Cons (disadvantages) of outdoor productions
Stocking density	Due to the lower stocking density in organic broiler production, compared with conventional production, the animals have more individual space, which, in turn, results in lower levels of stress. Stressed animals may secrete more bacteria than non -stressed animals. Due to more space for movement, cannibalism is less frequent.	The natural flock size for chickens is 10 – 14 individuals per flock. So even though the stocking density in outdoor produced poultry is low compared with conventional production, the flock size is unnaturally large and will influence natural behaviour.
Outdoor access	Access to outdoor areas supports the physiological and natural behaviour pattern of the animals. The birds can sand bathe, scrape and have free movement, which among other things prevents leg problems.	Higher prevalence of pathogenic zoonoses, e.g. <i>Salmonella</i> and <i>Campylobacter</i> .
Free-range system	Free movement supports natural and physiological behaviour	
Bedding	Quality of bedding is of great importance for the welfare poultry, since the animals spend their entire life in contact with bedding. The bedding supports the instinct for scraping and pecking.	Poor bedding quality is recognised as a welfare problem in modern broiler production. The quality of bedding affects the environmental situation of the birds by influencing e.g.: Dust levels, air humidity levels and occurrence of ammonia burns.
Perches	Part of natural behaviour for some breeds of poultry. Good potential for reducing bird density at floor level and reducing ammonia burns.	Can cause breast blisters in some breeds of poultry. A breast blister is a lesion of the skin on the breast, varies in size and is full of fluid and blood.

2.1. The market price for chicken

The consumption of chicken has increased rapidly over recent decades in Denmark – from about 6 kg in 1973 to 15 kg per inhabitant in 2002 (Graversen, 2003). Only a very small part of the

market (less than 1 percent) consists of production with special emphasis on animal welfare – the main markets are standardised chicken products. The price premium for an organic chicken on the other hand is considerable. An overview of the relationship between the prices of different products is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Price and budget share for chicken meat

	Price per kg (DKK)	Share of poultry budget
Whole frozen	21.96	11.5
Cut frozen	29.52	33.5
Whole chilled	32.11	12.6
Cut chilled	66.66	36.4
Campylobacter-free (whole frozen)	25.25	4.3
Organic (whole chilled)	56.64	0.8
Barn yard (withdrawn from market in 2001)	37.90	0.9
Total		100

Source: Jensen *et al.* (2004), The table is based on scanner purchase data from COOP in the period 2000-2002. COOP includes the stores groups OBS, Kvickly, SuperBrugsen, DagliBrugsen, LokalBrugsen and Irma.

Based on these market observations, it can be concluded that a market for food animal welfare exist. However, the market is probably too small to secure a pricing mechanism that ensures that the market prices reflect the actual consumers' WTP. Hence, a stated preference analysis is motivated.

3. The choice experiment

The questionnaire is designed to produce data for improving the understanding of consumers' food choice in relation to animal welfare and food related health risks – and how these are influenced by expert information. In this study we use the information that is related to animal welfare. The questionnaire consists of a choice experiment and questions concerning background information. Basically, the choice experiment is used to elicit estimates of the average WTP for the attributes and the average effect of information. The background information is used for consistency checks and to elicit the respondents' prior information levels, thereby, determining the “news” value of the information that is provided in the questionnaire.

The choice sets were described through three attributes – food safety in the case of campylobacter labelling (labelled campylobacter-free or not), animal welfare in the case of production method (outdoor produced or indoor produced) and price. The levels of the attributes are shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4. The attributes and their levels in the choice experiment.

Attributes	Levels
Food safety	Not labelled campylobacter-free, Labelled campylobacter-free
Animal welfare	Indoor produced, outdoor produced
Price (DKK)	40, 47, 55, 64, 74, 85, 97, 110

Note: DKK 10 ~ EUR 1.34

The attributes and their levels shown in Table 4 were identified and tested through focus groups. The maximum price was moreover identified as the price of an organic chicken in a Danish supermarket. The reason for this comparison is that an organic chicken contains a lot of attributes, with regards to e.g. food safety and animal welfare, and hence the price of such chicken would be expected to cover the maximum price of a chicken which only contains some of these attributes.

The respondents were faced with two alternative whole chilled chickens plus a third status quo alternative chicken (an opt-out), represented by the respondents' usual purchase - all alternatives were presented as whole chilled chickens weighing 1300g each.

To mimic the actual choice situations faced by the individuals as close as possible and to achieve as much information as possible we incorporated the value of the respondents' usual purchase in the status quo alternative. The status quo alternative was identified earlier in the questionnaire.

In the choice experiment the respondents were introduced to two different choice sets. In the first part of the choice sets, no information regarding either the food safety attribute or the animal welfare attribute was provided to the respondents, as the intention was to capture market behaviour as closely as possible. In the second part of the choice sets, the respondents were given

information regarding the animal welfare associated to a hypothetical scenario of the two different production methods – indoor – and outdoor production (see Table 5).

Table 5. Information part provided to the respondents before the second CE.

Indoor produced	Outdoor produced
The chickens are kept indoors all the time	The chickens also have access to outdoor areas
Each chicken has less space than an A4 sheet	Each chicken has almost two A4 sheets indoors. Furthermore, each chicken has a living space of 4 square metres
The light is kept on almost all the time day and night. This means that they eat most of the time and thus grow faster (From 2006 this is not legal)	The circadian cycle of the chickens is based on daylight. The chickens thus grow at a normal speed
The life span of the chickens is approx. 6 weeks	The life span is approx. 12 weeks

Before each choice scenario a “cheap talk” script was included, reminding the respondents about the fact that individuals often act differently towards a hypothetical scenario in a questionnaire than they would in a real situation, where they were faced with the same problem.

A full factorial design was used, which allows the estimation of two-way interaction effects, with 16 choice sets containing 2 alternatives each (3 alternatives when including the status quo alternative). Such design was found twice – without and with information. The 32 choice sets (16 without information and 16 with information) were blocked into 4 blocks. Thereby each respondent received 8 choice sets – 4 without information and 4 with information. There were 6 dominant alternatives present in the 32 choice set, but instead of removing the dominant alternatives, they were used as a consistency tests. 121 respondents failed the test; i.e., they did not show utility maximising behaviour. These respondents have been excluded from the sample.

The survey was conducted using an internet based questionnaire during February 2005. The sample was obtained from ACNielsen’s online database. In Denmark, there are approximately 2.4 million private households, of whom 75 percent are “online”. The panel members are all in the age 15 to 99 year, resident in a household with PC and they all have a private internet access. The online panel is representative with respect to the 75 percent of the Danish population that

has internet access in their homes.¹ Protest answers were identified as respondents, who supported animal welfare or campylobacter-free chickens, but who did not think that it was him (or her) as a consumer who should pay for these attributes. 246 respondents were identified as being protest bidders. After the exclusion of these respondents, the final data set used for further estimation consisted of 2301 respondents.

4. The econometric model

To estimate the WTP for outdoor production methods for chicken we apply a heteroskedastic error component (HEC) mixed logit model. In the choice experiment the sampled individual ($h = 1, \dots, H$) can choose between three alternatives in each of eight choice situations. The individual is assumed to consider the full set of alternatives and choose the alternative with the highest utility. The (relative) utility associated with each alternative i as evaluated by individual h on choice situation t can be represented by the utility expression

$$U_{hit} = \beta' x_{hit} + \varepsilon_{hit}, \quad (1)$$

where x_{hit} is a vector of observable variables relating to alternative i and the person; β is a vector of parameters to be estimated which are fixed over people and alternatives; and ε_{hit} is a random term with mean zero that denotes the unobserved part of the utility. Within the multinomial logit (MNL) context ε_{hit} is independent and identically distributed (iid) extreme value type 1. The iid assumption is restrictive in that it does not allow for the error components of different alternatives to be correlated. To obtain a more flexible model we partition the stochastic component additively into two parts, one part that is correlated over alternatives and heteroskedastic over individuals, and another part that is iid over alternatives and individuals. Equation (1) can thus be rewritten as

¹ Compared with the Danish population there is an overrepresentation of people under the age of 50 years in the sample. With respect to the number of children present in the household, our sample is underrepresented by respondents with no children, and overrepresented with families with one and two children. In the income dimension, there is an overrepresentation of high-income takers.

$$U_{hit} = \beta' x_{hit} + (\eta_{hi} + \varepsilon_{hit}), \quad (2)$$

where η_{hi} is a random term (and the unobserved heterogeneity for the h th individual) with zero mean and whose distribution over individuals and alternatives depends on the underlying parameters and observed data relating to alternative i and individual h . ε_{hit} is a random term with zero mean that is iid extreme value type 1 distributed and does not depend on underlying parameters or data. Stacking the utilities, we have $U = \beta' x + (\eta + \varepsilon)$ where $V(\varepsilon) = \alpha I$ with known (i.e. normalized) α and $V(\eta) = \Gamma \Gamma'$ is general.

Consider the sequence of alternatives, one for each time period (or choice occasion), $i = (i_1, \dots, i_T)$, and denote the density of η_{hi} by $f(\eta_{hi} | \Omega)$ where Ω are the fixed parameters of the distribution. Then, for a given value of η_{hi} , the conditional probability of person h 's observed sequence of choices is the product of standard logits, since ε_{hit} is iid extreme value

$$L_{hi}(\beta | \eta_{hi}) = \prod_{t=1}^T \left[\frac{\exp(\beta' x_{hi,t} + \eta_{hi})}{\sum_j \exp(\beta' x_{hj,t} + \eta_{hj})} \right]. \quad (3)$$

Since η is not given, the (unconditional) choice probability is (3) integrated over all values of η_{hi} weighted by the density of η_{hi} , i.e.

$$P_{hi}(\beta | \Omega) = \int_{\eta_{hi}} L_{hi}(\beta | \eta_{hi}) f(\eta_{hi} | \Omega) d\eta_{hi}. \quad (4)$$

This probability does not exhibit the questionable independence from irrelevant alternatives property (IIA). To allow for correlation among the alternatives and heteroskedasticity over people we specify η_{hi} as $\eta_{hi} = \mu' z_i$, where μ is a random vector with zero mean that does not vary over alternatives and has normal density $g(\mu | \Omega)$. Through appropriate specification of z_i we then induce heteroskedasticity over people and correlation over alternatives in the unobserved portion of utility, such that the covariance matrix for this error components model becomes

$$\begin{bmatrix} \sigma_1^2 + \sigma^2 & \sigma_k^2 & 0 \\ \sigma_k^2 & \sigma_2^2 + \sigma^2 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & \sigma^2 \end{bmatrix}, \quad (5)$$

i.e., we normalise the heteroskedasticity with respect to the opt-out alternative, and allows for correlation between the other two alternatives. The choice probability (4) can not be calculated exactly because the integral does not have a closed form. Therefore the integral is approximated through simulation. For technical details on the estimation see e.g. Brownstone and Train (1999). The model has been estimated in NLOGIT 3.0.

Since the utility function is linear in money, the marginal WTP for the attribute is the ratio between the parameter of the attribute and the cost parameter, such that

$$WTP = -\frac{\text{Attribute parameter}}{\text{Cost parameter}}. \quad (6)$$

5. Results

The results from the estimations of the MNL and HEC mixed logit model are presented in Tabel 6. As can be seen the price parameter is strongly significant in both the MNL model and the HEC mixed logit model. As a result of the more flexible model specification the absolute value of the point estimate increases with 18.1 percent for the price parameter in the HEC mixed logit model, compared with the MNL model. Furthermore the results clearly indicate that there is both heteroskedasticity over people, with $\sigma_1 = 2.63$ [s.e. 0.09] and $\sigma_2 = 2.57$ [s.e. 0.08], and correlation over the alternatives, $\sigma_k = -2.57$ [s.e. 0.08] in the Cholesky matrix Γ and $\sigma_k^2 = -6.75$ in $V(\eta)$. As can be seen from the table there is a large increase in the log-likelihood and the adjusted R -square when we allow for heteroskedasticity and correlation over the alternatives, and when we take into account that each individual has answered 8 choice sets (panel specification).

The results suggest that men have a lower WTP for outdoor produced chicken compared with women, although, this effect is only significant in the mixed logit model. The fact that men have a lower WTP than women is found in other studies as well (see e.g. List 2004; Johansson-Stenman & Martinsson 2006). Highly educated persons have also a significantly higher WTP for outdoor produced chicken, compared to people with a low or other education.

Generally we do not find significant differences in the WTP for different income categories for outdoor produced chicken. People living in cities, with an expected lower knowledge of animal production methods, have on the other hand a significantly lower WTP for outdoor produced chicken compared to people living in less populated areas. The results also suggest that households with children have a lower WTP for outdoor production. However, this effect is not statistically significant, at any common significance level.

After the respondents have been given information about the production method there is a general increase in the WTP for outdoor produced chicken. The results indicate that women are significantly more affected by information about production methods than men are. We also see from the table that the WTP for outdoor produced chicken increases with higher incomes, after the respondents are provided with information about the production method, and that the parameter estimates for the next lowest income group to the highest income group are significantly different from the households with the lowest incomes.

Moreover people living in the cities, increases their WTP more than people living in other areas, after they are provided with information about the production method. Although, this effect is not significantly different from zero, this might indicate that people living in the cities have a lower knowledge about animal production. Neither do we find any significantly different effect on families with children compared to households without children when they are provided with information about the production method.

Table 6. Estimated parameters in the multinomial – and mixed logit model.

Variables	MNL	s.e.	Mixed logit	s.e.
Price	-0.034	0.0006	-0.040	0.000
Outdoor produced chicken				
Constant	0.768	0.073	0.798	0.069
Male o.p.	-0.054	0.040	-0.118	0.038
High education o.p.	0.090	0.038	0.186	0.034
Other education o.p.	-0.185	0.069	-0.065	0.062
Next lowest income category o.p.	-0.061	0.098	-0.055	0.094
Next highest income category o.p.	-0.137	0.076	-0.150	0.071
Highest income category o.p.	-0.010	0.070	0.034	0.065
Living in city o.p.	-0.121	0.042	-0.138	0.039
Household with children o.p.	-0.065	0.042	-0.046	0.040
Outdoor produced chicken with information				
Constant	0.183	0.143	0.335	0.135
Male o.p. with info	-0.286	0.084	-0.361	0.082
Next lowest income category o.p. with info	0.396	0.197	0.422	0.189
Next highest income category o.p. with info	0.494	0.159	0.539	0.153
Highest income category o.p. with info	0.532	0.147	0.555	0.138
Lining in city o.p. with info	0.049	0.089	0.037	0.084
Household with children o.p. with info	-0.107	0.090	-0.148	0.084
Campylobacter-free chicken				
Constant	0.736	0.067	0.827	0.056
Male C.F.	0.059	0.036	0.014	0.028
High education C.F.	-0.089	0.038	-0.047	0.029
Other education C.F.	-0.059	0.070	0.076	0.056
Next lowest income category C.F.	-0.143	0.086	-0.219	0.068
Next highest income category C.F.	-0.162	0.068	-0.227	0.054
Highest income category C.F.	-0.088	0.064	-0.103	0.051
Living in city C.F.	0.091	0.038	0.128	0.029
Age 50 and higher C.F.	0.310	0.042	0.564	0.032
Household with children C.F.	-0.018	0.042	0.029	0.034
ASC1	1.028	0.026	2.351	0.088
ASC2	1.174	0.025	2.497	0.088
σ_1			2.629	0.086
σ_2			2.567	0.082
σ_k in Cholesky matrix Γ			-2.567	0.082
Log-Likelihood	-14735		-12970	
RsqaAdj	0.19		0.29	

Note: o.p. = outdoor produced, and C.F. = Campylobacter-free. ASC1 and ASC2 are alternative specific constants for the first and second alternative. Low education = nine-year (compulsory) school. High education = upper secondary or university degree. Other education = vocational education. City = people living in a city with up to 50000 inhabitants.

Even if the parameter estimates, in absolute values, generally are higher in the HEC mixed logit model compared to the MNL model, the estimated WTP is lower when we allow for

heteroscedasticity and correlation among the alternatives (see Table 7). The average WTP for outdoor produced chicken for a low educated woman in the lowest income group, without children and who is living in the rural part of Denmark, is DKK 19.9 in the HEC model. This is 14 per cent lower than the estimate of DKK 22.6 as the MNL model suggest. Furthermore, the results reveal that men are willing to pay DKK 2.9 less for an outdoor produced chicken than women are. Highly educated people have a WTP for outdoor produced chicken that amounts to DKK 24.6, which is approximately DKK 4.6 more than low educated people are willing to pay. For the next lowest to the highest income groups the WTP lies in the range of DKK 16.2 to 20.8, with the highest amount for the households with the highest incomes. People living in the cities have a WTP for outdoor produced chicken that is about DKK 3.5 less than the amount that people living in other areas are willing to pay.

When the respondents are given information about the production method, the WTP for our reference person, increases from DKK 19.9 to DKK 28.3, i.e. with 42 percent. For men, the increase in the WTP is smaller and amounts to approximately 14 per cent. After they have got information about the production method, the men are willing to pay about DKK 19.3 for an outdoor produced chicken. For the different income groups we see that the WTP increases as the income level becomes higher. As the table reveal, the WTP is DKK 38.8 for the next lowest income group and DKK 42.2 for the highest income group. For the next highest income group the WTP increases to DKK 41.8, or with 158 percent compared to the situation without information about the production method.

Although, there is no significantly different effect on the WTP for people living in the cities and households with children, there is an increase in their WTP for outdoor produced chicken after they got information about the production methods. The WTP for people living in the cities and households with children are DKK 29.9 and 24.6, respectively, i.e. an increase with 78 and 31 percent.

Table 7. Estimated WTP (in DKK) from the multinomial and HEC mixed logit model

Variables	MNL	HEC Mixed logit	s.e.	WTP per kg
Outdoor produced chicken	22.64	19.93	3.77	15.33
Male o.p.	21.04	16.98	3.92	13.06
High education o.p.	25.30	24.58	3.94	18.91
Other education o.p.	17.19	18.31	4.08	14.08
Next lowest income category o.p.	20.85	18.56	4.45	14.28
Next highest income category o.p.	18.59	16.20	4.21	12.46
Highest income category o.p.	22.35	20.77	4.11	15.98
Living in city o.p.	19.08	16.48	3.94	12.68
Household with children o.p.	20.73	18.79	3.90	14.45
Outdoor produced chicken with information	28.03	28.30	5.25	21.77
Male o.p. with info	19.61	19.30	5.83	14.85
Next lowest income category o.p. with info	39.70	38.83	7.28	29.87
Next highest income category o.p. with info	42.59	41.75	6.88	32.12
Highest income category o.p. with info	43.71	42.15	6.70	32.42
Living in city o.p. with info	29.49	29.22	5.65	22.48
Household with children o.p. with info	24.87	24.60	5.69	18.92

Note: o.p. = outdoor produced. Low education = nine-year (compulsory) school. High education = upper secondary or university degree. Other education = vocational education. City = people living in a city with more than 50000 inhabitants. The standard error has been calculated by the Delta method.

The last column of Table 7 contains the marginal WTP for outdoor produced chicken expressed in DKK per kg, for the HEC mixed logit model. As can be seen from Table 3, the price premium for an outdoor (organic) produced chicken in Denmark amounts to $56.64 - 32.11 = \text{DKK } 24.53$ per kg. Without the extra information about the production method for chicken, the mean WTP per kg for outdoor production is less than the price premium for outdoor produced chicken for all household categories, which also explains the low budget share, of 0.8 percent, for outdoor produced chicken, see Table 3. The highest mean marginal WTP for outdoor produced chicken is found for people with the highest education and amounts to about DKK 18.9 per kg.

However, from Table 7 we see that there is a large market potential for outdoor produced chicken when the consumers are informed about the production method. Although, men and households with children still have a rather low WTP for outdoor produced chicken, we see that households in the three highest income groups have a marginal WTP for outdoor produced chicken that is higher than the price premium of DKK 24.5. Thus a rather large fraction of the Danish households would be willing to buy outdoor produced chicken at the prevailing market price, if they were informed about the production method, and the market share could be increased.

To conclude the findings about the WTP for outdoor produced chicken, we see that information has a major impact on the WTP. This is apparent from the results from the choice experiment where the respondents are given information about the production methods, but also from the fact the people with the highest education, which may be assumed to have the best knowledge about the production method, have the highest WTP per kg for outdoor produced chicken before the respondents were given information about the production method.

The results also indicate that once the respondents/consumers are given information about the production method, the wealthier people are the more do they care about animal welfare. Thus, economic progress is likely to have a positive effect on animal welfare, if the consumers are given information about the production methods.

6. Conclusions and discussion

In this paper we have studied the WTP for animal welfare with respect to the production method, indoor and outdoor production, for chicken. To elicit the WTP for outdoor produced chicken, and the impact of information about the production methods, we have applied a choice experiment. In the estimation of the WTP for animal welfare, i.e. for outdoor produced chicken, we have used a heteroskedastic error-component mixed logit model that allows for heteroscedasticity over individuals and correlation over the choice alternatives.

Compared to the estimation results from a multinomial logit model the estimated parameters in the HEC model are generally higher, in absolute value. The WTP is, however, found to be lower when we control for heteroscedasticity and allow for correlation over the choice alternatives. This suggests that the MNL model will give biased parameter estimates and an erroneous value of the WTP, for the sample used in this study. Generally the estimated WTP for outdoor produced chicken is 5 percent higher in the MNL model compared to the HEC mixed model, and 10 percent higher if we just consider the WTP for outdoor produced chicken without information about the production method.

The results also indicate that there are differences in the WTP for outdoor produced chicken for the different household categories that we consider in this study. Among other things, the results suggest that men have a significantly lower WTP for outdoor produced chicken than women, while people with a high education have a significantly higher WTP than low educated people. Furthermore the results indicate that people living in the cities have a lower WTP for outdoor produced chicken, compared to people living in the countryside and less populated areas. One explanation, to the finding that highly educated people and people living outside the bigger cities, have a higher WTP for outdoor produced chicken might be that these persons are more inform about the production methods for chicken.

As the results suggest there is a welfare gain to the respondents/consumers, in the form of a higher WTP (and a higher demand) for outdoor produced chicken, when they received information about the production method. This implies that it would be beneficial to the society to provide information to the consumers about the production methods for chicken, if the cost of informing the consumers is lower than the welfare gain. This can either be done by public information campaigns, or by campaigns undertaken by consumer or producer groups. Although the results suggest a very large gain of providing information to the consumers, one should have in mind that the provided information for outdoor production was presented as very positive, which might explain part of the large WTP.

However, all consumers will not be equally affected by the information. The results indicate that men are significantly less affected by the information than women are, measured in terms of WTP for outdoor produced chicken. Using the same kind of measure, we find that people in the lowest income grope are significantly less affected by the information than people in the higher income groups. Although, the effect is not significant on a five percent significance level, the results suggest that people living in the cities are more affected by the information than people living in less populated areas. Households with children are also found to be less effected by the information than households without children.

Finally, we could conclude that there is a large market potential for outdoor produced chicken when the consumers are informed about the production method. Although, men and households with children have a rather low WTP for outdoor produced chicken, we still see that consumers

on average have a marginal WTP for outdoor produced chicken that is higher than the price premium of DKK 24.5. Thus a rather large fraction of the Danish households would be willing to buy outdoor produced chicken at the prevailing market price, if they were informed about the production method, and possibilities of increasing market shares of outdoor produced chickens would exist. Further research into the coherence of the consumers' WTP and the market price would be highly valuable.

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The Impact of Tax Reforms Designed to Encourage a Healthier Grain Consumption^{*}

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Abstract

In this paper we simulate the effects of taxes on products and/or nutrients aimed at encouraging a healthier grain consumption. To carry out the analysis we use a rich data set on household consumption of grain products, combined with information about the nutritional content of the products. We estimate behavioural parameters that are used to simulate the impact on the average household of different types of tax reforms; among other things subsidies on commodities particularly rich in fibre and subsidies of the fibre density in grain products. Our results suggest that to direct the fibre intake of the average household towards nutritional recommendations, reforms with a substantial impact on consumer prices are required. Our results also imply that subsidizing the fibre density is more cost-efficient than reducing the VAT on commodities rich in fibre. Regardless of the type of subsidy imposed, the increase in the fibre intake is accompanied by unwanted increases in nutrients that are often over consumed; fat, saturated fat, salt and sugar and added sugar. Funding the subsidies by taxing these nutrients, or less healthy commodities, prevents such developments. Results from such reforms are also presented in this study.

Key words: Consumer economics, food, health, taxation

JEL classification: D12, H23, I18

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the effects of tax reforms aimed at directing the fibre intake from grain consumption towards nutrition recommendations provided by public authorities.

Over the last few decades, technological change has contributed to advances both in food production and transportation, leading to a more cost-efficient food production and higher availability of processed and pre-prepared foods. As a result, welfare has been enhanced by falling relative prices of food. The other side of the coin is that the modern diet, combined with a more sedentary life-style, has proven to be an important determinant of a number of severe illnesses, such as several types of cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, dental caries and also overweight and obesity, themselves major risk factors of many of the illnesses mentioned. Cancer and cardiovascular diseases account for almost two thirds of the total disease burden in Europe, and poor nutrition is estimated to cause about one third of the deaths caused by cancer and one third of cardiovascular diseases (WHO, 2004). Conservative estimates suggest that poor nutrition is the cause of 4.6 percent of total losses of years of healthy lives in the European Union, and that obesity and overweight accounts for another 3.7 percent (National Institute of Public Health, 1997).

The negative health effects caused by modern food consumption also impose considerable burdens on health care budgets and, hence, on tax payers. In the U.S., direct costs on health care from poor nutrition and too little exercising are estimated to account for 7 percent of personal health care expenditures (Kenkel and Manning, 1999). In Germany, diet-related diseases have been estimated to account for 30 percent of total costs of health care, including both direct and indirect costs (Kohlmeier et al., 1993). Obesity and overweight alone have been estimated to account for direct costs on the Swedish health care system of 3.6 billion SEK (Persson et al. 2004), and indirect costs of 12.4 billion SEK (Persson et al. 2005). Should current trends prevail, diet-related costs on society will increase even further. The externalities imposed on tax payers could justify government intervention aimed at encouraging a healthier food consumption.¹

¹ It has also been argued by some, though, that diet related diseases might be a result of externalities that individuals impose on themselves. For a comprehensive review of, among other things, externalities that could justify policy interventions to improve the dietary quality, see Strnad (2004).

An important improvement of the dietary quality of modern consumers would be an increased intake of dietary fibre. A high intake of dietary fibre has several health promoting effects, such as helping to keep a healthy body weight (Burton-Freeman, 2000, Liu et al., 2003), controlling and preventing heart diseases (Liu, 1999, Mann, 2002), diabetes (Brand-Miller et al., 2003, Schulze et al., 2004, Willet et al., 2002), colon cancer (Larsson et al., 2005) and even gum disease (Merchant et al., 2006). Due to the positive health effects from a diet rich in fibre, the Swedish National Food Administration (SLV) recommends that the average Swedish consumer greatly increases his/her fibre intake. The average woman is recommended to increase her intake by a minimum of 56 percent, whereas the average man is recommended to increase his intake by a minimum of 38 percent.²

Grain products are, along with fruit and vegetables, the most important source of dietary fibre. Grain products are also the food group that contributes the most to our daily energy intake, as well as perhaps contains the greatest variety of food products.³ Whole grain products in particular are considered to be part of a healthy diet, whereas white, highly refined grain products are often classified as so called “empty calories”, food that is energy dense and at the same time low in nutritional content.

The nutrition recommendations stated above provide us with the overall policy objective of increasing the fibre intake from grain consumption by a minimum of 38 percent.⁴ To translate this into recommendations on grain product consumption, the SLV recommends that the average person (a) doubles her overall intake of bread and breakfast cereals, while (b) ensuring that half of the bread and breakfast cereal consumption carry the healthy label

² The average woman consumes 112 grams of dietary fibre per week, whereas the average man consumes 126 grams per week (Becker and Pearson, 2002). Recommended weekly levels are at 175-245 grams of dietary fibre for both men and women (SNR, 1997). To reach the lower bound of the recommended interval, the average woman and man have to increase their intake of dietary fibre by 56 percent and 38 percent respectively.

³ According to statistics collected by the Swedish Board of Agriculture, the consumption of grain products makes up around a third of the total energy intake for the average Swedish consumer, per day. In 2003, grain products made up 18 percent of total food expenditures, while food expenditures made up 12 percent of total household expenditures (Statistics Sweden, Household Budget Survey, 2003).

⁴ Worth mentioning is that the recommended increase in the fibre intake is general and considers all food groups, i.e. is not specific for grain consumption. However, assuming that policy makers might want to encourage consumer to increase the fibre intake from all product groups by the same proportion, we set the policy objective at a minimum of a 38 percent increase in the fibre intake from grain products, for simplicity for the average consumer, i.e. regardless of gender.

certified by the SLV; the “Keyhole” (SNÖ 2003). The Keyhole is a healthy label certified to particularly healthy food products.⁵

To carry out the analysis, we estimate a demand system for grain products based on two micro data sets; household expenditure data on grain products from GfK Sweden, a private market research company, and household expenditure data on soft bread from Statistics Sweden. The parameters estimated in the demand system are thereafter used to simulate the results of tax reforms aimed at directing grain consumption towards the above policy objectives. Policy makers might consider taxes or subsidies either on the commodity or nutrient level. We therefore simulate the results from reforms entailing subsidies of Keyhole labelled products, as well as reforms containing a subsidy of the fibre density of the product. We also simulate the results of revenue neutral reforms, where these subsidies are funded by commodity taxes on goods, or excise duties on nutrients, that are often over consumed by Western food consumers.

Even though there are no specific recommendations for grain products on the intake of nutrients that the Swedish consumer often over consumes; fat (particularly saturated fat), salt and sugar (particularly added sugar), the health of the average consumer is unlikely to improve if the intake of these nutrients increases, be it from grain consumption or consumption of other types of food. Total fat consumption of the average consumer amounts to 33-35 percent of total energy consumed, exceeding the recommended 30 percent of the daily intake. This is mainly due to the intake of saturated fat being higher than recommended (Becker and Pearson, 2002, and SNR, 1997). The average consumption of salt, excluding added table salt to prepared meals, is more than 40 percent above recommended levels for women and almost 80 percent above recommended levels for men. However, it is not an easy task for consumers to avoid over consuming salt, since most products available in the Swedish food market contain high levels of salt (SNÖ, 2003). As for added sugar, the intake from the average consumer is right on the recommended level (Becker and Pearson, 2002, and SNR, 2005).

⁵ If breakfast cereals fulfil the following criteria, it is certified with the Keyhole by the SLV: fat content: max 7g/100g, sugar content: max 13g/100g, sodium content: max 500mg/100g and fibre: min 1,9g/100 kcal. For soft bread, the criteria that need to be fulfilled are fat content: max 7g/100g, sugar content: max 10g/100g, sodium content: max 600mg/100g and fibre: min 1,9g/100 kcal, whereas the certification criteria for hard bread are fat content: max 8g/100g, sodium content: max 600mg/100g and fibre: min 1,9g/100 kcal.

There is a growing theoretical literature on the effects of economic policy instruments designed to improve health (see e.g. O'Donoghue and Rabin, 2003, and Aronsson and Thunström, 2006), but the empirical research on the subject is very limited. Dejgaard Jensen and Smed (2007) conclude that it is less costly to achieve an increase in the fibre intake from subsidizing the fibre content directly, compared to subsidizing products rich in fibre. Smed et al. (2007) find that subsidies of fibre, or products rich in fibre, give rise to unwanted increases in the intake of less healthy nutrients, though. Chouinard et al. (2007) analyse the effect of imposing ad valorem taxes on the fat percentage in milk products and conclude that these taxes have marginal effects on the intake of fat. They also find the tax to be highly regressive. Finally, Kuchler et al. (2005) find that ad valorem taxes on salty snack foods that range from 0.4 – 30 percent would have small effects on consumer behaviour and the dietary quality.

There are some countries where small, additional, taxes on particularly unhealthy foods, such as soft drinks, snacks or junk food, have been imposed (Australia, Canada, Finland, Norway and the U.S., for example). However, taxes imposed are generally aimed at generating public revenues, rather than affecting consumer behaviour (Jacobson and Brownell, 2000). The fact that countries have already imposed differentiated VAT rates, based on the health status of foods, further enhances the importance of empirical research on the effects of such policy measures.

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study analyzing the effects from policy instruments that are designed to direct consumption towards specific nutritional recommendations. This paper therefore provides unique and valuable insights into the impact of tax schemes that could be used to improve the quality of the modern diet, or even attain nutritional recommendations.

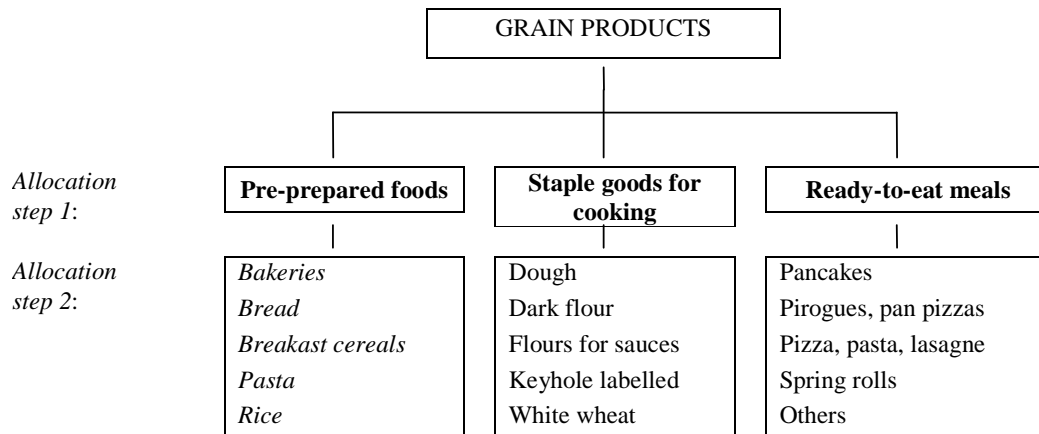
The outline of the paper is as follows. In Sections 2 and 3, we present the modelling framework and data used to estimate the demand system for grain products. Section 4 contains the estimation results. In Section 5, the simulations are described and Section 6 contains the simulation results. Finally, Section 7 summarizes and concludes.

2. Modelling Framework

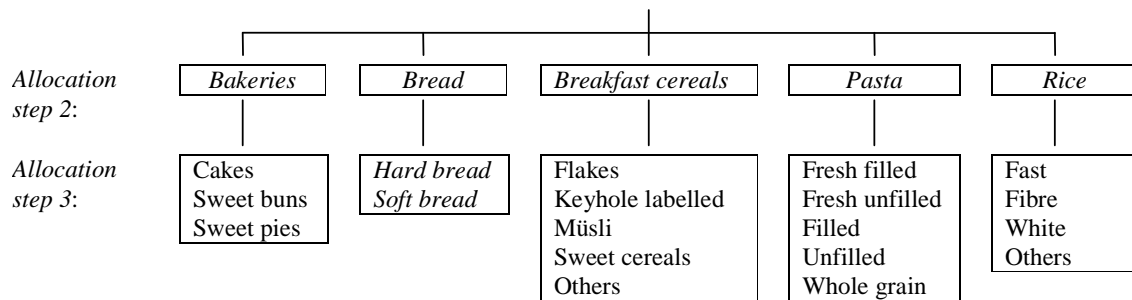
We believe that the decision process can be illustrated by Figure 1, where households allocate expenditures over grain products in multiple steps.

As illustrated by Figure 1, at the highest level in the decision process, the household allocates its (total) resources for grain expenditures between three broad product categories; pre-prepared foods, ready-to-eat-meals and staple goods for cooking. When the household has determined the expenditures for each category, it decides how to allocate these expenditures between the product groups within each category.

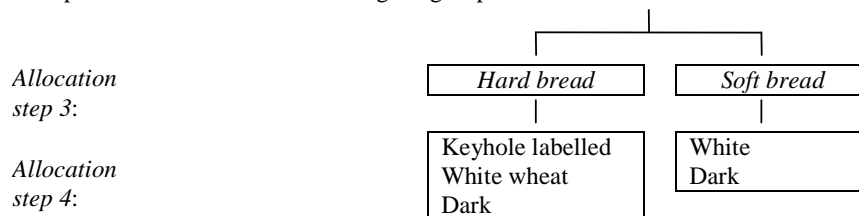
Figure 1: The decision process



Groups in *italic* contain the following subgroups:



Groups in *italic* contain the following subgroups:



2.1 Estimating the demand system

To model the demand for grain products we use the microeconomic data sets described in Section 3 below, and the multi stage allocation process shown in Figure 1. Consumer demand patterns typically found in micro-data sets vary considerably across households with different household characteristics and levels of income. As indicated in Banks et al. (1997) expenditures on some goods are non-linear in total expenditure (or income) while some are linear. Although we cannot observe the households total consumption of grain products (some are consumed outside the home in e.g. restaurants and school refectories), there are reasons to believe that the relative intake of different grain products is well reflected in the data set. This suggests that a demand system based on budget shares is preferred to a demand system based on quantities or expenditures for the goods.

A flexible functional form of consumer preferences, based on budget shares and with the capacity to handle non-linear expenditure effects, is the quadratic extension (Banks et al. 1997) to Deaton and Muellbauer's (1980) almost ideal demand system (AIDS). We therefore use the quadratic AIDS (QAIDS) model as our basic model specification. We take into account the differences in consumption patterns between household categories, by adding intercept and slope parameters in the budget share equations of the demand system. As we can not observe the households consumption of other goods we have to assume that household preferences are weakly separable in grain consumption and other goods. To reduce the number of estimated parameters we also assume that household preferences are weakly separable in ready to eat meals, staple goods for cooking and pre-prepared foods. The full decision process and the separability assumptions that follow from this process are shown in Figure 1.

We therefore estimate a demand system where the allocation decision is made in several steps. The preferences are characterised in such a way that household h makes decisions on how much of grain products to consume conditional on various household characteristics, \mathbf{d} . Household h 's budget share for good k , s_k^h , in the first allocation stage then takes the form:

$$s_k^h = \alpha_k(\mathbf{d}^h) + \sum_l \gamma_{kl} \ln p_l^h + \beta_k(\mathbf{d}^h) \times \ln \left[x^h / a^h(p, \mathbf{d}) \right] + \left(\delta_k(\mathbf{d}^h) / b^h(p) \right) \times \left(\ln \left[x^h / a^h(p, \mathbf{d}) \right] \right)^2 \quad k = 1, \dots, n \quad (1)$$

where p_l^h is the price of good l , x^h , is household h 's total expenditure on the $k = 1, \dots, n$ grain products, \mathbf{d} is a vector of household characteristics, and $\ln a^h(\cdot)$ and $\ln b^h(\cdot)$ are defined by

$$\ln a^h(p, \mathbf{d}) = \sum_l \alpha_l(\mathbf{d}^h) \ln p_l^h + \frac{1}{2} \sum_k \sum_l \gamma_{kl} \ln p_k^h \ln p_l^h \quad (2)$$

$$\ln b^h(p, \mathbf{d}) = \sum_{k=1}^n \beta_k(\mathbf{d}^h) \ln p_k^h \quad (3)$$

The household characteristics included in the \mathbf{d} vector of dummy variables are; a single woman with children, single man with and without children, two adults without children, two adults with one child, two adults with two children, two adults with three or more children, three or more adults, part time worker, student and pensioner. The reference person is a full time working single woman without children. A person is considered a child up to the age of 16.

The demand system for the second stage of expenditure allocation has the same functional form as (1), and can be written as

$$s_{(k)i}^h = \alpha_{(k)i}(\mathbf{d}^h) + \sum_j \gamma_{(k)ij} \ln p_{(k)j}^h + \beta_{(k)i}(\mathbf{d}^h) \times \ln \left[x_k^h / a_k^h(p, \mathbf{d}) \right] \\ + \left(\delta_{(k)i}(\mathbf{d}^h) / b_k^h(p) \right) \times \left(\ln \left[x_k^h / a_k^h(p, \mathbf{d}) \right] \right)^2 \quad i = 1, \dots, m \quad (4)$$

where $s_{(k)i}^h$ is household h 's budget share for good i within group k , $p_{(k)j}$ is the price of good j in group k , and x_k^h is the total expenditures that household h has allocated to the goods in group k in the first stage allocation problem. This procedure extends in a natural way to similar sub-demand systems when we have three stage and four stage allocation of expenditures on grain products.

2.2 Econometric Considerations

In the data, there is a large number of households not having purchased some of the goods. For example, for fresh filled pasta and fresh unfilled pasta the occurrence of zero expenditure is as high as 92 and 83 percent. The model traditionally used to account for censoring in commodity demand is the Tobit model (Tobin 1958 and Amemiya 1974). However, the underlying assumption in such models⁶ is that the same stochastic process determines both the value of continuous observations of the dependent variable and the discrete switch at zero. That is, a zero realisation for the dependent variable represents a corner solution. This clearly restricts other possible determinants of the zero observations, such as infrequencies of purchases or misreporting in commodity demand. Such restrictions have been recognised in the past by, for example, Deaton and Irish (1984) and Blundell and Meghir (1987).

Whether the zeros are a result of infrequencies of purchases or a result of non consumption is difficult to say. To allow for infrequencies of purchases, Blundell and Meghir (1987) presented a bivariate alternative to the Tobit model with separate processes determining the censoring rule and the continuous observations. It is also reasonable to assume that there are separate processes determining the zero-one decision of buying a good and the decision of how many units to actually buy. Therefore, to get consistent parameter estimates we follow Heckman's (1979) two-step procedure and estimate separate probit and truncated regression models for each commodity group.

To simplify the simulations, we follow Blundell, Pashardes and Weber (1993) and use household specific Stone price index, $\ln P^h = \sum_k s_k^h \ln p_k$, instead of the translog form price index, $\ln a^h(p, d)$, and set the price aggregator, $\ln b^h(p, d)$, equal to one. The estimated demand system for household h can therefore be written as

$$\begin{aligned}
 s_k^h &= \alpha_k(\mathbf{d}^h) + \left(\sum_l \gamma_{kl} \ln p_l^h \right) + (\beta_k(\mathbf{d}^h)) \times \ln \left[x^h / P^h \right] & k = 1, \dots, n \\
 &+ (\delta_k(\mathbf{d}^h)) \times \left(\ln \left[x^h / P^h \right] \right)^2 + \varphi_k \hat{\lambda}_k^h + \varepsilon_k^h & h = 1, \dots, r
 \end{aligned} \tag{5}$$

⁶ i.e., the Tobit1 model, Amemiya (1984).

where ε_k^h is an error term reflecting unobserved taste variation and r denotes the subsample for which $s_k^h > 0$. $\hat{\lambda}_k^h = \phi(\hat{\psi}_k \mathbf{z}_k^h) / \Phi(\hat{\psi}_k \mathbf{z}_k^h)$ is the estimated inverse Mills ratio, where $\phi(\cdot)$ and $\Phi(\cdot)$ are the probability density and cumulative distribution functions of the standard normal distribution, with $\hat{\psi}_k$ estimated in a first step from a univariate probit model for group k (see e.g., Leung and Yu 1996). The explanatory variables included in \mathbf{z}_k are the prices of the products in equation k , the household income and the same set of dummy variables as those contained in the \mathbf{d} vector. Although the notation in equation (4) refers to the demand for the k goods in the first allocation stage, the same procedure has been used in the estimation of all sub demand systems, see Figure 1.

The expenditure system has a set of within-equation and cross-equation restrictions that we impose. These are homogeneity, which gives rise only to within-equation restrictions, and symmetry, which gives rise to cross-equation restrictions. Homogeneity can thus be imposed in a first stage by estimating single equations. Since the number of observations will differ for different goods after the selection of $s_k^h > 0$, we use a minimum distance estimator (see Ferguson 1958) to impose the cross-equation restrictions in a second stage. If estimating the regression system simultaneously, we would lose information, as only households with $s_k^h > 0, \forall k$ would be included in the regression.

Let $\hat{\mu}$ be a $q \times 1$ vector of unrestricted parameters, and let θ be a vector of symmetry-restricted parameters of dimension $p \times 1$. Then under the null $\theta = g(\hat{\mu})$, where g is a known function and $p \leq q$, the symmetry restricted parameter estimates can be obtained by minimising

$$\Psi(\theta) = [\hat{\mu} - \theta]' \begin{bmatrix} \hat{\Sigma}_{\mu_1} & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & \ddots & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & \hat{\Sigma}_{\mu_n} \end{bmatrix}^{-1} [\hat{\mu} - \theta] \quad (6)$$

where $\hat{\Sigma}_{\mu_1}$ is an estimate of the covariance matrix of $\hat{\mu}_1$, where the subscript $1, \dots, n$ refers to the equation for a specific good within the demand system.⁷ The minimised value of $\Psi(\theta)$ follows a chi-square distribution with degrees of freedom equal to the number of restrictions. The consistency of the minimum distance estimator simply requires that the restrictions are correct and that $\hat{\mu}$ is a consistent estimator. For the linear case the restrictions simplify to $\theta = K\mu$, where K is a $q \times p$ matrix. Instead of specifying a particular form of the heteroscedasticity we employ White's (1980) approach to calculate the standard errors.

3. Data

To perform the analysis, we use three data sources. To estimate the demand system for grain products, we mainly use market research data from GfK Sweden. However, the GfK data lacks detailed information on the composition of the soft bread, and is therefore combined with household expenditure data (HUT) on bread purchases from Statistics Sweden. Finally, we match household purchases with their product contents, by using nutritional information from the SLV nutrition database.

The GfK data is based on weekly diary recordings of grain product purchases. To reduce the prevalence of non-purchases (zeros) in the sample, we aggregate the data to a yearly level.⁸ The data contains information on annual retail purchases of bakeries, bread, breakfast cereals, frozen and fresh ready-to-eat food, pasta, rice as well as flours. The information on products purchased by the GfK households is detailed and includes type, price and size of the products bought. An exception here is soft bread, for which the GfK households are only requested to state if they have purchased the product (i.e. "soft bread"), leaving out all other product specific information, with the exception of total expenditures. To gain more information on the type of bread purchased, we therefore use the 1996 household expenditure data (HUT) from Statistics Sweden, which provides information on the amounts of types of bread (white or dark) purchased, as well as a price index for bread prices.

⁷ The minimum distance estimator is just applied to price parameters, which imply that the other parameters in the demand system will not be affected.

⁸ Simulation results in Leung and Yu (1996) show that the parameter bias and parameter squared error increases as the degree of censoring increases (i.e., the smaller the proportions of uncensored observations are).

In the GfK household panel, 1336 households have purchased grain products for the full year of 2003 and are hence contained in the sample used for the analysis. The sample of households is satisfyingly representative for the population, even though pensioners are slightly over represented in the data. The sample of households in the data from Statistics Sweden consists of 1104 households.

3.1 Consumption patterns of the average household

Table 3.1 shows descriptive statistics on the budget shares for the sample. *Pre-prepared foods* is the dominating group of grain consumption, with the average household devoting more than 80 percent of its total grain expenditures to this group, while the rest of the grain budget is fairly evenly allocated between *ready-to-eat meals* and *staple goods for cooking*. *Bread* and *breakfast cereals* are, in turn, the dominating groups within *pre-prepared foods*, with 66 percent of total pre-prepared food expenditures for the average household being devoted to bread and 17 percent being allocated to breakfast cereals. Within the bread group, households on average allocate 88 percent of their expenditures to soft bread. Within *soft bread*, the average household allocates its expenditures fairly evenly over dark and white bread. Since we are not able to single out the Keyhole labelled soft bread, we will use the dark soft bread as a proxy for Keyhole labelled soft bread in the analysis. Noteworthy is that within the *hard bread* group, *Keyhole labelled hard bread* is clearly dominating. As for breakfast cereals, most of the expenditures on this group is allocated to *flakes* and *müsli*.⁹

⁹ It should be noted that the selection of breakfast cereal products into the Keyhole labelled group is based on the 2005 criteria for Keyhole certification (LIVSFS, 2005:9), whereas the expenditure data is from 2003. The 2005 criteria are stricter than those prevailing in 2003 (required minimum levels of fat, salt and sugar are lower, whereas required levels of dietary fibre are higher). For many products, maximum required levels of salt and sugar did not even exist in 2003 (SLVFS, 1989:2). It should therefore be expected that some of the products found in the müsli group did fulfill the 2003 Keyhole criteria, and that today, product contents has been revised so as to fulfill the 2005 criteria. The budget share for Keyhole labelled breakfast cereals is therefore likely to be understated. On the other hand; using dark soft bread as a proxy for Keyhole labelled soft bread in the analysis means that the share of Keyhole labelled soft bread is likely to be overstated, since all dark soft bread is not Keyhole labelled.

Table 3.1. Budget shares of the average household, at different allocation steps

Group	Product	Budget share	Group	Product	Budget share	Group	Product	Budget share
<i>First allocation stage</i>			<i>Third allocation stage</i>			<i>Fourth allocation stage</i>		
<i>Grain purchases</i>	Pre-prepared foods	0.839	<i>Bakeries</i>	Cakes	0.734	<i>Hard bread</i>	Keyhole labelled	0.786
	Staple goods for cooking	0.079		Sweet buns	0.176		White wheat	0.193
	Ready-to-eat meals	0.082		Sweet pies	0.090		Dark	0.021
	<i>Sum</i>	1.000		<i>Sum</i>	1.000		<i>Sum</i>	1.000
<i>Second allocation stage</i>								
<i>Pre-prepared foods</i>	Bakeries	0.024	<i>Breakfast Cereals</i>	Flakes	0.411	<i>Soft Bread</i>	Dark	0.483
	Bread	0.657		Müsli	0.362		White	0.517
	Breakfast cereals	0.173		Keyhole labelled	0.035		<i>Sum</i>	1.000
	Pasta	0.079		Sweet cereals	0.141			
	Rice	0.067		Others	0.050			
	<i>Sum</i>	1.000		<i>Sum</i>	1.000			
<i>Staple goods for cooking</i>	Dark flour	0.085	<i>Pasta</i>	Unfilled	0.853			
	Flour for sauces	0.133		Fresh unfilled	0.084			
	Keyhole labelled flour	0.070		Whole grain	0.010			
	White wheat flour	0.679		Fresh filled	0.030			
	Dough	0.033		Filled	0.024			
	<i>Sum</i>	1.000		<i>Sum</i>	1.000			
<i>Ready-to-eat meals</i>	Pancakes	0.073	<i>Rice</i>	Fast	0.078			
	Pirogues ^a	0.236		Fibre	0.066			
	Pizza ^b	0.556		White	0.681			
	Spring rolls	0.076		Others	0.175			
	Others	0.060		<i>Sum</i>	1.000			
	<i>Sum</i>	1.000						
			<i>Bread</i>	Hard bread	0.119			
				Soft bread	0.881			
				<i>Sum</i>	1.000			

Note: ^a The group pirogues also contain pan pizza. ^b The group pizza also contains pasta and lasagne.

3.2 Product characteristics

Food products purchased by the GfK and HUT households are matched with their product contents, by using the information on nutritional values in the nutrient database kept by the

SLV. The level of detail in the GfK data allows for matching a product of a specific brand (here called “brand product”) with its product content. The brand products are thereafter divided into somewhat more aggregated products (for example; all dry, white wheat pasta of different brands are aggregated into a product; unfilled pasta). The product content is the weighted average of the contents of the brand products, where the shares of purchases of different brands are used as weights. The nutrient contents that have been matched with the products are energy density (kilo joule per 100 gram product), as well as the density of fat, saturated fat, sugar, added sugar, salt and, fibre, all measured in grams per 100 gram product. For convenience, we will refer to fat, saturated fat, sugar, added sugar and salt as the “unhealthy” nutrients, due to the fact that the average household is likely to over consume these nutrients. For underweight individuals an increased intake of these nutrients will be health enhancing, though, salt perhaps being the exception. Descriptive statistics of the product contents is given by Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2. The average nutritional content in product groups, per 100 gram product

	KJ	Total fat	Saturated fat	Sugar	Added sugar	Salt	Fibre
Bakeries							
Cakes	1631.71	24.29	6.33	27.89	25.35	164.26	2.25
Sweet buns	1633.77	20.12	8.23	11.64	6.32	267.47	2.12
Sweet pies	1084.16	13.62	6.21	17.23	13.45	133.76	1.60
Bread							
<i>Hard bread</i>							
Keyhole labelled	1359.82	2.61	0.38	1.73	0.43	470.20	14.29
White wheat	1636.54	7.41	1.79	4.52	0.42	417.19	5.38
Dark	1425.18	3.98	0.99	3.56	0.29	540.53	11.78
<i>Soft bread</i>							
Dark	1025.82	3.07	0.55	6.03	0.31	358.77	6.47
White	1160.12	4.11	0.81	4.07	0.21	404.35	3.62
Breakfast cereals							
Flakes	1568.93	1.95	0.35	13.46	10.12	895.30	4.23
Keyhole labelled	1448.28	3.67	0.51	2.65	1.73	199.00	9.88
Müsli	1578.77	9.26	3.41	23.37	15.14	256.96	10.80
Sweet cereals	1614.75	1.26	0.25	38.39	28.86	467.08	2.56
Others	1567.01	4.30	1.24	21.44	16.60	368.64	6.21
Flours & dough							
Dark flour	1417.67	2.33	0.28	2.74	0.43	2.64	4.62
Flour for sauces	1407.06	0.69	0.09	1.13	0.51	4.48	3.03
Keyhole labelled flour	1344.52	3.33	0.48	1.24	0.65	3.41	10.89
White wheat flour	1504.68	1.88	0.26	1.53	0.26	0.80	3.60
Dough	2340.20	39.51	17.08	1.10	0.12	309.44	1.60

Pasta							
Fresh filled	708.24	9.15	4.07	0.98	0.14	522.37	0.83
Fresh unfilled	877.06	1.61	0.42	1.01	0.10	297.63	1.78
Filled	767.16	9.90	4.38	1.03	0.18	569.30	1.03
Unfilled	528.50	0.50	0.05	0.20	0.10	1.00	1.12
Whole grain	473.30	0.52	0.06	0.17	0.10	0.10	3.04
Ready-to-eat meals							
Pancakes	807.95	8.81	3.73	4.37	0.01	331.15	0.77
Pirogues, pan pizza	1541.16	23.43	10.11	1.82	0.31	533.81	1.36
Pizza, pasta, lasagne	910.06	9.73	4.14	2.20	0.20	472.06	1.43
Spring rolls	896.20	10.80	2.94	2.80	0.20	510.00	1.20
Others	1024.73	13.26	5.88	2.07	0.25	462.82	1.36
Rice							
Fast	490.91	0.30	0.07	0.32	0.28	270.07	0.50
Fibre	443.54	0.70	0.18	0.49	0.32	2.62	1.12
White	515.25	0.34	0.10	0.15	0.15	307.07	0.48
Others	520.56	0.29	0.10	0.09	0.11	171.77	0.36

As expected, bakery products have the highest energy density of all product groups in the data, but the individual product with the highest energy density turns out to be white wheat hard bread. The highest fat content is found in dough (almost 40 grams per 100 gram), which is mainly due to this product almost exclusively consisting of butter dough. Also cakes, sweet buns and pirogues and pan pizzas contain high amounts of fat per 100 grams (24, 20 and 23 grams per 100 gram, respectively). The product with the highest content of fibre per 100 gram is Keyhole labelled hard bread, with more than 14 grams of fibre per 100 gram product.¹⁰

3.3 Dietary quality of the average household

We measure the quality of the diet with the density of the nutrients in the household diet, i.e. the grams of nutrients per 100 gram product. Descriptive statistics of the dietary quality for the average household is found in column 1 of Table 6.1 below. It seems that the density of unhealthy nutrients in the average grain diet, such as fat and sugar, is relatively low. Table 6.1 also shows that the share of Keyhole labelled bread and breakfast cereals, of total bread and breakfast cereals, purchased by the average household amounts to 47 percent, whereas the share of bakeries and ready-to-eat meals, of total grain purchases, amounts to 3 percent.

¹⁰ Noteworthy from Table 3.2 is that the product dark hard bread on *average* fulfills the criteria for Keyhole labelling. However, none of the individual products in this product group fulfills these criteria and, hence, they are not included in the Keyhole labelled group.

4. Estimation results

F -tests indicate that the household specific variables in the β and δ functions, in the original specification, are not significantly different from zero. We have therefore reduced the number of estimated parameters in the final specification of the model and excluded the household specific parameters from these functions. The final estimation results show the importance of quadratic terms in real expenditures as well as the importance of controlling for non-consumption. In 35 out of 42 cases (and for all of the equations at the lowest level of aggregation, except for white wheat flour and cakes) are the estimated parameters for the non-linear expenditure variable significantly different from zero, at a 5 percent significance level. Using the same significance level, we find that 22 percent of the estimated parameters, controlling for censoring and non-consumption (i.e., the variable related to the inverse Mills ratio), are significantly different from zero.

Likelihood ratio tests for homogeneity generally suggest that this restriction can not be rejected. Chi-square tests indicate that the symmetry restrictions are rejected for only 2 of the 9 estimated demand systems, at a 5 percent significance level. The symmetry restrictions are rejected for the sub demand systems for pasta and bread, with P -values 0.02 and 0.00, respectively. The lowest P -value for the chi-square test for symmetry in the other sub demand is 0.18. The adjusted R -square is generally high and lies in the range 0.2 to 0.6. Overall the model fit is found to be good.

The estimation results are, however, easiest summarised by the elasticities. For each person or household the uncompensated price elasticity for a product within each separate demand system is given by

$$e_{fg} = \gamma_{fg} / s_f - (\beta_f + 2\delta_f \ln m) \times (s_f / s_g) - \kappa_{fg} \quad (7)$$

where $\kappa_{fg} = 1$ if $f = g$ and $\kappa_{fg} = 0$ if $f \neq g$, and m is real expenditures. To simplify the expressions we suppress the household index. The expenditure elasticity is

$$E_f = (\beta_f + 2\delta_f \ln m) + 1. \quad (8)$$

With positive β and negative δ , we see from equation (8) that the expenditure elasticity may be larger than one for households with low expenditures on the goods, indicating that it is a luxury good, whereas households with higher expenditures may have an expenditure elasticity that is less than one, thereby considering the product as a necessary good. To calculate the set of compensated elasticities we use the Slutsky equation $e_{fg}^c = e_{fg} + s_g E_f$. In the case of two stage budgeting the total uncompensated price elasticity is given by (Edgerton 1997)

$$e_{ij} = \kappa_{kl} e_{(k)ij}^c + E_{(k)i} s_{(l)j} e_{(k)(l)} \quad (9)$$

where $e_{(k)ij}^c$ is the compensated price elasticity between good i and j in the k 'th group, $E_{(k)i}$ is the expenditure elasticity for good i in the k 'th group and $e_{(k)(l)}$ is the uncompensated price elasticity between good k and l at the first allocation stage. The total expenditure elasticity is

$$E_i = E_{(k)} E_{(k)i} \quad (10)$$

where E_k is the expenditure elasticity for the k 'th group at the first allocation stage. If we extend the analysis to three stage budgeting the expression for the uncompensated price elasticity become

$$e_{ij} = \kappa_{ab} \kappa_{kl} e_{[a](k)ij}^c + \kappa_{ab} s_{[b](l)j} E_{[a](k)i} e_{[a](k)(l)}^c + s_{[b](l)j} s_{[b](l)} E_{[a](k)i} E_{[a](k)} e_{[a][b]} \quad (11)$$

where the notation $[a][b]$ refers to the first allocation stage, and $(k)(l)$ to the second allocation stage. The total expenditure elasticity is given by

$$E_i = E_{[a]} E_{[a](k)} E_{[a](k)i} \quad (12)$$

Table 4.1. Compensated and uncompensated own price elasticities and expenditure elasticities

	Uncompensated price elasticity	Compensated price elasticity	Expenditure elasticity
Bakeries			
Cakes	-0.56	-0.53	0.46
Sweet buns	-0.64	-0.63	0.29
Sweet pies	-0.58	-0.57	0.19
Bread			
<i>Hard bread</i>			
Keyhole labelled	-0.80	-0.77	0.27
White wheat	-1.27	-1.26	0.18
Dark	-0.72	-0.72	0.15
<i>Soft bread</i>			
Dark	-0.99	-0.83	0.64
White	-0.95	-0.81	0.58
Breakfast cereals			
Flakes	-0.71	-0.62	1.01
Keyhole labelled	-0.70	-0.68	0.60
Müsli	-0.73	-0.63	1.16
Sweet cereals	-0.71	-0.65	0.83
Others	-1.56	-1.53	0.81
Flours & dough			
Dark flours	-0.84	-0.82	1.12
Flours for sauces	-0.49	-0.47	0.68
Keyhole labelled flours	-0.79	-0.77	0.93
White wheat flours	-0.95	-0.87	1.45
Dough	-0.37	-0.35	0.83
Pasta			
Fresh filled pasta	-0.43	-0.42	0.65
Fresh unfilled pasta	-0.74	-0.73	0.60
Filled pasta	-1.50	-1.50	0.13
Unfilled pasta	-0.60	-0.54	1.05
Whole grain pasta	-0.21	-0.20	0.58
Ready-to-eat meals			
Pancakes	-0.78	-0.75	0.42
Pirogues	-0.86	-0.81	0.70
Pizzas	-0.70	-0.62	0.69
Spring rolls	-0.89	-0.87	0.38
Others	-0.26	-0.24	0.43
Rice			
Fast	-0.87	-0.85	0.67
Fibre	-0.50	-0.49	0.52
White	-0.68	-0.64	0.84
Others	-0.85	-0.84	0.44

As shown by Table 4.1 all compensated own price elasticities are negative, indicating that the negativity condition is fulfilled. The uncompensated own price elasticities range between -0.21 for whole grain pasta to -1.56 for “others” breakfast cereals. With the exception of filled pasta, the pasta products generally show the lowest price sensitivity. Another group of products that have relatively low own price elasticities (in absolute value), are the products in

the bakeries group. Furthermore, the results indicate that white wheat hard bread is the product with the highest price sensitivity within the bread group. For Keyhole labelled and dark hard bread the price sensitivity is lower, with estimated own price elasticities of -0.8 and -0.7, respectively. That the price sensitivity for white wheat hard bread is higher than for other hard bread products, might be a result of this type of hard bread being a closer substitute to soft bread. For the products within breakfast cereals the own price elasticities are estimated to be around -0.7 (“others” being the exception) and own price elasticities for the products within the rice group vary between -0.5 and -0.9. The products within ready-to-eat meals generally have an own price elasticity of around -0.8.

The price elasticities in Table 4.1 are in line with elasticities reported in previous studies (e.g. Chouinard et al., 2006, and Kuchler et al., 2005).¹¹

5. Simulations

The empirical model from Section 3.1 is used to illustrate responses and impacts on households from non-marginal changes of the value added tax (VAT) on different food products, as well as imposing excise duties on nutrients in the grain products. The type of model used here is particularly useful for such an analysis. A non-marginal tax change, that has a significant effect on prices, will affect the households' real income. A demand system of the type used here takes this income effect into account. In addition, the model employed includes non-linear income effects, which may be important when large tax changes are considered. Also, the demand system handles substitution effects, which might be large as a result of the changes in tax rates.

¹¹ Price elasticities would have been slightly higher, in absolute value, than those reported in Table 4.1 if we would have been able to estimate a full demand system for household consumption. Comparing the price elasticities for two-stage and three-stage budgeting, as shown by equation (9) and (11), we see that the effect on the elasticity from extending the budgeting process from two to three stages is given by the last term in equation (11). This term contains the product of the price elasticity at the highest allocation stage and budget shares and expenditure elasticities on lower allocation stages. The product of budget shares and expenditure elasticities is generally small, since budget shares are between 0 and 1 and expenditure elasticities are small. The effect of including the highest allocation stage will therefore have a small impact on the total price elasticities shown in Table 4.1. Adding another allocation stage is likely to have a greater impact on the expenditure elasticities reported in column 3 of Table 4.1, though, as shown by equation (12).

5.1 Policy reforms

In Sweden the VAT on food is 10.71 percent of the consumer price (amounting to a VAT of 12 percent on the producer price). Our baseline scenario is therefore a 10.71 percent VAT rate on the consumer price of all grain products. We start off by simulating the effects of a reform that is relatively easy to communicate and implement:

- (1) a removal of the VAT on Keyhole labelled bread and breakfast cereals, while keeping the VAT on all other grain products at the initial 10.71 percent.¹²

Thereafter, we simulate the results of

- (2) a fibre subsidy reform that achieves the same increase in the fibre intake as the above VAT reform.

As will be shown, these reforms have little impact on the fibre intake. We therefore simulate the effects of more extensive reforms designed to increase the fibre intake of the average household by the recommended 38 percent by using;

- (3) an extensive VAT reform and
- (4) an extensive fibre subsidy reform.

Thereafter, we will simulate results of funded reforms, i.e. policy packages containing the above subsidies, funded by taxes on unhealthy commodities and nutrients, respectively.

We will focus on the effect these reforms have on the fibre intake, as well as the intake of other nutrients, volumes purchased, the change in dietary quality and the change in public revenues (measured by revenues from VAT and excise duty on grain products).

¹² Subsidies are not imposed on Keyhole labelled flours that could be used for bread baking, since they could also be used for other, less healthy, purposes.

5.2 Simulation model

The simulation method can be described as follows. The percentage price change on good i in group k is calculated according to the following formula

$$\frac{\Delta p_{(k)i}}{p_{(k)i}^0} = \frac{(t_i^1 + \tau_i^1 + t_i^1 \tau_i^1) - (t_i^0)}{1 + t_i^0} \quad (13)$$

where the superscript denotes the tax regime (0 is baseline tax), t is the VAT rate (on the consumer price) for good i , and τ is the excise duty (or fibre subsidy) on good i . It should be noted that τ shows the excise duty's share of the producer price (price exclusive of taxes). The price level for household h for good i in group k after the tax change is then equal to

$$p_{(k)i}^{h1} = \left(1 + \frac{\Delta p_{(k)i}^h}{p_{(k)i}^{h0}} \right) p_{(k)i}^{h0} \quad (14)$$

which means that the after-tax change Stone price index for group k and household h (or expenditure deflator) equals

$$\ln P_k^{h1} = \sum_i s_{(k)i}^h \ln p_{(k)i}^{h1} \quad (15)$$

where, as previously, $s_{(k)i}^h$ is household h 's initial expenditure share on good i in group k . The Stone price index at the initial price level (for three stage budgeting) is then $\ln P_k^{h1} = \sum_k s_k^h \ln P_k^{h1}$. It should be noted that we do not allow for possible general equilibrium effects. That is, we assume that taxes are shifted completely on consumer prices.

Substituting expression (14) and (15) into the demand system representing the first-stage budgeting process gives us the new allocation across the different commodity groups for household h . The new consumption vector is given by

$$\begin{aligned} s_{(k)}^{h1} = & \hat{\alpha}_{(k)} \tilde{\mathbf{d}}^h + \left(\sum_k \hat{\gamma}_{kl} \ln p_k^{h1} \right) + \hat{\beta}_{(k)} \ln [x^{h0} / P^{h1}] \\ & + \hat{\delta}_{(k)} \left(\ln [x^{h0} / P^{h1}] \right)^2 + \hat{\varepsilon}_{(k)}^{h0} \end{aligned} \quad k = 1, \dots, n \quad (16)$$

where $\hat{\cdot}$ denotes an estimate and $\tilde{\mathbf{d}}^h$ is the vector of household characteristics. The superscript 0 indicates the point of reference (baseline). In the simulations we keep nominal expenditure (x) unchanged. The last term in equation (16), $\hat{\varepsilon}^{h0}$, represents unexplained household-specific effects not accounted for in the estimations, and the effect of non purchase. The latter is assumed to be constant over simulations.

Given the new group shares, according to equation (16), we get by definition the new expenditure on each group as

$$x_{(k)}^{h1} = s_{(k)}^{h1} x_{(k)}^{h0} \quad k = 1, \dots, n \quad (17)$$

which is substituted into the demand system representing the second stage of the budgeting process. This results in

$$\begin{aligned} s_{(k)i}^{h1} = & \hat{\alpha}_{(k)i} \tilde{\mathbf{d}}^h + \left(\sum_j \hat{\gamma}_{ij} \ln p_{(k)j}^1 \right) + \hat{\beta}_{(k)i} \ln [x_{(k)}^{h1} / P_{(k)}^{h1}] \\ & + \hat{\delta}_{(k)i} \left(\ln [x_{(k)}^{h1} / P_{(k)}^{h1}] \right)^2 + \hat{\varepsilon}^{h0} \end{aligned} \quad i = 1, \dots, m \quad (18)$$

In the case of additional sub-groups, or allocation stages, the above procedure is repeated for each allocation stage. From (18) we can define post-reform expenditures x_i^{h1} on good i and the volume V_i^{h1} of good i as

$$x_i^{h1} = s_{(k)i}^{h1} x_k^{h1} \quad (19a)$$

$$V_i^{h1} = x_i^{h1} / p_{(k)i}^{h1} \quad (19b)$$

The change in nutrient q for household h , ΔN_q^h , can now be defined as

$$\Delta N_q^h = \sum_i \omega_{iq}^h (V_i^{h1} - V_i^{h0}) \quad (20)$$

where ω_{iq}^h is the content per kilo gram of nutrient q (fat, saturated fat, fibre, kilo joule, salt, sugar or added sugar) in product i , for household h .¹³

Each household's tax payment on product i , before and after the tax reform, is calculated as

$$VAT^{h0} = \sum_i t_i^0 x_i^{h0} \quad (21a)$$

$$VAT^{h1} = \sum_i t_i^1 x_i^{h1} \quad (21b)$$

$$T^{h1} = \sum_q \sum_i \pi_q \omega_{iq}^h V_i^{h1} \quad (21c)$$

where VAT denotes value added tax payment, and T the excise duties paid on food products.

π_q is the excise duty in SEK per gram of nutrient q in kilo gram of grain product.

6. Simulation results

In this section, we report on the simulated results from implementing reforms (1)-(4) in section 5.1. To facilitate, we name the removal of the VAT on Keyhole labelled bread and breakfast cereals “VAT reform (1)”. A SEK 0.0087 subsidy per gram fibre, in a kilo gram product, is needed to guide grain consumption to the same increase in the fibre intake as that resulting from VAT reform (1). We name the SEK 0.0087 subsidy per gram fibre “fibre subsidy reform (1)”.

For the average household to attain the recommended 38 percent increase in the fibre intake, Keyhole labelled bread and breakfast cereals need to be subsidized by 50 percent¹⁴, or a SEK 0.0460 subsidy per gram fibre, in a kilo gram product, needs to be imposed. We name these extensive reforms “VAT reform (2)” and “fibre subsidy reform (2)”, respectively.

We start off this section by analyzing the simulated results from the unfunded reforms stated above, and thereafter proceed to analyzing the simulated results of reforms funded by

¹³ Note that the content of nutrients of products can differ over households since the calculus of the content is based on the household specific basket of brand products that make up each product in the demand system.

¹⁴ We also simulated the results from implementing a richer scheme of subsidies, entailing subsidies on all products rich in fibre in our grain demand system (i.e. including whole grain pasta, rice rich in fibre and Keyhole labelled flour). However, the subsidy level needed for the average consumer to increase her fibre intake by 38 percent remained 50 percent, even if more products were included.

commodity taxes on particularly unhealthy commodities and excise duties on particularly unhealthy nutrients.

Our focus is on price changes on individual products and changes of the overall price level faced by the average household, calculated as the change in the antilog of Stone's price index. We continue by analyzing the impact the price changes have on diets and public revenues, the latter calculated as the relative change in VAT and excise duty payments on grain products by the average household.

6.1 Effects of unfunded reforms

6.1.1 Impact of unfunded reforms on prices, the diet and public revenue

Table A.1 in Appendix A shows the impact on the prices of grain products from implementing reforms (1)-(4). Columns 1 and 2 show the price changes resulting from VAT reform (1) and fibre subsidy reform (1) and columns 3 and 4 show the price changes from VAT reform (2) and fibre subsidy reform (2). Least transparent are price changes due to the fibre subsidy reforms. As shown by column 2 in Table A.1, imposing fibre subsidy reform (1) results in prices that range from 90 percent to 100 percent of baseline prices. Flours rich in fibre and Keyhole labelled hard bread are the products for which price reductions are the most sizeable. If implementing the more extensive fibre subsidy (2), price changes would be even more pronounced. Prices would range from 45 percent of the baseline price (for Keyhole labelled flour).¹⁵

The VAT reforms have a greater impact on the overall price level, compared to the fibre subsidy reforms, as shown by Table A.2 in Appendix A. Comparing columns 3 and 4 in Table A.2, for example, we find that a VAT reform designed to achieve a 38 percent increase in the fibre intake has a greater impact on the price level than does a fibre subsidy reform that directs the consumption of the average household to the same increase in the fibre intake.

Table 6.1 shows the adjustments of the diet, by the average household, and the resulting relative change in public revenues from grain consumption of the average household, due to

¹⁵ Note also that relative price changes are sizeable for white wheat flour due to the excise duty reforms. This result is due to the price of white wheat flour being low at baseline, i.e. it is not a result of white wheat flour being particularly rich in fibre.

these price changes. Column 1 in Table 6.1 shows the baseline, i.e. the composition of the grain diet for the average household before any reform has been implemented and columns 2-5 show the results of the respective policy reforms.

Table 6.1. Impact on the average household of simulated policy reforms

	Baseline	Policy reform			
		VAT reform(1)	Fibre subsidy reform (1)	VAT reform(2)	Fibre subsidy reform (2)
Share of Keyhole labelled bread and breakfast cereals	0.47	0.50	0.48	0.69	0.51
Share of bakeries and ready-to-eat meals	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03
Relative change of volumes and intake of nutrients					
Volumes of bread and breakfast cereals		0.03	0.02	0.40	0.11
Volumes of bakeries and ready-to-eat meals		0.01	-0.01	0.06	-0.04
Fibre		0.04	0.04	0.38	0.38
Fat		0.02	0.03	0.18	0.26
Saturated fat		0.01	0.02	0.13	0.20
Kilo joule		0.02	0.03	0.20	0.32
Salt		0.02	0.01	0.25	0.09
Sugar		0.02	0.02	0.25	0.19
Added sugar		0.01	0.02	0.12	0.19
Density of nutrients in the grain diet					
Fibre/100 gr grain purchases	3.32	3.37	3.36	3.80	3.62
Fat/100 gr grain purchases	2.25	2.23	2.25	2.17	2.24
Saturated fat/100 gr grain purchase	0.55	0.54	0.54	0.50	0.52
Kilo joule/100 gr grain purchases	936.56	935.59	943.43	937.52	988.67
Salt in mg/100 gr grain purchases	190.67	190.13	188.78	196.05	175.54
Sugars/100 gr grain purchase	2.86	2.85	2.85	2.87	2.74
Added sugars/100 gr grain purchases	1.12	1.10	1.11	0.97	1.06
Effects on public revenues					
Average relative change in VAT and excise duty paid in SEK		-0.30	-0.16	-1.60	-1.29

Note: VAT reform (1) means imposing zero VAT on Keyhole labelled bread and breakfast cereals. Fibre subsidy reform (1) means imposing a subsidy per gram fibre, in a kilo gram grain product, of SEK 0.0087. VAT reform (2) means imposing the 50 percent subsidy of Keyhole labelled bread and breakfast cereals. Fibre subsidy reform (2) means imposing a subsidy per gram fibre, in a kilo gram grain product, of SEK 0.0460.

As shown by the second column (VAT reform (1)), our results imply that removing the VAT on Keyhole labelled bread and breakfast cereals results in the average household achieving the recommendation of half the bread and breakfast cereal consumption being Keyhole labelled. However, the increase in volumes consumed of bread and breakfast cereals is fairly

small; 3 percent, which also shows in the moderate increase of fibre consumption, amounting to 4 percent. This suggests that the average household far from attains the recommendation of doubling its bread and breakfast cereal consumption (alternatively increasing the fibre intake by a minimum of 38 percent), should this reform be implemented. In addition, our results suggest that volumes consumed of unhealthy grain products would increase (bakeries and ready-to-eat-meals), although by a modest 1 percent, for the average household. Volumes consumed by the unhealthy nutrients increase by 1-2 percent. The fibre density of the grain diet increases from 3.32 grams per 100 gram to 3.37 grams per 100 gram, for the average household, though, and there are slight decreases in the density of all other (unhealthy) nutrients. Our results also imply that VAT reform (1) would result in a 30 percent decrease of public revenues from VAT on grain products consumed by the average household.

The second column in Table 6.1 shows that if implementing fibre subsidy reform (1), the recommendation of half of bread and breakfast cereals being Keyhole labelled is not met, though, which is also reflected in that the increase in the fibre density of the grain diet would be slightly lower if the fibre subsidy reform would be implemented compared to if VAT reform (1) would be implemented. Changes in volumes are small; volumes consumed of bread and breakfast cereals would increase by 2 percent, whereas volumes consumed of bakeries and ready-to-eat-meals would decrease by 1 percent and volumes consumed of the unhealthy nutrients would increase by 1-3 percent. Impacts on densities are also small; compared to baseline, our results suggest that implementing the fibre subsidy reform would leave the density of fat unchanged, whereas the density of all other nutrients would decrease slightly, except for the energy density, which would increase from 937 KJ per 100 gram to 943 KJ per 100 gram.

Comparing the impact on public revenues of VAT reform (1) and fibre subsidy reform (1), it appears that increasing the fibre intake by a fibre subsidy reform instead of a VAT reform is cheaper, as measured by tax revenues lost. Our results suggest that if fibre subsidy reform (1) is implemented, VAT and excise duty revenues is reduced by 16 percent, per household.

Results from the reforms resulting in the average household attaining the recommended 38 percent increase in the fibre intake are provided in columns 3 and 5 in Table 5.1.

Our results suggest that implementing a 50 percent subsidy on Keyhole labelled bread and breakfast cereals (VAT reform (2)) would lead to the share of Keyhole labelled bread and breakfast cereals, of total bread and breakfast cereals consumed, rising to almost 70 percent. The share of bakeries and ready-to-eat meals, of total grain consumption, remains the same as before the reform, though. Overall volumes of bread and breakfast cereals would rise by 40 percent, whereas volumes of bakeries and ready-to-eat meals would rise by 6 percent. In addition, the intake of unhealthy nutrients rises substantially, although by less than the fibre intake. The rise in salt and sugar intakes is particularly high; 25 percent. However, the impact on the quality of the diet, as measured by the density of the nutrients, is more mixed. The density of fibre increases to 3.80 grams per 100 gram, to be compared with the 3.32 grams per 100 gram at baseline. The density of kilo joule, salt and sugar also increases, whereas the density of all other nutrients decreases. Finally, the reform turns out to be expensive, measured by public revenues lost; revenues from VAT on grain products paid by the average household decrease by 160 percent.

The simulated results from the fibre subsidy reform (2) are given in column 5 in Table 6.1. Our results suggest that if implementing this reform, the share of Keyhole labelled bread and breakfast cereals increases so that the nutritional recommendation is attained. The increase in the share of bakeries and ready-to-eat meals remains the same as before the reform. Comparing the results in column 4 and 5, noteworthy is that volumes consumed of bread and breakfast cereals would increase by 11 percent from the fibre subsidy reform, which is much less than if the corresponding VAT reform was implemented. Also; volumes of bakeries and ready-to-eat meals would decrease by 4 percent. The rise in the intake of fat, saturated fat, kilo joule and added sugar would be higher than that from VAT reform (2), whereas the rise in the intake of salt and sugar would be lower. The density of kilo joule would increase substantially to 989 kilo joule per 100 gram, whereas the density of salt, sugar and added sugar would decrease substantially. There would only be small changes in the density of fat and saturated fat, compared to the baseline. Compared to VAT reform (2), the fibre subsidy reform is cheaper, although still imposes a sizeable burden on public revenues; the VAT and excise duty paid by the average household would decrease by 129 percent.

6.2 Effects of funded reforms

Subsidizing either commodities rich in fibre or the fibre content itself is not only costly, it also leads to unwanted increases in unhealthy nutrients, as shown by Table 6.1. Governments might therefore consider policy packages that are revenue neutral and at the same time restrict the increase in unhealthy consumption. We therefore also simulate the results from revenue neutral reforms, where the subsidies of Keyhole labelled bread and breakfast cereals are funded by increased commodity taxes on particularly unhealthy grain products; bakeries and ready-to-eat meals (see Table 3.2 for descriptive statistics on product contents). The reforms that entail subsidies on the fibre content are funded by excise duties on other (unhealthy) nutrients. Funding, within the grain consumption demand system, could be done either by taxing one particular nutrient, or a combination of unhealthy nutrients. Here, we focus on analyzing tax schemes entailing a subsidy on fibre, funded by an excise duty on one single unhealthy nutrient, though. Policy makers might then consider funding the subsidy on fibre by excise duties on fat, saturated fat, sugars or added sugars.¹⁶

Our results imply that removing the VAT on Keyhole labelled bread and breakfast cereals could be funded by a 34.2 percent VAT on bakeries and ready-to-eat meals. The more extensive subsidy of Keyhole labelled bread and breakfast cereals would require a VAT on bakeries and ready-to-eat meals as high as 113.8 percent.

6.2.1 Impact of funded reforms on prices, the diet and public revenue

Funding the small VAT reform by a 34.2 percent VAT on bakeries and ready-to-eat meals results in a 21 percent price increase on these products, compared to baseline. For the same products, the price increases by 93 percent, if funding the more sizeable VAT reform (by imposing a VAT of 113.8 percent on bakeries and ready-to-eat meals). For all other products, individual price changes are the same as in column 1 and 3 in Table A.1, should funded VAT reforms be implemented.

¹⁶ As noted earlier in this paper, salt is also over consumed by the average consumer. However, salt is less efficient to tax for the time being, since food is generally high in salt and substitutes for consumers therefore few, if looking for alternatives less rich in salt (SNÖ, 2005). We therefore choose not to impose an excise duty on salt.

Table A.2 shows the change in the overall price level of the average household due to selected funded reforms. Our results imply, for instance, that the overall price level for the average household slightly decreases, to 99 percent of the baseline price level, if the VAT on Keyhole labelled bread and the VAT on breakfast cereals is removed and bakeries and ready-to-eat meals is raised to 34.2 percent. The more extensive funded VAT reform results in the price level faced by the average household decreasing to 97 percent of the baseline price level.

The changes in consumption and public revenues, resulting from the individual and overall price changes from these revenue neutral policy packages, are shown in columns 1 and 2 of Table 6.2. Our results imply that both revenue neutral VAT-reforms result in the average household attaining the nutrition recommendation of half of bread and breakfast cereals consumed being Keyhole labelled; the more extensive funded reform even leads to almost 70 percent of bread and breakfast cereals consumed by the average household being Keyhole labelled, should the reform be implemented. These results are very similar to the simulated impact on diets of the unfunded VAT reforms.

Table 6.2. The impact on the average household of funded VAT-reforms

	Policy reform	
	VAT reform(1)F	VAT reform(2)F
Share of Keyhole labelled bread and breakfast cereals	0.50	0.69
Share of bakeries and ready-to-eat meals	0.03	0.02
Relative change of volumes and intake of nutrients		
Volumes of bread and breakfast cereals	0.03	0.38
Volumes of bakeries and ready-to-eat meals	-0.01	-0.10
Fibre	0.03	0.35
Fat	0.00	0.12
Saturated fat	-0.01	0.05
Kilo joule	0.01	0.17
Salt	0.01	0.21
Sugar	0.01	0.21
Added sugar	0.00	0.07
Density of nutrients in the grain diet		
Fibre/100 gr grain purchases	3.38	3.84
Fat/100 gr grain purchases	2.20	2.09
Saturated fat/100 gr grain purchase	0.53	0.46
Kilo joule/100 gr grain purchases	935.69	937.40

Salt in mg/100 gr grain purchases	189.72	195.25
Sugars/100 gr grain purchase	2.84	2.86
Added sugars/100 gr grain purchases	1.09	0.95

Effects on public revenues

Average relative change in VAT and excise duty paid in SEK	0.00	0.00
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Note: VAT reform (1)F is the removal of the VAT on Keyhole labelled bread and breakfast cereals funded by a 34.2 percent VAT on bakeries and ready-to-eat meals. VAT reform (2)F is the 50 percent subsidy of Keyhole labelled bread and breakfast cereals funded by a 113.8 percent VAT on bakeries and ready-to-eat meals.

Our results also indicate that the smaller funded VAT reform results in an increase in volumes consumed of bread and breakfast cereals, as well as the intake of fibre, amounting to 3 percent. The change in other nutrients is minor.

The extensive funded VAT reform greatly increases the volumes consumed of bread and breakfast cereals by the average household by as much as 38 percent (i.e. by only two percentage points less than the unfunded reform) whereas volumes of bakeries and ready-to-eat meals decrease by 10 percent. The substantial increase in volumes consumed resulting from the VAT reform is also reflected in the high increase of the fibre intake; 35 percent, not far from the recommended increase of 38 percent, which was attained when simulating the results from the corresponding unfunded reform. However, increases of other, unhealthy, nutrients are also sizeable, although less so than if imposing the unfunded VAT reform, amounting to more than 20 percent for salt and sugar.

The impact on the quality of the grain diet, as measured by the density of nutrients in the grain diet, is mixed. Comparing the densities in columns 1 and 2 in Table 6.2 with the densities at baseline (see Table 3.3), it is noteworthy that the density of fibre increases from both reforms, whereas the density of fat, saturated fat and added sugar decreases from both reforms. The change in the densities is more pronounced if imposing the more extensive VAT reform. Interestingly, the density of sugar, salt and kilo joule also decreases if implementing the smaller VAT-reform, whereas these densities are either unchanged or increase, would the more extensive reform be imposed. Compared to the unfunded VAT-reforms (see Table 6.1), densities of fibre and kilo joule are higher if implementing funded reforms, whereas densities of all other nutrients are lower.

The SEK 0.0087 subsidy per gram fibre could be funded either by an excise duty of SEK 0.0126 per gram fat, an excise duty of SEK 0.0504 per gram saturated fat, an excise duty of SEK 0.0095 per gram sugar or an excise duty of SEK 0.022 per gram added sugar. Results on diets are minor, though, and are therefore left uncommented. However, for the interested reader, tables showing the simulated impact on individual product prices and the diet of the average household from imposing the less extensive funded fibre subsidy reforms are found in Appendix B.

Table A.3 shows the price changes of revenue neutral policy packages entailing the more sizeable SEK 0.0460 subsidy per gram fibre. The SEK 0.0460 subsidy per gram fibre could be funded either by an excise duty of SEK 0.0740 per gram fat, an excise duty of SEK 0.3250 per gram saturated fat, an excise duty of SEK 0.0630 per gram sugar or an excise duty of SEK 0.1820 per gram added sugar. As expected, an excise duty per gram saturated fat or added sugar has to be higher than those of fat and sugar, respectively, in order to be part of a revenue neutral policy package, since the content of saturated fat is lower than that of (total) fat and the content of added sugar is lower than that of (total) sugar.

As shown by Table A.3, the more extensive funded fibre subsidy reform results in sizeable price changes for many products and most prices are affected, even prices of products that are low in fat or sugar. As might be expected, prices of bakeries are highly affected by both excise duties on fibre funded by fat and sugar. Prices on ready-to-eat meals are also highly affected by reforms funded by excise duties on fat and saturated fat, but almost unchanged by reforms funded by excise duties on sugar or added sugar. Also, the price of fresh filled pasta more than doubles from the reform funded by an excise duty on saturated fat, whereas the price of the same product even decreases (although slightly) if the reform is instead funded by an excise duty on added sugar. As for prices of bread and breakfast cereals in particular, the price of dark soft bread decreases if reforms are funded by excise duties on fat, saturated fat or added sugar, whereas it increases slightly if the reform is funded by an excise duty on added sugar. The opposite is true for the price of white bread. Noteworthy is that the price of sweet breakfast cereals and other breakfast cereals more than doubles from a reform funded by an excise duty on added sugar, compared to baseline. The price of flakes decreases slightly from reforms funded by excise duties on fat or saturated fat, whereas the price of flakes increases sizeably by reforms funded by excise duties on sugar or added sugar. The decrease in the price of Keyhole labelled breakfast cereals is the largest from funding the reform by an

excise duty on sugar, whereas the decrease is the smallest if the reform is instead funded by an excise duty on fat or added sugar. Regarding the change in the overall price level due to the extensive funded fibre subsidy reform, Table A.2 shows that the SEK 0.0460 subsidy per gram fibre, per kilo gram grain product, coupled with a SEK 0.1820 excise duty on added sugar, results in a 4 percent increase in the overall price level, compared to baseline, whereas the same subsidy on fibre financed by a SEK 0.3250 excise duty on saturated fat increases the price level by 2 percent.

Columns 2-5 of Table 6.3 show how these price changes affect consumption. Our results imply that all revenue neutral reforms lead to the average household attaining the nutrition recommendation of half of bread and breakfast cereal consumption being Keyhole labelled; the policy package entailing the subsidy on fibre combined with an excise duty on added sugar leading to the highest share of Keyhole labelled bread and breakfast cereals, 54 percent. As expected, the resulting increase in volumes consumed is lower from the revenue neutral reforms than from the unfunded fibre subsidy reform, shown in column 1 of Table 6.3. Noteworthy is that a revenue neutral policy package where the fibre subsidy is funded by an SEK 0.182 excise duty per gram added sugar increases the fibre intake of the average household by twice as much as the revenue neutral policy package where the fibre subsidy is funded by an excise duty of SEK 0.074 per gram fat. The former policy package also results in an increase of fat and kilo joule for the average household that is greater than for any other policy package shown in Table 6.3, but, on the other hand, it also leads to sizeable decreases in the intake of sugar and added sugar in particular. As for the densities of the nutrients, the reforms resulting in the highest density of fibre in the grain diet of the average household are the reforms funded by the excise duty on saturated fat and sugar, as shown by column 3 and 4 in Table 6.3. The reform funded by an excise duty on grams of saturated fat also reduces the intake of saturated fat by 3 percent, while being more efficient in increasing the fibre intake than for example the reform funded by an excise duty on gram of fat per kilo gram product. However, the reform entailing the excise duty on added sugar results in the lowest density of salt, sugar and added sugar, and together with the reform funded by an excise duty on saturated fat, it also results in the lowest density of fat and saturated fat.

Table 6.3. Impact on the average household from funding fibre subsidy reform (2)

	Unfunded	Funding the SEK 0.0460 subsidy per gram fibre by imposing an excise duty of			
		0.0740 SEK per gram fat	0.3250 SEK per gram saturated fat	0.0630 SEK per gram sugar	0.1820 SEK per gram added sugar
Share of Keyhole labelled bread and breakfast cereals	0.51	0.51	0.52	0.52	0.54
Share of bakeries and ready-to-eat meals	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.03
Relative change of volumes and intake of nutrients					
Volumes of bread and breakfast cereals	0.11	0.04	0.04	0.03	0.03
Volumes of bakeries and ready-to-eat meals	-0.04	-0.03	-0.06	-0.05	-0.10
Fibre	0.38	0.07	0.11	0.12	0.15
Fat	0.26	-0.01	0.01	0.03	0.05
Saturated fat	0.20	-0.03	-0.03	-0.01	0.00
Kilo joule	0.32	0.02	0.05	0.06	0.10
Salt	0.09	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.01
Sugar	0.19	-0.01	0.00	-0.04	-0.04
Added sugar	0.19	-0.01	-0.01	-0.06	-0.11
Density of nutrients in the grain diet					
Fibre/100 gr grain purchases	3.62	3.55	3.59	3.59	3.53
Fat/100 gr grain purchases	2.24	2.20	2.17	2.21	2.17
Saturated fat/100 gr grain purchase	0.52	0.52	0.50	0.52	0.50
Kilo joule/100 gr grain purchases	988.67	948.73	961.69	953.55	957.97
Salt in mg/100 gr grain purchases	175.54	194.18	191.22	189.00	182.48
Sugars/100 gr grain purchase	2.74	2.81	2.75	2.57	2.44
Added sugars/100 gr grain purchases	1.06	1.09	1.05	0.94	0.82
Effects on public revenues					
Average relative change in VAT and excise duty paid in SEK	-1.29	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

7. Conclusions

In this paper, we simulate the results of economic policy reforms designed to improve the quality of the modern grain diet. The policy objectives guiding our analysis are nutritional recommendations for grain consumption given by the Swedish National Food Administration (SLV). For the average consumer, the SLV recommends that bread and breakfast cereal consumption doubles, while ensuring that half of bread and breakfast cereals consumed are

labelled with the “Keyhole” symbol (a label certified by the SLV, based on criteria for the fat, fibre, salt and sugar content of these products). Such changes of the bread and breakfast cereal consumption would contribute to achieving the overall objective of increasing the fibre intake by 38 percent. In addition, recommendations for all food consumption, state that the average consumer should cut down on fat, especially saturated fat, and salt, while not increasing the added sugar consumption.

The average household is already close to attaining the recommendation of half of bread and breakfast cereals being Keyhole labelled, meaning that this is the easiest recommendation to attain. Our results suggest that a relatively small reform – a removal of the VAT on Keyhole labelled bread and breakfast cereals - results in the average consumer attaining this recommendation. More important might be the increase in the intake of fibre due to the reform, though, and this turns out to be minor (4 percent).

Our results imply that price instruments have to be sizeable in order to attain the recommendations for grain consumption given by the SLV. In order for the average household to attain a 38 percent increase in the fibre intake, our results imply that either a commodity subsidy of 50 percent on Keyhole labelled bread and breakfast is needed or a SEK 0.0460 subsidy per gram fibre in a kilo gram grain product. Our results imply that an increase in the fibre intake is more cost-efficiently achieved by imposing a subsidy of the fibre content, instead of subsidizing products rich in fibre, even if both reforms are costly.

Subsidizing products rich in fibre, or the fibre content, not only imposes great costs on the government, though. Our results also suggest that such reforms lead to unwanted increases in nutrients that are likely to be over consumed by the average consumer, due to the income effect resulting from the reforms. This is in line with results found by Smed et al. (2007). A healthy diet might therefore be better achieved by reforms where subsidies of fibre, or products rich in fibre, are funded by taxes on less healthy commodities or nutrients. Our results imply that in order to fund the 50 percent subsidy of Keyhole labelled bread and breakfast cereals, a 114 percent VAT on bakeries and ready-to-eat meals is required, which is approaching Swedish VAT levels for tobacco. Even with this funded reform, the increase in the fibre intake is substantial. So are increases in other (unhealthy) nutrients too, though, even if reduced, compared to the reform with the unfunded subsidy.

The SEK 0.0460 subsidy per gram fibre, in each kilo gram grain product, could be funded either by excise duties on single nutrients, or combinations of nutrients. We find that funding the SEK 0.0460 fibre subsidy by either an excise duty of SEK 0.182 per gram added sugar or a SEK 0.325 excise duty per gram saturated fat, has a good impact on the dietary quality of the average household; the increase in the fibre intake is less than it would be if the unfunded reform was imposed, but the funded fibre subsidy reforms also efficiently reduces the increase in the less healthy nutrients that results from the unfunded reform.

We find that the smaller funded VAT or fibre subsidy reform hardly affects the price level, whereas the more extensive funded VAT reform results in a price level on grain products that amounts to 97 percent of the baseline price level. The extensive fibre subsidy reform funded by the excise duty on added sugar results in the highest increase in the price level faced by the average consumer; 4 percent, whereas the price level would increase by half as much, should the fibre subsidy reform funded by the excise duty on saturated fat be implemented. Compared to the average inflation rate over the last decade, these increases are fairly sizeable.

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Appendix A

Table A.1. Comparing average relative price changes after selected, unfunded, policy reforms

	POLICY REFORM			
	VAT reform(1)	Fibre subsidy reform (1)	VAT reform(2)	Fibre subsidy reform (2)
Prices on bakeries				
Cakes	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.98
Sweet buns	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.98
Sweet pies	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.99
Prices on bread				
<i>Hard bread</i>				
Keyhole labelled	0.90	0.95	0.50	0.75
White wheat	1.00	0.99	1.00	0.93
Dark	1.00	0.98	1.00	0.88
<i>Soft bread</i>				
Dark	0.90	0.99	0.50	0.93
White	1.00	0.99	1.00	0.96
Prices on breakfast cereals				
Flakes	1.00	0.99	1.00	0.95
Keyhole labelled	0.90	0.96	0.50	0.81
Müsli	1.00	0.97	1.00	0.83
Sweet cereals	1.00	0.99	1.00	0.97
Others	1.00	0.99	1.00	0.97
Prices on flours & dough				
Dark flour	1.00	0.91	1.00	0.51
Flour for sauces	1.00	0.99	1.00	0.94
Keyhole labelled flour	1.00	0.90	1.00	0.45
White wheat flour	1.00	0.91	1.00	0.53
Dough	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.98
Prices on pasta				
Fresh filled	1.00	0.99	1.00	0.96
Fresh unfilled	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.98
Filled	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.98
Unfilled	1.00	0.99	1.00	0.95
Whole grain	1.00	0.99	1.00	0.93
Prices on ready-to-eat meals				
Pancakes	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.99
Pirogues, pan pizza	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.99
Pizza, pasta, lasagne	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.99
Spring rolls	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.99
Others	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.99
Prices on rice				
Fast	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.99
Fibre	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.98
White	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.98
Others	1.00	0.99	1.00	0.96

Table A.2. Price changes for the average household, from selected policy reforms

Unfunded reforms	
VAT reform(1)	0.97
Fibre subsidy reform (1)	0.98
VAT reform(2)	0.85
Fibre subsidy reform (2)	0.90
Funded reforms	
VAT reform(1)F	0.99
Fibre subsidy reform (1a)F	1.00
Fibre subsidy reform (1b)F	1.00
VAT reform(2)F	0.97
Fibre subsidy reform (2a)F	1.04
Fibre subsidy reform (2b)F	1.02

Table A.3. The impact on prices of funded reforms entailing a fibre subsidy of SEK 0.0460 per gram fibre

	Unfunded	Funding the 0.0460 subsidy per gram fibre by imposing an excise duty of			
		0.0740 SEK per gram fat	0.3250 SEK per gram saturated fat	0.0630 SEK per gram sugar	0.1820 SEK per gram added sugar
Prices on bakeries					
Cakes	0.98	1.25	1.29	1.24	1.64
Sweet buns	0.98	1.26	1.48	1.12	1.20
Sweet pies	0.99	1.17	1.36	1.19	1.44
Prices on bread					
<i>Hard bread</i>					
Keyhole labelled	0.75	0.82	0.80	0.79	0.79
White wheat	0.93	1.09	1.09	1.01	0.95
Dark	0.88	0.95	0.95	0.93	0.89
<i>Soft bread</i>					
Dark	0.93	0.98	0.97	1.02	0.94
White	0.96	1.03	1.02	1.02	0.97
Prices on breakfast cereals					
Flakes	0.95	0.99	0.98	1.18	1.41
Keyhole labelled	0.81	0.93	0.89	0.87	0.93
Müsli	0.83	1.08	1.25	1.36	1.77
Sweet cereals	0.97	0.99	0.99	1.55	2.20
Others	0.97	0.99	0.99	1.55	2.22
Prices on flours & dough					
Dark flour	0.51	0.90	0.72	0.92	0.75
Flour for sauces	0.94	0.96	0.95	0.97	0.98
Keyhole labelled flour	0.45	0.72	0.62	0.54	0.61
White wheat flour	0.53	0.92	0.77	0.80	0.69
Dough	0.98	1.74	2.41	1.00	0.99
Prices on pasta					
Fresh filled	0.96	1.61	2.23	1.02	0.99
Fresh unfilled	0.98	1.01	1.02	0.99	0.98
Filled	0.98	1.22	1.36	1.01	1.00

Unfilled	0.95	0.99	0.96	0.96	0.97
Whole grain	0.93	0.95	0.94	0.94	0.94
Prices on ready-to-eat meals					
Pancakes	0.99	1.13	1.25	1.05	0.99
Pirogues, pan pizza	0.99	1.31	1.60	1.01	1.00
Pizza, pasta, lasagne	0.99	1.11	1.21	1.01	1.00
Spring rolls	0.99	1.15	1.19	1.03	1.00
Others	0.99	1.18	1.36	1.01	1.00
Prices on rice					
Fast	0.99	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.01
Fibre	0.98	1.00	1.00	0.99	1.00
White	0.98	1.00	1.01	0.99	1.00
Others	0.96	1.01	1.02	0.98	1.01

Appendix B

Table B.1. The impact on prices of funded reforms entailing a subsidy of SEK 0.0087 per gram fibre

	Unfunded	Funding the SEK 0.0087 subsidy per gram fibre by imposing an excise duty of			
		SEK 0.0126 per gram fat	SEK 0.0504 per gram saturated fat	SEK 0.0095 per gram sugar	SEK 0.0220 per gram added sugar
Prices on bakeries					
Cakes	1.00	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.08
Sweet buns	1.00	1.04	1.07	1.02	1.02
Sweet pies	1.00	1.03	1.06	1.03	1.05
Prices on bread					
<i>Hard bread</i>					
Keyhole labelled	0.95	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96
White wheat	0.99	1.01	1.01	1.00	0.99
Dark	0.98	0.99	0.99	0.98	0.98
<i>Soft bread</i>					
Dark	0.99	1.00	0.99	1.00	0.99
White	0.99	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.99
Prices on breakfast cereals					
Flakes	0.99	1.00	1.00	1.02	1.05
Keyhole labelled	0.96	0.99	0.98	0.97	0.98
Müsli	0.97	1.01	1.03	1.05	1.08
Sweet cereals	0.99	1.00	1.00	1.08	1.14
Others	0.99	1.00	1.00	1.08	1.15
Prices on flours & dough					
Dark flour	0.91	0.97	0.94	0.97	0.94
Flour for sauces	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99
Keyhole labelled flour	0.90	0.94	0.92	0.91	0.92
White wheat flour	0.91	0.98	0.95	0.95	0.93
Dough	1.00	1.12	1.22	1.00	1.00
Prices on pasta					
Fresh filled	0.99	1.10	1.19	1.00	1.00
Fresh unfilled	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Filled	1.00	1.04	1.06	1.00	1.00
Unfilled	0.99	1.00	0.99	0.99	0.99
Whole grain	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99
Prices on ready-to-eat meals					
Pancakes	1.00	1.02	1.04	1.01	1.00
Pirogues, pan pizza	1.00	1.05	1.09	1.00	1.00
Pizza, pasta, lasagne	1.00	1.02	1.03	1.00	1.00
Spring rolls	1.00	1.03	1.03	1.00	1.00
Others	1.00	1.03	1.06	1.00	1.00
Prices on rice					
Fast	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Fibre	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
White	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Others	0.99	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00

Table B.2. Impact on the average household from funding fibre subsidy reform (1)

	Unfunded	Funding the SEK 0.0087 subsidy per gram fibre by imposing an excise duty of			
		SEK 0.0126 per gram fat	SEK 0.0504 per gram saturated fat	SEK 0.0095 per gram sugar	SEK 0.0220 per gram added sugar
Share of Keyhole labelled bread and breakfast cereals	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48
Share of bakeries and ready-to-eat meals	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03
Relative change of volumes and intake of nutrients					
Volumes of bread and breakfast cereals	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00
Volumes of bakeries and ready-to-eat meals	-0.01	0.00	0.00	-0.01	-0.01
Fibre	0.04	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.02
Fat	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01
Saturated fat	0.02	0.00	-0.01	0.00	0.00
Kilo joule	0.03	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.02
Salt	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sugar	0.02	0.00	0.00	-0.01	-0.01
Added sugar	0.02	0.00	0.00	-0.01	-0.02
Density of nutrients in the grain diet					
Fibre/100 gr grain purchases	3.36	3.36	3.36	3.36	3.35
Fat/100 gr grain purchases	2.25	2.24	2.24	2.24	2.23
Saturated fat/100 gr grain purchase	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.54
Kilo joule/100 gr grain purchases	943.43	939.17	941.22	939.79	940.25
Salt in mg/100 gr grain purchases	188.78	191.09	190.66	189.98	188.98
Sugars/100 gr grain purchase	2.85	2.85	2.84	2.81	2.78
Added sugars/100 gr grain purchases	1.11	1.12	1.11	1.09	1.06
Effects on public revenues					
Average relative change in VAT and excise duty paid in SEK	-0.16	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Consumers, nutrition policy and simplified nutritional labelling of foods

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Abstract

This paper addresses consumers' views on simplified nutritional labelling of foods in a Norwegian setting. It is interesting to focus on Norway because there is an ongoing debate and authorities have set a goal to implement simplified nutritional labelling in 2008. Simplified labelling schemes have been included in nutrition policies as a measure to inform and empower consumers. Such labelling can also have other effects and encourage health related aspects in product development processes. But it has been criticised for moving focus away from healthy diets towards the qualities of single food products. The paper has a main focus on consumers' views on simplified nutritional labelling based on a recent Norwegian survey. Overlaps in why and how consumers, policymakers and the food market support simplified nutritional labelling are discussed in relation to choice and responsibility.

1. Introduction

This paper focuses on consumers, nutrition policy and simplified nutritional labelling. The paper reflects mainly on consumers' views and why simplified nutritional labelling has received more interest in recent years in a Norwegian setting. It is interesting to focus on Norway because there is an ongoing debate and authorities have set a goal to implement simplified nutritional labelling in 2008. The questions guiding this paper are: What are the driving forces? Who are the key actors? Is the increased interest in such labelling linked to consumers' interests and demands? What is the role of health and nutrition policy? What is the role of food industry and retail? The paper will explore if there is an overlap in why and how consumers, public health policymakers and the food market support simplified nutritional labelling of foods.

Health related food labelling, including simplified nutritional labelling, has during the past few decades received accelerating attention in Europe especially among public health policymakers, food manufacturers and marketers, and consumer organisations. The explanation for this development is complex. The growing interest is both related to changes in the food system and market (globalisation, common markets, and non-tariff trade barriers) and a widespread focus on public health, nutrition policy and health issues (obesity, food safety scandals, governance and responsibility).

Obesity and overweight are viewed as major public health problems world wide (WHO 1997). It is conceptualized as an "obesity epidemic", and being overweight is increasingly understood as a disease and risk factor (Coveney 2000). The growing incidence of obesity has

in Europe in recent years put a new focus on health and nutrition policy and on finding good ways to promote better diets and empowering consumers. The notion that people should take responsibility for their own health is a major theme in public health, and thus the task for society becomes to support this (Food Ethics Council 2005, Palmblad 2003). Choice and freedom to choose have according to John Coveney (2000) become central in food and nutrition. Because of a focus on food choice, lifestyle diseases and risk factors everyone becomes the target of nutrition surveillance and you are expected to govern yourself. Coveney (2000) describes that people today have a duty to be well and to be good citizens.

This paper starts with a description of simplified nutritional labelling and the recent interest in such labelling in Norway. Next, consumers' views based on results from a Norwegian consumer survey on simplified nutrition labelling are presented. This is followed by discussions on the views of policymakers and the food industry and retail. The paper concludes with pointing to the relevance of studying the overlaps in consumers', policy makers' and industry's views for discussing why simplified nutritional labelling has become popular.

2. Simplified nutritional labelling of foods

Consumer protection and food labelling became necessary as a result of the expansion of industrial food production and urbanisation at the end of the 19th century (Elvebakken 2001).

The current food labelling regulations in Norway follow the EU legislation. The EU labelling legislation states that it is based on consumer protection and the common market (European Communities 2006). The aims are: to ensure fair competition among producers by standardisation of legislation on nutrition labelling because differences between national laws on labelling can lead to unequal conditions of competition; to increase consumers' access to information; and to reduce risks to individual consumer safety and health. The first labelling Directive was passed in 1997, and this was replaced in 2000 by a new General Labelling Directive 2000/13/EC, which has been amended a few times (some of the amendments have been to include a definition of meat and extra requirements for allergen labelling). The labelling on pre-packaged foodstuffs must include: name, list of ingredients, quantity, potential allergens, the minimum durability date and conditions for keeping.

According to the nutrition labelling Directive of 1990 (with later amendments) nutrition labelling was optional, but became compulsory if a nutrition claim appeared on the label or in advertising. The first suggestion for a new Directive on nutrition and health claims was proposed in 2003 and the Regulation No 1924/2006 was implemented starting July 1st 2007. This Regulation aims at protecting consumers' health and rights, and rebuilding consumer confidence in food safety. According to the Regulation nutrition and health claims that encourage consumers to purchase a product, but are false, misleading or not scientifically proven are prohibited. The Regulation includes a positive list of allowed claims. Simplified nutritional labelling on food packages is an example of voluntary nutritional labelling.

Different types of simplified labelling, signposting and logos (environment, organic, fair trade etc.) started appearing on packages in the 1980s. For example, the white swan, a Nordic logo for environmental products, was introduced in 1989. The same year Sweden and Australia introduced simplified nutritional labelling. In Sweden, it was the authorities that issued rules for a keyhole logo for foods with low content of fat, sugar and salt or high content of dietary

fibres (Figure 1). In Australia, it was the heart foundation that started the “pick the tick” campaign. New Zealand followed Australia and implemented a similar program in 1991. A heart mark was introduced in 2000 in Finland by the heart and diabetic associations. In the UK there is an ongoing debate about the voluntary traffic light labelling (green = eat plenty; orange = eat in moderation; red = eat sparingly) recommended by the authorities (Figure 1). As a response businesses have introduced their own signposting showing percentage of GDA (Guideline Daily Amounts) for different nutrients (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Examples of simplified nutrition labelling: Swedish key hole (<http://www.slv.se>), UK traffic light (<http://food.gov.uk/foodlabelling/signposting/>), and GDA (http://tesco.com/health/food/food_labelling/labelling.html?)

Today simplified nutrition labelling exists mainly at national level, but there are ongoing initiatives both at the Nordic and European level (Nordic Council of Ministers 2006a, <http://beuc.org>). The Nordic Council of Ministers supports harmonization of criteria for simplified nutritional labelling in the Nordic countries in the new Action plan on diet and physical activity (Nordic Council of Ministers 2006b), and has also recently given comments to the European Commission on food labelling legislation (Nordic Council of Ministers 2006a). The European Consumers’ Organisation (BEUC) supports the development of a simplified labelling scheme and has initiated a project to try to develop consensus with stakeholders (consumers, industry, retail, public health experts) on a EU-wide model for providing government endorsed nutritional information on packs in a simplified form. BEUC has developed guidelines for signposting system and recommends the use of a nutritional analysis table, including information in the form of Recommended Daily Amounts (RDAs), combined with a simplified front of pack “sign-posting” system that conveys certain essential information in a manner that facilitates consumer choice at the point of purchase.

Simplified labelling of foods is today in Norway mainly promoted as a tool for assisting consumers to easily identify, which foods are healthy options, and which ones are high in energy, fat, sugar, salt or fibre. NGOs and food retailers took the first initiatives to develop simplified ways of communicating nutritional information to consumers. The NGOs arranged in 2005 a conference “Why does Norway need simplified nutritional labelling of foods?” to start a debate among the key actors (<http://www.kostogtrening.com>), and a simplified labelling system (the Swedish key hole) was introduced in parts of the Norwegian grocery sector in 2006. The Norwegian authorities have now also entered the scene and have set a goal to implement simplified nutritional labelling in 2008 as part of nutrition policy (Handlingsplan for bedre kosthold i befolkningen 2007). The Norwegian Food Safety

Authority is now in the process of evaluating the various alternatives in dialogue with other key actors.

3. Consumers' views on simplified nutritional labelling

Consumers have in policy context generally been viewed as responsible individuals who need different types of information including labelling to make informed choices. However, this narrow view has been criticized because eating is influenced by social factors and everyday life (Kjærnes and Holm 2007). Food choice does not just include making choices and selecting products in the grocery store, but is a complex consumer practice that has been described to be based on routines, rationality and intuition (Berg 2005). Labelling may play a role in providing information for choices made based on rationality, and may consequently have some effect on healthy eating. A recent review of consumers and nutrition labelling showed that labelling may have a limited but important role in promoting healthy diet (Cowburn and Stockley 2005).

According to the Norwegian Food Safety Authority food labelling gives various advantages to consumers (<http://mattilsynet.no>):

- labelling makes it easier to compare products (price and quality)
- can avoid some ingredients (allergies)
- can avoid old spoiled food (date)
- get information on producer and who to contact
- information on how to prepare food.

Labelling aims at informing and protecting the consumer, but overload and complexity of information on food products may also result in misunderstanding and misinterpretation. It has been pointed out that more information is not always better for consumers. Based on this argument simplified food labelling scheme has been presented as a way to enable a broader spectre of consumers to easily identify, which foods are healthy options, and, which ones are high in energy, fat, sugar, salt or fibre. Earlier research on food labelling and consumers has shown that consumers are interested in nutrition information but that they do not always read and understand food labelling (Cowburn and Stockley 2005, Grunert 2002, Wandel 1997, Wang et al. 1995).

To get an understanding of how Norwegians consumers today view food labelling and especially simplified nutritional labelling a survey was conducted in 2007 (Roos 2007). The target was the population between 18-80 years of age and a sample consisting of 1000 respondents was telephone interviewed.

The survey reveals that when presented with a list of possible information that consumers read on labels, Norwegian consumers in general look at product information (date, price, brand name, ingredients, weight) and less often on specific nutritional information (including fat content, sugar content, calories, salt content). About half of the respondents report that they at least sometimes look at the content of fat, sugar or additives. However, many (70%) also report that they choose their daily diet based on what they think is healthy. There may be various reasons for consumers reporting that they do not very often look at nutritional information. The survey showed that many Norwegian consumers report that they are actually content with the current food labelling. This may reflect the fairly limited choices in the Norwegian food market and the observations that Norwegians trust food and food authorities

(Torjusen 2004, Kjærnes et al. 2007, + other Sifo reports). It may also be that consumers are not very interested in nutritional labelling because they report that they think that they already have a healthy diet and also that they think it is fairly easy to find healthy foods in the grocery store. However, the survey doesn't really give an answer to this question. It may also be that their response reflects that they know based on experience that it is not easy to find this type of information on the package and thus report that they do not look for it today.

The majority of participants (90%) are positive to simplified nutritional labelling and almost 70% think it would make it easier to make healthy choices in the grocery store. One in four report that they have seen or heard about symbol labelling of healthy foods in Norwegian grocery stores. The survey included a question about the type of simplified nutritional labelling that consumers prefer if it would be implemented in Norway. The majority (68%) said that they would prefer a traffic light type of logo that identifies both healthy and unhealthy foods. This result was somewhat surprising considering that many (40%) also said that they do not read nutritional information on the current label. This may to some degree be a methodological issue – people usually tend to say that they wish to get as much information as possible and to respond on the phone on something that is hypothetical is difficult. But it may also in part reflect that a traffic light type of labelling fits better with people's perceptions of the healthiness of food as a continuum and not a dichotomy (healthy vs. unhealthy food) in their everyday life (Johansson et al. 2006). The keyhole labelling, which only puts logos on the products that are the healthy choices, is thus not maybe seen as useful as the traffic light. However, more in-depth research is needed to clarify why consumers said that they preferred traffic light labelling. In the public debate a traffic light type of simplified nutritional labelling is supported by the Norwegian Consumer Council.

Norwegian consumers seem to have a somewhat ambivalent view of simplified nutrition labelling. They are mostly positive to it when asked, but they are not individually demanding such labelling. It remains unclear how much consumers would really use it when choosing foods in the grocery store, and if it really would motivate and make it easier for them to make healthy choices. It is important in this context to consider that health information is only one of many potential factors consumers take into consideration because food choice is a complex process influenced by both social processes in everyday life and individual decision-making (Kjærnes and Holm 2007).

4. Government and policymakers

Obesity and food scandals have in recent years made food, nutrition and health important political topics (Lien 2004). Food and nutrition have become central to policy because of scientific evidence of their potential to improve public health (Duff 1999). Therefore, one of the major health challenges facing governments and health policymakers today is to find successful ways to modify food choice (Buttriss et al. 2004). In the area of food and nutrition it means that policies have to depend on consumers' food choices. Regulation of the supply and marketing of unhealthy food products has been suggested. There is a focus on partnership between public and private actors and shared responsibility.

Health policy makers today focus on motivating and supporting people to make food and other lifestyle choices that are better for their health and prevent obesity. This means that the success of policies comes to rest heavily on consumer behaviour. Public health policy is underpinned by the notion that people should take responsibility for their own health and the

choices of policy measures also reflect this view (Food Ethics Council 2005, Palmblad 2003). Empowerment, choice and responsibility are central themes. Information and labelling gets a lot of attention, but critics emphasize that people should not have to choose health in order to eat healthily. This has been criticised for actually reducing consumers' autonomy by assuming that rational consumers see food primarily as a means to health. It is pointed out that it is limited to treat food like a medicine when we know that food and eating play important roles in social bonding, in shaping individual and group identities (Food Ethics Council 2005).

It is generally assumed that people will make healthy choices if they get information on the nutritional quality of foods. Nutrition policies have traditionally emphasized measures that encourage individuals to adopt healthy eating habits (Kjærnes 2003, Lien 1990), and information and food labelling have been included as measures to help consumers make informed choices. Labelling is viewed as a useful measure by policymakers, but a limitation is that this type of information at point-of-purchase probably only benefits those who are motivated to change and read labels (Buttriss et al. 2004).

Policies have been criticized for focusing on rational individual choice and thus failing to take adequately into account the impact of structure, including the food market. There is also a potential conflict between public health and corporate interests. Food industry has influenced in some countries the direction and wording of dietary guidelines (for example, "avoid" has been changed to "eat a moderate amount") because the document has strategic importance for industry (Duff 1999).

5. Food industry and retailers

Competitiveness is distinctive for today's markets and it has also become a key issue for the food sector. Corporate concentration in the food supply chain has resulted in that today a few large global companies have a lot of power within the food system (Lang and Heasman 2004).

The food chain is said to have changed from a supply system to a demand system and as a result producers increasingly seem to consider what their customers want. However, consumers' food choices are shaped and largely determined by the actors involved in production, processing and distribution. The food market describes that consumers worry about health and the safety of food production and question the ability of the modern food system to provide safe food (Henneberry et al. 1998, Macfarlane 2002). Information and transparency have become part of the strategies used by large retail chains in their competition for market shares. Health is used in information and advertising of products and also new types of products, functional foods. Retailers also undertake some of the regulatory work previously done by national governments. They are interested in self-regulation as a way to add value and reduce liability.

Businesses need to add value to food in order to survive in the marketplace, and a popular way to do this is processing ingredients to give them new qualities because little money is made by selling fresh fruits and vegetables that form the mainstay of healthy eating advice. Thus food manufacturers and retailers are interested in adding value to products (including developing functional foods), marketing value-added food products and pursuing health related labelling to be able to use health claims in marketing their products. Functional foods have been criticized for promoting individualization of eating (Holm 2003a). Food industry has been interested in lobbying and influencing the development of the regulations on

nutrition and health claims to try to get permission to use health claims on functional foods. They argue that health claims are a legitimate nutrition education tool. Opponents of functional foods state that the total diet is important for health and that technological interventions cannot solve complex social problems (Lawrence and Germov 1999).

Simplified nutritional labelling of foods may serve as bench-markers potentially rewarding health related aspects in product development processes. Manufacturers and retailers may improve the nutrient profile of foods. Labelling may thus have positive effects for consumers without them reading the labels. For example, in Australia and New Zealand the salt content in some foods (breakfast cereals, bread, margarine) was reduced in the late 1990s after the introduction of the tick logo (Williams et al 2003, Young and Swinburn 2002).

It has been objected that simplified nutritional labelling and health claims may move focus away from the diet as whole and lifestyles towards the qualities of single industrial food products (thereby also taking attention away from healthier fresh produce). It has also been objected that in technologically and otherwise dynamic fields like food production, such labelling may hamper product developments as “good enough” solutions are rewarded on equal footing with those who search to optimize the healthiness of their product. Businesses have been criticized for their focus on differentiating products not on raising base-line standards of nutrition (Food Ethics Council 2005). A standard response from industry has been what also is well established in nutrition “there is no such thing as good or bad foods – only good or bad diets.”

6. Overlaps – consumers, policymakers and food market

To get an understanding of why health related food labelling today has received more attention and support among different actors it is useful to explore similarities and differences in the actors’ views in a wider context.

The obesity epidemic has been referred to as a driving force for simplified nutritional labelling in Norway by different actors. NGOs and retailers were the first to put this on the agenda, but now the authorities have decided to implement some type of simplified nutritional labelling. However, it is not new that many actors are involved in patterns and processes related to food labelling. Marion Nestle (2002) has in her book “Food Politics” described that interactions in the beginning of the twentieth century in the United States among the industry, regulatory agencies, the public, the Congress established a cyclical pattern: manufacturers market products with health claims, the FDA responds with regulations, marketers file objections, the courts rule in favour of food industry, lobbying, Congress passes laws limiting FDA authority, and marketers take advantage.

The state, consumers and businesses have very different roles in the food system. The government is mainly a regulator and policy maker, consumers are involved in everyday food choice processes, and companies provide foods and services. The power of governments has been declining in the food system. Businesses have got more regulatory force and are active players in policy debates about public health. Corporate concentration has given big companies more power (Lang and Heasman 2004), and big companies in general rely on selling added-value, processed food products, not fresh fruit and vegetables.

The different actors also have different roles and expectations in relation to food, and refer to food in different ways. Food is mainly presented as nature or nutrition by health policy makers, whereas consumers present it more as culture and part of social relations and everyday life, and retailers and big companies present food as a commodity for sale and purchase (Jacobsen 2004).

Health is a central value in modern Western societies and food is very closely linked to health. The various actors focus on different aspects of food and health. People in part classify foods based on health, and they learn already as children to make a distinction between healthy and unhealthy foods, good foods and bad foods (Johansson et al. 2006). During the past decades the link between food and health has become internalised in everyday eating (Holm 2003), and health concerns are incorporated in the public debate and writings about food (Warde 1997). Consumers also report that they are interested in healthy food. But health is not often foremost in people's minds when they decide what to eat. Food is important for social bonding, for distinguishing cultures and shaping identities. Food is for many mainly associated with taste and pleasure, which is often seen as an antithesis of healthy food (Kjærnes and Holm 2007, Warde 1997, Makela 2002).

The government and authorities are concerned about public health (currently much focus on overweight and obesity) and the costs of health care. By framing overweight and obesity as an epidemic, food is mainly referred to as medicine and obesity becomes an individual problem. The role of health experts has largely become to empower people and motivate and support them to improve their own health, make healthy choices or take their 'medicine'. As a consequence health again becomes more individual responsibility. Health policy seems to assume that people choose food based on health. However, people should not have to "choose health" in order to eat healthily.

Food industry in line with government seems to prefer individualised approaches to public health. Businesses thus also treat food like medicine and emphasize consumers to improve their own health. Lawrence and Germov (1999) have described how industry and certain government bodies constitute a 'medical-food-industrial complex'. But it is important to remember that businesses are meant to make money not to improve public health. Large food companies are facing market saturation and there are limits to growth for businesses. In addition, businesses face the risk that they can be held legally and morally liable. Selling more food has become difficult and one response for companies is to differentiate products. By adding value, for example, health, are they able to charge more. Thus businesses are interested in developing functional foods (that is adding health properties to foods) and marketing their health-related products.

The different actors have different roles in simplified nutritional labelling. Simplified nutritional labelling of foods fits well in with the "obesity epidemic" and views of food as medicine. The ways health policy makers and industry and retail refer to simplified nutritional labelling overlap in many ways and thus strengthen the implementation. Consumers have a wider view of food and are more ambivalent about the role of this type of food labelling. Consumers tend to support simplified nutritional labelling but they are not active advocates for it.

Regulatory bodies generally respond to change rather than initiate change (Lawrence and Germov 1999). The new EU Regulation on nutrition and health claims shows that governments also can have an active role and require that health related information is

included on food labels through regulation. However, it is relevant to question if labelling is enough for achieving the policy goal to empower people to improve their own health. It builds on an expectation that people have the capacity and interest to do more. Much also suggests that the state assumes that information including labelling will boost the demand for healthy food. Labelling has a potential to help improve health but it is not enough. By focusing on consumers' choice and decisions government underplays the importance of supply-side decisions and other policy measures that could make a difference to people's health. They expect that the market will respond to demand and reduce salt, harmful fats, and sugars in processed food (Food Ethics Council 2005).

Consumers can use their choices and political activities to influence what is on food labels. However, as shown in this paper individual consumers have not been very active in the process with implementing simplified nutritional labelling in Norway. Simplified nutrition labelling may help consumers choose healthy products in the grocery store, and may have a positive health outcome for consumers if it induces producers to change the composition of their products to fulfil criteria for labelling. Companies select health related information for marketing and advertising, when the benefits of providing the information outweigh the cost. Health related labelling may also provide incentives to manufacturers to change composition of old products and develop new products that promote public health. However, there is also a risk that this leads to increased use of food fortification and health related marketing to boost sales of products that should be eaten only sparingly according to public health advice.

Consumer choice and responsibility are key overlapping issues in why consumers, policymakers and the food market support simplified nutritional labelling of foods. Consumers wish to be able to choose and express that they are responsible for their own health. Policymakers also wish to give consumers the right to choose healthy foods and the food market provides consumers with the choice.

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Theme 11. Housing and consumption

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Housing and immigrants – consumer aspects of the meaning of the home

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Abstract

Housing research of recent years has approached consumption by focusing on the meaning and the use of the home and by focusing on housing preferences for different consumer groups. In parallel there has been research on immigrants' housing, however, much of this has focused on social problems of deprived areas. This paper combines the two approaches theoretically and raises questions of how a consumer-based approach to the question of immigrants' housing situation can enrich the field of housing research in general as well as the studies of immigrants' housing. The paper is thus primarily a theoretical paper combining approaches and raising questions for further empirical investigation, however it also includes examples from an empirical pilot study with a few qualitative interviews on the subject.

1. Introduction

For the last decade some housing research has been developed in a consumer perspective, focusing on the housing preferences of different consumer groups and on the meaning of 'home' to these different groups. Other parts of the housing research have focused on housing problems among immigrants and refugees, especially those living in deprived housing areas. In this paper we will combine the two approaches. Thus we will examine, to what extent the ideas of good housing are culturally dependent and what the concept 'home' means to different groups of immigrants.

In the past different sociological categories have been used to find differences in the understanding of the meaning of home; class distinction, gender, education, lifestyle. In this paper we argue that the sociological categories of ethnicity and nationality could be fruitful as well. This implies that the concept of home will be pushed to the edge. To immigrants and refugees who have left their native country and might have lost their former house, the concept of 'home' might have a special value. Thus the study of immigrants' attachment to their home might not only tell us about the cultural impact on the concept of home, it might also be a way to achieve improved understanding of the meaning of home in general.

By combining the approaches as described above, the main questions we would like to raise in this article are:

- Do immigrants feel at home in several places (their country of residence and their country of origin), and does this affect their relation to their home in the country of residence?
- To what extent are the ideas of good housing culturally dependent? Are the residences available in Denmark culturally biased in ways that do not meet the needs of some types of immigrants?
- Are immigrants a special (or several special) consumer groups with other and maybe restricted access to parts of the housing market and with special preferences?
- What are the positive and negative approaches to ghettos in the sense of housing areas with a socially and culturally homogeneous population?

The focus on immigrants involves the use of terms and concepts which we need to define before continuing: *Immigrants* are persons born in another country – by foreign parents (Poulsen and Lange, 1998). Some immigrants have chosen to immigrate of their own free will, while others are *refugees*, who have been forced to leave their home-country because of religious or political reasons (Büdnikow 1987). This means, that refugees are a – smaller or larger - subset of the immigrants. This is not the case with the *descendants*, or second-generation immigrants, who are persons, born in Denmark with immigrant parents.

Terms such as *ethnic*, *ethnic group* and *ethnicity* are more unclear and hard to define. Frederic Boal (Boal, 2000) quotes Richard Schermerhorn, saying that an ethnic group is a “collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements as the epitome of their peoplehood”. For a more precise definition of ethnic group Boal makes a list of attributes of an ethnic group: Members will share certain basic cultural values; they will have a common origin or myth of origin and a sense of shared past; they will be biologically self-reproducing; they will make up a network of contact among themselves; and finally, they are categories of ascription by others and of self-identification by the members themselves. Boal concludes that an ethnic group will define itself in a matter of contrast: an ethnic group consists of self conscious members, seeing themselves and the group as distinct to outsiders.

The term *race* is closely connected to ethnicity, but still ethnicity and race are not the same. Boal defines the difference this way (Boal, 2000): While the ethnic group are distinguished by socially selected cultural traits, the racial group are distinguished by socially selected physical traits. The physical traits can be those of skin pigmentation, hair texture, facial features, stature and the like.

In countries with a long history of immigration a well-known phenomenon is that immigrants settle in certain housing areas – close to fellow-countrymen. In the literature of recent years these housing areas have been called *enclaves* (Andersen, 2006b). Andersen describes enclaves as an area with a social network among people from a certain ethnic group. In contrast to *ghettos*, the residents of the enclaves have chosen the housing area voluntarily (Andersen, 2000b).

In the following part 2) we will first present different theoretical approaches from the literature to 'the meaning of home'. After this description of the meaning of home in general, we will 3) focus on the literature on immigrants: What does the term 'home' mean to immigrants and do the immigrants have special preferences on the housing market? The following part 4) describes the Danish context and the history of immigration in Denmark. Finally we will 5) describe a study which we will carry out at the Danish Building Research Institute in the coming year. We will describe the objective and the methods of the study, and

give some insights from an empirical pilot study with a few qualitative interviews with Turkish households.

2. Housing research and the meaning of the home

The international housing research can be divided into at least three different approaches, firstly quantitative economic or demographic studies on housing and moving patterns (see for instance (Clark et al, 1984; Littlewood and Munro, 1997)), secondly a quantitative approach to understanding cultural differences in housing consumption and preferences (see for instance (Saunders, 1989; Ærø, 2006)) and thirdly a qualitative phenomenological approach on the meaning of the home to its residents (Després, 1991). Much housing research, however, can be criticized for being too policy oriented and thus less oriented towards theoretical interests (Clapham, 2005). This is for instance often seen in the papers presented at the European Housing Research Network (ENHR) conferences.

To introduce a more theoretical approach, Clapham suggests a pathway approach in housing studies, following individuals and households in their changing living conditions resulting from changes in work and family life (Clapham, 2005). In such a pathway approach it is important to understand different "times", including the age of the individual, the lifecycle of the household and the time of the cohorts for the individuals and households and their historically specific contexts. Furthermore Clapham criticizes that much of the quantitative housing research uses rationalistic understandings of housing choices and objective criteria for what good housing is. Objective categories in housing for instance focus on the size of and installations in the home, however, this is not necessarily the best criteria for what different types of residents consider as housing qualities. The question of what good housing or housing problems are thus needs research based on more qualitative methods and the remaining part of this section will focus on insights from this type of research.

A central question in a qualitative approach to housing studies is the question of how the concept of the home relates to the physical dwelling. In much housing research the notion of home is often linked directly to the dwelling, however one can also feel at home at other places. Shelley Mallet quotes from Hollander (1991) that home can be perceived as concentric circles where each circle represents existential meaning, including for instance the dwelling, the neighbourhood, the family, other social environments, workplace or the nation (Mallet, 2004). Following this, Mallet also raises the question of whether 'home' is a place, a space, a feeling, a praxis or a way of being in the world. Mallet's own answer is that 'home' can be any of these (Mallet, 2004).

The strong link between home and residence today in the western world can be traced back to the seventeenth century and the bourgeoisie homes with their strong focus on family life (Somerville, 1997). Mallet quotes from Rybczynski that particularly the seventeenth century fostered the ideas of privacy, intimacy and comfort and made these strong organizing principles for furnishing homes. Even today we can find these principles as strong ideas of how to furnish a home (Mallet, 2004). John Burnett (1978) describes how this idea grows even stronger in the end of the 1800s when the newly established middle-classes needed a codex for how to settle. Family life was woven into a morally religious codex, and the family home arose as an almost sacred place. Following this we have later seen how the modern welfare states worked with the nuclear family in private homes as a basic social unit, and a cornerstone in building a healthy and civilized society (Bech-Danielsen, 2004).

Today we still find conservative political forces promoting family values through housing policy (Clapham, 2005), and we find economic forces promoting the dream of the ideal home (Chapman, 1999). The consumer, however, is not a mere victim of societal forces. The dream of nuclear family life in ideal homes also comes from inside the consumer, and most people live somewhere in between the real settlement and the dream of the ideal (Mallet, 2004). This also means that all people are limited by what is actually available at the housing market, and therefore limited by both present and historic political, cultural and economic factors governing housing construction. This historical perspective on how home and housing has been strongly linked through the last centuries indicates that the meaning of home and questions of what is good housing are socially constructed more than they depend on universal deep human needs (Somerville, 1997).

An often cited review article by Carole Després uses a phenomenological perspective to gather all the different meanings of the home for its inhabitants (Després, 1991). These meanings include home as security and control, as reflection of one's ideas and values, as something to act upon and modify, as permanence and continuity, as relationship with family and friends, as a centre of activities, as a refuge from the outside world, as an indicator of personal status, as a material structure and as a place to own. The article has been criticized for its lack of theoretical understanding and for claiming socially constructed values to be universal (Somerville, 1997). It has also been criticized for only focusing on the positive aspects of the home, and thus ignoring domestic violence and domination of women and children in the patriarchal home (Mallet, 2004). Those criticizing the article, however, in their own review articles use several of the same categories. Peter Somerville thus argues that the concepts of privacy, identity and familiarity are essential in the understanding of the home and his argument for these three concepts are that they relate to spatial, psychological and social conditions, each of these being necessary dimensions in the concept of home (Somerville, 1997)

Another approach to understanding the meaning of the home comes from the Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad, who argues that everyday life is crucial in combining all the activities we perform every day in different sectors of society (Gullestad, 1989). According to Gullestad everyday life contains two dimensions; on one hand the practical organisation of activities, and on the other hand the knowledge and recognition which follows from carrying through these activities. In both dimensions the home has a key position in efforts to create cohesion in a fragmented everyday life. According to space and time structures, the home is centrally placed in everyday life and even though the home is not necessarily the place where most hours are spent, the home is where we depart from and where we return to. This means the home is not only important in the daily organisation of everyday life, it is also a fundamental aspect of how we perceive and recognize the world.

Above we have summarized studies focusing on housing consumption. Another approach is to focus on the main lines in consumer theories and then apply these to the housing field. An important aspect of consumer theories relates to the question of conspicuous consumption and how goods are used to show status and class belonging (Bourdieu, 1984). As the biggest asset in private households, both in a physical and financial sense, the house is clearly also used as a status object. More recent consumer studies however question the strong focus on conspicuous consumption and emphasize the more routine aspects (Gronow and Warde, 2001). Furthermore recent consumer research has also put more effort into understanding the relation between the goods and the consumer. Colin Campbell talks about how the 'craft

consumer', through the consumption process, designs, redesigns and decorates goods such as the home (Campbell, 2005) and Kaj Ilmonen, describes the process of appropriating goods and how the consumer, through working with and changing goods, makes them an important part of human life, not only as objects, but also as something that has special meaning to us (Ilmonen, 2004). In line with this we have previously shown how families chose type of residence and decorate their homes following very class-based structures in choosing where to live, but using more craft-consumer oriented approaches in the interior decoration (Gram-Hanssen and Bech-Danielsen, 2004).

In this section a review of research within the field of housing consumption and the meaning of the home in general has been presented. In the following section this will be used as a basis for a review of literature focusing more explicitly on the question of the meaning of the home among immigrants. In this we envisage that there are differences relating to the meaning of the home depending on the cultural background of the resident and depending on the situation of having moved far from one's country of origin, either forced as a refugee or freely as an immigrant.

3. Immigrants and the meaning of home

Different individuals find different meaning in the concept of home. This depends on sex, age and personal history, but also social and cultural backgrounds have a great influence. Thus in the literature (Lewin, 2001), the concept of home among immigrants is described as being developed as a mix between the culture of the native country and the culture of the new settlement. Therefore immigrants having a background in a culture far away from Western influences might put quite another meaning in the notion of 'home'. Could this be the cause to some conflicts in housing areas, where people with different cultural backgrounds are living next to each other?

In Denmark and probably also in other Western countries the importance of the home has increased during the last decades and this is reflected in the growing number of television programmes and magazines on interior decoration etc. However, some research states that the meaning of the home is even more crucial to immigrants (Lewin, 2001). It is argued, that housing plays an important role in the integration of immigrants; it is of great importance to immigrants to find an adequate, appropriate and affordable house, where the life in a new settlement can start. The house is the 'residence', which lays down the framework for activity and experience in the everyday life.

In continuation of this, it is argued that the meaning of home as security (as described above, (Carole Depres 1991) established 'security' as an important meaning of home) can be of special importance to immigrants and refugees. Ethnic minorities see their home as a place of refuge; a retreat from the challenges in the new society (Andersen 2006b). Furthermore it is argued by Andersen, that ethnic minorities put great meaning into the home in relation to establishing a close-knit family, and therefore immigrants spend more time in their home than an average Dane (Andersen, 2006b).

The home might also play an important role in the process of integration. Anthropologists describe the home as a micro-cosmos reflecting the most important concepts and values of the surrounding culture (Gullestad, 1989). Therefore, to the newcomers, the home can be an important place to experience the values and lifestyles of the new culture. For instance social

relations between men and women as well as relations between generations can be experienced in the design of the house. On the other hand, the immigrants might find it hard to live in Danish houses, reflecting a lifestyle very different from their own.

Other research (Murdie 2004) suggests that immigrants from less modern societies put less importance to the concept of home. Murdie quotes Moore (2000), saying that the home as the domain of privacy is a less dominant concept among immigrants coming from non-individualistic cultures. This argument finds support in a historic perspective from Western culture. In Western countries during the 19th century the 'home' was understood as one's country of origin rather than one's private house (Moore, 2000; Burnett, 1978). Only later have private spaces been created within dwellings and the house has become a place of intimacy and privacy.

Finally, in continuation of this, it can be argued, that the meaning of home among immigrants should not be discussed as 'either less or more'. Instead the meaning of 'home' among different ethnic groups can simply be seen as being different. Thus Somerville (Somerville, 2000) argues that different ethnic groups find different meaning in the concept of home. Consequently an understanding of the native culture is necessary to get an understanding of the apparent concept of home among immigrants.

According to Amos Rapoport (Rapoport, 1982) 'home' also have different meanings inside each ethnic group. By way of example Rapoport refers to young versus old people from India. To young Indians, the pattern of settlements is seen as an expression of identity. This is not the case among the older Indians (Rapoport, 1982).

Nevertheless, to leave your native culture and to become integrated in a new society can be seen as a process of changing identity. Living in a society where the cultural values are drastically different than your own and where your behaviour is constantly questioned, will - sooner or later - influence your own values and your own behaviour. Therefore, to some extent the loss of 'familiarity' that is experienced by immigrants and refugees outside their country of origin results in a loss of identity (Somerville, 1997). To settle in a new society and to become integrated in a new culture means that your personal identity changes. You may have to say goodbye to values and traditions connected to your origin, and you will be influenced by values and customs in the new society.

In the introduction to the book, *Migrants of Identity. Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement* Nigel Rapport and Andrew Dawson propound that immigrants' existence on the move and refugees' existence in exile are like an image of modernity. As an immigrant and a refugee you have left your roots of origin, and still you might not feel quite familiar with the new society. This is the nature of modernity - to quote Marchall Berman: "To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are" (Berman, 1988, p.15).

Berman's description of modernity has similarities to the situation of immigrants. They are often aiming for utopia in a new culture, and they sometimes end up with nostalgic memories of their origin. Thus, in a study (Necsef, 1992) on Turkish immigrants in Denmark it was concluded that many Turks had a nostalgic relationship to Turkey, and in other research (Christensen, 2001) it is established, that immigrants often find it hard to cut the bonds to the native country.

There is a risk that immigrants become torn between two cultures – the culture of the past (the culture of origin) and the lifestyle of the present (the new culture). This can be described as an 'identity of diaspora', splitting the immigrants between the former country and the new country. 'Diaspora' is the Jewish word for having a home in more than one place (Schwartz, 1997). Thus some immigrants and refugees might relate the concept of home to a previous house or a native village rather than their current apartment in a Western social housing area.

Diaspora is often seen as a barrier to integration. Settling in the new society is difficult if the immigrant has a desire to return to the native country. Therefore in the literature 'home' is closely linked to resettlement and seen as an important indicator of immigrants' integration in the new society (Murdie, 2004, p.3). Deep down, integration is a matter of familiarity and a matter of feeling at home.

Nevertheless, immigrants often settle among other immigrants (see next part of this paper), and they often feel membership of a certain ethnic group. To a certain degree this means that they cling to the identity of the native culture. In this context it is noteworthy that identity is developed by making distinctions: Identity arises when someone differentiates himself/herself from the surroundings and defines himself/herself as 'something else' (Rapoport, 1982, p.12). Basically, this is the well known distinction between 'us' and 'them' (Boal, 2000, p.5). In this definition of identity, it is closely connected to ethnicity. To claim the existence of an ethnic group is to distinguish the members of the group from others. Again it is a matter of drawing a boundary between 'us' and 'them'. Boal concludes that ethnic groups see themselves as 'distinct', and that an ethnic group cannot exist in isolation.

Following this theoretical review of questions relating specifically to the meaning of home among emigrants, we will now continue with an empirical overview of emigration to Denmark and knowledge about the emigrants' housing situation.

4. Immigrants and refugees in Denmark

Denmark has always experienced immigration. For centuries Dutch, Germans, French, Poles, Russians, Swedes and others have moved to Denmark (Sane, 2000) - often they were invited by the Danes because of the need of working capacity, at other times they came as refugees, forced to leave their home-country for religious or political reasons (Büdnikow, 1987). Of course this tendency increased in the 20th century. Modernity and urbanization set people on the move, and while a lot of Danes moved to America, people from other nations settled in Denmark.

In the first decades after the Second World War, immigration to Denmark primarily consisted of political refugees from Eastern Europe, starting in 1956 with refugees from Hungary (Fenger-Grøn & Grøndahl, 2004). Nevertheless, it was in the late 1960s that immigration really gained pace. The economic growth and the lack of working capacity in Denmark resulted in immigration of 30,000-40,000 people per year. This immigration first came from Turkey and the former Yugoslavia, later Pakistanis and people from African countries like Morocco and Algeria followed (Fenger-Grøn & Grøndahl, 2004). These 'guest workers' were usually single men, or men who left their families in the native country.

In 1973 the Danish government stopped further immigration. The oil crisis had caused a temporary break in the economic growth, and the Turkish and the Yugoslavian immigrants were among the first to become unemployed. This was one of the reasons, that 'the strangers' became a topic on the Danish political scene. A new law made it much harder to obtain a residency permit and a work permit in Denmark, and the wave of immigration stopped for a while. In the next two decades immigration to Denmark mainly consisted of refugees – first the political refugees from Chile (after Pinochet's military coup in 1973), then the 'boat-refugees' from Vietnam from 1975 (Fenger-Grøn & Grøndahl, 2004). In the 1980s the refugees primarily came from Iran and Iraq, for religious or political reasons and because of the war between the two countries from 1980-1988 (Fenger-Grøn & Grøndahl, 2004). During the civil war in Sri Lanka (1983-1984) Tamil refugees also came to Denmark, and throughout the 1980s Palestinians came to Denmark. In the 1990s the refugees primarily came from the former Yugoslavia and from Somalia - both places as a result of civil wars (Fenger-Grøn & Grøndahl, 2004).

Today, immigration to Denmark has a lot of similarities to the situation in 1969-1973. The demographic development in Denmark and the economic growth mean that an import of working capacity is needed again. This time the immigrants typically come from the former Eastern European countries, Poland in particular. In 2006 approx. 46,500 immigrants came to Denmark (Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs, 2007). Of these only 1,100 people came as refugees (Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs, 2007) - from Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan and former Yugoslavia.

Thus the immigrants in Denmark represent different ethnic groups with different cultural and personal backgrounds. Some research has been carried out in order to map the way they settle in the Danish society. In a study (based on statistical data and surveys) focusing on the housing situation of immigrants in Danish social housing, Andersen concludes, that the ethnic groups are unequally distributed in Denmark. Often they live in urbanised areas, and they very rarely live in smaller villages and rural areas (Andersen, 2006a). Furthermore many immigrants are settled in ethnic enclaves with a high concentration of people coming from the same culture as themselves.

The appearance of ethnic enclaves can have many reasons. First of all the network and the social resources of the immigrants are relatively weak, and therefore they often have difficulties achieving an appropriate and affordable house in Denmark. The result is that many immigrants end up in housing estates, where the waiting lists are relatively short, and which for all practical purposes this means in housing estates with a high concentration of unemployment, crime and other social problems. This might cause some problems in the process of integration. In another survey from 2006 Andersen found that immigrants living in Danish social housing were dissatisfied with the reputation of their housing area (Andersen, 2006b).

In Denmark most immigrants settle in social housing. 60 per cent of the immigrants live in social housing (Andersen, 2006a) compared with only 20 per cent of Danes. And 22 per cent of the immigrants live in housing areas where more than 40 per cent of the residents have an ethnic background other than Danish. This stresses the fact that immigrants live in ethnic enclaves.

The existence of ethnic enclaves might involve some problems in the process of integration. Immigrants and refugees can live in Denmark for years with only few contacts to Danes.¹ Nevertheless, Andersen (Andersen, 2006a) suggests, that the ethnic enclaves can also have a positive effect in the process of integration. Living close to fellow-countrymen, who are already well established in Denmark can be a great help in getting knowledge of Danish society, and the network of friends or family might be useful in finding a job. This might be another reason, why many immigrants live in ethnic enclaves.

A third reason is that many immigrants want to live in an area where they do not feel too much of a stranger. In his research on the housing situation of black Caribbeans in England, Frederick Boal found that most of the Caribbeans do not want to live in areas dominated by white Englishmen. The black Caribbeans argued that it would make them feel like strangers in their own living area. Surrounded by familiarity they felt more 'at home' in their neighbourhood (Boal, 2000, p.269).

Andersen (Andersen, 2006a) concludes the same in his research: What matters most when ethnic minorities choose to live in Danish social housing is that there is an ethnic environment of a certain size. Thus half of the ethnic immigrants living in Danish social housing have chosen their dwelling because they have friends and/or family in the area, and every third because they like having many fellow residents with the same ethnic background as themselves (Andersen, 2006b).

On the other hand immigrants want to live among Danes. Only very few immigrants want to live in an area with a minority of Danes. One-third think that at least half of the residents in the area ought to be Danes, and one-third think that immigrants should make up no more than one-third of the residents. The final one-third place no importance on the number of Danes/immigrants. These figures are closely related to the process of integration. Typically, immigrants who are relatively weakly integrated find it most important to have friends or family in their neighbourhood (Andersen, 2006a).

Half of Danes live in detached houses, typically owner-occupied housing. In these housing areas ethnic minorities are underrepresented (Andersen, 2006a). This might indicate a lack of integration - home ownership is connected not only to wealth accumulation but also to putting down roots, committing, and by extension to social integration (Murdie, 2004, p.5). Nevertheless, a survey from 2006 (Andersen, 2006a) concluded, that 74 per cent of ethnic people moving from social housing in Denmark prefer to live in a detached house. A survey from 2001 stated that this is also the case among average Danes: 78 per cent of Danes wanting to move prefer to live in a detached house (SBI and AKF, 2001). The same surveys find, that ethnic people in Denmark have the same needs to become a home-owner (73 per cent) as average Danes (72 per cent). The fact that the ethnic groups are overrepresented in social housing and underrepresented in detached houses stresses the importance of social, financial, economic and political conditions on the housing market.

¹ In the following we use the term 'Danes', for the residents born in Denmark by Danish parents in contrast to immigrants and descendants. Of course this is not completely correct, as immigrants and descendants might be Danish citizens as well.

5. Our study – design, objective and preliminary results

This paper is the kick-start to a study which will be carried out at the Danish Building Research Institute in 2007-2008. The study is part of a larger research project focusing on conflicts (and solutions of conflicts) among immigrants and refugees in social housing. In this context our specific study will focus on 'the meaning of home'. What is the meaning of home to different ethnic groups – and can conflicts in social housing estates be understood as an expression of different peoples' varying idea of the concept of 'home'? Are some conflicts basically rooted in different expectations of what a home and a housing area should be?

The study will include twelve in-depth interviews – nine interviews with families coming from three different nationalities and three interviews with Danish families. Each interview is expected to last for two hours, they will be recorded electronically and afterwards thematically referred, partly transcribed and analyzed.

The weakness of the qualitative interview is the limited number of interviews. The interviewed residents do not in any way represent ethnic residents in Denmark. Nevertheless, the strength of the limited number of qualitative interviews is that you get in-depth information on opinions from individuals and a richness of detail and narrative. This way, our qualitative study has to be seen in connection to the quantitative studies of the larger research projects.

Ethnic people from Iraq, Somalia and Turkey have been chosen for the interviews (three families from each group). These three groups have been chosen because they represent different topics in the question of integration. Somalis and Iraqis came to Denmark recently. This means, that they have only just settled, and that they have the challenges of integration and the problems of leaving the native home close in mind. Furthermore Somalis and Iraqis are the two ethnic groups having most difficulties in getting settled in Denmark. In his research Andersen compares the level of integration among different ethnic groups in Denmark, and he concludes that signs of disintegration are highest among Somalis and Iraqis.

Also with regard to creating a new 'home' in Denmark and leaving a native home, Somalis and Iraqis are of special interest - and quite interesting to compare. The Iraqis seem to be strongly rooted in Iraq, having a strong feeling of diaspora. This might be one of the reasons why Iraqis have difficulties becoming integrated in Denmark. To the Somalis diaspora is definitely not the issue. Paradoxically, even though Somalis are the weakest integrated ethnic group in Danish society, at the same time they are the group with the lowest signs of diaspora (Andersen, 2006a). Nevertheless, the private home is very important to Somalis, especially the feeling of security and safety connected to the home (Murdie, 2004, p.9). According to Murdie this is caused by the fact that the Somalis are refugees from devastated areas.

Turks are one of the largest ethnic groups in Denmark. Turks have typically been in Denmark for 30-40 years. According to Peter Somerville the attachment to one's home increases with the length of residence (Somerville 1997, p.229). This is mainly because the home is an embodiment of last memories, he explains. Therefore it is not surprising that Turks are actually well integrated in Danish society (2006a). The interview of the Turks will focus on the process of integration – from arrival Denmark and up till now. Where is 'home' today? What do they miss from their native country? Is it possible for Turks to feel at home in Danish social housing? In what sense are Turkish culture / Danish culture visible in the interior and home-decorating?

The three ethnic groups will be found where they are typically settled - in the enclaves of respectively Somalis, Iraqis and Turks. In each of these enclaves, four families will be interviewed; three families from the dominant ethnic group of the area and one Danish family. The object of the interviews with the Danish families is to elucidate how the 'feeling of home' of the Danes and their attachment to the housing area are influenced by the presence of the dominant ethnic group. How do the Danish families experience the ethnic groups in their neighbourhood? The atmosphere among the different groups and the communication between the groups can be crucial to the experience in the neighbourhood. Also the interviews with the Danish families are meant as a standard of reference in the analysis of the ethnic groups.

In the following we will give some insights from the first three interviews, including two interviews with Turkish households and one with a Danish household, all living in the same neighbourhood in a suburban block built in 1972. Contact with the interviewees was made through clubs and social workers in the area. Two of the interviews were recorded, but the Turk did not want us to record the interview because she felt ashamed of her bad Danish (which was not grammatically correct but quite understandable). In this case the analysis is based on our notes during and immediately after the interview combined with some written statements/answers which the interviewee had prepared before the interview with help from her grow-up daughter.

The interviews may be biased, especially those with the immigrant, as those accepting to be interviewed were probably the most integrated in Danish society. Furthermore we had a feeling that they felt an obligation to represent other immigrants in the neighbourhood and thus give the most positive impression of being well integrated and happy to live in Denmark. Still the interviews provide interesting knowledge of how questions of home and housing may be influenced by ethnicity and cultural background. In the following we will present some preliminary results from these first interviews dealing with the question of where interviewees feel at home, the importance of being among followers in the neighbourhood and finally questions of how the physical design of these blocks conflicts with the immigrants' ideas of a good dwelling based on a partly different cultural background.

The question of feeling at home is answered very differently in the three interviews. In one of the Turkish families, the man explains that he came to Denmark with his parents thirty years ago when he was teenager. All the years he has stayed in the same neighbourhood in Denmark. His parents went back to Turkey some years ago, but to him Denmark is where he feels at home: *"I feel more Danish than Turkish. When I go on holiday in Turkey, I do that every second year for four weeks.... after two weeks I start to think about when are we going home. That is because the system there does not fit me well"*. In the other Turkish family the women came to Denmark fifteen years ago when she was thirty years old. She still has a home in Turkey, and she explains that 'home' for her is both places. When she is in her house in Turkey she can miss her Danish home and when she is in Denmark she can miss the Turkish. This woman also explains how an earthquake in Turkey some years ago destroyed her parental home completely, and this means that both her Danish and her own Turkish home has got an even stronger meaning for her. Furthermore she also explains that she might wish to go back to stay permanently in Turkey in her old age, however, her two daughters feel like Danes, so probably she will stay in Denmark to be close to them.

Of the three families, the Danish family feels the least at home in the neighbourhood. They have only lived there a few years and they hope they will be able to move to another area within some years. This family used to own their own terraced house, but because of an accident and illness they had to sell it and lost a lot of money. They do not expect to be able to buy a house again. They moved into this area because their previous apartment in another social housing block became too small when they were expecting their second child and now where they are expecting again, they are happy about the size of their apartment but have much more mixed feelings about the neighbourhood. They describe that they sometimes feel insecure walking in the area in the evening and their 7-year-old boy seldom goes out on his own, even in daytime. Groups of young immigrant boys calling after those walking by makes them feel insecure, however, the family also emphasize that the boys do not actually do anything if you just ignore them. On the one hand this family describes how they experience problems in the area and on the other hand they also describe how the reputation of their neighbourhood is much worse than it deserves. This in itself can be a problem because they have to explain to their friends and family how they can live 'in such a place'.

Another problem mentioned often in the interview with the Danish family concerns garbage and litter in the common areas and in their own little garden. Quite often, they say, some of their neighbours just throw garbage out of the window, and they have several times found used nappies in their garden. On the other hand extreme cleanliness can also be a problem as they describe how some of the immigrants living above them might use a lot of water to clean their balcony, and all this water inevitably runs down on their terrace. Sometimes some of their neighbours also use chemicals to clean with and this smells bad, as does some of the food they cook. To our question of whether they ever complain to their neighbours, the husband tells that if he knows who to blame he will not hesitate to knock on their door and bawl them out. He says he almost hit a child once who had stolen or perhaps just played with his son's toy.

Actually it is interesting that cleanliness becomes a subject in all three interviews without being part of our interview guide – it seems that cleanliness is an important factor in relation to home and housing both for the Turkish and the Danish families. From the Danish family it is clear that there are problems of litter and garbage in the staircase and the surroundings, whereas cleanliness in their own home is not mentioned during the interview. In both of the Turkish interviews the importance of having a clean home is emphasised and connected to the pride of the housewife, and one of the women explains how she had difficulties in accepting Danish families having pets in their home when she first came to Denmark. Neither of the Turks interviewed finds it nice or acceptable to litter the common areas, however this does not seem to be such a big problem for them, even though the contrast between the very dirty and worn-out staircase and the very tidy Turkish homes inside the front door is big.

Another interesting contrast between the staircase and the inside of the Turkish home was observed at our arrival. The staircase looked as can be expected in a Danish social housing block from the 1970s. It was constructed in concrete, the floors were made in terrazzo, the walls were painted in typical 70s colours and 'decorated' by graffiti. When the family opened the front door, we entered quite another world. We felt we had gone directly to Ankara – the apartment was decorated with a lot of framed paintings and photos, Persian carpets covered the floors, curtains made of tulle covered the windows, small embroidered tablecloths decorated the television and the stereo etc. Later on in the interview we asked the family whether they felt the apartment was decorated in a Danish or a Turkish style. The answer was definite: "Danish. Only the carpets are a leftover from Turkish culture".

Concerning the dwellings and how Danish architectural ideas from the 1970s fit with the three families, they all seem to agree that the apartments as well as the facilities for shopping etc. are quite good. However, as a minor example of how the layout of the apartments may conflict with the Turkish norms, one of the families explains a problem concerning the location of the kitchen in relation to the rest of the house. This recently came into view when the husband's father died: The traditional way of mourning includes that the male part of the relatives gather together. However, because of the location of the kitchen the wife had to go through the living room many times that day, which felt wrong to both of them.

Concerning feeling at home in the neighbourhood, descriptions throughout the interview give the impression that the Danish family does not really feel at home in the area and feel that they are among strangers. This is also backed up when they describe how when they are at home, they most often draw the curtains so that they can forget the surroundings of their apartment. On the other hand the family also tells that they do say hello to most of their neighbours and think they are quite nice people. And they describe how many of the Turkish families in particular often sit together in the common area in summertime and have barbecues, which looks very cosy and they would like to be a part of this. Some of their immigrant neighbours have asked if they should do something together like these barbecues, however, the Danish family think that the Turks need to take more initiative and actually arrange something rather than just asking. Again, maybe because the Danish family feels like part of an ethnic minority in the area, they expect the Turks to take the initiative, and then they would be happy to be part of the activity. The same holds for many of the social clubs in the area. The wife has considered being part of a fitness group for instance, but she is afraid of being the only not-immigrant and feeling outside.

From the Turk interviews we also hear about the strong social relations between many of the Turks and they talk about this as very positive and a part of why they feel at home in the area. The man in one of the families says: *"When I walk in the streets I always meet someone I know, and we say hallo, that is very nice"*. This family, however, are about to leave the area, as they have bought a detached house. The most important reasons for moving out the area are economic (they want to invest money instead of paying rent) and that they need more space with three teenagers at home. However, the husband also explains that he thinks it is a problem that there are too few Danes in the area and that there is too much trouble and noise from young (second generation) immigrant children in the streets in the night. To the question of whether he feels insecure in the area he answers that everybody knows him, so he feels absolutely safe. Also from the other Turkish interviews we hear about the positive aspects of the social life among Turkish people living in the neighbourhood, people say hallo to each other like in the old days. The wife here has been very active in the local social life and she also explains that she feels absolutely safe as she knows everybody. Among other things she has arranged cleaning-up activities among the young (second generation) immigrants, as she also thinks the litter and garbage in the area is a problem. She explains that she feels like a fellow citizen (it is very important for her that we understand her correctly so she takes a Turkish-Danish dictionary and shows us the word 'medborger' = fellow citizen). She finds it important to do something in her local area, and this is the same whether she is in Turkey or in Denmark.

The three families agree that the biggest problems of their neighbourhood relate to the reputation and the state of the common areas combined with the social problems among some of the inhabitants. From the Turkish families we hear positive statements about the strong

social community among many of the Turks, however, from the Danish family we hear how this might add to the feeling of not being at home because the Danish family feels outside this community.

6. Conclusions

In the following we will shortly summarize and conclude on the reviews and analyses presented in relation to the meaning of home in general, in relation to what this approach can contribute the field of immigrant studies and problems in deprived areas. Finally we will summarize what we have learned so far as the basis for our further studies in this field.

The literature review of immigrants and the meaning of home, together with our first qualitative analysis illustrates how the question of good housing is a cultural question which cannot be answered by objective categories such as size and sanitation standards. In this way the social construction approach to the meaning of home is confirmed. Furthermore the qualitative interviews in particular point towards the importance of feeling among followers in your neighbourhood as a very essential aspect of feeling at home. Thus the social environment can seem more important than the physical environment. The interviews with Turkish families point towards time and family relations as important factors for where to feel at home; the longer you have stayed in the country the more you feel at home, strengthened by family relations in the sense that one feels at home where one's family is. Both the question of being among followers and of being close to family become much more highlighted when studying immigrants, and in this way the immigrant perspective can help throw light on important aspects of the more general question of where to feel at home.

Focusing specifically on the question of what this type of research can contribute to issues regarding immigrants and housing problems, we would like to emphasise that the question of cleanliness, and of cultural differences in the understanding of cleanliness, might be incorporated in area-based strategies to solve conflicts in neighbourhoods with many immigrants. Furthermore the feeling among Danish families of being an ethnic minority group where the dominant ethnic culture should try to integrate Danes in their social life is an interesting approach. Finally our interviews also confirm what others have found, namely that a bad reputation for a neighbourhood can be quite a problem for those living in the area. They feel stigmatised and feel they have to defend to others why they live where they live, even though they do not necessarily feel that their neighbourhood deserves its bad reputation.

This paper represents the first step in a study and its main objective is to search for other relevant approaches and studies dealing with the same questions. Through the reviews we find that this subject is highly relevant and that further research is needed in the area. In the continuation of the project and in the further qualitative interviews we will continue the focus held so far, however we will also consider putting stronger focus on the importance of being among fellow countryman for the feeling of being at home, and the question of different cultural perceptions of cleanliness.

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Paradoxical places, ambivalent feelings: between cosmopolitan and metropolitan spaces

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Abstract

This paper explores how residents in new middleclass housing areas in greater Copenhagen experience and make sense of their area in terms of urban, suburban and centre and periphery. Following processes of spatial extensification wellknown spatial categories of such as urban and suburban are dissolving. However, this does not mean that such categories cease to matter in terms of housing choice. Indeed, this paper suggest that residents experience and understand their housing area using these categories. This paper suggest some preliminary results from a qualitative study carried out in three locations in greater Copenhagen amongst young families in new middleclass housing areas. In total 20 interviews have been carried out, and this study reports from one site located close to Copenhagen city center. The paper suggest some of the mixed, varied and complicated emotions and meanings used to make sense of the housing areas, which suggest that the status that these areas have are not straight forward but most seen as socially constructed.

Introduction

In this article I look at the experienced and emotional aspects of processes of extensification of space. Urban processes are increasingly characterised by urban sprawl, leading to what some researchers call the 'borderless' city. These ongoing processes make it a challenge to understand the spatial extension of social activities in what Castells define as the metropolitan region. In particular, he suggests "These settlements blur the distinction between cities and countryside, and between cities and suburbs" (2002: 374), and, one could add, distinctions between centre and periphery. However, this does not mean that these categories cease to be used. Surveys of housing preferences show that people like to live near nature and that they like to live in small towns, i.e. with clear spatial identity. Further, there is a growing popular cultural interest into the themes of living where commercial and popular productions both TV, magazines, film, literature, is concerned where people live.

Spatial categories such as urban and suburban can be seen as incorporating powerful emotional associations (Tuan 1974). The dominant cultural meanings associated with

these spatial categories mean that we tend to experience specific emotions when we move in these types of spaces. The urban processes of spatial extensification raise the question of what happens with well-known cultural categories of urban, suburban and rural, as well as center and periphery, that we use to make sense of the space we live in.

Rather than assuming that these categories are dissolving and disappearing as a relic of the 19th century, I want to look at how these boundaries/cultural categories are used to make sense of everyday space and identity. In this paper I look at how these cultural categories are used to make sense of identity and everyday space in new housing areas. What do they mean for how we feel about our housing area? How do such categories – and their boundaries - generate emotions such as excitement, anxiety and boredom? How do inhabitants handle these categories in their performance of place?

The overall study focus on three selected new housing areas in the greater region of Copenhagen (but only results from one area is reported in this paper). During the last decade new housing areas have shot up both in Copenhagen area as well as Denmark, as part of the economic boom. These areas aim at different groups of inhabitants, as well as having different forms of ownership. This study focuses on young families, which also form the largest part of the housing market. Focus is primarily on owned housing. When focusing on these new housing areas the study supplement existing research into housing and urban processes. Existing research tend to look at extreme cases such as marginalised housing areas with social problems, or dynamic city centres. In contrast, this article specifically focus on suburban-like housing areas. Only few studies look at the suburb and the urban periphery (but see Chaney 1997; Karstens 2003, Longhurst & Savage 2000, Mazanti 2005, Ozaki 2005, Poolen 2006, Ærø 2005). The paper builds on qualitative data collected in one new housing area relatively close to the city centre of Copenhagen (in total the study looks at three areas). This area consist of terraced housing situated next to the new Metroline, and next to a huge nature reserve. The qualitative data consist of app. 10 interviews carried out with residents, both male and female. Most of the respondents moved from flats in central Copenhagen in connection with having children. They come from different parts of Denmark, and have different educational backgrounds, but can all be said to belong to the privileged middleclasses qua their home-ownership. They therefore all talk from a privileged position in relation to the urban processes of spatial extension and gentrification.

The aim of the study is to contribute to an understanding of how broader processes of spatial extension, gentrification and homogenisation of space are played out at the level of the everyday and situated experience. It has been suggested that local and phenomenological perspectives have a limited contribution to our understanding of such processes (Urry 2000) because they tend to focus on a limited array of spaces such as 'the home'. In contrast I want to suggest that this perspective can help us understand how such processes have implications not just at a global level, but also on how we live and perceive everyday spaces. More specifically the paper is interested in exploring one specific emotional geography of the city, namely of how the suburban is being transformed in the current context.

Theoretical perspectives

The perspective on urban transformations that I take up in this paper is the emotional dimensions of residents relations to their housing areas up – how people feel about their area, as well as how they feel urban/surburban. While emotions and affect have been marginal in social sciences, there are an increasing scholarly interest in emotions. More broadly, emotions is increasingly becoming part of how cities are understood (Thrift 2004). For example, cities are increasingly expected to have a buzz, to be creative, and to bring forth powers of innovation and intuition. However, affect, as Thrift points out, has always been a part of the urban experience. Indeed, one of the early sociologists, Simmel wrote at the beginning of last century about the metropolis and mental life. The focus on affect and emotions are also furthered by the increasing commercialisation of urban space, which means that the identity of a space, how it feels, are increasingly being engineered as part of political and economic processes (Thrift 2004; Bendelow & Williams 2000), making affect and emotions more central. Taking up the emotions with regard to space, can also be seen as a continuation of the pre-occupation with the everyday which particularly has characterised Scandinavian housing reseach. When this paper takes up an emotional perspective it is as a way of developing a subjective account of inhabitants experiences of their local spaces. Emotional concepts, can, as Lupton suggest, be used to “give meaning and provide explanations for our lives, for why we respond to live events, other people, material artefacts and places in certain ways, why we might tend to follow patterns of behavoir throughout our lives “ (Lupton 1998: 6).

Here I take up a phenomenologically inspired perspective, to explore how residents think and experience their lived everyday spaces. Taking Merleau-Pontys phenomenology as a the starting point, this his perspective allow us to focus on actual lived and embodied experience. However, at the same time it does not mean that we ignore the material and social world. In this perspective space and place are central features of the experience of ‘being-in-world’, for embodiment is always experienced through the spatial dimension. Merleau-Ponty explores the perceptual nature of our being in the world, and is concerned to offer an account of space, time and world as we live them, rather than as abstract entities. Unlike geometrical space, lived space change according to our modes of existence. Our sense of being in the world entails a kind of qualitative ‘measurement’ of lived space, a ‘lived distance’ that binds me to the things that count for me and links them to each other (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 286). For Merleau-Ponty, this space is mediated through the body.

Thinking about how urban and surburban, centre and periphery can be understood in a context characterised by spatial extension and mobility alerts us to the more diffuse and shifting relations between people and space. We can not assume that bodies fit neatly into spaces. Grosz (1992) introduce the metaphor ‘interface’ where she seek to capture the relationship between body and city. She suggest that the two not are seen as separate units, but that they define each other. Not as a mirror, but as assemblages or parts. She rejects a holistic perspective, but a perspective where the relations between body and city are seen as ‘disunified series of systems, a series of disparate flows, energies, events or entities, brining together or drawing apart their more or less temporary alignments’ (Grosz 1992).

Mixed emotions: Feeling close to the city & being in nature

Inhabitants from two housing areas repeatedly stress that an important sense that they have from living in the area is that they feel close to the city, or feel they have easy access to the city, as well as they have easy access to nature. They say "it is not far to the centre of Copenhagen, and yet we live peacefully out here, you can call it, we live a bit in nature" (SS). SS explains that "it was close to other people, close to the city, the metro, that was what it said and this is what we would have...It is close to the centre of Copenhagen, and yet far enough away to feel you are a bit in nature" (SS). MH say: "I like the environment here, it is a massive nature area, and I find it fun looking at the DR-city, it is full of contrasts, both new and old, nature and civilisation, it is a strange area, but also fascinating." T says that they got to live "close to the city and the most beautiful sunset in the city as it said in the brochure". L: "What was most important for us was that we could cycle to work in the city, the closeness, and the garden...There is a lot of lovely light and air, it is not build up around us and that is nice". J: "we would like a house and a garden...if could get closer to town then we would like to live closer". In this way most of the respondent frame their area in terms of closeness and easy access to the city, as well as a feeling of being in nature.

At the same time they discuss their area in terms of the lacking qualities that this means for their everyday life, particularly the lack of close access to shops, cafes, people, 'pulse' and other urban qualities.

It is important to point out that, unlike negative feelings in other context (such as national affiliations) that speak to intensely felt emotions, inhabitants discussions are more playful. The desire to live close to the city as well as nature is framed more as a compromise than as being truly embarrassing. Nevertheless inhabitants stories about settling in their area do point to some of the complex emotional response that inhabitants have regarding the implication of urban processes for their spatial affiliations.

This recognition of the housing areas as having nature qualities as well as closeness to the city centre on the one hand, and on the other hand, the way many residents distance themselves from the area due to its lack of urban qualities are implicated in the way the housing area is symbolically spatialised in residents stories. The mixed feelings that the residents express about their area as something that is the right mix and give them pleasure, but at the same time as not being urban enough be seen as the residents attempts at maintaining a clear and unique identity in a space where the borders between urban and suburban, center and periphery are difficult to draw. The ambivalent feelings that the residents to a certain extent express can be seen as part of attempts at producing distinct identity to present themselves as cosmopolitans or urbanites in contrast to being suburban.

Historically, distinctions in the city such as urban/suburban and centre and periphery are linked to class distinctions. The Danish narrative of the development of suburbs has been told as the travel towards light, air and green areas, and was initiated in the middle of the 18th century by the upper middle classes to leave overpopulation and illness in central

Copenhagen, and move outside the city to gain fresh air and space. In an analysis of the Parisian middle classes invasion of the spaces outside Paris, Green (1990) describe the particular experience involved in this as a visual spectacle, where the language of views prescribed a certain visual structure of the nature experience. This created an individualised experience of nature as a refreshing contrast to the city. This was an experience which initially belonged to the middle classes. However, as suburban areas has developed up through the 20th century, suburban areas have become increasingly homogenised. Culturally, the suburb have been described as anomalous and ordinary (Chaney 1997). While the narrative about travel towards air, light and green space has dominated the building of Danish housing, in recent years many young families decide to stay in the city rather than move to the suburbs. Likewise, new housing areas are built close to the city in shut-down industrial areas. The city, the urban therefore gain new meaning and positive attraction that distinguishes it from the suburb. Here the city becomes a place for 'a civilised array of pleasures', it becomes a place for public life, for meeting others in the space of the urban centre, with window exhibitions, bars, museums and galleries (Rose 2000). This re-evaluation of the city can also be seen in a context where the city is part of global competition for attracting the new middle classes, cosmopolitan knowledge workers (Löfgren 2000). This redrawing of the distinction between the urban and suburban means that the suburban becomes inauthentic, making it difficult to create a unique identity.

When residents express a desire to live near the city, near nature, as well as feelings of the area not being quite right, it can be seen in the context of these historically changing distinctions. In inhabitants stories, housing areas may therefore symbolise spectacular nature, as well as symbolise cosmopolitan, and on the other side the conventionality of suburban living, and residents stories can be seen as the complexity of navigating between these distinctions. However, the complexity can also be seen on the background of them only having lived a short period in the area, and not having any prior knowledge of the area. They are therefore busy making connections and forms of belonging to the area. In this, they use culturally available images of city, suburb and nature to symbolise what they feel.

If we look closer at the respondents stories a more complex picture emerge about how they construct centre and periphery and urbanity and suburbanity.

Negotiating centres and peripheries

The residents project a variety of spatial meanings onto their housing areas. These meanings do not inhere in the area, instead the way these spatialisations and the related feelings are performed and handled in residents stories depends on where the resident come from, where he or she is in terms of life cyclus and how well they know the area.

Living close to the city centre means a variety of things for the inhabitants. Many stress the importance of living close to the city due to their work. They say: "I drive outside the city a lot, I can get on the motorway straight away from here. Plus I work in the city, you can drive there in no time." (Ronnie) "We drew a 10 km line around Copenhagen and our work, most of it was expensive, apart from Amager." (Lena). "...one can feel it quits

down when you become a family, you don't use (the city) so much...but it is great that we can cycle to work" (Kaspar)." had a very clear idea that what was most important for us was that we could cycle to work, we both work in the city." (Birgitte)

The inhabitants also stress closeness to the city centre to keep up social relations. Sarah says:"it means a lot to live close to friends, a lot of our friends have moved here, and to keep this network up, I imagine that one should live close together, because people are busy, and it is a daytrip to Køge and back again. It has to be planned more than meeting one Saturday afternoon in Copenhagen"

Further the inhabitants stress closeness to the city centre to have access to activities. "We felt it was too far to the city from Brønshøj, and we did not see any houses that was wauv. ...Then we looked a bit on Amager, and thought it looked great, and was close to the city. It was also about, as Birgitte said, not being too far from the city, the feeling of being close to the city, being able to go to a cafe or the cinema or something." (Birgitte)

Making new centre-periphery distinctions & dissolving boundaries

One way of negotiating centre and periphery is in terms of seeing the suburbs of Copenhagen on the same level as Jutland, the other part of Denmark. Here the residents want to live close to the city centre, the suburbs of Copenhagen are not considered a place to live, otherwise they might as well live in Jutland, where their family live and where they come from. In this way the suburbs of Copenhagen are compared to Jutland, the other end of Denmark. One female resident explain:

"My opinion is that if I have to live in Copenhagen and be a Jutlander, then I have to live in here, I do not want to move to Køge, then I much rather want to move to Jutland. If I have to move to the province, then I might as well live close to my family [in Jutland]". (Johnny's wife)

Another female resident explain:

"We did not look in the suburbs,..because then I said that we might as well live near our family in Jutland. It had to be close to Copenhagen, where we could continue our work, or in Jutland close to our family. So we looked for something close to the city...The furthest I wanted to move was Vanløse, and that is close.". (Trine)

As the previous resident, Trine states that she needs to be close to the city, otherwise she might as well return to her family. Both contrasts Copenhagen and Jutland, as places to live that symbolise city or family. However, it is not just people who have families in Jutland, that use this contrast. Mikkel grew up in a suburb to Copenhagen, and he expresses a similar inclination as the two women. Initially he liked moving back to where he grew up because he liked it from his childhood. But his wife wanted to live close to the city, as she had always done. Also, as he says,

”Copenhagen life pulled more than I thought...and it is ok” ”I began to think more about distance to the things you need to use, well you don’t need to be more than 1 or 2 km from them otherwise you don’t use them – you might as well live in Jutland. I can see our friends, several moved north, and they are never in the city, only when they visit us, it is rarely that they use the city.” (Mikkel)

Mikkel relates use and closeness, commenting that while you may live near Copenhagen in the suburbs, in reality you do not use the city, and might as well live in the other end of Denmark, and compares the suburbs with the whole of the Danish provinces; they are alike. But where the women suggests that they rather want to live closer to their families, if they were to live in the suburbs, Mikkel’s point is that he would never use the city.

However, when the two women has the city centre and closeness to their families as a way of contrasting where they want to live, at the same time they suggests in different ways that the boundary between Copenhagen City and Jutland dissolves. Johnnys wife suggests:

“ It was great, the month before we moved in we went to an open day to visit the houses, where all the ones who were to be out neighbours were there, and I began to look forward to it, I though then that it was cosy, because they were all like us, it was really cosy, they were all from Jutland, all with children the same age as ours.” (Johnnys wife)

Here she experiences that all the other residents in the area are from Jutland, and her distinction between Copenhagen and Jutland breaks down. It feels homely because she has shared roots in Jutland. Trine has a similar experience but in a different way. She says:

“And this area was new and family friendly, light, air and open space, it gave me the right feeling in the stomach. That is the experience people from Jutland have, it is only for Jutland people out here,– a trip on the Jutland heath, that’s what it was like to get on to Amager Fælled, it was the Jutland Heath” (Trine)

She suggests that the housing area and Jutland nature – the heath – are very similar, which means that Jutland people feel at home here, in a way she is at home here. This suggests that the distinction between between ‘being close to the city’ and being Jutland dissolves. For both women this can be seen as a way of making the ‘the city’ more familiar. Obviously, Mikkel does not have a similar feeling. He asserts his choice of living close to the city, instead of in the suburbs. He says:

”I dont think we will move away from the city, not if we can avoid it. None of us need to go to the countryside” (Mikkel)

In contrast Ronnie and his wife grew up on Amager and has his whole family living there. They explain:

”We wanted to stay on Amager because our whole family are on Amager, and thats easy with the children...We didn’t want to move further away, for example to Måløv, because we did not want to commute, and Ronnie can mainly get a job in central Copenhagen... (Ronnie)

In their story closeness to the family is central, as well as a dislike to commuting. However, the need for a house with the garden has led the family to consider moving to Sweden, the closest place with affordable housing. They say:

”However we think it is a possibility to move to Sweden...(we can afford it) and we want the space now rather than in 5 years time....(living in Sweden) we need to commute as we will continue to work in Copenhagen...It is an area south of Malmø...it is old mixed with new, very rural really. Lots of nature, close to Malmø...My mum think it is far, but it is not so much further than Valby, it would take time to. The barrierer is probably that it cost money.”

They want to move to be able to have a house and a garden, and in doing so they stress the nature qualities of the new area as well as the easy commuting. In doing so they reject that t should be particularly far away, equating it with other surburbs close to Copenhagen. In a sense the new area is symbolised not as a cosmopolitan space, but as surburbian.

Negotiating spatial extension: age and the centre-periphery

When the inhabitants are looking for the right place to live, they not only look at the area, they also look at themselves and how they feel about themselves. One of the issues they brought up in interviews was age, and how their age influenced what they thought about the place they were going to live. Johnny explain:

“We decided to look for a house, we looked a bit around, ... We would like to live closer to the city, if we could have a garden and a house. We did not look out in the surburbs. It is to far away, we did not want anymore than 5-10 minutes to the centre. We are not that old. Some might think we are, but not mentally.”(Johnny)

Here Johnny explain he does not want to live in the surburbs because he is not old enough, or as he says, at least not mentally. Here surburban space is equated with middleage as a mental state of mind, which he actively rejects. Instead living close to the city is a way of maintaining youthfulness. Kaspar express a similar sentiment. He says:

“We looked at a parcelhouse further out on Amager, it could have been a lovely house if it was restored. But I had it like this, ok, sit out there, not being able to have children, I would really feel I had bought the cat in the bag. Whereas with this I could better, I had this garden I could sit in the sun, it would not matter so much. You invested so much in the house and it was still a great house. “ (Kaspar)

While they had found a perfect house, he felt unease about its location further out, particularly if they had not had children. Living in a house in this surburban area without children would have felt wrong. These stories suggests that the residents are not able to

upheld their urban? self-image in a too suburban setting, which makes them reject moving further out.

Birgitte express a similar sentiment:

“...When I was younger I had this idea that children should grow up in the countryside, but as you grow older and feel less like moving to the countryside, you revise it.”

She explain how she gradually has adjusted her idea of where she should live; from an idea that living in the countryside would be the best for her children, she realises she ‘feels less’ like moving to the countryside, and adjust this idea: living in a rural setting would coincide with how she feels about herself.

Being urban or rural

The residents also look at ‘what kind of person they are’ when they negotiate where they should live.

Kaspar explain about their decision:

”Although she does not sound it, she is from the countryside, she is the one who is most urban, well we would like to live close to the city centre. ... I am not the the big ‘city-man’, I was probably the one feeling worst in Frederiksberg, in this big building complex sometimes. Well, I like the facilities, but for me 20 minutes on an S-train was also fine.”

Here the relation to space is explained in terms of what kind of person they are, not in terms of being primordial, where they are born and bred, but what kind of person. What kind of person you are means something in relation to how you feel about living in a place, for example kaspar says that he felt ‘worst’ living in the big building complex. A bit later, he talks about how they feel about nature:

“We were very of the Fælled when we moved here, ...but it is not as exciting, the (next fælled) is more...but when the children gets older then perhaps we can explore more.... We are both nature people and likes to get out. So you can say we are not city people. We like it all, as Lena said, she just want some lakes, forest and close to the city, but as we said we could not afford it.

While he was differentiating between himself and his wife in terms of being ‘city-people’ above, here he stresses that they are both nature people. This is the reason why they are not keen on the next-door nature area. They want he says, it all, both nature and city, as a way of reconciling being both nature-people and city people. Being a city person or a nature person is not something that defines you, but rather something you can have degrees of as well as containing both.

Uneasyness of the local urbanity/surburbanity

While the residents are satisfied with their location of living in relation to nature, urbanity and surburbanity, they also express a sense of uneasyness with regard to their local area, in fact they often express strong emotional feelings and reactions. These feelings and emotions of uneasyness in relation to their housing area, at the same time they legitimate and reconcile that they live there in different ways.

Simon explain that he miss Frederiksber where he used to live. More things happened there, one lived a bit closer to everything, he explains, while here there is some distance to these envrinments. However, he says, living where they do have some other qualities.

”It is an advantage when you got a dog, there is not som many places you can walk with it without it being on a lead....Before we signed the papers I said..that apart from Fælleden there is nothing in the area woth while..There was not any shops, and there is a psychiatric hospital...it was not the local area, one should move out here for, if one wanted life and cafes and small shops every where. But then we also agreed, that it was nice enough that it was so calm”

While Simon experience a longing for a more cosmopolitan environment, a desire to be closer to the city, at the same time accepts living there because he, as he says, likes the calmness and likes to walk his dog.

Mikkel also explain how they felt ‘fed up’ after the first few months:

”It is not very cosy when you go to the (main street)..it does not have any apeal, and we were a bit fed up after the first 6 months...The first month we could not get our arms down, it was hot, we could stay outside to barbecue, and I thought, this is nice, but the grill was quickly packed away because it was to cold..and then we did not see any people anymore, and the outdoor life died...We felt like living in a glass jar, not so cosy, could not walk down to the street and see a lot of people around us, and it is great fun that things are going on. You don’t have that feeling here, because there is 3 km to where things are happening...But now we have begun to talk to the neighbours..and we became really happy with it. Now it is home, it is not as if you feel you are entering a strange planet when you cycle home. It meant a lot to us that we got to know people here, I can feel it, we greet people, and speak to them, children play with each other, it is a gift....We have found that we know many people here, or know someone who knows them.”

Mikkel feels that the area does not have appeal, that it is like living in a glassjar, that nothing is going on. He misses the things going on in the city centre, which they don’t have here. However, at the same time he looks to the new relations they are making with the neighbours, and the relations his children are making with other children, which means it begins to feel a bit homely.

Kaspar also contrasts the area with their former location in the city. He says:

” One can feel, the area is a total social loser area. The bikeman sniffs gas fumes all day, they do not have a shop, so they work right behind all day, stand in big therm suits all winter, and you think this is not work condition one would allow...The same for the kiosk and the pixxaria, it is somethin, well...But perhaps we are a bit prejudiced from Frederiksberg, you could choose between 3 pizzarias, one was more delicate than the other, and the cheeseman, sausageman, you can say now we have some stupid kiosk man, he has a newspaper and old milk...It was a desert (when we moved here). We lived opposite (a supermarket) (where we lived before) and we had loads of shops, clothes shops, everything, lots to look at when you were out with a pram. Specialities shops of any kind, cheese, italian delikatessen and wine....

The only negative thing with this area is that there are no shops, because we are still, I more than you, city people, so it is still nice to have the shops close by. ... I don't think it is that big a contrast, it is a desert in the way that there is no good bakers in the morning, we have started to do our own bread. If we want pizza for lunch on Saturdays, we used to pop down after it, now it is too far. ...Well now I am almost getting worked up and making it into a problem, but it is not a problem in that way, I would like it was different, but is not something that means I have regretted moving here. ...It is hurting my self-feeling or self-image of being a big-city-metropolit who has to use these things and have access to these things.

He expresses a strong uneasiness about the lack of cosmopolitanism in the area – as he says it is not that big a problem, but does express a feeling of not being who he thinks he is.

“Johnny has lived there for 10 years, and I felt at home as well straight away when I moved there. It is a great place to live with the shopping life. It is another atmosphere than here. I felt it was very deserted here in comparison to Valby, in Valby I could take the pram for a walk and there would be people around me, here I could go to fields, if I wanted to have people around me, but I did not think it was the same atmosphere as in Valby. On the other side it is more bare, a place like Valby has the atmosphere, and if you like things happening, with shops and cafes, all these things closer by, that is what is missing out here. There is no such environment here, there is not. There are no shops, no vegetable shops, no cheeseshops or kiosk. But then we got Fields.... After we have moved here I think it is reasonable. ...We hear a bit about what traditions they have in the local main shopping street, we have tried to take part, and in Islands brygge. There are some initiatives out here.”

These stories all comment on the lack of right feeling of the area, the area does not symbolise cosmopolitan living, and this generates feelings of discomfort and uneasiness. The informants are very elaborate, but at the same time tend to play the feeling of uneasiness down. They legitimate their living there, suggesting that new neighbours, places to walk the dog, emerging urban traditions etc. as ways that justify that it is legitimate to live there.

Towards the suburban

While many residents strongly express their sense of uneasiness with the area because of its lack of cosmopolitanism, some residents suggest a sense of uneasiness about it being too urban.

Trine: "Perhaps we move back sometime...Sending the kids to school here does not attract me. I would like it, they can run out and play, and be many places without me needing to keep an eye on them all the time." There are several things she feels uncomfortable about, a local shop is 'disgusting' because it allows smoking: sometimes her husband smells of smoke because he says he has been there. There are scooters driving up and down the cycle path outside her house, which makes her frightened. And the grey concrete blocks nearby does not inspire 'happiness and children's play'.

Johnny: "It was a feeling of being safe and good. Valby was a bit like a slum, social housing, there had been some fires, and trouble in the area. ...In a way this seems more clean, one has a better overview, more secure than a place like Valby, where there are so many different, and you don't know who lives here. It was more concentrated than here, where you have an overview, we almost know who lives here. There you live closer. ..."

Final Comments

In this paper I have sketched out a perspective on how aspects of current changes taking place in new and middleclass housing areas can be understood, as well as how they are experienced. In particular, I demonstrate the mixed and contrasting experiences that residents have, navigating their stories of experiences of living in the housing area between the cultural categories of urban, suburban and nature, as well as center and periphery. These stories help us understand what happens to the suburban, to 'rural' and urban' in the context of spatial extensification. In these stories, these housing areas emerge as a paradoxical space, contoured both by emotions of desire and anxiety. Thus these housing areas become an emotional landscape where conflicting desires for urban pulse as well as safe surroundings are played out amongst metro lines, motorways, nature reserves, and artificial lakes.

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Are summerhouse owners just wealthier or do they have an outgoing lifestyle?

– Implications for sustainable holidays and leisure

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1. Introduction

About a one-fifth of the Finnish households disposes of a summerhouse, whereas an even larger share has regular access to it, thanks to family or friends. This means that summerhouses represent an important share of the Finnish holiday and leisure budgets, both in terms of money and in terms of time. Furthermore, summerhouses often make up a part of the lifestyle of households. Correspondingly, there are summerhouses which are fitted with many conveniences in order to cater for a luxurious standard of living during holidays. In contrast other summerhouses are supposed to be ‘near to nature’, which often implies that their standards of living are rather austere.

In recent years summerhouses have become a popular theme for social and economic studies. In various countryside municipalities the summerhouse visitors are a major or even the principal source of income for the area. With other sectors retreating, the local economic sustainability depends to an ever larger extent on summerhouses. From the viewpoint of environmental sustainability other worries arise, that may partly conflict with the local economic sustainability objectives. For example, in various popular summerhouse areas shorelines – often of outstanding natural beauty – are threatened to get filled up with summerhouses. Furthermore, due to spatial-demographic changes the average distance from a regular residence to a summerhouse is increasing, thereby implying increases in car use. It also appears that recently built summerhouses are on average about 50% larger than the pre-2000 stock average and are more often equipped with various large appliances and electric heating.

The proposed article deals with the ambiguous character of summerhouse use with respect to its sustainability performance. It is based on a pre-study and an ongoing study concerning the potential for improved eco-efficiency of summerhouses and summerhouse use. Next to literature study and interviews the study uses micro-data sets regarding summerhouse ownership and use, consumer expenditures, and time use. Particular attention is paid to the overall ecological footprint of summerhouse owners in comparison to other households, in order to detect possible trade-offs within the tourism and leisure budgets, as well as between those budgets and other household activities.

The article first provides an overview of key elements of the stock of Finnish summerhouses, including the development of the stock summerhouses in recent decades, standards of equipment, locations, market price of plots and summerhouses, and typical difference in use in relation to features of summerhouses. Subsequently, the article provides some preliminary results regarding the comparison of budget allocation in summerhouse owning households and other households as well as some of the environmental implications of these differences in consumer patterns.

2. The Summerhouse Stock

According to the summerhouse survey of 2003 (Nieminen, 2004) about 24 % enjoyed regular access to a summerhouse. About 18 % of the Finnish households actually owns a summerhouse for their own use. Owner's children typically benefit from unlimited access, and part of the stock is in shared ownership, or rented for a long period. The term summerhouse is becoming somewhat misleading as about 60 % of newly built summerhouses is winter proof and about 40 % are equipped to function as secondary fully fledged homes for longer stays or all-year-round visits. There are however still also many small cottages or even cabins, of which a part has only very basic amenities. Most summerhouses are located by one of Finland's 60 thousand lakes or by the sea, within convenient travel distance from the larger agglomerations. So far only about 13 % of the Finnish shore line is occupied by summerhouse plots, and overbuilding threatens only the most popular shore lines near large agglomerations.

Traditionally summerhouse owners spent their long summer vacations there, but consumption patterns are evolving. Before proceeding to owner characteristics in section 2, and consumption patterns in section 3, we shall first overview long-term trends in the stock.

Figure 1 shows the annual number of new summerhouses built after the Second World War. The 1960's – 1980's witnessed large swings rising at times to over 10 000 new cabins per year. Economic cycles and financial market conditions have influenced the availability of household funds to invest in summerhouses. The most recent boom period was experienced towards the end of the 1980's when foreign credit flooded in due to a poorly managed liberalisation of the capital market and thereby overheated the Finnish economy. The subsequent bust caused price declines and paved the way for a decelerating expansion of the stock. Recent figures show the annual number of completed summerhouses to hover around 4000.

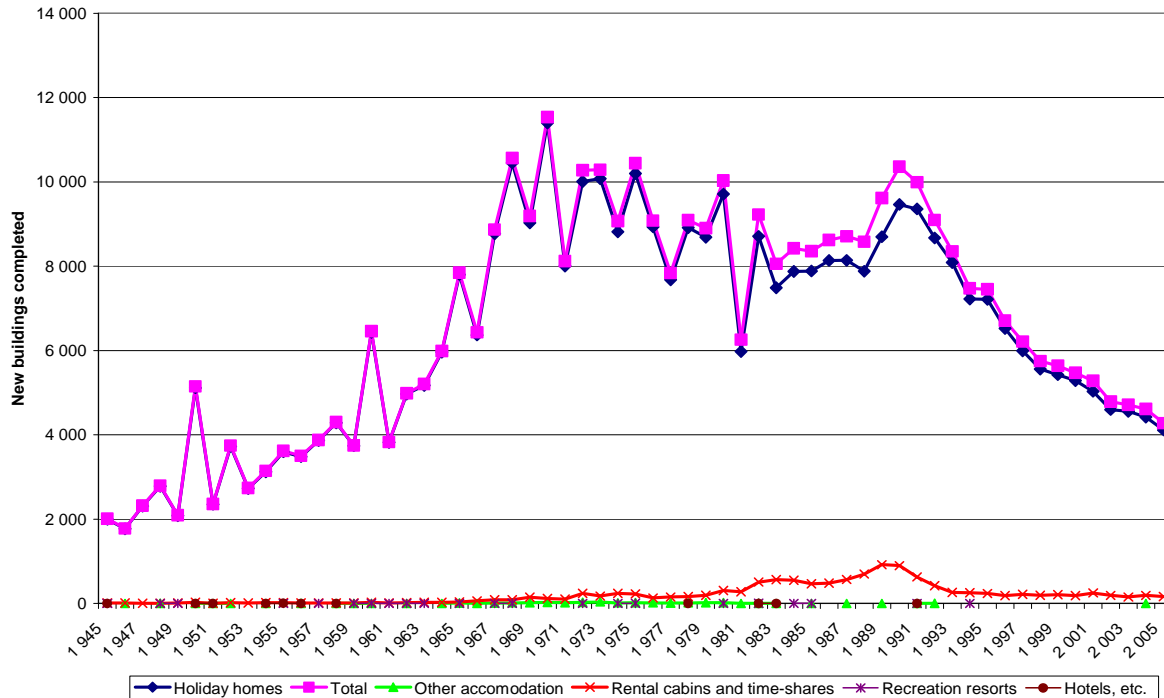


Figure 1. *New summerhouses and other leisure buildings completed after the II World War.*
Source: National Building registry RHR.

Rental Cabins and Time Sharing

As Figure 1 shows, the construction of rental cottages boomed during the 1980's overheating for a brief period. Subsequent developments following the recession continue to be modest at the official statistics level (Mökkitilasto and Rakentaminen 2004:27). Willingness to rent summerhouses to outsiders remains low (Nieminen, 2004). Although renting out may help cover maintenance costs, but large profits have so far been absent. Rental cottages are often located on farmland, which entitles them to public support covering e.g. 40 % of construction costs in southern Finland (Talouselämä 4.6.2004). In northern Finland privately owned cabins' rental, time-sharing and so-called sale- and lease back forms have reduced the need to expand hotel capacity despite the travel boom (Kauppalehti 20.8.2007). The eco-efficiency of rental cabins is reduced by their higher equipment levels, but increased by their more intensive use.

Prices of shoreline plots

Prices in the most popular southern regions have risen fast due excessive demand. About 80 % of the cabins are built near a shore. As figure 2 shows, prices of vacant shore properties near the capital and its neighbouring regions, (i.e., former Uusimaa, Turku and Pori, Häme, Kyme and Vaasa provinces), are about double the level of respective prices in more remote regions. Inflation has by far exceeded the average for the best locations, for which the markets are thin. In addition to the mere unavailability of appropriate vacant shore lots, legal obligations for municipalities to produce shoreline area plans and the withholding tendencies among plot owners constrain building. Shoreline area plans aim to secure environmental protection, the aesthetic appearance and other leisure uses of shores. Leisure cabins are expected to be located in the midst of beautiful nature.

Ugly, polluted or otherwise unattractive areas are excluded, but as summerhouse prices rise, the rewards for restoring shore lines their natural beauty rise. Well-equipped, modern cabins located near services and suited for all-year-round visits appear to be greatest demand.

While a summerhouse seems a rather secure investment in the south, in more distant regions, real prices of vacant shore lots have even declined in real terms. These price declines are rather surprising e.g., in Lapland, where most new and the largest summerhouses are at being built. The price collapse between 1989 and 1995 (figure 2) can easily be explained by the recession after the building hype. Other potential explanations may be sought from migration to cities, policy changes influencing property prices, the deteriorating quality of vacant lots as best lots are the first to be occupied.

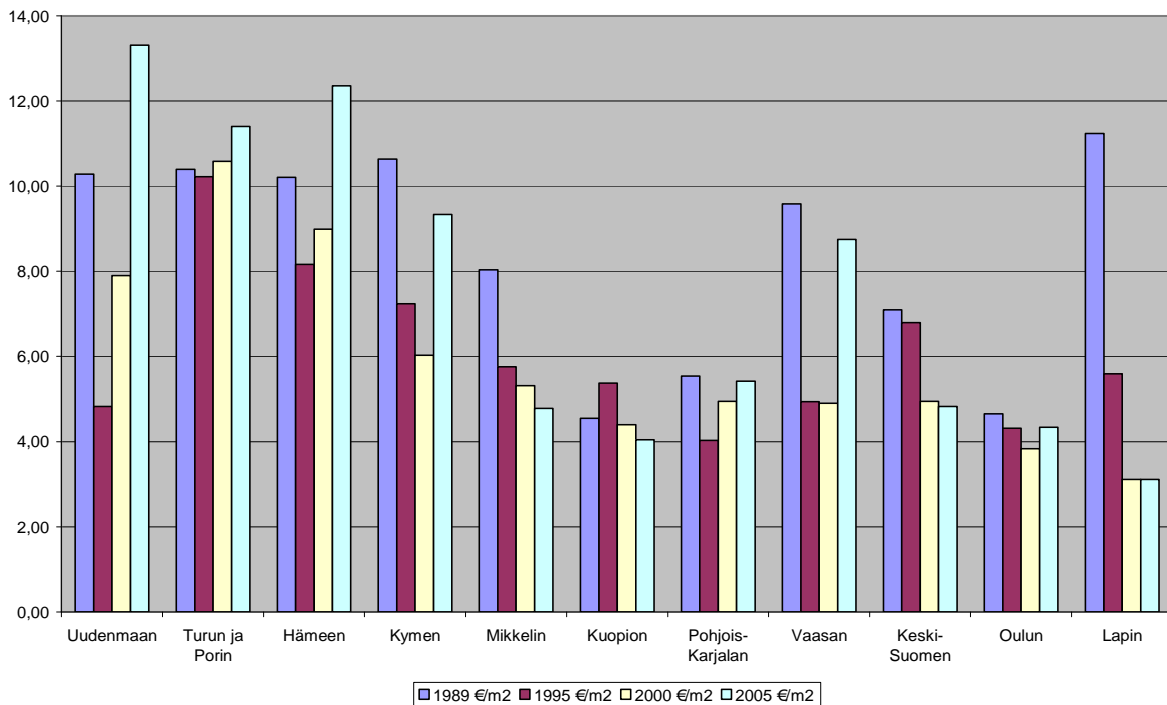


Figure 2 Prices of non-built shoreline building plots (< 2ha) deflated by the cost of living index for 1989, 1995, 2000 and 2005, expressed in 2006 prices.

Source: plot slaes prices: National Land Survey (Maanmittauslaitos) (kauppahinnat); price index: Statistics Finland

The completion of shoreline area plans may bring in new vacant lots to the most sought after areas, but *ceteris paribus* building trends suggest most new cabins to be built in northern resorts, though at a decelerating pace. In the period 1980 – 2006, most of the new cabins were built in northern provinces, such as Lapland, Kainuu, North-Pohjanmaa and Kuusamo. Many of these are located in ski resorts and include time-share and rental arrangements. The average size of newly built summerhouses has been rising steadily in the past two decades. Existing summerhouses are renovated and in due course extended, while new ones have larger floor plans right from the start. Nowadays, the largest cabins (over 80 square metres floor area) are built in Lapland (Figure 3).

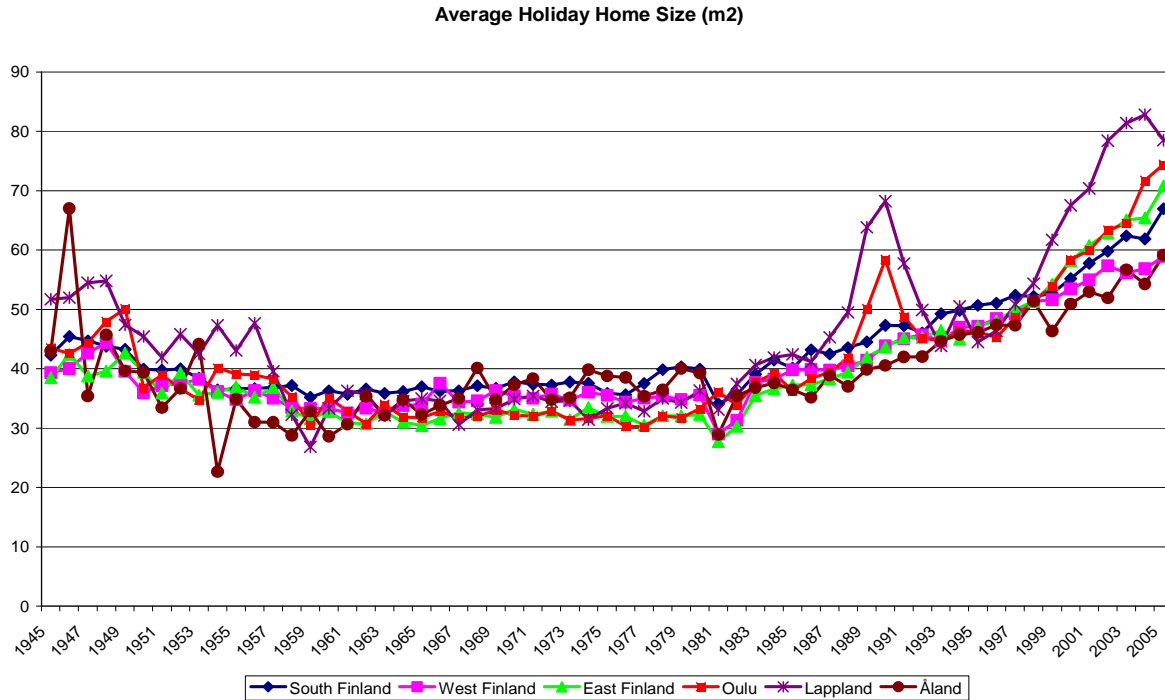


Figure 3. Average size (in m²) of holiday homes by year of construction by county. Source: RHR 2005.

Cabin building trends may take another turn for several reasons. The completion of municipal shoreline area plans may incite the sale of vacant lots (even) in the popular areas. Large energy price fluctuations or other factors that affect travel popularity may redirect household budget allocations in the domain of leisure activities. Global warming may shift tourist trends towards the north and broaden the demand for accommodation and services (Sievänen et al, 2005; Hamilton et al, 2005), while turbulent storms and floods restrain shore building and the extension of emission trade to air travel after 2012 could raise ticket prices and limit travel. Improved logistics may breed building booms in remote areas. Acceleration of visa procedures for Russian tourists may engender travel and cabin demand particularly in south-east regions, while restrictions on Russian property acquisition rights may restrain building. All in all in the summerhouse scenario, which is currently under development, it is assumed that the annual amount of new summerhouses can vary between 3500 and 8000 during the period 2005-2025.

3 Ownership characteristics

Perrels and Kangas (2007) explained summerhouse ownership with a logistic model based on time use data for 2000 (Time use micro-dataset), with 4650 observations¹. Their model explained summerhouse availability for 71 % of households. The most significant explanatory variables proved to be:

1. Ownership of principal home – positive relationship;

¹. They used this micro-dataset instead of the 2003 Summerhouse survey, because of the richness of household characteristics in the 2000 Time use survey.

2. Household income – positive relationship;
3. Average age of household reference person – positive relationship;
4. Number of household members (1 or at least 2) – positive relationship;
5. Degree of urbanisation of the principal residence – positive relationship.

Wealth

The above demand factors are associated with wealth accumulation, since it increases typically in cities and with age. Urbanisation can be expected to increase summerhouse demand.

Summerhouses compete with other leisure activities and travel, durable consumption goods, e.g. cars, boats, etc. for household disposable income. Summerhouses represent 9.5 % of Finnish citizens wealth, i.e., it comes second after permanent housing, which represents half of Finns' wealth (Säylä, Statistics Finland 2007). Other forms of savings may, however, increase in the future.

The utility of a summerhouse depends on the owner's preferences. Even if increasingly wealthy summerhouse owners spend less and less time at their summerhouse, they may still prefer to continue ownership, without renting to third persons. Other leisure activities are gaining ground among owner time allocation. Typically summerhouse owners are wealthier citizens than other households. They tend to travel more than others, both in Finland and abroad. Please notice that travelling abroad has been on the rise overall across the Finnish population.

Table 1 shows that even though summerhouse owners spend overall more on travel than other households, they do not spend more on transport fuels. So, the extra mobility is realised through other means of transport, whereas a part of the extra transport expenditures goes to maintenance etc. Given the higher income level of summerhouse owners one could even claim that their fuel use is even somewhat on the economical side (lower budget share).

Table 1. *The share of transport and petrol expenditure in holiday home owners' budgets compared to non-owners.**

	Expenditure item	Share (%)	Expenditure (€)
No holiday home	Transport costs as share of disposable income and as amount	14,5	4987
	User costs of private vehicles as share of transport expenditures and as amount	65,3	2122
	Fuel costs as share of transport expenditures and as amount	43,4	1356
Holiday home owner	Transport costs as share of disposable income and as amount	13,1	5380
	User costs of private vehicles as share of transport expenditures and as amount	65,8	2233
	Fuel costs as share of transport expenditures and as amount	41,2	1357

*) source: 2001 Consumer expenditure survey (Statistics Finland); In this table are compared all households whose reference person is at least 20 years and where at least one car is available

Figure 4 shows that trips to cabins have risen rapidly since the year 2000. These trips do not include regular and frequent, nor long term summerhouse visits (every week). Surprisingly, the same statistics do not show any increase in travel abroad.

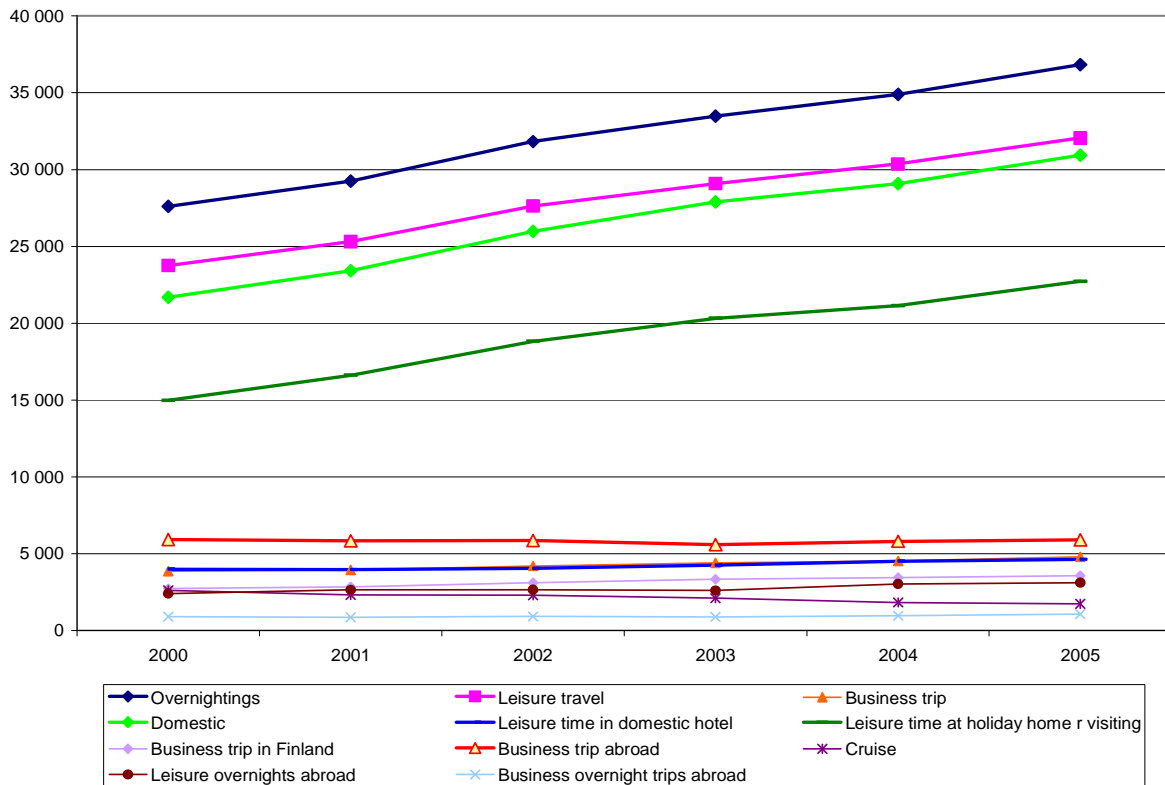


Figure 4. Overnight trips by type of destination among 15-74 year old Finns in the period 2000-2005. Source: Statistics Finland.

Demographic change and preferences

Demographic change is expected to influence developments. On the one hand upcoming cohorts of summerhouse inheritors are getting smaller, thus increasing their supply relative to demand. On the other hand, aging raises demand for summer- and secondary housing as leisure time increases and the quality of the living environment increases. This demand is also expected to be directed at secondary housing and time-shares abroad. Pensioners are also expected to demand good public and private service levels from summer- or secondary house communities. Demand for secondary housing is influenced by local public and private services, particularly in regard to healthcare and social services, and their pricing in sparsely populated areas. Public service levels do not affect foreigners' cabin demand. Instead they may be more demanding on logistics, quality standards and natural beauty.

Particularly male pensioners enjoy cabin life, while there appears to be considerable latent demand among women, of whom the current cohorts of seniors have still less often driven licenses and cars than their male counterparts. This makes these women dependent on public transport and taxi rides. A recent survey (Ahlqvist, Statistics Finland, 2007) also suggested that there are two principal trends:

- (i) summerhouse vacationers who seek refuge from urban routines by ascetic nature friendly living, and
- (ii) second home owners, who transfer their urban life to the countryside where they prefer to spend time. The latter group is more likely to demand all kinds of modern amenities, while the former group usually tries to minimise on them.

Use patterns

There many types of uses of summerhouses. Some function merely as facility for a hunting or fishing. Others are a temporary retreat from busy urban life. A part of the summerhouses is used throughout the entire summer period instead of the principal residence (often located at not too big a distance from the summerhouse or even in the same municipality).

The distance between the principal place of residence and the summerhouse is an important factor for the intensity of use. Nearby summerhouses are either used very intensively (alternative residence or rather rarely – due to low quality or specific hobby use). For the other distance categories there is a straightforward relation between distance and intensity of use (measured as day per year in summerhouse).

Table 2 *Distribution of Holiday Home Use by Travel Distance Category (%)**

	< 30 days	30 ≤ days <60	60 ≤ days <90	≥ 90 days	share (%)	average number of days
< 25 km	29,3	22,4	16,6	31,7	25,9	68,9
25 – < 70 km	19,2	26,1	20,9	33,9	32,3	78,0
70 – < 200 km	15,0	27,5	24,9	32,7	25,4	77,9
≥ 200 km	27,2	30,0	19,7	23,1	16,5	63,7
share (%)	22,1	26,1	20,5	31,3	100	73,3
average number of days	14,8	44,4	73,4	138,7	73,4	

*) Includes only those holiday homes, where a minimum of half a day were spent during prior 12 months (October 2002 – September 2003). Source: Mökkibarometri 2003.

4 *Equipment standards of summerhouses*

The share of newly built summerhouses equipped with a sewage system is constantly on the rise, and was ranging round 50 - 60 % in 2005. New regulations on waste water treatment outside sewage systems entered in force in 2004. The aim is to improve water protection with regard to oxygen consumption by 90 %, total phosphorus by 85 % and nitrogen by 40 % relative to non-treatment levels. In sparsely populated areas treatment levels are house-specific and depend largely on the prevailing regulations at the time of construction of the summerhouse. The expansion of sewage systems into sparsely populated areas of municipalities cannot entirely solve the problem, because infrequent sewage use hampers service quality and causes environmental nuisances. The new regulations demand considerable upgrading of older properties by 2014 at the latest.

Building permits are conditioned on compliance with regulations. Their tightening may therefore reduce new building and accelerate the withdrawal of existing ones from use, but as additional building rights are constrained, existing summerhouses are typically upgraded and expanded.

(source: http://www.rakentaja.fi/index.asp?s=/seurantakohteet/hajahanke/haja_asetustiedote.htm.)

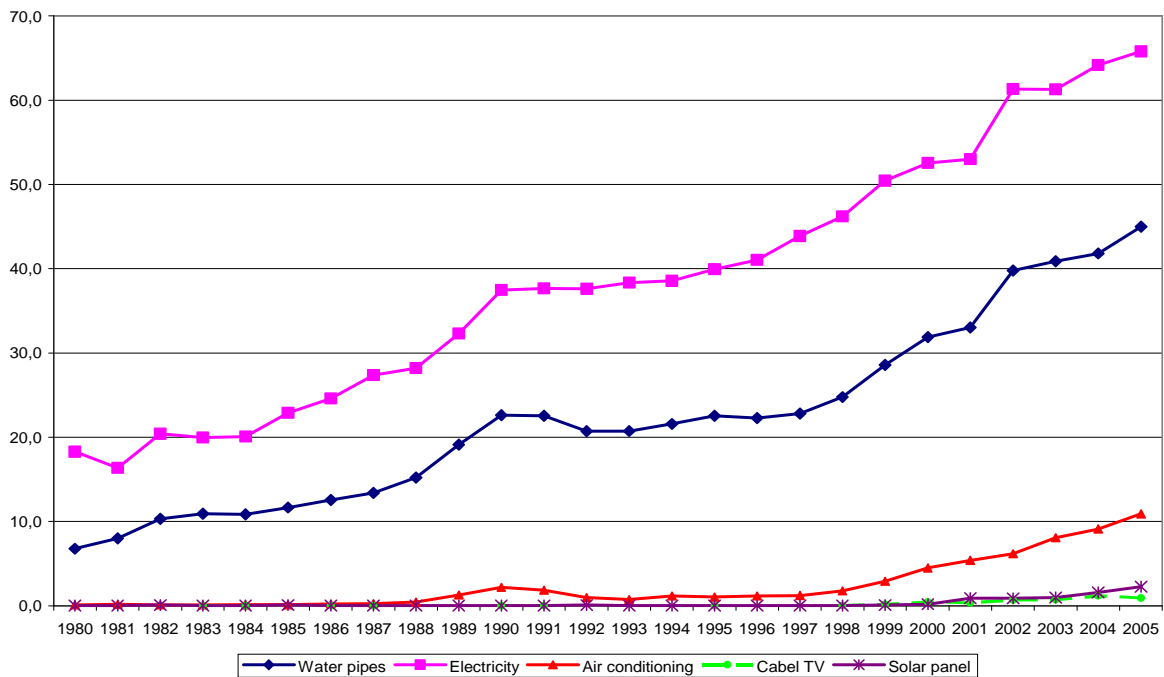


Figure 5. Penetration rates of selected equipment; Source: RHR 2005.

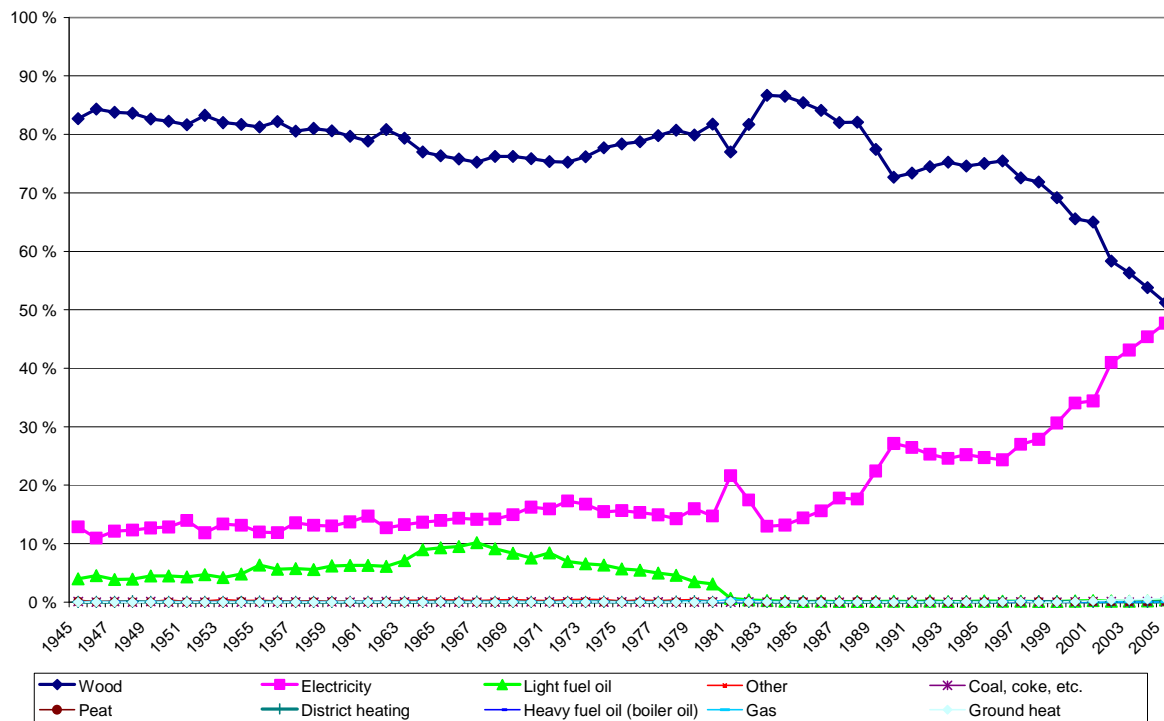


Figure 6. Principle type of heating in summerhouses by year of construction, as shares (%) (in as far as reported)

N.B. many summerhouses have electric heating batteries as auxiliary heating

Source: RHR 2005.

Electricity is installed in about 65 % of new summerhouses, water pipes in about 45 %, and air conditioning in over 10 % and their share is rising. In contrast, only a small share of the summerhouses is fitted with solar PV-panels. Electricity heating is taking over traditional firewood heated stoves. Other heating forms remain marginal or complementary. Innovations, such as heat pumps, popular in Sweden, raise interest, but otherwise, eco-efficient solutions such as thermal and electric solar panels, and wind turbines suffer from prejudices concerning ambient nuisances such as noise, appearance, or smell. Rising equipment levels will lower eco-efficiency significantly also when summerhouses are empty due to their heating.

Table 3 *Equipment standards of summerhouses by period of construction**

	Construction period of summerhouse					All
	Prior to 1960	1960's	1970's	1980's	1990-2003	
average size (m ²)	59,9	46,2	45,5	46,5	53,0	50,8
linked to public power system (%)	83,2	70,5	69,9	62,6	66,8	70,5
other (local) power source (%)	7,4	12,0	13,8	19,9	20,2	14,6
electric heating (%)	46,1	52,3	53,2	48,7	54,5	50,3
linked to public drinking water network (%)	14,0	7,9	8,6	7,2	13,3	10,3
refrigerator (%)	90,0	86,8	84,9	84,3	84,6	85,7
shower (%)	13,3	12,8	12,4	12,1	26,8	16,0
dish washing machine (%)	5,1	2,7	4,0	5,5	13,4	6,4
laundry machine (%)	14,4	8,2	9,9	10,4	14,3	11,8
television (%)	73,1	70,6	68,3	68,8	74,1	70,5
wastewater: untreated in ground of courtyard (%)	58,0	59,4	50,0	46,9	27,6	48,1
wastewater: to own sedimentation basin (%)	35,3	34,8	43,7	46,6	57,6	43,4
wastewater: to own sewer reservoir (%)	5,3	5,3	5,1	5,6	11,9	7,1
wastewater: linked to public sewer network (%)	1,4	0,6	1,2	0,8	2,9	1,4
internal WC (%)	12,7	6,8	8,5	8,8	22,8	12,7
share of summerhouse stock (%)	24,2	15,2	22,0	16,5	22,1	

*) source: 2003 Summerhouse survey; Only summerhouses that were used for at least day are included; summerhouses on the Ahvenanmaa islands are excluded

5. In what respects are summerhouse owners different?

5.1 Introduction

The ownership and use of summerhouses can be assessed from many angles, sociologically, economically, technically and ecologically. The study to which the current material is contributing

(VAPET²) aims to take all these dimensions into account. The present article however focuses on the economic and ecological aspects, while admitting that there is a technical and social context.

The ownership and use of a summerhouse necessitates the owning household to allocate money and time to it. As a consequence it could be expected that some other expenditures and time uses are reduced in comparison to the expenditure patterns of households that do not own nor use summerhouses. The differences in allocation of expenditures have consequences for the kind of production that is demanded from the economy. If the mix is somewhat different this may mean more or less emissions. The households obviously also affect the environment directly through their own behaviour. For example, if they wish to use the summerhouse also in winter, it means that such households will consume energy, notably for heating, both in their principal home *and* in their summerhouse. Another aspect is travelling, in table 2 is shown that over 40% of the summerhouses is located at more than 70 km distance from the principal home, and 17% more than 200km. This could lead to more car travel per year.

In order to provide preliminary answers to these questions, two types of assessments were carried out. Firstly, on the basis of the 2001 Consumer Survey micro-dataset³ expenditure patterns of summerhouse owners⁴ were compared with households not owning summerhouses. The comparison included both main categories of consumer expenditures such as food, clothing and housing and specific sub-categories that either deal with summerhouse features or with typical substitute commodities and services (e.g. holiday packages). The other assessment was carried out with a consumption expenditure simulation model (Perrels, 2005; Perrels and Sullström, 2007). The model system includes a variable for summerhouse ownership, which affects the expenditure system in various ways (included in the equations for expenditure shares of food, housing, travel and tourism respectively).

5.2 Comparing observed expenditure patterns

There are differences in expenditure patterns between summerhouse owning households and other households. The comparison should however be controlled for differences in household characteristics. Summerhouse owning households have on average a higher disposable income, whereas also the average age of the reference person (one of the adult household members) is much higher among summerhouse owning households. When the comparison is done per income decile the disposable income levels get mostly quite close to each other, the age difference however remain to be significant. Also household size may differ significantly, notably in the lower income deciles. To accommodate the various differences the comparison is done on the basis of absolute differences in euros per household as well as on the basis of differences in budget shares (normalised for household size).

Table 4 below summarises the findings. We can observe that regardless of the income decile summerhouse owning households spend more on housing as well as on interior. Transport and leisure and culture are the categories on which is less spent across all income deciles. For other

² . VAPET is a study in the framework of the Environmental Cluster Programme and aims to assess how the development of the stock of summerhouses can be combined with a reduction of its environmental loads (notably various emissions to air and water). (see also: <http://www.tts.fi/vapet/index.html> - in Finnish)

³ . The 2006 Consumer Survey dataset will be available by the end of 2007.

⁴ . This includes households with long term rental contracts for a summerhouse.

categories the results vary across the income deciles, thereby making it harder to produce overall conclusions.

Table 4. Differences in expenditures and expenditure shares per household for selected income deciles (difference is defined as figure for summerhouse owning household -/- figure for other household)

	absolute differences in expenditures (in €, $E_{owner, Dx}$ -/ - $E_{other, Dx}$)				differences in expenditure shares (in %-points, $S_{owner, Dx} - S_{other, Dx}$)			
	D3	D5	D7	D9	D3	D5	D7	D9
<i>household characteristics</i>								
age of main respondent (years)	59.8	60.0	50.5	51.2	48.4	45.8	42.9	46.5
share of pensioners	57%	65%	22%	18%	39%	29%	11%	15%
household size	1.4	2.1	2.8	3.1	1.7	2.4	2.9	3.3
<i>consumption categories</i>								
food & alcohol free beverages	92	205	102	213	0.3%	0.8%	0.8%	-0.5%
alcoholic beverages & tobacco	-104	-123	-103	-133	-0.6%	-0.5%	-0.2%	-0.3%
clothing & footwear	8	-246	-100	-59	0.0%	-1.0%	-0.2%	-0.1%
housing & energy	276	540	730	1271	1.0%	2.1%	3.2%	2.4%
interior & furniture	363	187	226	266	1.9%	0.7%	0.9%	0.5%
health care	-171	262	498	222	-1.0%	1.0%	1.6%	0.4%
transport	-140	114	-1416	-302	-1.0%	0.5%	-3.5%	-0.7%
telecommunication	-30	-201	-111	-130	-0.2%	-0.8%	-0.2%	0.2%
culture and leisure	-108	-239	-129	130	-0.7%	-1.0%	0.0%	-1.0%
hotels & restaurants	136	-311	-640	-39	0.7%	-1.2%	-1.7%	-0.1%
other products & services	-5	-177	-456	-489	-0.2%	-0.7%	-0.9%	-1.0%
<i>consumption sub-categories</i>								
summerhouse maintenance	114	171	140	308	0.6%	0.7%	0.4%	0.6%
all electricity ...	92	153	85	104	0.5%	0.6%	0.3%	0.2%
... of which for summerhouse	84	110	96	241	0.5%	0.4%	0.3%	0.5%
tools / machinery for home & garden	305	13	42	28	1.7%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%
car purchases	24	318	-1410	-258	0.1%	1.3%	-3.9%	-0.5%
transport fuel	-119	-85	-122	47	-0.7%	-0.3%	-0.2%	0.1%
large sports and leisure equipment	152	118	295	-275	0.8%	0.5%	0.9%	-0.6%
restaurant meals	78	-289	-651	-52	0.3%	-1.2%	-1.7%	-0.1%
insurances	73	38	27	134	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%
holiday packages	13	144	11	83	0.1%	0.6%	0.1%	0.3%
expenditures while abroad	-66	64	-108	-118	-0.4%	0.3%	-0.3%	-0.2%

At a more detailed level of comparison it becomes obvious that the ownership of a summerhouse implies extra cost for maintenance, repair, and energy, which are not – or at least not significantly –

compensated by less cost for the same items in the principal residence. From an environmental point of view this is important. Not only energy use, but also repair and maintenance may entail significant (embodied) environmental effects due to the involved building materials. As regards car purchase and use, there seem to be significant differences between lower and higher income deciles. Lower income households that own a summerhouse will be more inclined to own a car, hence the on balance higher expenditures. On the other hand wealthier households tend to own a car (or several) anyhow, so there is no reason for augmented car purchase expenditures for these households (and in fact the expenditures are even lower, but there is no information what might be the reason for this). Furthermore, for most deciles the various use cost items the differences tend to be negative, including fuel purchases. In a pre-study for VAPET (Perrels and Kangas, 2007) in which household expenditures were also compared (including controlling for car ownership) it was also argued that summerhouse ownership *on average* does not lead to extra fuel consumption for cars.

Summerhouse owning households tend to spend less on culture and leisure services. For holidays abroad a mixed picture results. Summerhouse owners tend to spend a bit more on holiday packages, but on the other hand holiday expenditures abroad (while on holiday) are mostly smaller. The combined effect of the two tends to be negative.

All in all this first comparison produces a mixed picture. Some concerns are confirmed, such as the increase in energy expenditures. The results hint at a slight substitution away from other free time activities and possibly from holidays abroad. As regards transport fuels however there seems – on balance – no effect. Apparently those that do not own a summerhouse are travelling just as much, albeit to other destinations.

5.3 Simulating expenditure responses and their implications for embodied emissions

In the simulation model was assessed to what extent the expenditure patterns differ when the summerhouse ownership rate is set at 1 and 0 respectively. For this simulation the model uses the income levels and other household characteristics based on the year 2005 as well as income levels of 2030. In addition various alternatives have been run which account for different degrees of cleaner production technology and variations in import shares of food products. These variations in input assumptions produce a range of estimated changes in emissions attributable to household consumption.

The simulation results for the changes in the budget shares based on the year 2005 income levels are for the greater part in line with the findings of the detailed assessment of the micro-data of 2001, presented above. However, the definition of the categories is different, which makes the comparison less straightforward. For example, the category ‘transport’ in the simulation model also includes – as far as possible – long distance travelling for holidays, whereas ‘tourism’ comprises of the actual services for tourists (hotels, leisure, etc.). The category ‘tourism’ also includes complete holiday packages. The category ‘living’ in the simulation model includes the insurances for houses and interior. When accounting for these differences the only difference that stands out is that transportation expenditures are projected to grow according to the model, whereas according to the detailed assessment reported above (table 3) a general rise in transportation expenditures is not necessarily happening with a hint to rather the opposite. With respect to car purchases it should be noted however that the error margin of the figures in table 4 is rather large. The reason is that the

number of households actually buying a car during the survey period is relatively small. The model on the other hand counts for the fact that summerhouse ownership raises the likelihood of car ownership, notably for households in lower income deciles. This leads to an overall slightly higher car ownership rate for summerhouse owners in comparison to others.

Table 5. *Simulated budget shares of main expenditure categories of households owning a summerhouse and households not owning a summerhouse based on input data for 2005*

<i>family types</i>	All households		couples 55-64; no children		retired persons (65+)		families (20-54) with children	
	income: 28000		income: 29500		income: 20000		income: 40000	
<i>consumption categories</i>	non-owners	owners	non-owners	owners	non-owners	owners	non-owners	owners
food, beverages, restaurants	0,225	0,211	0,207	0,194	0,206	0,193	0,230	0,217
clothing, footwear, accessories	0,049	0,048	0,045	0,044	0,037	0,036	0,063	0,062
living (home, energy, interior)	0,325	0,331	0,341	0,346	0,407	0,412	0,279	0,286
transport	0,070	0,073	0,071	0,074	0,049	0,052	0,082	0,085
media	0,057	0,056	0,058	0,057	0,065	0,064	0,052	0,051
leisure	0,043	0,043	0,040	0,039	0,035	0,035	0,050	0,050
health and personal care	0,064	0,063	0,071	0,070	0,092	0,091	0,056	0,055
tourism	0,022	0,024	0,025	0,027	0,021	0,023	0,022	0,024
financial services	0,069	0,068	0,069	0,067	0,040	0,039	0,081	0,080
cars	0,027	0,027	0,030	0,030	0,017	0,017	0,033	0,033
electric appliances	0,013	0,012	0,011	0,011	0,009	0,009	0,015	0,015
large leisure goods	0,010	0,013	0,009	0,012	0,004	0,005	0,009	0,012
furniture, decoration	0,025	0,031	0,023	0,029	0,019	0,024	0,027	0,031

There is however also the interesting effect, that – according to the simulation model – summerhouse owners tend to be slightly more inclined to spending than the other households. It is too early to judge whether this is a model artefact. Furthermore, if summerhouse ownership would abound it is not a priori certain the additional households would adopt also a spending mentality. In other words it is not clear whether current summerhouse owning households just happen to have a commonality regarding spending behaviour or that summerhouse ownership is indeed inciting or necessitating to more spending (and hence less saving). For the nearby future Finland probably will continue to be a country with a surplus trade balance, and consequently a slight decrease in saving rates may not need to be fatal. Yet, in the longer run a drop in the savings rate may be problematic from a macro-economic point of view.

In order to assess the impact on embodied emissions of a changed budget allocation the simulation model employs a dual input-output system, with secondary figures for specific emissions per unit of

production value. The development of specific emissions and of the energy efficiency in production (value basis) can be adapted. It also allows adaptation of the import shares per sector. There are 44 sectors and 20 consumption expenditure categories. The various simulation runs included both constant and eco-efficiency improving production technology. On the other hand both current and future disposable income levels were tested. Table 6 provides an overview of the range of changes that might be possible. Please realise that the figures should also be interpreted in a time frame (about two decades ahead).

The results indicate that for some types of emissions (e.g. ammonia) reductions seem to be more likely, if summerhouse ownership would become substantially more popular, whereas for others the probability is rather high that increased popularity of summerhouses would result in increased emissions (carbon dioxide). For NO_x and nutrients (N and P) in waste, higher ownership rates for summerhouses seem to lead to higher emissions regardless of the variations in income development or technology. It should be stressed that the figures in table 6 are without additional (not yet decided) policies or specific eco-innovations for summerhouses. Obviously, from a climate policy point of view summerhouse ownership and use merits attention. The direct and embodied CO₂ emissions in Finland of consumption in Finland represent roughly 60% of all emissions. For example, the 1.7% more in table 6 below would mean approximately 1.2% more for overall national CO₂ emissions. Given the long term aims of 20% to 30% reduction in the next two decades the depicted risks for increases do merit attention and further assessment about their potential.

Table 6. *Hypothetical changes in national nutrient emissions attributable to household consumption when all households would own a summerhouse compared to a situation without any summerhouse ownership – figures refer to changes would unfold in the next two decades*

	Water	Air	Air	Air	Waste	Water	Waste	Air
	N	NO _x -N	N ₂ O-N	NH ₃ - N	N	P	P	CO ₂
impact	-0.8 % ~	0.6 % ~	-0.9 % ~	-2.0 % ~	0.4 % ~	-1.6 % ~	0.5 % ~	-0.2 % ~
range	1.0%	2.4%	0.9%	-0.1%	2.2%	0.3%	2.3%	1.7%

6. Conclusions

With recourse to the title we have for a start to keep in mind that on average summerhouse owners have higher disposable incomes than other households. Yet, if we consider travel it seems hard to come up with definite conclusions. After controlling for disposable income summerhouse ownership does not seem to lead to higher overall travel performance per year. Possibly domestic travel could increase slightly if summerhouse ownership increases, but travel abroad could equally reduce as a result. It should be stressed however, that current results leave still too much leeway for definitive answers.

Possibly, more pertinent answers can only be given after distinguishing by type of household. Summerhouse ownership typically entails a certain lifestyle, whereas there different lifestyles possible in conjunction with summerhouse ownership. This also relates to other concerns regarding the environmental impacts of summerhouses. Even though equipment standards tend to be rising, this might be combined in the future with new technical innovations that enable significant improvements in energy saving, material efficiency and recycling, water use, etc. Nevertheless as regards energy consumption the findings – even though preliminary – hint at a significant increase

of energy consumption by households if summerhouse ownership would abound. To compensate that effect substantial efforts would be necessary.

As regards sustainable holidays summerhouses do offer some potential, notably if travelling to far away destinations can be reduced. Furthermore, also inside Finland summerhouse owners do not consume more transport fuel, controlled for income levels even somewhat less. If summerhouse use could be developed in the direction of more prolonged stays instead of many short breaks, a further reduction in transport fuel use might be possible.

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Purchasing a house. Is there a place for environmental arguments? Putman, L. and S. van den Burg

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Purchasing a house. Is there a place for environmental arguments?¹

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Keywords: housing; user perspective; social practices; everyday life; consumption; environment; sustainability; ecological modernisation; the Netherlands.

In this paper we discuss the transition to sustainable housing in the Netherlands from an everyday life consumption perspective. We analyse the development of environmental arguments in the social practice of purchasing existing houses. We investigate the role of environmental arguments in current practices and we investigate how environmental arguments (can) enter these practices. For this we draw upon the Ecological Modernisation Theory (EM) and the Social Practices Approach (SPA) in which the social practice is a set of common activities of buyers that take place in interaction with and responding to the system of provision, consisting of a network of house-sellers, real estate agents, mortgaging companies, and insurance companies. SPA takes into consideration the fact that consumers are a heterogeneous group involving different lifestyles. In the practice of purchasing an existing house we selected the interface between real estate agents and buyers as consumption junction; the space where providers and buyers meet. In this paper we present the results of the focusgroup of real estate agents providing existing houses and the results of the focusgroup of consumers reflecting on their purchasing practices and on the provision of environmental innovations in these practices. The results suggest that current practices of real estate agents and consumers hardly involve environmental arguments and sustain each other. Action-oriented environmental information tailor-made for buyers of houses is lacking to both real estate agents and consumers, which makes it difficult for consumers to take environmental arguments into consideration when purchasing a house.

1 Introduction

Contemporary society is facing several major environmental challenges. For a transition towards a sustainable society, a transition towards environmental sustainable housing are needed, including changes in the environmental impact of consumption in housing. Many of the consumption practices that are affiliated with 'housing' contribute to several of the most pressing environmental challenges of contemporary society, including climate change, water availability and pollution, air pollution, deterioration of nature and biodiversity, and land use. This is for example shown in research of Nijdam and Wilting (2003, et al., 2005) who calculated the direct and indirect environmental loads² of Dutch consumption domains. Two

¹ A previous version of was presented at the ENHR conference 2007, 25-28 June 2007, Rotterdam, The Netherlands and at an Environmental Policy Group colloquium, Wageningen University, 9 May 2007, Wageningen.

² "The *direct* environmental load is defined as the load that occurs during use of the product by the consumer. The *indirect* environmental load is the load that occurs before the product or service has been purchased, or after it has been collected for waste treatment. Basically, this is the load caused by enterprises and institutions (Nijdam, et al., 2005: 149)." The environmental loads include both national and international environmental loads.

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of the consumption domains they distinguish are part of what we define as the consumption domain 'home maintenance', i.e., the consumption domains 'housing' and 'furnishing'. The consumption domain 'housing' consists of rent, mortgage, local housing taxes, housing insurance, maintenance, heating and lighting. The expenditures on rent and mortgage "reflect the environmental load associated with the building of houses and all the associated production activities" and local housing taxes "include impact of waste and wastewater treatment". The consumption domain 'furnishing' consists of furniture, upholstery, decoration and gardening (Nijdam et al, 2005). Together, these two domains contribute significantly to environmental concerns such as climate change (23%), smog (19%), acidification (17%), use of wood (32%), use of land (17%), use of water (15%), and nutrification (8%) (Nijdam and Wilting, 2003)³.

Consumption domain Home Maintenance

Although the main body of housing literature focuses on social issues (Lovell, 2005) and although "the conceptual linking of housing and environmental issues has remained marginal to academic activity in housing studies (Bhatti and Dixon, 2003: 501)", in housing literature an increasing number of authors deals with the challenge of changes and the need for changes in housing towards sustainability. In addition a further greening of housing studies is argued for (Brown and Bhatti, 2003). With this paper we want to contribute to this body of literature. We provide an approach to study the role of citizen-consumers in transitions to environmental sustainable 'housing', by connecting insights from consumption studies in environmental sociology to the consumption practices affiliated with housing. In this paper, which is part of the project Contrast⁴, we analyse environmental change in one of the consumption domains affiliated to 'housing': home maintenance.

Analytically we can make a distinction between two kinds of consumption practices affiliated to 'housing'. First, we can distinguish consumption practices that take place at the house, but that could take place at other places as well including dwelling practices like cocooning or sleeping, household practices like laundering, and practices of personal care like showering and bathing. Cowan (1983) for example shows how, in the process of industrialisation and technology development, household practices as fuel and food production have changed place from home to the industrial sector. In addition Urry (2000) shows how many previously place bound practices that were related to dwelling are increasingly mobile. These consumption practices are part of different consumption domains like 'clothing and personal care' and 'food consumption'. Second, in addition to these consumption practices for which the house is the space of place, we can distinguish practices in which the house is the focus of consumption practices, like acquiring the house, renovating the house, furnishing the house and cleaning the house. The practices with the house as focus we define as the consumption domain 'home maintenance'. A similar distinction is made by Saunders (1987). "In contemporary western culture, the focus and pivot consumption is above all else the home. The home is not only itself an object of consumption, but is also the container within much consumption takes place (Saunders, 1989: 177)" In this paper we focus on one particular practice of the consumption domain 'home maintenance': *the practice of purchasing an existing house*.

³ Within the consumption domain 'furnishing' the largest part of the environmental pressures is related to furniture and within the consumption domain 'housing' the largest part is related to rent and mortgage, thus to building the house, and to heating (Nijdam ad Wilting, 2003).

⁴ Contrast (COConsumption TRAnsitions for suSTainability) is a research project concerning sustainability transitions in four consumption domains: day-to-day mobility, food consumption, recreational mobility and 'home maintenance and repair'. In this research project the main focus is on the role of the citizen-consumer in interaction with and responding to social-technical environmental innovations as provided by the relevant systems of provision.

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Purchasing an existing house as consumption practice

Purchasing a house is a special kind of 'consumption'. Purchasing a house differs in many ways from buying processes of other consumer goods (see also Gram-Hanssen, 2006). The house, the product purchased, is a very robust product with a long life time most often connected to all kinds of, often also robust, infrastructures like electricity, gas or heat, water, wastewater and transport or road infrastructures. The house is situated in a neighbourhood in which other people live as well, the neighbours, in which all kinds of facilities or services can be located and in which the location can have all kinds of physical characteristics like a green environment or lots of surface water. The house is situated at a location which can be more nearby or further away from other locations, like the location of work or education. Hence, the citizen-consumer does not only purchase the house but also purchases a *place* in these complex social-technical networks and environment. Second, purchasing a house is a special kind of consumption since it involves large financial obligations and takes place only a few times in a citizen-consumer's life, if it does take place. It is fair to say that purchasing a house concerns for most citizen-consumers, from a financial perspective, the largest purchase in their life with all the 'worries' that come along with it. Third, next to means of consumption, the house can be regarded an investment; as a source of capital development. Already in 1978 Saunders argued that house ownership has a potential to accumulate "wealth". This potential is strongly linked to peculiarities of the housing market like shortage of building land, restrictions on building imposed by spatial planning authorities, the relationship between inflation rates on houses in relation to inflation on other commodity prices and governmental subsidies including tax relieve on mortgage interest (Saunders, 1978; 1984). But it is also directly related to robustness or 'obduracy' of the product, the house. In Warde's words: "[...] one does not consume a house, one uses it: it remains (mostly) intact through its use and is a commodity which can subsequently be exchanged on the market. The same is true to a lesser extent of motor cars and domestic machines, but of course their fast rates of deterioration in value and their short life before obsolescence make them not particularly useful as objects of investment (Warde, 1990: 237)." Fourth, the purchase of a house involves both elements of what in consumption literature is referred to as 'conspicuous' and 'inconspicuous' consumption. A house, or the place in the social-technical network and environment, contains elements that can be explained as aspects with symbolic meanings that are symbol to communicate with society and to give meaning to oneself; to define ones identity (see for example Gram-Hanssen et al, 2004; Gram-Hanssen, 2006, and Wagenaar, 2005). In addition many elements of the house, like the quality of the construction, insulation or the connection to technical infrastructures like electricity, water and wastewater, are not visible or tangible and thus their consumption relates more to the long term development of conventions and infrastructures (see for example Chappells, 2003). Fifth, the house, as 'a product with a long lifetime', is continually appropriated in the process of making the house ones home (Gram-Hanssen, 2006; Gram-Hanssen et al, 2004).

Aim of the paper and research questions

The aim of this paper is to analyse environmental change in the practice of purchasing a house by analyzing how environmental arguments are and become embedded in this consumption practice and whether and how they restructure the practice into an environmental sound direction. Rather than a focus on one particular innovation as in technology diffusion or in social-technical system approaches, like a focus on natural ventilation, insulation, or other sustainable building technologies (see for example Guy and Shove, 2000; Van Hal, 2000, Farmer and Guy, 2002; and Van Mierlo, 2002) or on a particular environmental concept of houses (see for example Silvester, 1996 and Van Hal, 2000), the focus is on the development and the embedding or institutionalization of an ecological rationality in the practice and the restructuring of the practice into an environmental sound direction. This approach is derived from the ecological modernisation

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theory (EM), which is a theory in the field of environmental sociology theorising the transformation of production and consumption into an ecological sound one. According to EM the only possibility to establish a transformation to an ecological sound society is to embed ecological rationality parallel to other rationalities within the *social practices* and *institutions* of modernity going further into the process of modernity (Mol, 1995). This does not mean that the social practices and institutions are itself seen as static concerning the other 'spheres'; they develop as well. Nor does it propose economic growth per se. Rather it suggests that economic development does not need to lead to an environmental unsustainable society per se; that economic development and environmental sustainability can be combined and thus does not see stopping economic development as *the* solution for a development towards a sustainable society (see for further discussions on EM, Mol et al, 2000; 2004). In the 'early days' of EM the focus was on the emancipation of, or dis-embedding of, the environmental sphere from the economic sphere and the re-embedding of the environmental rationality in the economic sphere through the notions 'ecologising economy' and 'economising ecology'. In addition the focus was mainly on the system of production (see Mol, 1995). Focusing on the development of consumption practices in a post modern society, we do not only focus on the development of an environmental rationality and the re-embedding of this environmental rationality in economic sphere, the social sphere and political sphere (see Mol, 1995), but we also focus on the re-embedding of the environmental rationality in the cultural sphere. Embedding an environmental rationality in different cultural spheres presupposes the development of different environmental logics. Thus although in housing literature ecological modernization is associated with or sometimes even seen as synonymous to an eco-technical or techno-centrist approach in which technology 'will save the world' (see for example Guy and Farmer, 2000; Farmer and Guy, 2002; Öst, 2007), we focus on the development of an environmental rationality which can contain different environmental logics, including an eco-technical logic. At the same time, we do see environmental issues as more than only social constructs.

The existence and development of an environmental rationality is operationalised as the existence and development of environmental arguments in the practice, the embedding of this environmental rationality in the practice. Our main questions thus are: 1) what role do environmental arguments play in the current Dutch practices of purchasing a house? 2) how can this be explained? And 3) how can environmental arguments be brought into the practice of purchasing a house?

Before we will present our further layout of the paper, we first want to emphasize, to prevent misunderstanding, that we do not assume or suggest that if environmental arguments are part of consumption practices, it will automatically lead to environmental sound practices. The development of an environmental rationality is regarded as a precondition for the embedding or institutionalisation of the environmental rationality into the practice, including its social and technical structures, and through this embedding the restructuring of the practice towards an environmental sound direction.

Outline

In the following section we will present our reasoning behind the need to focus on consumption practices and, more specifically, the need for citizen-consumer involvement in changes towards sustainability in housing. After that we will continue with a presentation of our theoretical framework for analysing the practice and the development of environmental arguments in the practice. For this we draw upon the Social Practices Approach. This framework is subsequently 'translated' to the social practice of purchasing a house and to a methodology suitable for analysing this practice. Next the findings of the quickscan and focusgroups are discussed: first we will analyse the role of environmental arguments in

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current practices after which we will elaborate on how environmental arguments can become part of current practices. We will finalize with a conclusion on the research findings and develop a line for further research.

2 Why focus consumption practices?

We challenge the believes that it is not needed to develop an environmental rational in the consumption practices of citizen-consumers; that the development and embedding of an environmental rational solely in the production of houses, for example by increasing the energy performance of new built houses or by reducing the CO₂ emissions in the production of houses, is sufficient for a development towards sustainable housing and that consumers should not and do not want to be bothered with environmental innovations and changes. We are of the opinion that in order to reduce the environmental impact of housing or to enable a transitions towards sustainable housing an environmental rational should be developed as well in the consumption practices; one should bother the consumer. The following three groups of arguments underlie our position. First, we argue that technical solutions do not automatically lead to more sustainable consumption practices and show that this particular holds for housing which is characterized by obdurate material structures which is for a large part privately owned. Second, we argue that the position of citizen-consumers in the practice of purchasing an existing house is changing which leads us to believe that consumers will come to play a more important role in making the Dutch housing sector more environmental sustainable. And third, we argue that involvement of citizen-consumers is needed to enable and legitimize policy interventions.

Technological solutions, sustainable solutions?

One of the logics behind non involvement of citizen-consumers seems to be that idea through embedding environmental characteristics in the robust material structure of new build houses, indirect environmental impact and direct environmental impact of the consumption practices that take place in these houses will be reduced without a need for changes in the consumption practices. We see several difficulties concerning this logic.

First of all, it only applies to new build houses, which is, of course, only a small part of the total housing stock. In the Netherlands in the period 2000 – 2006 the number of new built houses added to the housing stock varies between about 60.000 till 73.000 a year⁵ on a total housing stock of almost 7 million houses in 2006 (VROM, 2007:07). Second, although it can significantly contribute to reducing environmental impacts, improving the environmental characteristics of the material structure does not automatically or by definition lead to a reduction of environmental impacts. When we look for example at energy performances of houses, research has shown that with a lower energy performance⁶, the use of energy for heating rooms and water and for cooking (using gas) on average decreases (Uitzinger, 2004; Novem, 2004). However, at the same time large variations have been found like large variations in the energy use of houses with similar performances, and households dwelling houses with an high energy performance can have a lower energy use than households in houses with a low energy performance and vice versa (Uitzinger, 2004). Thus although the environmental effect of consumption practices can be affected through changes in the material system, the practices of citizen-consumers still, despite these changes, considerably determine the actual energy use. In addition research on sustainable building has illustrated that the potential environmental benefits of technical solutions are in some cases made undone by renovations and adaptations to the house by citizen-consumers (see for example Reijden van der et al, 2002). This renovation, adjusting or 'appropriation' of the house shows

⁵ In 2000: 70.650. In 2001: 72.958. In 2002: 66.704. In 2003: 59.629. In 2004: 65.314. In 2005: 67.016. And in 2006: 72.382 (VROM, 2006: 07)

⁶ A lower energy performance stands for a higher energy efficiency of the house.

that the robustness of houses is limited. This could lead one to argue that these innovations should be made 'consumer-proof' but our argument is that it is more viable (and socially-just) to involve consumers in the development, implementation and/or use of such innovations. Third, the robustness or obduracy of the 'material system' of houses can not only be considered a characteristic that contributes to environmental change, but also a characteristic that hinders environmental change. In case of products with a 'short' lifetime and related to that, higher frequency in consumption practices of acquiring the product, the adjusted more environmental sustainable product can, theoretically, relatively easy replace the existing products. For example the low-energy or led lamps can replace the light-bulb or the more environmentally friendly produced detergent that can replace the finished detergent. Products with a long lifetime are not replaced very frequently since they are not bought very frequently and since they not necessarily replace 'finished' products but can be added to existing products (see Gram-Hanssen, 2004?). The house is a 'product' with a long lifetime. Demolishing of houses does not take place in large numbers. The number of houses that were withdrawn in 2006 from the Dutch housing stock were: 21.656 houses⁷ (VROM, 2007a). Most houses withdrawn in the period 2000 – 2005 were built before 1970 (VROM, 2007b). Only part of the houses that are demolished are replaced by new built houses at the same place. In the period 1990 – 2003 the number of houses that were demolished was 144.050 and the number of houses that were build to replace demolished houses at the same place (postal code) was 99.022 (Koops et al., 2005). This means that the strategy of reducing environmental effects through improving the environmental performance of new build houses concerns an improvement of houses added to the housing stock and hardly relates to the existing housing stock. Following the strategy of reducing environmental impact of dwelling practices through the physical structure of houses, an environmental improvement of existing houses is needed. Which directly involves the citizen-consumers, both tenants and owners, dwelling the house. If the house is owned by the citizen-consumer, the practices of the citizen-consumer determine the renovation and maintenance of the house. More than half of these houses are privately owned by citizen-consumers and the trend is an increase of privately owned houses. In the Netherlands in the year 2006 55,9% of the houses were owned by private owners (citizen-consumers), 33,1% was for rent in the social sector and 11,0% was for rent in the private market. Figures show an increase in the fraction of private owned houses from 45,5% in 1990 till 55,9% in 2006 (VROM, 2007: 13). This all implies that without involvement of citizen-consumers only a gradual change in the housing sector can be expected, via new built houses. A change of which it may be doubted whether the environmental effect will sustain.

Changing position of citizen-consumers

Related to changes in the political landscape, the position of the citizen-consumers is changing and it is to be expected that with this changing position the citizen-consumers will come to play a more important role in changes towards sustainability. Many political scientists and sociologists have illustrated that contemporary political arrangements are characterized by a new distribution of power and responsibility. One clear consequence is that as increased importance is attached to consumer-choice, greater attention is paid to the opportunities to tap on the power of consumers in bringing about environmental improvements (Micheletti, 2003). Several recent developments in the building and development sector, the housing policy and in the provision of houses can be distinguished that have lead us to believe that also in housing sectors consumers will come to play a more important role.

⁷ In 2000: 13.529; 2001: 15.555; in 2002: 16.407; in 2003: 17.762; in 2004: 19.312; and in 2005: 19.055 (VROM, 2006b).

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Dutch housing has been and to a large extent still is provider dominated. Where houses can be built is laid down in spatial plans subject to democratic control. These plans are based upon housing needs surveys which in general only make a distinction in houses on the basis of price, access, typology of houses; and residential environment. Which houses and how many houses are built in an area is decided upon by the municipality and involved project developers, which relationship depends on who owns the land. In general future buyers become involved when project plans have already been developed. However, citizen-consumers increasingly have a direct role in the building and development of 'their' houses, thus not only as 'citizen' but also as 'consumer'. New notions have been developed in the building sector as 'consument gericht bouwen' (consumer oriented building) or 'het wilde wonen', a concept launched by the architect Weeber and applied in Almere as 'gewild wonen' in which the citizen-consumer is given much more freedom to develop and build its own house.

Moreover, last decade the practice of purchasing a house has undergone many changes which are related to turbulent changes of the real estate agency and which has changed the position of consumers vis-à-vis real estate agencies. These changes are brought on by the development of internet, especially real estate websites like Funda and DIMO, and by the liberalisation of the institute 'real estate agency'. The liberalisation of the real estate agency implicated the liberalisation of tariffs and services in 1994 and the end of the legal protection of the title 'real estate agent' in 2001. Before 2001 the title was exclusively reserved for the court sworn real estate brokers and ensured the professional skills, trustworthiness and independency of real estate agents. Only the title 'real estate agent' was protected and not its activities. This means that other persons were allowed to 'mediate' between buyers and sellers of real estate as well, but were not allowed to call themselves 'real estate agent' (Dammingh, 2002). However, in practice real estate brokerage took mostly place via the real estate agent. By ending the legal protection of the title a centuries old Dutch institute 'the sworn housing real estate agents' had come to an end. The sworn broker, in different variations, had already been regulated by (local) governmental authorities since the 13th century (Dammingh, 2002). Before the liberalisation and the internet the real estate agent was not only a broker concerning real estate but also, maybe even more, a broker concerning real estate information which consumers could not do without. The real estate agent knew first which houses were for sale and the agent knew who was looking for a house, since he serviced both groups and exchanged information with other real estate agents. Citizen-consumers thus needed a real estate agent to find and purchase a house and to sell a house. Tariffs of their services were fixed and 'total service packages' for purchasing or selling a house was provided. The liberalization of the real estate agent enabled consumers to shop between real estate agencies that now could differ in prices of services. The availability and use of internet lifted the monopoly on information, since citizen-consumers could find more easily houses for sale on their own. This development led to the development of real estate agents providing partial purchasing services instead of only a 'total package'. The citizen-consumer could now search for homes on the internet where he is able to compare more homes than before and not only homes in one region but in the entire country. He can select those houses he considers to be the most interesting and can then decide whether to hire services from real estate agencies like support during the demonstration of the home, the negotiations and finalising the buy, or citizen-consumers can purchase the house completely by themselves and if necessary order the necessary reports like a construction report themselves. The citizen-consumers became thus more independent from real estate agents concerning their services in purchasing a house. This has also led to a decrease of use of purchasing support services. This is shown in the yearly branch monitors of the Dutch union of real-estate brokers (NVM). The monitors show a decrease in use of the purchasing support service. The authors explain this decrease far most by the

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development of internet and by the change of the housing market from a providers market to a buyers market in which the citizen-consumer has the opportunity to choose and has the time to choose. In addition the monitor shows a trend of provision of partial buying services instead of an integral buying services package in reaction to the loss of customers on the buying services (Risseeuw et al, 2002; 2003). Since only real estate agents could place houses on the real estate website, which in the beginning was only the website Funda of NVM, the real estate agents still had a very strong position in the information flow from sellers to buyers. This changed when, the NVM real estate agent Makelaarsland, presenting itself as a national discount real estate agent, started to offer the partial services including the service advertisements on Funda, still the biggest and most viewed real estate website. Obviously, this led to a lot of commotion in the real estate sector, especially among NVM real estate agents. In addition, Funda has been given strong competition from an increasing number of other housing websites, including websites at which citizen-consumers can put their own advertisements without involvement any involvement of a real estate agent. This goes along with legal cases between several of the real estate websites about whether one website might use information or link to information of another website, like Funda versus 'zoekallehuizen' in 2006 and Funda versus 'Jaap.nl' in 2007. Since the introduction of partial services in selling a home by Makelaarsland, also an increase can be seen in do-it-yourself buying and selling and providers for services for do-it yourself buying and selling like Direct-TE-KOOP.com, the 'deeldienst Makelaar', the 'Doehetzelfmakelaar'. They are all national internet real estate agents providing services like 'for sale' boards and an opportunity to place the home at a website. In sum, we find that the internet combined with the liberalisation of the position of the real-estate broker changed the relationship between real estate agents and citizen-consumers, giving the citizen-consumer a stronger position. In addition, these changes in the structure of real estate agents as providers of houses, or as provider of information of houses, has led to changes in the practices of purchasing a house. With the change of the modes of access and provision from a fixed mode of provision and access through the real estate agencies to several modes of access and provision through more different providers, citizen-consumers no longer have to buy the 'complete brokerage package' from a real estate agent, but can buy a partial service like access to a real estate website to present the house. Nowadays most citizen-consumers first search the internet for homes and choose between real estate agencies or even choose not to involve any real estate agent at all.

We can conclude that the position of citizen-consumers vis-à-vis the provider of houses and the producers of houses is still changing towards a more 'independent' position of citizen-consumers. This changing position of citizen-consumers in housing asks for a better understanding of their consumption practices in relation to environmental sustainability.

Legitimization and enabling of policy interventions

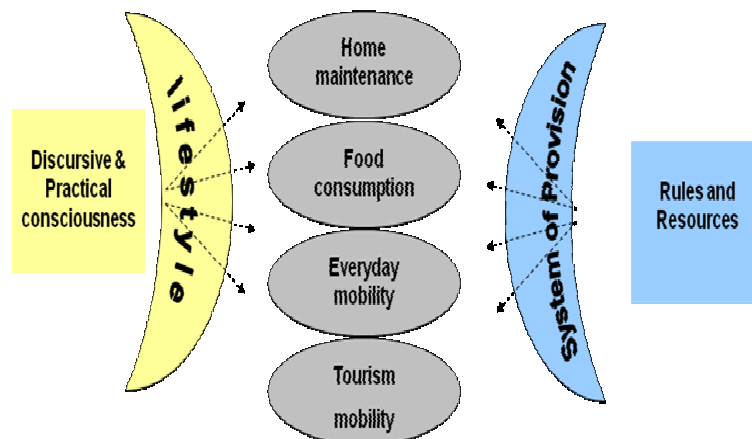
The third argument for focusing on consumption practices and on citizen-consumers since they legitimize and enable political interventions. It is difficult to imagine governments imposing and enforcing strict regulations in the absence of concerned citizen-consumers – although these concerns are of course often voiced by organisations which 'represent' consumers such as consumer organisations and environmental organisations.

3 Theoretical framework: Social Practice Approach

The ecological modernisation of the practice of purchasing a house entails the development of an environmental rationality in the practice, or more specifically the development of environmental arguments in the practice, and the re-embedding of this environmental rationality in the practice. To analyse the development of environmental rationalities in the

practices of purchasing a house we draw upon the Social Practices Approach (SPA). SPA (see figure 1) is developed as a consumer oriented approach in environmental sociology by Spaargaren (1997), Beckers et al (2000), Spaargaren and van Vliet (2000) to investigate the ecological modernisation of consumption. SPA is based upon the Structuration Theory of Anthony Giddens (1984). Central to the approach is the concept of practices and the notion of 'duality of structure'. The practices are conceptualised as a set of activities or routines that consumers would recognize as part of their daily life, like the practices of heating the home, of furnishing the home or of purchasing a house. The notion of 'duality of structure' refers to the idea that behaviour of actors, more specifically their practices, are structured or shaped by structures consisting of rules and resources, including routines, material structures, and meaning, and which forms the context in which behaviour of actors take place. Simultaneously these structures are formed, maintained and adjusted by the behaviour of the actors. "On the one hand actors are 'forces' in their actions to draw on existing rules and resources. In such cases, structures are 'media' in the sense that they enable a human to act. On the other hand these structures are in turn confirmed and reinforced by the actors' very actions. In this sense, structures are both media and outcomes of human action (Spaargaren and van Vliet, 2000: 54)." The approach thus combines insights of approaches on how consumption practices are shaped by their social-technical context going from right to left in the SPA model, like the work of Chappells (2003) focusing on how electricity and water demand is structured by the social-technical systems, the work of Guy and Shove (2000) showing how social-technical systems shape energy-efficiency in building, or the work of Shove (2003) showing how different everyday life consumption practices are shaped through different mechanisms, with an actor approach in which the behaviour of citizen-consumers shapes the social-technical context, going from left to right in the SPA model.

Figure 1: Social Practices Approach



From this follows that the SPA does not conceptualise citizen-consumer as individual decision makers, focusing on individual behaviour and choice. SPA conceptualizes citizen-consumers as part of a group citizen-consumers that share social practices situated in space and time, or in other words situated in a social-technical context. Nor does the SPA conceptualise assume citizen-consumers to behave fully economically rational or in an instrumental goal oriented way. In this way the SPA differentiates from several approaches in environmental studies that try to explain the behaviour of individual citizen-consumers solely on the basis of their characteristics like their (environmental) values and their (environmental) knowledge. In this way SPA also differentiates from approaches in housing studies as the studies on residential mobility, housing choice, and housing search that focus on citizen-consumers as individual decision makers. For example the four approaches on housing

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choice and residential mobility discussed by Mulder (1996) which “all four assume rational behaviour and aim at making generalizable statements about the determinants of that behaviour (Mulder, 1996: 224).” Or the work of Coolen et al (2001; 2002) on values in housing and tenure choice and that is based on means-end theory. These kind of rational and functional approaches in general conceptualise behaviour of citizen-consumers as rational, functional or intended behaviour and explains divergent behaviour by barriers. As Guy and Shove (2000) have shown, this model gives only a limited explanation of behaviour. The SPA approach tries to move beyond that. In the SPA approach consumers draw for example on developed routines, heuristics and believes that structure their behaviour. Examples of these routines in the practice of purchasing a house are the questions buyers ask to the person selling the house just because they are part of a general list of questions people ask when purchasing house. For example questions as ‘what is the age of the central heater boiler?’ or ‘how many ‘electricity groups’ are available in this house?’ Thus even for a social practices in which consumers are less frequently involved than for example in practices of shopping for grocery or clothing, routines and heuristics are developed.

Finally the SPA approach distinguishes between different groups of consumers on the basis of lifestyles. In its lifestyles the actor binds together its different practices like its practices of buying a home, of dwelling and of food consumption. In that sense the lifestyle refers to a degree of coherence in the actor’s behaviour. In addition it refers to the story the actor tells about its practices to bring coherence in the practices; a lifestory or a narrative of the self (Spaargaren and van Vliet, 2000).

From SPA to the practice of purchasing a house

As a consequence of applying SPA we focus on the practice of purchasing an existing house as a set of activities that consumers undertake when purchasing an existing house. These steps take place in a context that we operationalise as the system of provision of a house. This system of provision consists of a network of actors that provide services and products to the consumers in the practice of purchasing a house. Derived from Cowan (1987), we focus on the space where the providers of the system of provision and the consumers in the practice meet: the consumption junction.

In general the following set of activities can be distinguished in the practice of purchasing a house. First, consumers search for houses for sale in the region(s) in which one wants to live. If a house for sale has awoken the interest of the house seeker, (s)he shows its interest to the sales representative and asks for additional information. Following this, the house seeker visits a demonstration of the house. Subsequently, the house seeker considers whether the house is fit for or can be adjusted to fit to ones wishes and if the house seeker decides to buy the house negotiations between the owner of the house and buyer are started. If the negotiations have lead to an agreement the sale is officially finalized; and finally the house is delivered at a set date and the buying consumer inspects the house. In reality these steps, especially step 1 till 4, are intermingled. Citizen-consumers that are looking for a house show interest in several homes simultaneously and houses in which they are still interested after the first visit can be visited several times. In addition the steps can take place in short period of time, but also over a very long period. And, as shown in a previous section, purchasing practices change along changes in the structures concerning the real estate agents and the way they provide information.

These steps of purchasing a house are a rather narrow interpretation of practice only referring to a practice in relation to a real estate agent or the owner of the house. In other words, it refers to a system of provision consisting of only one provider, the real estate agent or the owner of the house selling the home, and providing only one product, the house. We

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want to broaden our perspective by looking at purchasing of house from the angle of a system of systems perspective (see Shove, 2003). Citizen-consumers in the practice of purchasing a house have to acquire several services simultaneously. Citizen-consumers not only purchases the house, but also acquire the financial means to be able to purchase the house most often in the form of a mortgage. Often connected to the mortgage (s)he has to acquire live-insurances, income insurances or income assurances from their employer. In addition an appraisal of the house and a constructional assessment can be part of the buying process, possibly linked again to the mortgage requirements. If the citizen-consumer considers an adjustment of the home, like a new kitchen or bathroom, the practice of purchasing a house is broadened with the practice of renovating the house. If the consumer wants to purchase the house together with a partner or a friend to whom she or he is not married, the citizen-consumer has to arrange a cohabitation agreement at the notary. The citizen-consumer thus meets several providers that represent different 'production chains' that together form the system of provision and together form a package of services that are needed. The actors providing these services or their virtual representation are the interface of the system of provision in the practice of acquiring an existing home. The system of provision is not only connected via the practices of citizen-consumers, but also through linkages between the different 'production chains'. Recently we have seen shifts in these connections between the 'production chains', like the involvement of a major bank that provides mortgages real estate services (Postbank 'HuisVindService'), the purchase of the housing website 'zoekallehuizen' by another major mortgage provider: Rabobank, or the purchase of part of the shares of the housingwebsite 'jaap.nl' by DSB Bank. It is a system of systems swirling around.

In sum, we can distinguish several actors that function as providers in the consumption junction of the practice purchasing an existing house: the house owner, the real estate agent, the mortgage consultant, the insurance consultant, and the notary, and the actors in the consumption junction of the system of provision of renovation of the home.

From ecological modernisation theory to the practice of purchasing a house

The ecological modernisation of the practice of purchasing a house entails the development of an environmental rationality in the practice, or more specifically the development of environmental arguments in the practice, and the re-embedding of this environmental rationality in economic, social, political and cultural spheres. In addition, as Martens and Spaargaren argue, the environmental rationality should be translated into the everyday action oriented knowledge and experiences (Martens and Spaargaren, 2005). From this follows that environmental arguments in the practice should consist of environmental knowledge that relate to consumer knowledge and 'language'. Environmental system or expert knowledge that is now used by providers, experts and policymakers in the system of provision should be translated in environmental action-oriented knowledge that fit to the knowledge of consumers in everyday life. In addition the environmental arguments should be embedded in the cultural and economic rationalities of everyday life. In other words they should be embedded in conventions, concerns, logics or narratives and values of consumers in the concerning practice.

From our theoretical perspective we can derive at least six ways in which an environmental rationality can become part of the practice of purchasing a house and can contribute to reshaping the social practice: 1) by the system of provision providing environmental sustainable products and services as environmental sustainable products. Not only can the development of an environmental rationality concern the home that is bought, but it can also concern the use of services related to buying the home like the mortgage, real estate

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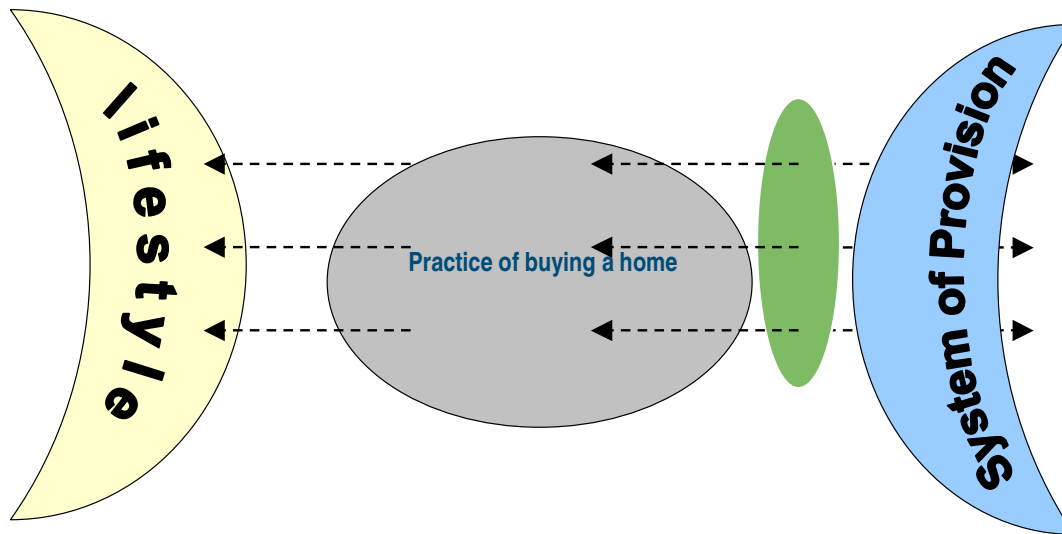
services and insurances. Examples are green mortgages⁸ and green homes like the WWF Zonnewoning and the homes that are provided with a Passive Home certificate. 2) by green providers in the system of provision that present themselves as green providers. Examples could be a green real estate office or a green mortgage office. 3) by citizen-consumers who ask for green products and services or who develop ways to green their practice of buying. Examples are sustainable housing projects like Het Groene Dak or De Kersentuin in Utrecht. 4) by visualising for citizen-consumers the environmental effects of their activities in the practice, for example by an ecological footprint or CO₂-calculator for the entire purchasing practice. 5) by environmental information that is related to the practice of buying, for example consumer oriented environmental product information or practice related guidelines that provide citizen-consumers strategies to make the practice more environmental sustainable. Examples could be a governmental campaign stating 'if you want to buy a more energy efficient home, you should buy a WWF home', an article in the magazine of the Union for Homeowners (Vereniging Eigen Huis) or a home real estate TV show stating that homes that are build with FSC labelled wood are more sustainable. And 6) by the development of formal norms or institutions. An example could be a rule that forbids the consumer to purchase a house that does not comply with certain sustainability criteria.

Methodology of analysing a practice

To analyse the practice of purchasing a house and how environmental arguments become or can become part of this practice, we first made a quick scan of the structure of the practice; the rules and resources and more specifically the system of provision. The quick scan consisted of desk research and interviews with several experts. With this quick scan we also identified environmental socio-technical innovations provided by this system of provision or that might be provided in the future. Secondly, we organised a focusgroup with providers who form a direct contact of the system of provision with the residents: the real estate agents. In this focusgroup (see figure 2) we asked the real estate agents to reflect on the practice of purchasing a house and specifically on the environmental innovations (green circle in figure 2) in this practice. We asked them to reflect on the consequences of the environmental innovations for their practices of selling a house, on the consequences for practice of citizen-consumers purchasing a house, for different consumers and whether different groups of consumers could be distinguished in this.

Figure 2. Reflections Focusgroup

⁸ A green mortgage is a mortgage in which the savings for the mortgage are only invested in environmental sustainable shares.



The key selection criterion for participation of real estate agents in the focusgroup was that the real estate agent should have some experience with environmental innovations. First we searched for real estate agents who were selling homes in residential areas of which we knew that environmental innovations were applied to the homes in these areas or to the residential areas themselves. We searched for example for real estate agents selling houses in the area Goede Aarde in Boxtel, Dichteren in Doetinchem, Leidsche Rijn in Utrecht, and the area Noord-West in Wageningen. In addition we tried to ensure to involve some real estate agents who not only sell homes, but who also have some experiences in the provision of mortgages, appraisals, or insurances. We approached the real estate agents personally by telephone and asked them to participate in an expert meeting concerning the sale of homes involving environmental innovations. Those who were interested were sent a letter with additional information about the expert meeting and a form to register. In total fifty real estate agents were approached by telephone. Twenty nine wanted to receive additional information. Ten of them finally registered for the meeting. The day before the meeting four of them cancelled and one of them did not show up at the meeting. In total five real estate agents participated in the focusgroup. All these real estate agents had more or less experience with green innovations, all these agents had experience with providing appraisals and some of them had experience with other services like mortgages.

Thirdly, we organised a focusgroup with consumers. In this focusgroup we asked consumers to reflect on the practice of purchasing a house and the environmental innovations in this practice. More specifically we asked the consumers to reflect on their current practice of purchasing a house and asked them to reflect on the consequences of the environmental innovations for their practice and on the consequences of these environmental innovations for the system of provision if the environmental innovations would be provided in a way that fits their current practices of purchasing a house. Key selection criterion for participation in the focusgroup was that the consumer should be in the process of buying a home or should have bought a home no longer than one year ago. In addition we wanted to ensure a mix of consumers in relation to their environmental experience and attitude. We approached the consumers through a digital newsletter of a major housing website DIMO in which we asked consumers to participate in a consumer panel on buying a house. The consumers who responded to the newsletter were sent additional information about the consumer panel and a form to register. The DIMO newsletter was sent to 142.009 users. This led to a response of 22 consumers of which finally four participated in the focusgroup. Since the response was too low, the real estate agents who participated in the expert meeting and a notary were

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approached to ask their clients to participate. From the call through real estate agents finally two consumers (a couple) participated and from a call through friends and colleagues one. In total seven consumers participated in the focusgroup. Of these participants four were still in the process of purchasing a house. Three participants had already purchased a house, all newly build houses, less than one year ago.

4 Environmental rationality in current purchasing practices

In this section and the following section we will elaborate on the results of the quickscan and focusgroups. We will reflect on the purchasing practice from the side of the system of provision - the real estate agents, as well as from the side of consumers. The focus is on the practice of purchasing an *existing* house, but we will first give a short introduction on the ways currently in general environmental rationality enters the practice of purchasing a house.

Environmental rationality in current practices of purchasing a house

In the previous section we distinguished six ways in which environmental rationality can enter the practice of purchasing a house and that we can use to assess the entering of environmental rationality into the practice. Following the sequence in the previous section we find only limited examples of houses that are not only built in an environmental sustainable way, but that are also provided as such. Exemptions are the sustainable residential areas which are put forward as sustainable by municipalities or other initiators of the area. These sustainable residential areas often concern the development of a new area or a case of urban regeneration, involving only new build houses. In addition we can find examples of green mortgages that are provided as such, but which are provided by small green companies to a small group of consumers⁹. The activities of consumers have stayed limited to a relatively small number of residential areas available for a relatively small group of citizen-consumers. We have not found any examples of visualising environmental effects of the practice. We have found a few examples of green housing certificates oriented at citizen-consumers as a form of environmental product information, but we have not found general practical guidelines provided to consumers on what is purchasing a house in an environmental sustainable way could be. We did find many examples of environmental information on specific technical aspects of a house, like TV shows on home improvement and VEH magazine stating which technical aspects are more environmental sustainable for example a certain heating system or insulation. The attention for environmental information in these TV shows seems to be increasing, which can be explained by the cooperation of some of these TV shows with an 'environmental consumer organisation'. In addition we have not found formal institutions that directly structure the buying practice in relation to the environment. Thus we can say that although there are environmental innovations available that contribute to the development of an environmental rationality in the practice of purchasing a house, these are only available to a small group of consumers and mostly concern new build homes or areas. The challenge and question thus is how this environmental rationality can become part of the purchasing practices of large groups of consumers. In the following section we will elaborate on the development of an environmental rationality in practices of 'general consumers' purchasing existing houses.

The system of Provision: Real Estate Agents

On the side of the system of provision we find that in housing advertisements environmental information is given only marginally. If environmental information is provided, the environmental information is given in the more extensive description of the house in

⁹ However, very recently a new mortgage 'climate mortgage' has been introduced in the market by a major bank.

brochures or websites. During the tour in and around the house environmental information is often not provided either. Information on environmental innovations and aspects of the house is only given if the buyer shows an interest in them or if the real estate agent estimates that the buyer might be interested in them. If environmental information is provided during the tour, it mainly concerns explanations of environmental innovations of the house. Especially visible environmental innovations, like a balanced ventilation system or solar boiler, can lead to questions and remarks of buyers, mostly related to user aspects like maintenance and financial aspects. Two explanations can be given for the lack of environmental information provided by real estate agents: 1) the environmental information provision does not fit in the current selling practices, which is strengthened by the beliefs of real estate agents that consumers in general are not interested in the environmental aspects in the practice of purchasing a house. 2) real estate agents experience a lack of practice related environmental knowledge and they lack access to information on the environmental innovations that is tailor-made for buyers.

Misfit in current selling practices

We find that real estate agents in general believe that consumers are not interested in environmental aspects of a house, except for one small specific group of 'deep green' consumers. These deep green consumers are expected to take the initiative on the environmental aspects; to ask for information on the environmental aspects of a house. This information provision strategy fits in contemporary selling practices in which most real estate agents "shoot with hail". In general, real estate agents use similar information channels and information strategies for all consumers and for all types of houses. They try to reach as much potential buyers as possible through newspapers, websites and specially published housing magazines. The content of these advertisements is expected to attract the specific buyers that might be interested in this specific house. Location, house type, house price, and house size are considered to be the most important and first selection criteria used by consumers. Consequently information on location, type, price and size is found at the top of every advertisement and location and price are used as search criterion on every housing website. For determining which information should be highlighted in these advertisements real estate agents apply different strategies: 1) highlighting the most popular features of the house; the features for which the real estate agent sees a good market. In this strategy environmental features will be highlighted, if the agent senses that they are popular. 2) highlighting features that make the house special or exceptional compared to other houses. Environmental features will be highlighted if the agent believes that they make the house exceptional. 3) highlighting information that the selling home owner considers to be relevant, in which case the information is decided upon by the real estate agent together with the selling house owner. Environmental features will be highlighted, if the selling house owner brings this information to the table. During the housing tour environmental information is only provided if the consumer shows an interest or if the real estate agent estimates that the consumer is interested, since real estate agents do not want to provide too much information during the first tour. They want the consumer to experience the house and to get a good feeling about it. *"In the first tour in and around the house you do not want to give too much information or information that is too complex, so you only pay attention to these aspects the moment it becomes clear that buyers are interested in them. Just like every time after entering the house, standing in the hall, you try to estimate whether you should first take the buyers to the garden or you should first show them the three bedrooms upstairs. You make this assessment every time again and again(real estate agent - focusgroup)."* Although real estate agents in general are not tempted to take the initiative to provide environmental information, they believe that they ought to be prepared to be able to answer the questions of buyers on these aspects. Some real estate agents do provide information on environmental innovations on their own initiative, but they provide it as secondary information. They place

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the information for example in a folder at the kitchen table so that buyers who are interested can have a look at it. One real estate agent considered the environmental innovations even as an opportunity to develop more attractive sales talks and materials.

Access to environmental knowledge and information

The second reason for the lack of environmental information provided by real estate agents is that real estate agents experience a lack of knowledge and experience on the environmental aspects and environmental innovations of the house and they lack access to information on the environmental innovations that is tailor made for buyers; that meets the consumer concerns of buyers. A real estate agent as purchasing agent reflecting on her experience of visiting a house with a heating pump: *“The selling real estate agent often only knows something about the lifespan of a normal central heating boiler and barely knows the existence and difference between High Efficiency, High Efficiency Plus and Improved Efficiency. [...] You visit a house with a heat pump, so you wonder: where is this heating pump located and how does it work? And then: zero information. Of course the buyer you represent will soon be put off. He sees these machines at the attic and...[...] So you start to look for information yourself. It took me one and half hour to find the accurate website of TNO; the website of the person who worked on the installations in this specific residential area. The builders did not have any information for me anymore. I thought ‘there should be some information available tailor-made for normal users that I can order and that I can use to tell the buyers a nice sales tale about the house. There should be some information that I can use to explain in normal words: what is the lifespan, what is the depreciation and what are the costs’. I mean this information **should** be available. Purchasing a house is already too complicated to add another complex story.”* Real estate agents make use of different strategies to obtain information about environmental innovations like searching for information on the internet, contacting experts, contacting the builders of the house and involved installation companies, or if available using old sales materials which were used to sell the house when it was newly build. For the latter the real estate agent depends on the fact whether the selling house owners have preserved this information. Real estate agents experience a large advantage if they also sold the house as new build house.

The practice of purchasing a house: Consumers

In general consumers do not select or reject houses on the basis of environmental aspects solely, if environmental arguments are involved at all. In how far consumers do take environmental aspects into account or in how far consumers link environment to purchasing a house is not depicted in environmental literature. Research of Van der Reijden (et al, 2002) concerning user-experiences among occupants in fifteen sustainable building projects in the Netherlands shows that environmental aspects have played a relatively small role in the decision of these occupants to buy the house. Most reasons for purchasing the house were related to personal issues and to lack of access to alternative houses. Still, the share of occupants for which an environmental aspect was an important reason for purchasing the house was about one out of five (18 percent). In addition environmental measures were a secondary reason for purchasing the house for about ten till fifteen percent of the occupants (Reijden van der et al, 2002). Silvester and de Vries who also studied ‘model’ projects in sustainable building, found that although environmental aspects were not the main reason for purchasing the house, environmental aspects did play a role in purchasing the house for about 70% of the occupants (Silvester and de Vries, 1999). Since these two examples of research concern frontrunner projects including projects instigated by consumers, the percentages of consumers that take environmental aspects into consideration might in practice be lower. The participants in our consumer focusgroup are not living in sustainable building projects. None of these consumers considered the environmental aspects to be a very important aspect in purchasing a house. Most of them did not take environmental

aspects into consideration while searching and purchasing a house. However, there were large differences between the consumers: one consumer had never before linked environment to purchasing a house stating “... *I have never made a link between those two: buying a home and the environment. I have even never thought of it before...*” (focusgroup participant), while another had already asked her purchasing real estate agent to pay attention to the energy aspects in regard to her user costs and considered it a pleasant idea to contribute to sustainability. For the limited attention and priority given to environmental arguments we derived two explanations from the focusgroup: 1) the consumers feel like captured consumers and 2) the consumers lack the practice related environmental knowledge and information.

Feeling like a captured consumer

Most of the consumers felt like a captured consumer. Also depending on personal situation, the consumers felt that they hardly had any choice in what they could buy. In reaction to a presentation of environmental innovations in purchasing a house one of the participants reacted: “... *to me this seems to be rather unrealistic. These kinds of sustainable houses and areas hardly exist. When I am searching for a house, I will not take this into consideration. I already have to take so many other aspects into consideration, so I will not be able to look for such houses. It would take me more than hundred and fifty years to find one (participant – focusgroup).*” Also the consumers purchasing a new build house felt that they did not have a say in their house in relation to the environmental aspects. However, they expected the environmental aspects to be sufficiently taken care of according to the ‘many’ environmental regulations. “*Those rules serve it up to you. [...] It is all arranged for you (participant - focusgroup).*”

Access to environmental knowledge and information

Some of the consumers experienced a lack of knowledge on environmental innovations that is needed in *current* practices to recognise sustainable aspects of houses. They experienced lack of knowledge on the environmental technologies, which combined with a lack of environmental information in current practices, makes it difficult to take environmental aspects into consideration when purchasing a house. After all, the environmental aspects and sustainable houses are hard to recognise. In addition all consumers experienced a lack of knowledge on the environmental effectiveness of these environmental innovations (effectiveness knowledge). In this sense the consumers experienced that environmental information indicating the more sustainable houses is not or hardly available. “*You never see a sign stating for example ‘this is sustainably build’ and ‘I cannot remember that I have ever seen an ad in which that stated that the house was more environmental sustainable or something similar...*”

The environmental argument

The consumers mostly referred to environmental aspects in purchasing a house as to products or devices that are part of the house like solar panels or an efficient heating system. Three ways of framing came forward. The most dominant was the *environmental rational, systemic* and *environmental technological* way of framing. When we asked for associations in relation to environment and purchasing a house, they referred to environmental innovations like insulation, solar panels or building materials and they referred to environmental aspects in an environmental rational way like energy use, energy efficiency, use of materials, or water use. A second way of framing was the *natural* framing. The consumer who referred to the environmental aspects in this way considered environmental innovations to be sustainable when they consist of natural products like a house made of wood or a house in green surroundings. The difference between environmental technological framing and natural framing of sustainability becomes clear in a debate about window frames. One consumer considered synthetic window frames to be sustainable for their long

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lifespan, while the other considered them to be unsustainable since these are artificial so she preferred wooden window frames. These were again considered to be unsustainable by the other consumer for their shorter lifespan and for their maintenance like painting. A third way of framing is the *long lifetime* framing in which a house or area is considered to be sustainable when it has long lifespan and is well maintained. The consumers initially did not link environmental arguments to their consumer concerns.

The environmental aspects which the consumers considered to be the most related to sustainable purchasing, were not linked to their most important concerns in purchasing a house. An exemption are the economic concerns to which environmental arguments were linked both negatively and positively. Environmental innovations were considered to be expensive, but could also save money. However, debating the presented environmental innovations consumers linked environmental innovations positively or negatively to other concerns like the notions of comfort, low-maintenance or convenience, privacy and autonomy.

5 Bringing environmental rationality into purchasing practices

In this section we focus on one of the levels of environmental innovations¹⁰ that we presented consumers to reflect upon: sustainable updating of the house. The innovation concerns the provision of information and services on adjusting the house to a more sustainable house in the process of purchasing a house. This level of innovation refers to at least two ways of environmental rationality entering the practice as laid down in chapter 2. It can bring environmental rationality into the practice by providing sustainable services as sustainable (1) and it includes the provision of information and practical guidelines that provide the consumer with strategies on how to behave more sustainable (5).

Reflection on the innovation by consumers

One group of consumers considered updating the house as one of the strategies to overcome the position of captured consumer in purchasing an existing house. In this way the consumer does not have to keep looking for a sustainable house but can purchase the house that is available and that fits to the consumers wishes, while it can still be updated to a sustainable house. The other group does not believe it will work. If an environmental innovation is part of the house they will accept it as an additional feature, but they will not give the house an environmental upgrade themselves. In addition they will not ask the real estate agent how the house can be sustainably updated. They believe this innovation is more fit to idealistic frontrunners since, they argue, most people will prefer to invest their money in other aspects of the house for example in a larger house. A precondition at any time would be that the adjustment is cost-effective.

Reflection on the innovation by real estate agents

The real estate agents do not regard sustainable updating to be a selling point that should be brought forward during the housing tour, since it will emphasise the points of the house that still need improvement and that still need an extra investment of the consumer. Moreover, it demands time and effort of the consumer. On the other hand the potential to adjust the house could be a selling point if it leads to clear financial benefits and improved comfort. And it gives the opportunity to adjust the house to ones style. Still, the real estate agents stay very reluctant towards taking the initiative to bring forward the options of sustainable upgrading of the house. Again they expect the consumer to take the initiative. However, they are aware that currently consumers will not just start asking for a sustainable update of the

¹⁰ We presented consumers and real estate agents three levels of environmental innovations in products and services that can provide a way to bring environmental rationality into the practice: a house in a sustainable residential area, a sustainable house and updating the house to a more sustainable house.

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house. For this reason they believe that a public campaign from government, utility companies and branch organisations, should make the consumers aware of the environmental aspects and the potential benefits of updating the house and should stimulate them to ask real estate agents for information on the possibilities of environmental upgrading during the demonstration of the house.

Energy label

The introduction of the EPBD energy label in January 2008 might strongly influence this practice. Not only did both real estate agents and consumers react positively to this label, the real estate agents believe that if a house is provided with this energy label they will have a reason to bring forward the option that the house can be updated to a more sustainable one. Especially if the house is given a low qualification, the real estate agents believe that real estate agents might take the initiative to inform the buyer about options for upgrading. They will need an upgrading story, to make a positive sales tale out of it.

6 Discussion and conclusions

We argued that the development of an environmental rationality in the practice of purchasing a house is necessary for a transition towards environmental sustainable housing. In this paper we tried to answer the following questions: 1) what role do environmental arguments play in the current Dutch practices of purchasing a house? 2) how can this be explained? And 3) how can environmental arguments be brought into the practice of purchasing a house?

In this paper we showed that the development of an environmental rationality in the practice of purchasing a house is marginal. Although environmental innovations are available, like the WWF label and green mortgages or websites on environmental aspects of a residential area, these are only available to a small group of citizen-consumers or concern new build houses or areas. In general the environmental characteristics of houses and residential areas are not communicated in the practice of purchasing a house. However, we do observe an increase in attention for environmental issues from intermediary organisations like the organisation for house-owners (VEH) and housing television programs. Although this does not concern environmental information or the development of an environmental rationality directly in the consumption junction, it does relate environmental information to the consumption practice of purchasing a house; to the images, actors and logics of the practice. A disadvantage is that this knowledge refers to parts of the house; to specific environmental technologies. This makes the knowledge very difficult for citizen-consumers to use in the process of purchasing the house. They make in the first place comparisons on the level of residential areas and houses.

The marginal attention for environmental arguments in the practice can be explained by the practices of real estate agents and citizen-consumers sustaining and balancing each other; sustaining the practice without environment arguments. The marginal provision of environmental arguments by real estate agents can be explained by the fact that environmental information provision does not fit in current selling practices in which the citizen-consumer has to take the initiative to get information that is not part of the 'general' practice, combined with the believes that citizen-consumers are not interested in the environmental arguments when purchasing a house. On the other hand consumers who do not directly relate environmental arguments to purchasing a house and who do not think about environmental aspects in the process of purchasing a house are not confronted with environmental arguments in a way that 'makes sense' to their practices, and thus will not reflect on it or ask for it in the process of purchasing a house. Another reason for the lack of

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environmental arguments in the practices is that there is not transfer of environmental expertise or knowledge from builders and developers to real estate agents or to citizen-consumers that makes sense to them in the practice of selling or purchasing a house. Although there are courses available for real estate agents on marketing environmental innovations in houses, they lack tools for access to this kind of knowledge in their everyday practices. The introduction of the energy label bringing an environmental rationality in the form of action related knowledge into the practice, might in the future appear to be a breakthrough. The label, which is part of an eco-technical logic, can be expected to make sense to those citizen-consumers that refer to this logic, and can be a useful environmental tool in the practice. At the same time, it can be doubted whether it also a useful tool for citizen-consumers referring to a 'natural' logic or 'long lifetime or good housekeeping' logic. Despite of that, the label can still be a breakthrough. Not only by providing an environmental tool for both real estate agents and a large group of citizen-consumers that makes sense in the practice, but also by being a starting place for restructuring the system of provision along an environmental rationality. A large bank has recently started to provide a climate change mortgage, which gives a reduction on the interest rate if measures are taken to make the house more energy efficient. Currently, this mortgage is connected to changes in Energy Performance of the house, which is used as a measure by the building sector and in regulations, but it is likely that it will be connected the energy label when it is formally introduced. In addition very recently the Platform Built Environment of the Dutch Energy Transition proposed consumer oriented measures to support renovations of houses and framed these measures in terms of levels on the energy label, like hypothetically, a subsidy for going from c to b. It is to be expected that more consumer oriented environmental innovations will follow.

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Helping, Informing or Coaxing the Consumer? – exploring Persuasive Technology as applied to households' energy use

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Abstract

Let us assume, that people could be persuaded to reduce their energy use in the home through a “dialogue” with a computer. What information, what means of persuasion could the dialogue consist of? Which is the technical hardware? Who persuades, and what about personal integrity? In this paper we explore the merging of two computer-based technologies – “smart homes” and “persuasive technology”.

There are computer programmes that persuade children to brush their teeth, and others that support regular physical exercise: Persuasive technology combines the persuasive powers of TV advertising with the computers' interactive information handling. Smart homes technology provides residents with information and control, to keep a good indoor climate and a small energy bill. However, the merging of these two concepts has not been explored.

Energy use in housing is a considerable part of society's whole and the potentials for reduction through changes in the consumers' habits are large. Often, dwellings' indoor climate could become better through simple measures. There might be a conflict between low energy use and good indoor climate; but on the whole, better control can achieve both. Therefore it is worthwhile to explore how “smart homes” technology could be developed to include computerized persuasion.

Based on a “Master's Class” at TU Eindhoven and a literature review, we discuss:

- How can households be persuaded to reduce their energy use through interaction with a computer?
- Which are the technical prerequisites?
- How much could be saved?
- What forms could the persuasive dialogue take?
- What differences in control and persuasion follow from the form of tenure?
- Which are the ethical restrictions?

We don't assume that this kind of persuasion is by necessity a good thing. Instead, we explore the issue to enable discussion on its merits and shortcomings – in terms of environmental impacts, comfort, health, technology and consumer ethics.

1. Introduction

"Don't forget to turn off the light, dear", a familiar voice says through the light switch as Mary, 5 years, is about to leave the room for dinner. Meanwhile, teenage son Herbert sees a line of red warning lights on the bathroom wall; his shower time is now well over ten minutes. In the living room, Mum is concerned, sitting in front of the family computer; during the first four months of the year, the family has averaged a ten percent higher energy use than last year. Add to that a considerable increase in energy price, and her concern is understandable. To make things even worse, the screen diagram indicates that they thereby score higher than the neighbourhood average.

Is this a nightmare vision of societal control, or a good example of persuasive technology helping a household to retain a small energy bill and low climate impacts? Let us hypothesize, that people could be persuaded to reduce their energy use in the home through a "dialogue" with a computerised system. What types of information, what means of persuasion could the dialogue consist of? Who initiates the persuasion, and based on that which are the limits of persuasion from the perspective of personal integrity or ethics?

Energy use in housing is a considerable part of society's total in any high-income country. Its environmental impacts are vast, and the potentials for reduction through change of habits are large. Sometimes, there might be a conflict between low energy use and good indoor climate; but on the whole, better control can be utilized to better achieve both aims (Abel & Elmroth 2006).

You can buy computer programmes that persuade children to eat healthier food or brush their teeth regularly and other ones that support the good habit of regular physical exercise. Furthermore, there are informative as well as persuasive websites designed to help you to quit smoking, and they are initiated and supported by authorities as well as industry (Oxygen 2007; Quitnow 2007). Persuasive Technology is emerging as a concept that combines the persuasive powers of TV advertising with the interactive information handling that computers provide (Fogg 2003).

The concept of Smart Homes illustrates how computer technology can provide residents with information and means of control to keep a comfortable indoor climate as well as low energy use. At times, its advocates have had delusions of grandeur, but at its core highly developable ideas are found. Therefore, we argue that it is worthwhile to explore how Smart Homes' technology could be developed to also include computerized persuasion, and with the overarching aim of reducing the energy use of households towards a sustainable level.

Based on findings from a "Master's Class" held at TU Eindhoven in 2006 and a literature review, we in this paper outline a research proposal with the purpose of exploring the merge of the concepts of Smart Homes and Persuasive Technology from a consumer perspective. However, we don't assume that this kind of persuasion is by necessity a good thing. Instead, we want to explore the issue to enable discussion on its merits and shortcomings – in terms of environmental impacts, comfort, technology, and consumer ethics.

2. Background – on households 'energy use and its climate impacts

Energy use related to housing is a large share of society's total and has large environmental impacts that can only slowly be reduced through technical measures; this year's global burst of attention concerning climate change indicates the gravity of the situation. It is often argued that with a wide definition, the built environment uses roughly 40 per cent of society's total use of energy, materials etc. (Gudmundsson m. fl. 1999; Energimyndigheten 2004). Housing is in turn a dominant part of the built environment. Furthermore, the level of energy use varies widely between households, even of the same size and living in similar dwellings; research indicates a factor four difference between high and low users in similar flats (Gram Hanssen 2003). Thus it can be assumed that consumer habits play a large role in determining the level of energy use, even though the properties of the building give the basic conditions. Furthermore, if habits were to change for the better, great improvements would be possible without the technical inertia of construction or refurbishment.

Energy is used in three main forms in a dwelling: To supply an even indoor temperature all year round; as hot tap water for washing up, washing and personal hygiene; and as electricity for stoves, refrigerators, lamps, home entertainment etc. Depending on the type of system for heating and ventilation as well as on the tenure form, residents can influence their energy use and indoor climate to a larger or smaller extent. At a minimum, they control the temperature via thermostats on the radiators, and ventilation through the opening of windows. Besides, they have full control over the use of hot water, in the kitchen, bathroom etc. Finally, part of the electricity use is related to permanently used devices such as freezers. But also here, the residents have a wide field of influence. Based on the above, we arrive at the overarching, cross-disciplinary research question of the project elaborated in the following: To what extent could consumer households be persuaded to use less energy, without seeing it as a loss of comfort or an infringement on privacy?

3. Background, delimitation and literature review – on Smart Homes' Technology

The concept of 'Smart Home' identifies dwellings that have a variety of ICT functions. This is a very wide field of research and development involving for example computer science, man-machine interaction and architectural design, each of them in its turn having a cross-disciplinary nature. In the early 2000s, it seemed as though the concept were ripe for widespread practical application, but development stagnated and today the focus is on research and demonstration projects, as for example in the project Kv. Vallgossen, Stockholm (Granqvist 2004; Istedt Hjelm 2004). Domotics is a synonym, and will be used in the following.

According to Wikipedia (2007), domotics can offer five main types of services: power saving, comfort, personal protection, communication and domo-robotics. Any division of this kind is to some extent arbitrary and circumstantial, however there are some elements that are normally included, for example: control of building performance for economy as well as for comfort, security, and services for the elderly and disabled (Edge et al. 2000; van Broonswijk 2006). There are also tools specifically aimed at energy and climate issues (Bang et al. 2006; Design Council 2007). In this paper we will focus on building performance, energy use and comfort.

In the extensive body of literature on domotics, we have observed several dimensions of opposites. For our project proposal they should be explored in terms of potential conflicts or dilemmas:

- enjoyment and comfort vs. utility (e.g. educational and normative purposes);
- private ambitions vs. societal aims;
- hardware, products and technology, vs. services or usage;
- visionary, future-oriented ideas vs. hands-on evaluations of systems available on the market;
- silent, reactive systems vs. active man-machine interactive ones;
- communication and interaction centralised to one place vs. pervading/ubiquitous in the home; and finally
- systems that are separate for each dwelling vs. connected to society via hardware or management.

Two quotes illustrate this diversity and the potentially conflicting ideas. The first one elaborates on a vision (Meyer & Rakotonirainy 2003): "The goal of research on context-aware buildings is to offer an unobtrusive and appealing environment embedded with pervasive devices that help its occupants to achieve their tasks at hand; technology that interacts closely with its occupants in the most natural ways to the point where such interaction becomes implicit." The focus here is on making life easier and more enjoyable for the residents. The domotic system achieves this through "knowing" what the consumers want and adapting accordingly, not through giving them a control panel with lots of opportunities for deliberate control. In other words the system is acting and reacting in the background rather than actively interacting with the consumers. This vision has no normative content, e.g. "save energy" or "do your physical exercise", neither as requested by the consumers nor as stemming from societal goals. Thus it avoids potential dilemmas such as comfort versus energy savings, of enjoyment vs. health, of individual ambitions vs. societal aims.

The second quote comes from a post-occupancy evaluation of a system installed in a residential building in Stockholm (Sandström 2003): "The basic idea was that the home network should play a central role in the residents' everyday life. The residents would be able to gather all their families' information in one place, e.g. to communicate with each other (e-notes), to communicate with their friends (e-mail and address book) and to co-ordinate their activities (calendar). Further, it would help them to feel safer at home (alarms) and to have control over their energy use. " Here, the consumers are assumed to consciously and actively choose to interact with the computer, the practical functions are in focus and the whole is centralised to one touch screen. Societal aims are present in the form of information on the household's energy use and also as benchmarking with the residents' average. However, the aims are not seen as conflicting with privacy since there is no persuasion or open normativity; furthermore the consumers are assumed to have an economic interest in saving energy (Junestrand et al. 2001; Junestrand 2004).

Besides domotics projects with building performance in focus, there is research that begins with the residents, the people who use the home. One such example is the EU funded InterLiving project (Lindquist et al. 2007). In it, the aim was to develop innovative technologies for communication between generations; the main approach was to research together with families – in a longitudinal study, through various co-operative design methods. One important result was that of "communication appliances", defined as simple-to-use, single-function devices to help people

communicate. Privacy was a big issue for the participating families – they wanted to be convinced that their communication was not observed by anybody or made profit on without their knowledge or beyond their control.

In spite of the wide diversity of approaches exemplified above, there are issues that have received little attention in the development of domotics. One such is its long-term operation, maintenance and upgrading (Sandström 2005). To amend this on the technical side, there is a need for component replaceability and standardisation. To handle the organisational problems, Sandström (ibid) argues that there is a need for an external service provider. From this we arrive at an overarching conclusion for the project proposal: We assume that the domotics system is sold to the consumers as a service from a company, not as a product across the counter. However, from this follows another dilemma: The distant service calls for Internet communication, privacy is easier to achieve in local systems.

There is yet another conflict between the consumers' right to privacy and the domotic system's need for data. Meyer and Rakotonirainy (2003) observe: "In an environment full of sensors that are keeping track of everybody and everything that is happening, privacy becomes an important issue which can not be added at the end of the development process. Privacy must be taken into account from the beginning."

4. Background, delimitation and literature review – on Persuasive Technology

Persuasive Technology could be defined as "...a class of technologies that are intentionally designed to change a person's attitude or behaviour." (Ijsselstein et al. 2006b). With a narrow definition, it is very recent and stems to a high extent from a single academic environment, the Stanford Persuasive Technology Lab (Captology 2007; Fogg 2003). There, the research focus is on computer technology and on how "...computing products — from websites to mobile phone software — can be designed to change what people believe and what they do." (Fogg 2003). From Stanford stems also the concept of Captology, introduced as an acronym for "computers as persuasive technology".

According to Fogg (2003), captology can be understood in terms of a "triad" of increasing interaction between computer and user, namely computers functioning as tools, media or social actors. Thus he sees the computer as one of the persuasion's partners. In a recent anthology on Persuasive Technology, Redström (2006) argues that any well-designed artefact communicates its proper use in manners similar to the computerised tool, although the message mostly is tacit. Atkinson (2006), however, argues that computers (and other artefacts) can best be understood as *mediators* between the provider of the persuasive technology and its user. For the purpose of our project, this latter approach is more relevant, not least since exactly the same technology will relate to its users in widely differing ways depending on the usage situation. Compare for example the following scenarios of extremes: In the first, the captology system is installed in an existing flat, by the manager, and the residents who live there have little of influence over the computer/user dialogue but are assumed to use it. In the second, it is installed in a one-family home, on the household's initiative, and the dialogue is customized by the residents themselves to suit their ambitions.

On the other hand, we find Fogg's differentiating between macro and micro aspects of persuasion useful (Fogg 2003). In our project, the former is seen as the societal aim of reducing energy use to a sustainable level. This we intend to concretise utilising a vision of a 2 kW Society, developed at ETH (Jochem 2004). The latter is the techniques used in persuasion, the technical devices as well as the arguments used in the dialogue. Developing a computerised model of the dialogue is a major part of the project, facilitated by Fogg's categorisation of persuasive dialogue techniques (Fogg 2006).

Every day, every consumer is exposed to the persuasive powers of advertising, in TV and other media and their influence is widely discussed (but seldom totally questioned). However, persuasion mediated via computers is new and can be assumed to have strong persuasive powers. Therefore, when developing captology, its ethics must be considered. Fogg (ibid) argues that only the intentional effects of the designer need to be included. Atkinson (2006) admits that the long-term indirect effects might be hard to predict, but argues for doing expert assessments. Following Atkinson, we propose to include that methodology in our project.

The literature on the ethic dimension of captology is scarce. On the other hand, with a wider definition techniques of persuasion are similar to rhetoric, and thus have a tradition of at least two thousand years (Hägg 1998). From this tradition we can get general, timeless knowledge on the tricks of persuasion as well as learn about its ethics.

From the discussion above, we summarise some delimitations of the project. We should:

- design the captology hardware and software to support the societal aim of reducing energy use to a sustainable level (the macrosuasion aspect);
- consider the captology products as ubiquitous, context-aware and utilising also tacit communication. Furthermore, we should consider also other designed artefacts (e.g. water saving taps);
- be equally wide in defining persuasion strategies in terms of software and dialogue (the microsuation aspect). Environmental arguments, economy etc. could be included;
- see captology as computer-mediated persuasion, as a mediated dialogue between the consumer and the designer. In some cases there is also an intermediary real estate owner or manager to be considered; and finally
- explore the direct and indirect ethical aspects of captology, utilising also the traditions of rhetoric.

5. Background and literature review – on Research by Design

Normally, design leads to proposals for new products and its results as such are not "used" in any other way. "Design is the ability to imagine that-which-does-not-yet-exist, to make it appear in concrete form as a new, purposeful addition to the real world." (Nelson & Stolterman 2002). However, in our project we propose to take design further, since we see it as an "investigation into the future situation of use" (Gedenryd 1998). Furthermore, since "design concerns itself with the meanings artefacts can acquire by their users" (Krippendorff 1995) ours should be research regarding the meanings that future users may gain in relation to an artefact or an example within a design space.

The more exploratory approaches that design can have, can broadly be divided into two:

The first is mostly used by larger corporations to create knowledge about possible futures; Philips and Whirlpool are examples of companies that take this approach. The aim is to investigate what new technologies can provide, but also which possible consumer opinions and market opportunities that might be created as a response to the concept designs.

The other approach is focussed on creating discussion and thereby knowledge. Dunne and Raby are designers working with "Critical Design". They define that concept as being "design that asks carefully crafted questions and makes us think" (Dunne et al. 2001). Critical design is often provocative and challenging and its purpose is to stimulate discussion and debate amongst designers, industry and consumers in general. So far, critical design is not widespread but we argue that it has great potential. Yet another designer, Gaver, has done several well-known critical design projects, for example the recent "Drift table" (Gaver et al. 2004).

6. General purpose and research questions

Based on the previous discussion, we here outline a novel, cross-disciplinary project. In it, we intend to explore issues that are related to the merge of Smart Homes' and Persuasive Technologies. The overarching purpose of this merge is to support habits that lead to lower energy use without loss of perceived comfort or infringement on privacy. Through a consumer centred research-by-design methodology, we develop prototypes of a series of computerised, interacting and ubiquitous dialogue devices and techniques, based on the merge. We furthermore discuss its possibilities, merits and shortcomings, and put it into a context of tenure forms, social and ethic restrictions and estimated savings in energy, cost and environmental impacts. In other words, within a strategy of research by design, we first develop a model of a computer-based persuasive home environment. Through experiments we then evaluate it, exploring the following issues:

- Which are its technical conditions, possibilities and restrictions?
- How much energy could be saved, on the household level, on the societal level?
- What forms could the persuasive dialogue take?
- What differences in control and persuasion follow from tenure and other context variables?
- Which are the main practical/social and ethical conditions, possibilities and restrictions?

7. Research by Design – main strategy and project organisation

Based on the overview above of previous research and development, we argue that our proposal is innovative; from that follows uncertainties to overcome as well as opportunities to explore. Furthermore, it is evident that the project calls for a truly cross-disciplinary and exploratory approach, and we take it through co-operation between researchers from two KTH research units: Members of the Division of Environmental Strategies Research within the Department of Urban Planning and Environment join researchers of the Department of Human Computer Interaction within the School of Computer Science and Communication. Furthermore, the project relies heavily on the expertise and laboratory resources of KTH's recently established Vinnova-funded Excellence Centre for Sustainable Communication, which is a co-operation between the School

of Architecture and the Built Environment, and the School of Computer Science and Communication. External Centre partners include Ericsson, TeliaSonera, Bonnier's and the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning. Through the Centre, we aim at collaborating with one or more of these partners during the later phases of the project. This arrangement should be of mutual benefit for all, since the project fits well into other activities planned by the Centre, and some of the project's researchers are involved in the Centre's development.

In the design approach to research and development issues, a controlled "oscillation" between synthesis and analysis is a core feature. Thus, a co-operative, research by design strategy is proposed for the project. It should provide the team with a common methodology for understanding the aims of the consumers, and it should help the members of the team in their working together. Since this strategy is multi-disciplinary, researchers with a wide range of experience and skills – observational field studies, hard- and software design, industrial design and architecture to mention but a few – should be able to get a shared understanding, even though they come from such diverse research traditions as ethnology, industrial design, human-computer interaction, architecture/planning and environmental strategies research. Besides producing a common body of cross-disciplinary results, we aim at contributing to our disciplines' bodies of knowledge, although the former is the first priority.

8. Development and evaluation – methodological approaches

Based on the research issues as previously outlined, we envisage the project as having five, in part overlapping parts. In particular the first two must be done in parallel. The first one considers hardware issues, asking: What types of sensors and control devices are needed to support persuasion? Here, we go beyond a narrow domestic approach, designing new devices for data collection, processing and communication. Design is taken to the point where experimental prototypes are developed. For the context, parallel scenarios should be considered, related to for example the manager installing the technology in rented flats vs. the individual household buying it as part of their new home.

The second part focuses on software issues and the mediated dialogue, asking: What is the mediated dialogue about, how does it persuade? It will include studies of previous research as well as consumer studies that will be merged into a common knowledge base for following phases of the project. It seems clear that persuasion includes information on heating, ventilation and indoor temperature (health and comfort aspects), hot water use and electricity use. It could include comparisons over time, with statistics or neighbours as well as calculated costs. It could be retrospective as well as prospective. To some extent it could be "tacit" – non-verbal. We should also consider the whole spectrum: Inform, remind, persuade, seduce, force, automatize. Furthermore, we should ask: How often is persuasion taking place? Is it active or only occurring at the initiative of the consumer? Could it have an element of "continuous improvement" built into the persuasion strategy? The same parallel scenarios as in the first phase are considered. As already mentioned the two phases are realised in parallel, and also the research team is the same. Thus, after the two phases, we have developed a set of experimental prototypes of captology hardware related to the aforementioned contrasting scenarios, and also prototype software that forms the mediated, persuasive dialogue.

The results of these parts give input to the third one, a consumer evaluation of the mediated dialogue and the persuasive environment. This takes the form of a number of experiments, performed in part in a laboratory environment, in part in different types of real dwellings. Five to ten households are asked to assume that they live in a persuasive environment and then to evaluate the different kinds of mediated control and persuasive dialogue. Data collection methods include dialogues during the experiment, observations, diaries, interviews and questionnaires. Households are selected to match the aforementioned context scenarios related to tenure etc.

The final phases are also evaluative. The fourth focuses on context issues related to tenure etc. as illustrated in the scenarios. The main question that we address is: Persuasion on whose initiative, by whom? Furthermore what kinds of information, what types of persuasion and how much of it, depending on who provides the technology, in what phase of the life cycle of the household and the flat it is introduced etc. Besides these issues, we assess the likely reductions in energy use and its related impacts, utilizing established methods. To some extent there is an overlap with the consumer evaluation questions. However, this evaluation is done by an expert panel and largely with focus group methodology. Housing managers, ICT companies, energy providers etc. participate.

In the fifth phase, the ethics and practical social limits of Persuasive Technology are assessed. Here, too, an expert panel is utilised, now extended with experts on ethics and rhetoric. Finally, the findings of the whole project are processed and final reports produced.

One basic assumption of ours is that women and men, children, adults and elderly will perceive both the hardware and the software of the smart homes/persuasive technologies differently. Thus, we propose that at least some of the technologies are designed to be specifically aimed at a certain group. Furthermore, we should fully explore the assumed differences between these categories of consumers – in the phase three evaluation as well as in the other phases of the project. This calls for methods of dialogue, interrogation, observation etc. that are age and gender sensitive, to be included into the general strategy of research by design.

9. Results and dissemination

In this paper, we have outlined an exploratory study, the first of its kind and taking a wide approach to a complex issue. Therefore, we can assume that the main body of results will be centred on a core of understanding; findings will be presented in the form of well-formulated questions rather than definite answers, as proposals for further research etc. The captology system is of course a very “hands-on” result that could be further developed through research in co-operation with one or more of the partners of the project.

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Theme 12. Inequality in consumption (including ethnicity and gender issues)

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Papers

Berg, Lisbet & Mari Teigen: Gendered consumer competences in households with one versus two adults

Borgeraas, Elling & Espen Dahl: Low income and “poverty lines” in Norway – A comparison of three concepts

Ekström, Marianne Pipping & Inger M Jonsson: Women dining alone in restaurant rooms

Haanpää, Leena: Women’s sporting events in Finland: from physical enjoyment to recreation of mind

Hjort, Torbjörn & Pernille Hohnen: Consumption as a field of participation

Hohnen, Pernille & Torbjörn Hjort: Towards a new model citizen? A qualitative analysis of new responsibilities and forms of individualized social security for consumer-citizens in the Nordic welfare state.

Rysst, Mari: Needs, wants and bicycles: Financial resources, cultural priorities and marginalization in Nordic families

Smed, Sinne: The Influence of Prices on a Healthy Diet

Gendered consumer competences in households with one versus two adults.

Dr. polit. Lisbet Berg¹ & Dr. polit. Mari Teigen²

Abstract

Being a reflective (i.e. sensible/prudent/economic rational) consumer in today's complex societies require advanced consumer competence about an increasing range of products and services. The market is not homogenous, but rather heterogeneous, demanding different types of competences (Hyman, 1990). Seen from the consumers' perspective, the complexity of the markets has resulted in 'choice overload' (Ôlander & Neuner 2007 forthcoming). Today it is hardly possible for any consumer to keep well-informed and orientated on every market he or she operates on. It appears that Norwegian consumers – according to their self judgements – solve this problem by staying well-informed on some, and poorly informed on other, segments of the market (Berg 2007).

The departure of this paper is that there are significant gender differences in consumer competences and that some markets can be described as female dominated, while others can be described as male dominated consumer areas, measured by consumers' self-reported consumer competence level. Our main concern has been to investigate whether such gendered differences could be explained by *the specializing hypothesis*, i.e. that the observed gendered pattern rely on a gendered division of consumer competences within couple households. In other words that gender differences in consumer competences among single-person households should be absent, or significantly lower, than among couple households. In case we would not find support for the specializing hypothesis, two other probable explanations were also put forward: the traditional *gender difference hypothesis* and *the selection hypothesis*.

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Introduction

In advanced consumer societies hardly anybody manages to keep sufficiently informed to master well all the markets he or she needs to operate on. The marketplace is complex and in constant change and development. New products emerge, while others disappear. Today the consumer role is also challenged by the emergence of the global and digital marketplace with its new purchasing channels and rules, providing both opportunities and hazards. The ever increasing number of options that characterize both the consumer goods markets and many service areas have resulted in a situation of choice overload and decrease in consumer competences (Ölander & Neuner 2007:90-91). It appears that a common solution to the choice overload problem is to specialize on specific segments of the markets^[mte2]: Different groups of consumers seem to have different consumer competence profiles. Accordingly, some consumers are price-conscious in their daily purchases, while others are price-conscious when they make their yearly dispositions in the financial markets, and a third group is community-oriented and active in the environmentally friendly and ethical product markets (Berg 2007).^[mte3] Consumer competence relevant for the food markets cannot be transmitted to the financial markets and vice versa. The market is not homogenous, but rather heterogeneous, demanding different types of competences (Hyman, 1990). In this perspective, especially since a large part of the consumption takes place within the households, it should be advantageous to have someone to share the consumer competence responsibilities with.

Typically, consumption has been distinctively gendered, particularly associated with women and typically female activities. Either, women are caricatured as the thrifty responsible consumer in charge of the reproduction, production and consumption within the household; or as the irresponsible, vain and conspicuous consumer. The stereotypical consumer is a woman. This builds on the traditional split between work and family – production and consumption, where Mr. Breadwinner is the sole provider of the family income, while Mrs. Consumer is responsible of the entity of household spending (de Grazia and Furlough 1996). Such a picture of a dichotomous, gendered division of work and consumption, of Mr. Breadwinner and Mrs. Consumer, rests on at least two false presuppositions of social and gendered relations of today. First, that the gendering of consumption is interrelated to a gender division of work and family, where he provides the money/resources that she exchanges into commodities and services for the family. More and more families can be characterized as economically equal

partnerships/dual earner families.³ Second, the households of Western societies consist increasingly not of Mr. Breadwinner and Mrs. Consumer, but of single households. Today more than each third of the adult population (aged 18-80) in Norway live without a partner. (Calculations based on Statistics Norway: Population 1. January 2007)⁴.

Today there is no doubt that also Mr. Consumer is present in the markets. Between 1980 and 2000 there was a considerable growth in the percentages that used time for shopping per day in Norway, especially among men. While 49 percent of the men spent 43 minutes shopping on a regular day in 2000, the corresponding amount for women was only slightly higher; a regular day 57 percent of the women spent 46 minutes shopping (Statistics Norway 2002). However, it is reason to believe that Mr. Consumer is more active on the technological markets, while Mrs. Consumer is more active on the cloths and shoes markets (Pedersen 2005).

The purpose of this paper is to investigate gendered division of consumer competences. The data material presented in this article confirm, as expected, that women more often than men say they keep well informed about the foods-, clothes- and shoes- markets, while men more often say they keep well informed about the data-, technologies- and broad band- markets. In this paper the main question to be investigated is *whether the observed gender differences in consumer competences can be explained by a gendered division of consumer responsibilities within the households*. In other words: Do gender differences vary according to household situation?⁵ How are consumer competence gendered in single households compared to households consisting of couples? [mte5]

³Today Norwegian men and women participate in the work-force about equally, women account for 47 per cent. The labour force participation of women has increased steadily significantly from the beginning of the 1970s. In 2004, the labour force was made up of 69 per cent of women and 76 per cent of men aged 16-74. Many more women than men work part-time, although also the proportion of women working part-time is dropping. The average working hours for women are 31 and 37 for men.

⁴ According to the official statistics 39 percent live without a partner. This statistic, however, is based on modelling and combinations of different registers, and is hardly accurate. The average Norwegian household consists of 2,2 people, and the proportion of *one-person* household has increased dramatically from 4,3 % in 1960 to 17,3 % of the population (including children) in 2006.

⁵ We here distinguish between single-person households and family households (consisting of an adult couple).

The data presented is based on a country representative survey among 2000 Norwegian consumers in 2007. We will compare differences in consumer competences between single women and men to differences between women and men living in couples.

Gender differences, gendered specialization, gender-based selection

Departing from a classification of different fields of consumption into male dominated and female dominated consumer areas, we shall discuss three different mechanisms or hypotheses to explain variation in consumer competences according to gender and household situation (single/couple).

Gender differences

The first hypothesis, *the gender difference hypothesis*, focuses gender differences in interests and behaviour. The gender difference hypothesis investigates if, how and to what extent men and women differ in relation to consumer competence. ‘Gender’ refers here to the socially constructed roles and behaviour of men and women. We understand gender differences as the result of how people actively produce/reproduce themselves as genders, or as put by West and Zimmerman (1987), the ways they are “doing gender”. Thus, gender is understood as an interrelation between free choices and social forces conditioned by social expectations. Several studies have shown how patterns of consumption are significantly gendered (Becker 1995, Collins 1988, de Grazia and Furlough 1996⁶, Scott and Tilly 1987).

The gender difference hypothesis assumes that the gendering of consumer areas strongly will affect the consumer competence of men and women on different areas of consumption. To put it simple: *We expect men to generally develop higher competence than women on male dominated consumer areas, and respectively, women to develop higher competence on female dominated consumer areas.*

According to the gender differences hypothesis we assume that the following pattern will emerge:

	Male dominated consumer areas	Female dominated consumer areas
Men	Higher competence	
Women		Higher competence

⁶ See also bibliography in de Grazia and Furlough (1996).

Gendered specialization

Consumption serves as a particularly important symbolic marker for the “doing of gender” within the couple (Collins 1988, de Grazia and Furlough 1996). The gendered specialization hypothesis implies a furthering of the gender difference hypothesis. We here assume that the “doing of gender” vary with ‘household situation’, suspecting that gender differences in consumer competences will be particularly strong for persons sharing consumption responsibilities with a partner. For persons living in single household we assume consumer competences to a lesser degree to follow gendered patterns. Two reciprocal mechanisms are assumed to produce larger gender differences for persons in couples compared to persons who are single. First, we assume the gender effect to be weakened among singles, because of necessity; single males need to buy food, shoes and clothes and single women need IT-equipment, phones and internet access. Second, we assume gender differences to be strengthened among couples. Partly it is rational for persons in a couple to divide and share consumer responsibilities. Besides, the household constitutes an important locus for the “doing of gender” between the couple. Negotiations between the spouses will have a tendency to reproduce traditions and internalised presuppositions about the typically female and typically male (Haavind 1989). This is further reinforced through the mutual reproduction of ‘she’ and ‘he’ within the household through a gendering of the division of work.

If we find support for such mechanisms, *gendered differences in consumer competences will turn out to be larger among consumers living in couples compared to single household consumers*, and the following pattern will emerge:

	Male dominated consumer areas	Female dominated consumer areas
Men	Married men higher competence than single men	Single men higher competence than married men
Women	Single women higher competence than married women	Married women higher competence than single women

The selection hypothesis

A third hypothesis, the selection hypothesis, modifies the specialization hypothesis (above) by claiming that married men today is an increasingly selected group, expected to master also female dominated areas of consumer competence. Consequently, we assume that men in couples will have higher competence on female dominated areas than single men. This hypothesis develops on Skrede (2005), who asserts that a general process of gender equality

implies a strengthening of the social selection of family formation. More precisely she refers to the fact that because some men get children with several women, significantly more men than women in Norway remain childless. One reason for this could be that women tend to select men that improve her opportunities for living a life characterized by gender equality. And accordingly, some men are never selected for husbands and fathers.

It is well established sociological knowledge that family formation is socially differentiated (Hansen 1995). Although people tend to marry within their social group (endogamy), there are tendencies of a gendered, social differentiation: women tend to marry men with higher social status compared to them selves, and consequently, men marry women with lower social status. Within the industrial phase the gendered social differentiation of marriage implied a strengthened gendered division of labour within the couple, as hypothesized in the specialization hypothesis. Within the post-industrial phase, featured by increased gender equality both in working life and in the household, the social differentiation of marriage might have changed its direction implying a stronger social selection of who women choose to father their children, not longer (only) according to his abilities as economical provider, but also according to his abilities to participate in a gender equal family life, where household and family activities should be managed together with a dual career pattern (see Acker, Hansen 1995, Skrede 2005). Transferred to consumer practices, this could imply that women in their choices of partner also consider possible future spouses due to their consumer abilities. Modern working women do not any more want be the only responsible for the traditionally female dominated, and highly time-consuming, consumer areas, i.e. the households' everyday consumption.

If we find support for the selection hypothesis, *married men should be more reflected consumers than single men on female areas*. The following pattern will emerge:

	Female dominated consumer areas
Men	Married higher competence than single

We acknowledge that other qualities than gender and marital status could affect consumer competences, and in the multivariate analysis to come, we shall also include the consumer resource variables age, income and educational level.

Relevant studies^[mte6]

The forwarded hypotheses are related to both studies on gender and studies on consumption. In the following we will present some relevant knowledge about gender differences in Norway, studies about gendered consumption, and finally we discuss different approaches to the consumer competence concept.

Gender differences in Norway

In world-wide comparisons on gender equality, the Nordic countries are regularly placed on the top of the lists.⁷ This is the case when it comes to the number of women in political positions as well as broader aspects of gender equality such as economic opportunities, educational attainment and health and well-being for women and men.⁸ Contemporary research often high-light the importance of a specific Nordic culture impregnated by egalitarian values, in order to explain variances between countries or regions in this field. The egalitarian culture is said to serve as an enabling force for women.⁹

Major transformations in gender relations occurred throughout the Nordic countries in the 1970s and 1980s. Similar welfare state models and pervasive cooperation and policy diffusion processes where the context these transformations developed within (Borchorst and Dahlerup 2003:15-16). The employment **rate** of Nordic women increased dramatically and women got access to political decision making bodies to almost the same degree as men.¹⁰ Still male dominance in positions of power — more broadly understood than the political sphere — prevails and male privileges continues together with other kinds of gender traditionalism as illustrated by the relatively high level of gender segregated labour markets (Nermo 2000).

⁷ Some examples of recent world-wide comparisons on gender equality are the World Economic Forum Gender Gap (2005) which rank Sweden first and Norway second on the list (<http://www.weforum.org>) and the United Nations Human Development Index (2002) which ranks Norway first and Sweden second (<http://www.undp.org> see the GEM Gender empowerment measure and GDI Gender Related Development Index). The Inter-parliamentary Union provides statistics regarding women in national parliaments (<http://www.ipu.org>). Currently (2005) Sweden is ranked as number two and Norway number three on the list.

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⁹ Stephen Graubards (ed.) book *Norden — The Passion for Equality* from 1986 has been influential in this field.

¹⁰ In international comparisons the representation of women in the in the Nordic parliaments is generally high; Sweden (47.2 %), Norway (37.7 %), Denmark (36.9 %). Some surprises exist, however, with Rwanda (48.8 %) topping the list and Costa Rica (38.6 %) just ahead of Norway (see <http://www.quotaproject.org/country.cfm?SortOrder=LastLowerPercentage%20DESC>).

This mixture of gender changes and stability constitutes what has been called *the Nordic paradox* (Kvande 1998, Teigen and Wängnerud, forthcoming).

Time used for gainful employment on the one hand, and domestic work on the other, have been central in the discussion on gender equality. Time used for domestic work varies considerably between countries, but everywhere women use more time than men (Knudsen & Wærness 2007:144). Building on Grønmo's and Lingsom's earlier work, Knudsen & Wærness (2007), investigate how gender differences in time used for domestic work varies over time¹¹ and between countries with different gender empowerment level (GEM¹²). They find that the higher a countries' GEM, the more 'equal' use of time for domestic housework between men and women. While men living with a partner in countries with low GEM contribute with 25 percent of the housework, the corresponding percentage in the high GEM Nordic countries is 30 percent. The underlying reason for lower gender differences in high level GEM countries, however, is not that men contribute more, but that women spend less time on domestic work. It is reason to believe that also gender differences in consumer competences is even more distinguished in low level GEM countries than what we find in the Norwegian material presented in this article.

Female dominated consumer areas

Several studies claim that men take less interest in shopping than women (de Grazia and Furlough 1996, Campbell 1997, Underhill 1999). It has been documented that men are less likely than women to take the main responsibility for the households' grocery purchases in Norway (e.g. Lavik 1999, Berg 2005:41). In a recent study referring to research showing an increased interest among Australian men in purchasing foods, Brusdal and Lavik (2007) question whether such changes in the gendered pattern could also be registered in Norway. The assortments of foods in Norway have increased considerably during the last decade, and so has the general interest for home cooking and gourmet foods, measured by number of television programs and newly published cooking books (Bugge 2003). This could mean that this area is becoming attractive to more men and that men now eventually take more

¹¹ In Norway the gender differences decreased considerably between 1970 and 2000. Women's use of time for domestic work decreased by 2,15 hours/day, while men's use of time increased slightly with 0,13 hours/day. Still, however, women used more than twice as much time for domestic work than men in 2000 (women 1,59 hours/day and men 0,51 hours/day).

¹² United Nations measurement on womens influence in society, introduced in Human development report 2005.

responsibility for the everyday purchases of groceries. Based on a large quantitative material Brusdal and Lavik compare married (and cohabitant) men's and women's self-reported purchasing practices in 1990 and 2005 in order to investigate whether or not there had been any progress during this period seen from an equal rights perspective. The results indicate that women's responsibility for purchasing foods seem to be more or less unchanged, while men seem to take responsibility slightly more often in 2005 than in 1990. The main picture, however, is unchanged. It is the women who most frequently bring home the foods from the grocery stores. They also find, probably due to a strong increase in average income levels, that both men and women are less interested in food prices today than fifteen years ago (Brusdal & Lavik 2007 fig.1, table 1).

Klepp and Storm-Mathisen (2005) questions why women tend to need more clothes than men. Women buy more clothes – and frequent the stores more often - than men, and they also change their costume more frequently than men. According to Klepp and Storm-Mathisen one reason for this is that women are met with other, more challenging, dressing code demands than men are. A woman is expected to show more variance in her daily, as well as party-, costumes, and she is also expected to show more interest in aesthetics and being dressed in a becoming way (Klepp & Storm-Mathisen 2005, Storm-Mathisen & Klepp 2006).

Women's interests in clothes and kitchen, as well as men's interests in data and technologies, are stimulated from early childhood through gendered toys and games. In a study on child oriented advertising Nzegwu (2000) found that television commercials contain little to challenge stereotypical gender roles. The emphasis on commercials for girls' toys was on being a girlfriend, mother, homemaker, being a source of comfort and finally a communication expert. The commercials for boys' toys, on the other hand, emphasised building, running and exploring. While the girls' toys were often presented indoors with an adult present, the boys' toys were presented in an outdoor setting without adult supervision. Brusdal (1997) have studied what girls and boys in Norway wishes for Christmas. The gendered wishes reflect children's conception about themselves, confirming their identities as girls or boys. Even though some wishes were gender neutral, the main pattern was quite gendered. The girls wanted dolls, doll's equipment and furnishings, boys wanted cars, sports equipment and computer technologies. While playing with dolls is very much about clothes and domestic work, boys' toys more stimulate to action and technological insight. In other words; it seems as if children from early childhood are guided into separate segments of the markets.

Male dominated consumer areas

Consumption is not only consumption of foods, clothes and shoes. We also consume energy, culture, financial services, medical care, technologies, etc. While women seem to dominate some consumer areas, there are other areas of consumption that are dominated by men.

The digitalization of everyday life is a major consumer competence challenge. The choice whether or not to buy the new technological products is in fact rather limited. Citizens in a consumer society are forced to adapt to new digital standards, e.g. as the banks changes to internet banks, or when television is digitalized: In September 2007 digital television was available for most households in Norway, first as an offer, but after two years the analogue telecommunication net will be dismantled. From then it is no longer possible to watch the few programs available on the traditional television antenna. In stead, every household need to subscribe to a package with several program choices that the consumers in the first place have no possibilities to choose. The change from 3:4 to 9:16 screen picture also more than motivate people to exchange their old television set with a new digital HD-ready flat screen television.

The mobile phone development is another story. Handheld mobile telephones were permitted in Norway in 1986. These days an average mobile phone weighted several kilos, and were only owned by people with special needs. Less than twenty years later, the third generation mobile phones – with integrated television and internet - were available (2004), and there were more mobile phone subscriptions than inhabitants in Norway (2005). The modern Internet – World Wide Web – was introduced in 1992. In 1994, helped by the Lillehammer Olympic Games, the internet started its expansion in Norway. Today most people have access to a computer either at work or at home, and the majority of the private computers have access to internet, mainly by ADSL/broadband (Statistical yearbook 2006, table 442 & 231, Yin & Jørgensen 2006, Slette-meås 2006, Nordsveen 2006, Norsk telemuseum 2006).

As illustrated above, modern consumer societies are characterized by a rapid development and growth in the technological markets. To master these fields yields empowerment and self-esteem, while lack of such insights might result in a feeling of bewilderment and powerlessness. Mastering these markets is strongly associated with age, as the younger generation seems to be more interested and adaptable. It is also pronounced that men more often than women say that they find it easy to cope with the technological development, and they are more often confident that they have sufficient digital competence to meet new digital challenges in the future (Yin & Jørgensen 2006, Slette-meås 2006).

Consumers self reported competence on five digital areas in 2006 showed that the majority of the respondents reported to master the use of net bank, and there were no significant gender differences. The broadband market, however, was only mastered by a minority, among which the male consumers were in majority (Slettemeås 2006).

A comparison between single women and men, based on Norwegian official consumer statistics, shows that while women spend twice as much as men on clothes and shoes, men spend twice as much on technological equipment like television and computers (Pedersen 2005). The gendered pattern is also observable among young people. In a survey among 12.000 pupils aged 13 – 19 the boys reported to use more money than the girls on five out of seven categories. The girls reported to use more money than the boys only on clothes and school equipment, while the boys reported to use more on sports equipment, motor vehicles and on entertainments (including play-station, video and concerts). During a regular month the boys reported to spend more money than the girls, and they also reported to receive more pocket money from their parents than girls did. (Brusdal 2004:105-115.) All in all, it is reason to assert that Mr. Consumer is as active as Mrs. Consumer, but the two genders dominate different consumer areas.

Consumer competence

‘Consumption’ has been defined as a process both covering i) acquisition, ii) use and iii) disposals of products and goods (Stø et. al. 2006). Likewise consumer competence could be understood as knowledge and skills related to all three stages from; searching, choosing and buying, through; using, processing and maintenance to finally; disposal and recycling. In this article, however, the concept consumer competence mainly refers to the first stage, i.e. how consumers master their role as choice makers in the markets. We acknowledge, however, that consumers’ choices between products of different prices and qualities are often affected by the two other stages. As an example, when deciding what to buy for dinner – the consumer might not only consider the taste, content and price of the products, but also how much kitchen efforts and time different options imply, as well as considering different recycling

¹³ In Norway the gender differences decreased considerably between 1970 and 2000. Women’s use of time for domestic work decreased by 2,15 hours/day, while men’s use of time increased slightly with 0,13 hours/day. Still, however, women used more than twice as much time for domestic work than men in 2000 (women 1,59 hours/day and men 0,51 hours/day).

¹⁴ United Nations measurement on womens influence in society, introduced in Human development report 2005.

perspectives (Bugge & Almås 2006). Such choices can even include considerations related to the production and distribution process of the products, which are the case for choices of ecologic and fair trade products. In other words, even though we limit consumer competence to competence relevant for the purchasing situation, the concept is rather comprehensive.

In the literature the solution to the fact that many consumers neither always act in an appropriate way to further their own economic interests, nor contribute to a sustainable consumption, is to empower the consumers through consumer education. The aim of consumer education is to increase consumers' competence. It is therefore relevant to see what has been included in this concept. According to the Nordic consumer organization (in Nordic Council of Ministers 2000:599) consumer education in schools is about increasing pupils' abilities to:

- Economize with resources and manage their finances
- Make use of their rights and know their obligations as consumers
- Cope with the commercial persuasion they are exposed to
- Be able to assess the effects of their own consumption on the environment and for production/consumption in a global perspective
- Choose and cook nutritious food which is beneficial from an environmental point of view, and to work rationally in the home
- Make use of product information and assess the safety and quality of different products.

The comprehensive list above illustrate that being a prudent, reflected and well-informed consumer is rather challenging, and require a never ending, life-long process of learning and reflection.

In a literature study concerning the consumer competence concept, Ölander & Neuner (2007) define consumer competence as *...the ability of consumers to take decisions which as well as possible match their own needs and wishes* (93). And they suggest that at a minimum four elements should be considered: Knowledge, decision-making skills, motivation and need reflection. They admit, however, that to find objective quantitative measures that satisfy their minimum standards is an almost unsolvable challenge. They conclude that in the attempts to operationalize consumer competence, the measurement of 'knowledge' dominates. (Ölander & Neuner 2007:89-102).

In this paper consumer competence is understood as: the result of the continuing process of consumers' efforts to increase or update their knowledge about products and

markets¹⁵, i.e. *consumers' acquirement of information* in order to make appropriate and reflected consumer choices. Information is central in our understanding of the concept. In order to make reflected and prudent consumer choices, the consumer need to be informed. We do acknowledge, however, that economic illiteracy, lack of knowledge about consumers' right, as well as naivety and weakness of will, will affect consumers' choices on the markets.

Methods:

This paper is based on the Norwegian SIFO-survey, a country representative, annual survey aiming at understanding consumer issues seen from the consumers' interests, as contrary to the market agents' interests.

Data collection

The material analysed in this paper was collected in February 2007 by computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI) organized by Norstat Norway. One thousand randomly selected respondents, aged 18 to 80, have answered the questions. The material has been weighted according to gender and age and stratified according to geography to be nationally representative.

To get reliable answers telephone interviews should not exceed fifteen minutes, and the questions are therefore accordingly carefully selected. In the construction of the questionnaire, special attention was given to the succession of questions in order to minimise ordering effects (Frey and Oishi, 1995).

Since the respondents in telephone interviews only get the questions on the ear, this method require easy, unequivocal questions and simplicity. Complex phenomena like consumer competence need to be transformed into simple, easy understandable questions. In order to simplify and promote flow in the interviews, answering alternatives (scales) have been standardised though out the questionnaire, when possible.

Variable construction

The dependent variable to be studied in this paper is *consumer competence*. Operationalizing and measuring *consumer competence* can be done in several ways. In this analysis consumer competence is based on respondents' self-evaluation. More precisely, how much efforts –

¹⁵ *Consumer competence is knowledge about products (e.g. prices, qualities and production methods) combined with familiarity with, and insight into, how markets function (Berg 2007).*

according to their self judgments – they spend to keep themselves orientated and informed in order to make reflective, well-informed consumer choices on different segments of the market. On a standardized scale from one to five – where one is ‘very poorly’ and five is ‘very well’, the respondents were asked to self-evaluate their efforts on twelve different markets. The following analysis is based on two distinguished female dominated and two distinguished male dominated markets: *How well would you say that you keep yourself informed about...*

- *..food prices*
- *..qualities and prices on clothes and shoes*
- *..qualities and prices on data end electronics*
- *..capacities and prices on broadband*

The way these questions are posed, emphasise the consumers’ efforts, and not their objective information level. We expect that information gathering and knowledge based on experiences and practises is central to the feeling of being well-informed. The variables intend to measure how the respondents feel they master different markets, due to their own information level.

Variables based on self-evaluations are of course not objective. Several studies demonstrate that self evaluation deviate from more objective measures like exams and tests. There is a tendency that people tend to be too generous when estimating own capabilities (Pascarella & Terrenzini 1991, Alba & Hutchinson 2000). However, it is also acknowledged that there is indeed coherence between self evaluation and more objective measures, especially on judgements about overall memory (Mazzoni & Nelson 1995, Alba & Hutchinson 2000:137). One problem is that men seem to be more self confident and tend to evaluate themselves more generously than women (Borgeraas 1998). This mean that the gender differences on the male dominated areas might be overestimated, while the gender differences on the female dominated areas might be underestimated. However, our primary intention is to compare single and married men and women respectively, and we expect that the overestimation problem is the same among married and single men and women respectively.

Independent variables

Whether one live with a partner or not, is an important variable in the analysis to come. In the analysis we label the respondents who report to live with a partner for ‘married’, even though

we know this group undoubtedly contains many unmarried cohabitants. We did not ask about the gender of the cohabitant. We will therefore not miss same gender couples, who rightly have someone to share responsibilities with. If this group is large, which we do not expect, gender differences within couples could be underestimated.

Other variables to be included in the analysis because they are expected to influence consumer competences are age, income and educational level. Age is an important variable since needs, desires and interests varies over the life-course. The respondents were asked about year of birth, since it is easier to remember than age. This variable is considered uncomplicated to measure.

Income is somewhat more difficult to measure in a survey. Far from everybody have a clear idea about their exact income, and several respondents will have problems to report their exact income in a quick telephone interview. Someone might also hesitate to answer such questions for private reasons. In the survey we asked: On average, what is your gross income? 86 percent of the respondents gave an answer. However, we still expect there are inaccuracies in the given amounts, and one way to tone down probable errors is to construct a more robust and less distinct variable. Accordingly we only separate between those with a gross income 120.000 NoK and less (low income – equivalent to the minimum pension), and those with a gross income 500.000 NoK and more (high income). The fourteen percent that did not remember or refused to tell their income is placed in the comparing mid-income group. This means we maintain the whole sample for the multivariate analyses, but unfortunately, this also implies that the economic variable is less strong, and underestimation of effects from income is probable.

For educational level we distinguish between those with and those without university or college education. These variables are not controversial and we would expect quite high reliability. However, compared to other similar surveys, women with higher education are overrepresented in this material. We have undertaken several additional calculations, and do not expect this to affect the main results presented in this paper.

The variables to be included in the analysis are presented in table 1:

Tabell 1: Variables to be included in the analysis, subsequent to gender. SIFO-survey data 2007. Weighted by gender, age and geography. Percentages (& mean age) (N=2000)

	2007	
	Men	Women
Single	29	34
Live with a partner (married/cohabitant)	71	66
Age (mean)	45	46
Higher education	41	44
High income	22	05
Low income	11	17
I keep well informed about:		
Foods prices	36	47
Prices and qualities on clothes and shoes	30	49
Prices and qualities on data and electronics	53	24
Prices and capacities on broadband	33	18

In the first descriptive analysis, separating on gender and marital status, we compare percentages who say they are well informed (4 or 5 on the original scale) on the selected two male and two female dominated consumer areas.

For the multivariate analyses, we constructed two indexes by adding the values on the male and a female dominated area variables respectively. These indexes will be called ‘daily consumption markets competences’ and ‘electronic market competences’.

Analyses

We depart from the assumption that gender differences are minor or less salient among men and women in single-person households. If the gender differences in consumer competences persist when we only compare single men and women, this will be interpreted as a result of traditional gender roles. Another possibility is that such differences rather are generated by the known gendered differences in level of income or education and not by gender in itself. This will be investigated in the multivariate analysis.

If we find that the gendered differences are larger between men and women living in couples than between men and women living alone, we interpret this as a support to our main hypothesis: When the circumstances allow it – that is when living with a partner, men and women tend to share responsibilities (e.g. consumer competences) in a gendered way.

The third probable pattern to influence the results is related to the selection hypothesis; i.e. that married men are better than single men on all areas, due to women’s strong selection of marital worthy men.

Trivariate distributions

In figure 5 we give an overview of how well informed single men and women compared to men and women living in couples say they are on different areas. This allows us to survey whether the gendered differences persist among single consumers, and whether gendered differences are bigger among people living in couples than among single people:

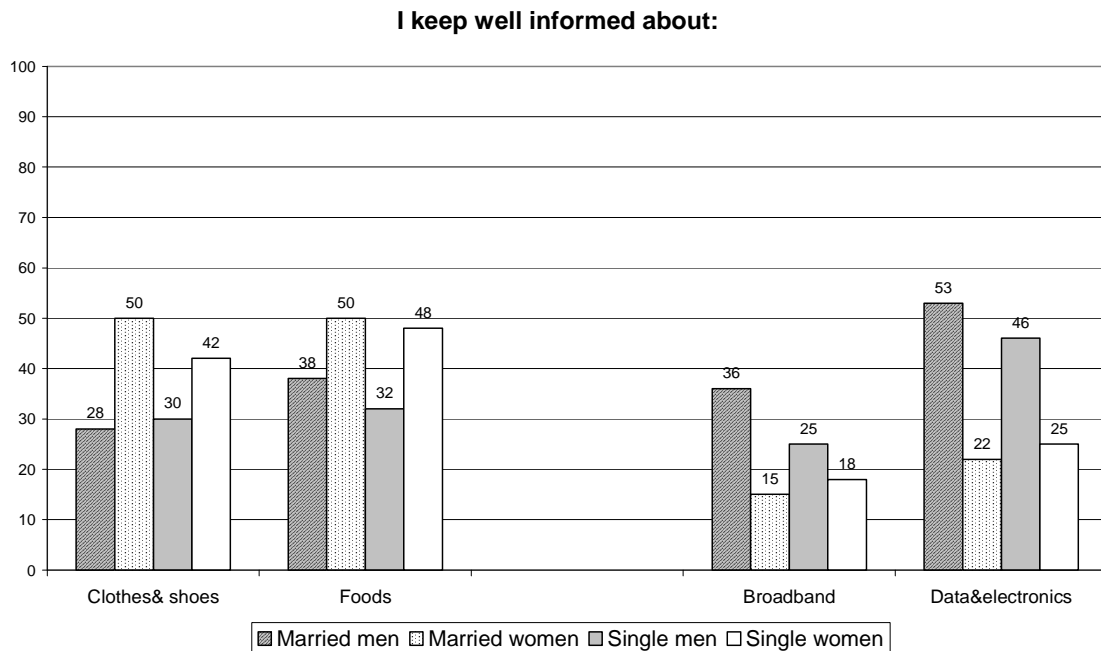


Figure 1: Percentages who say they keep well informed on different consumer markets among single and married* men and women. Weighted by gender, age and geography. (N=2000)

In figure 1 the two female dominated consumer areas are represented on the left side of the figure, while the two male dominated consumer areas are represented on the right side. As a first impression from figure 1, we see that the gendered differences do not disappear, when we only compare single male (grey columns) and female (white columns) consumers. There are considerable gender differences also between single men and women. In other words; traditional gender roles seem to affect single as well as married consumers.

We also notice that married women (patterned white columns) are more likely than others to master well the female dominated markets, while married men (patterned grey columns) are more likely than others to master well the male dominated markets. It is also observable that the differences between single men and single women are smaller than the differences between married men and married women on three of the areas. On these areas the

material seems to support our main hypothesis: People in couples tend to divide tasks within the households in a gendered way.

The exception is to stay informed about food prices, where more married men than single men say they keep well informed. This could reflect that married men are influenced by their women to put more effort and interests into foods and food preparation, and also that being a couple very much is to share meals (Bugge & Almås 2006). Or – supporting the selection hypothesis (Skrede 2005) - that married men are carefully selected, not only are they better than unmarried men on data, electronics and broadband, they are also more reflected on foods prices than single men. When asked about consumer competences related to clothes and shoes, the results show no decrease in married men's competences.

In the subsequent analysis we shall significant test these differences in multivariate analyses.

Multivariate approach

Our main concern is to investigate what happens with consumer responsibilities, more precisely consumer competences, when people decide to live together. The next step in our analysis is therefore to check/investigate whether the differences in consumer competences between single men and women compared to married men and women as shown in figure 1 are significant or not. In other words we need to check whether a difference between two differences is significant. For such purpose an appropriate approach is to apply linear regression using as independent variables; gender, whether one live in couples or not, and finally the interaction term (gender * couple)¹⁶. The interaction term represents the additional gendered effect appearing from living in couples, i.e. the difference between the gendered differences among married and single people. In other words, if the interaction term reveals significant results, it means that we find support for our main hypothesis: Gendered differences in consumer competence can be (partly) explained by a gendered division of labour within households.

We acknowledge that qualities others than gender, as well as whether one live in an established relationship or not, could affect level of consumer competences. Age is expected to affect consumption through two different mechanisms: 'as years go by, you become a more experienced and reflected consumer' and 'younger generations more easily adapt to new

¹⁶ Y (consumer competence) = b_0 (intercept) + b_1 (gender) + b_2 (couples) + b_3 (gender * couples)

technologies’. While the first mechanism is expected to influence the female dominated areas, the second mechanism is expected to influence the male dominated area.

Another possibility is that gender differences in consumer competences could rely on gendered differences in personal income and education. While higher education is expected to influence consumer competence positively, this is not the case for high income. We expect that rich people can afford to be less conscious about prices when they buy foods, clothes and shoes than low income consumers. More concrete: women might be more reflected on the daily consumption markets because they more often than men are among those with low income, and less seldom among those with high income. If the gendered differences in consumer competence can be partly explained by a gender biased distributions on the mentioned other variables, this should be manifested in a decrease on the standardised beta effects from gender when variables measuring such properties are included in the equation. We shall therefore control for income and educational level, as well as age, in the multivariate analysis to come.

Instead of presenting analyses for each consumer competence area presented in figure 1, we group the areas in one male and one female dominated consumer area.

Table 3: Variables affecting level of consumer competences on female dominated areas (daily consumption markets) and on male dominated areas (electronic markets). Multivariate linear regressions. Standardized beta-coefficients. (N=2000-1825)

	Dependent variable: Daily consumption markets comp. (2-10)				Dependent variable: Electronic markets comp. (2-10)			
	Step 1 r ² =.07	Step 2 r ² =.07	Step 3 R ² =.07	Step 4 r ² =.08	Step 1 r ² =.09	Step 2 r ² =.09	Step 3 r ² =.09	Step 4 r ² =.13
Gender (female=1)	.26***	.24***	.24***	.22***	-.29***	-.19***	-.29***	-.16***
Couples = 1		.02		.02		.13***		.13***
Gender * Couples		.03		.03		-.13***		-.17***
Higher education=1			.02	.02			.06**	.07**
High income=1			-.08***	-.08***			.02	.02
Low income=1			-.01	-.02			.01	-.04
Age				.07**				-.17***

= sig. 1%-level, *=sig.0%-level.

Table 2 shows the results – more precisely the standardised beta coefficients – from two four step linear regression analyses, both starting with the beta coefficients¹⁷ when only gender is

¹⁷ The standardized beta coefficient is identical to a correlation coefficient (pearson r).

included in the analysis. We want to study probable decreases in the gender effects when other variables are included in the analysis.

The main picture is that the gendered effect on consumer competences related to the female dominated daily consumption markets predominately persists when the other variables are included in the equation, while the gendered effect on consumer competence related to the male dominated technological markets decreases considerably.

Traditional gender difference hypothesis

First step in the two analyses show rather strong gendered effects. While women tend to master the daily consumption markets, men tend to master the technological markets. Neither on the female, nor on the male, dominated consumer areas did we succeed in eliminating the gendered effects by controlling for marital status. In other words; the traditional gender difference hypothesis is supported for both markets.

Specializing hypothesis

We start interpreting the result on the female dominated areas: The interaction terms (gender * couples) do not show significant results. In other words, the seemingly interval/gap between the gendered differences among single and married consumers that appeared in figure 1, did not turn out to be significant. This means that our main hypothesis is not supported on these areas: We cannot claim that gendered differences related to the female dominated areas can be explained by a gendered division of consumer tasks for persons living in couples. Women – single as well as married - tend to master the daily consumption markets better than men.

On the male dominated areas, however, we find support for the specializing hypothesis. The standardized beta effect from gender decreases from $-.29^{***}$ to $-.16^{**}$ when ‘couples’ and the ‘interaction term’ is included in the model. And the interaction term, i.e. the additional gender effect when people move together in couples shows significant result ($-.13^{**}$). This means that gendered consumer competence differences on data, electronics and broadband increases significantly in favour of the married men. In other words, married women tend to leave consumer responsibilities on the technological markets to their husbands.

Selection hypothesis:

The results, strictly interpreted, do not support the selection hypothesis: male married consumers are not significantly better than single male consumers on the female consumer

areas¹⁸. However, married men do not seem to *reduce* their efforts on the female areas, like married women tend to do on the male areas.

While the specializing hypothesis explained a significant part of the gender differences on the technological markets, traditional gender roles seem to underlie the gender differences on the daily consumption markets. However, we acknowledged that both the specializing hypothesis and the selection hypothesis could be active on the female dominated markets. These mechanisms pull in opposite directions, and could in fact eliminate each other. If this is the case, the reason why we do not find support for the specializing hypothesis on the daily consumption markets, is that also the selection hypothesis is in function¹⁹.

Other consumer resource variables

Since income and education are not equally distributed between men and women, such resources could explain some of the gendered differences. As shown in step 3, this is hardly the case, neither for the daily consumption markets, nor for the technological markets. There are only minor changes in the standardized regression coefficients from gender when income and educational level are kept constant.

In step 4 of the analysis both sets of variables, as well as age, are included in the equations. This allows us to estimate which factors are influencing consumer competences, as well as comparing their relative strength. We find that gender is the strongest predictor on level of consumer competences on the daily consumption markets. But also age and income seem to affect level of consumer competences on the daily consumption markets.

Step 4 also demonstrates that the combination of gender and marital status is a strong predictor of whom one can expect to master the electronic markets. Women with a partner are less likely than others to master the technological markets. As expected, while consumers seem to grow more experienced and informed by age on the female dominated daily consumption markets, it is the younger generations that master the male dominated electronic markets. While income had a significant effect on how well consumers master the female

¹⁸ The three first variables can also be read as three dicotome variables: single women (female=1), married men (couples=1) and the additional gender effect for married women (gender * couples), all compared to single men. If married men were significantly better informed on the female consumer areas than single men, the variable 'couples' should therefore show significant results, which it doesn't.

¹⁹ The std. deviation is slightly higher among married men than among married women.

dominated daily consumption markets, it is education that affects consumer competence relevant for the technological markets.

To conclude: To be women, older, and not rich, increases the probability of being well informed about foods prices and prices and qualities on clothes and shoes. Traditional gender roles are the most probable explanation for the gendered distribution of consumer competences on these markets. However, if both the specializing hypothesis and the selection hypothesis are present, they could in fact eliminate each other. [mte9]

The variables that contribute to increase consumer competences relevant for the electronic markets are to be young, to be man, to live with a partner and to have higher education. On these markets the specializing hypothesis contributes to explain the gendered differences. But still, traditional gender roles also seem to be present. The results (explained variance) also indicate that it is easier to predict who will master the electronic markets compared to who will master the daily consumption markets.

Discussion

The departure of this paper is that there are significant gender differences in consumer competences and that some markets can be described as female dominated, while others can be described as male dominated consumer areas, measured by consumers' self-reported consumer competence level. Our interpretation of the results rest on the assumption that consumer competences reflect consumer responsibilities, since level of consumer competence is a result of past practices and future expected practices as a consumer on the markets.

Our main concern has been to investigate whether the gendered differences described above could be explained by *the specializing hypothesis*, i.e. that the observed gendered pattern rely on a gendered division of consumer competences within couple households. In other words that gender differences in consumer competences among single-person households should be absent, or significantly lower, than among couple households.

In case we would not find support for the specializing hypothesis, two other probable explanations were also put forward: the traditional *gender difference hypothesis* and *the selection hypothesis*.

Our results supported the specializing hypothesis on the male dominated areas, but not on the female dominated areas. More precisely; the results indicate that for women, to live in

a couple decreases her probability for having technological consumer competences, she rather tend to leave this to her partner. We do not, however, find the opposite pattern on the female dominated markets: To live with a woman do not seem to release men from daily market consumer competence responsibilities. Rather, it appears, married men tend to be more engaged in keeping informed about the daily markets than single men. As Mrs. Consumer has also become Mrs. Breadwinner, Mr. Breadwinner appears to accompany her as Mr. Consumer.

There could be several reasons for this complementary pattern: One probable explanation why married men rather report higher than lower competence level than single men on the female dominated areas could be that the specializing hypothesis is counterbalanced by the selection hypothesis. This would mean that in some couples a specialized, traditional gendered pattern emerge; women take the main responsibility for keeping informed about the daily consumption markets - while in other couples - due to women's preference and selection for men who agree on a more gender equal division of consumer responsibilities on the daily consumption markets - a more gender equal pattern emerges, and accordingly; married men exhibit higher level of consumer competence on these markets than single men. If true, this explain why neither the specialization hypothesis, nor the selection hypothesis gave significant result.

If we accept there are some signs of a more equal gendered pattern on the female dominated markets (within couples), why do we not find the same on the male dominated markets? One explanation can be related to distinguishing features of the two market segments: While female dominated markets are associated with low status and daily, time consuming responsibilities, like purchasing milk, butter, toilet paper and tooth paste, male dominated markets are more likely to be associated with complex competence and festive, attractive purchases of status commodities, like a new television, computer or perhaps a funny technological spear time gadget. If true, it is reasonable that women wants to share responsibilities related to the female dominated markets with a partner, while men would like to keep their domain over technology. In other words, while modern women invite their men to participate on the traditionally female dominated markets, women have to conquer the technological markets since their men are perfectly satisfied with their traditional dominion.

We could add that while the female dominated markets are visited daily and a bad buy is not a big deal, the male dominated technological markets are visited more periodically and a bad buy can be an expensive, awkward, experience. It is also reason to believe that reaching the level of feeling well-informed on the technological markets can be more time demanding, than feeling well-informed on the daily markets. Accordingly, it is probably easier to enter the traditionally female dominated daily consumption markets, than the traditionally male dominated technological markets.

Another explanation for this biased gender pattern, i.e. that married men stay equally informed on the daily consumption markets as single men, could be that meals, and accordingly food preparation and purchase of foods, is closely related to being a couple, and that men in couples therefore engage more when they live in couples than when they live alone (Bugge 2003).

Eventually, the gender differences did remain on both male and female dominated markets when we only studied single consumers. In other words, socialization into traditional gender roles seem to be vivid and successful. However, considering the strongly gendered markets of toys and clothes confronting children, exemplified by studies on commercials and advertising referred to in this paper (Nzegwu 2000, Brusdal 1997, Brusdal 2004), one could wonder why gender differences in consumer competences are not larger?

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Low income and “poverty lines” in Norway – A comparison of three concepts

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Abstract

In this paper we address the question how well do “poverty” as defined by three different poverty concepts correspond. We have compared three different measures of “poverty” in Norway: income poverty, and two measures of a minimum budget standard, one scientifically and one politically defined. The three measures rest on different underlying concepts, serving different purposes and yielding significantly different poverty lines. If followed by the municipal social services, the Governmental norms for social benefits will, paradoxically, leave the beneficiaries in income poverty as defined by the same Government. The most generous poverty line of all three measures is provided by the minimum budget standard developed by SIFO, which rests on the assumption that a household’s income needs to give a sustainable financial situation in the longer run. Neither of the two other poverty measures have this property. Some political and practical implications of the findings are discussed.

1. Introduction

The question we address in this paper is how well three different poverty definitions, all in use in Norway, correspond, or more accurately where they draw their poverty lines. It is widely recognised that in late-modern, affluent Western societies, poverty is a relative phenomenon; it has to do with social participation and lack of resources that enable people to live a “normal” life. In this article we adopt this notion of relative poverty. However, “poverty” may be defined and measured in a number of ways. The number of poor and who are poor will be heavily affected by the definitions and measures we use. Countries have different ways to define and measure poverty. Recently, however, within the EU a consensus has now been reached on this matter (Atkinson et al. 2002). The EU member countries agree that those having an income less than 60 per cent of the median are considered “poor”. In Norway as well, the official view on poverty is close, but not identical to this notion. The use of income to define poverty may be justified by on the ground that income is essential in societies with market economies, the measure is widely available, relatively easy to compare in time and space, and has a common and intuitive understanding. In Norway as in the EU, the income limit approach is the official way to define poverty. The income limit approach has however been extensively criticized. It has variously been accused for being arbitrary, that it has no

reference to “need”, that it is conceptually empty, and that it is an indirect measure of poverty. Suggested alternatives are abundant. In this article we adopt a need based approach, a minimum budget standard, which takes into account the economic resources to be commanded by households of different size and composition in order to achieve a normal and sustainable living standard and social participation. These two measures are compared with the official social assistance norms decided by the former Ministry of Social Affairs, now The Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion. These norms are intended to serve as guidelines for the local social assistance departments when they assess who gets what. All three measures have been suggested for official use in Norway. However, the Ministry has so far rejected the minimum budget developed by SIFO (National Institute for Consumer Research).

2. Defining poverty – some conceptual challenges

Today, research on level of living and consumption stands out as two quite different traditions. Until the Second World War, however, they were practically flip sides of the same coin (see Collette 2000). Thus, the early classics *Ducpétiaux* (1804 – 1868) in Belgium, *Le Play* (1806 – 1882) in France and *Engel* (1821 – 1896) in Germany may be seen as the founding fathers of modern studies of both research traditions. Engel utilized the empirical material from the two former researchers – consumption items, patterns of consumption and income – to formulate one of the best documented economic “laws” ever; viz. Engel’s law:

.. je armer eine Familie ist, einen desto grösseren Antheil von der Gesamtausgabe muss zur Beschaffung der Nahrung aufgewendet werden (Engel 1895:28-29).

The development of income standards based on consumption studies is a prominent feature of poverty research during the first part of the 19.th century. Best known is perhaps Booth and, not to mention, Rowntree’s study from 1901 (Rowntree 2000 [1901]). These works may be seen as a further development of the continental, classic studies on consumption and levels of living, where definitions of poverty thresholds (i.e. Rowntree’s primary and secondary poverty) are based on a mix of scientific theorising and normative principles. The income levels defining poverty were supplied with content by explicitly taking into consideration the relationship between consumption and living conditions. Orschansky (1965) took Rowntree’s account a step further by using it to create a food basket, which in turn became the poverty line in USA (Glennester 2000, Fisher 1992). Even though the demarcation line between poverty and non-poverty was — and still is — open to criticism, its main advantage is transparency. In fact, there is little confusion about the definition as such. Instead, criticisms are directed towards the methodological assumptions, the composition of basic items and their relation to poverty in substantial terms (Bradshaw 2001, Saunders 1999).

After the Second World War, the studies of level of living and consumption gradually developed into two different and distinct traditions; the income approach as opposed to the consumption approach.¹ The former no doubt gained more scientific legitimacy and political support than the latter. This is also the situation today. Research on poverty in Europe and Norway is more or less exclusively dominated by income and income measures, even though there are a few poverty researchers who from time to time make the case for a consumption -, or budget based approach (Bradshaw 1993, Saunders 1998). This account is not exhaustive, however. Veit-Wilson (1998) outlines three scientific, empirical approaches to poverty: the

¹ This development may be explained by the so called “ordinalist revolution” in economic theory – “the rejection of cardinal notion of utility and the general acceptance of the position that utility was not comparable between individuals” (Cooter and Rappoport, 1984).

deprivation indicator approach, the attitudinal approach, and the budget approach. The first correlates social necessities as identified in general population surveys with income levels; the second compares actual incomes with estimated levels at which “ends could be met”; and the third, which Veit-Wilson calls a hybrid between a scientific and a prescriptive approach, shows the income levels at which a range of conventional life-styles in theory could be achieved. This approach is partly but not totally prescriptive or normative because it avoids prescribing the minimum level of living (Veit-Wilson 1998:19). In our account we focus on poverty defined by measures based on income as well as consumption.

The most common definition of poverty in use is based on the median income, as for instance EU’s 50 percent of median income threshold. This is a powerful and influential approach widely applied by governmental (e.g. OECD and the EU) and scientific bodies such as the Luxembourg Income Study (LIS). These kinds of indirect measures are useful and appropriate for several purposes; medians are simple and straightforward to grasp, they enable comparisons over time and across countries, and income statistics are easily available. From a theoretical point of view they allow for what is known as ‘*neutrality of preference*’: “With indirect measure, wellbeing is measured by the choices people *can* make” (Ringen 1995:10). Thus, according to the proponents of this view, there is no compelling reason to replace the income limit definition of poverty by some other measure. This distinction between indirect measures of poverty, for example income, and direct measures of poverty, for example deprivation of living conditions, is important. In addition to the theoretical argument, the use of income in defining poverty has several practical advantages. Income data are easily available and measurement is straight forward. Only one single variable is sufficient in contrast to complicated measurement procedures and index constructions of many items, like in the Nordic living conditions approach. Moreover, most people have an intuitive understanding of income limits. The widespread use of the income limit approach and its popularity amongst international organisations like OECD and EU is probably best explained by its convenience in these terms.

Yet, the income limit approach to poverty has its critics. First, according to Veit-Wilson, income may be criticized for being non-scientific in the sense that they may or may not be related to “poverty”, i.e. material deprivation and social exclusion. Much of the critique of income measures is not directed against the measures as such, but rather against certain uses of them. Of course, such measures may be very important and efficient — even unrivalled — in a number of research approaches as for instance when monitoring the development of inequality in society. But if the purpose is to define actual income levels for people and households, it is highly problematic. In this case it is vital that the defined thresholds actually ensure an adequate – or at least known - level of living. The in principle arbitrary statistical definitions of income levels are not the appropriate way to handle this kind of challenge. A crucial challenge for the research community is, as we see it, to identify appropriate income thresholds by taking consumption as the point of departure. As an alternative to technical measures such as the 50% of the median income we ask: what is the price tag for a set of items that may be seen as necessary to ensure a reasonable viability level/sustainability for households of different size and composition?

3. Three poverty concepts

In this section we offer a discussion of three poverty concepts which later will be compared.

Income poverty

In the European Union (EU), income poverty is one of the key indicators in the monitoring of and battle against social exclusion (Atkinson et al. 2001, Joint Report on Social exclusion 2003). According to the official view taken by the EU, the poor are defined as “individuals or families whose resources are so small as to exclude them from the minimal acceptable way of life of the Member State in which they live” (Atkinson et al 2001:52). Here we find a notion of a social minimum norm of “way of life” which people should not fall below. Also the notion of “way of life” is broader than pure financial matters and includes presumably life styles, and social participation and activities in addition to material living standards.

The so called Sub-Group on Social Indicators recommended income as the common poverty indicator among the EU member states. The Sub-Group’s primary justification for making income poverty their main poverty indicator was that “it provides a poverty line that facilitates cross national comparisons” (Atkinson 2001:55). The Sub-Group recommended that net equivalised household income should be interpreted as purchasing power (p.65). At the same time the Sub-Group pointed out that a serious drawback that the chosen percentage is arbitrary and moreover far from neutral in its influence on cross-national comparisons. Further, the Sub-Group acknowledged the value of the expenditure or consumption approach on the ground that these measures are closer to standards of living than income. Over all, however, the Sub-Group concluded that “we do not feel that there are strong enough grounds to reverse the move to an income basis” (Atkinson et al. 2001). They gave several reasons for this point of view: first, that income measures were available on an annual basis from all member countries, and that considerable work was invested to validate the measure. A common EU poverty indicator based on expenditures would on the other hand require harmonised budget surveys in all member countries. In this area, the Sub-Group states, considerable research effort is needed in the future.

In summary, the Sub-Group is explicit in that their justification to keep income as the basis for drawing the poverty line rests mainly, if not entirely on practical arguments. One of the main concerns of the Sub-Group was cross-national comparability, and this has strongly affected the Group’s recommendations. However, for one single country this concern is much less compelling. Thus, the argument to prefer income to consumption when drawing the poverty line loses weight when the purpose is to validate the income poverty line, and not to make comparisons between countries.

In 2002, Norway has now joined the EU effort to combat social exclusion. The “Action Plan against Poverty” (St.meld. nr. 6 2002-2003. Tiltaksplan mot fattigdom) was the Norwegian equivalent to the EU countries’ national inclusion plans. The Action Plan outlined a five year action program with the ambition to eradicate poverty in Norway in general, and child poverty in particular. Poverty is defined in these terms: “By poverty we mean that individuals have so low income, possibly combined with high, necessary expenditures related to illness and impairment etc, that they in the long run are unable to fulfil basic welfare needs”. “Individuals who find themselves below this income limit have an income which departs significantly from the general income level in the population” (pX). It is further claimed that: “a sufficient and predictable income is a necessary condition to achieve an acceptable living standard” (p7), but no objective, external criteria to assess what a “sufficient income” is, is put forward. The Plan admits that low income is a one dimensional measure for a complex problem, but argues that it often shows a relationship with problematic living conditions in other areas. Low income is thus used as an indicator of people’s total economic and social living conditions (p8). “In the long run” is operationalised as poverty lasting for three years. This means that the existence of short term poverty and transitional poverty, e.g. students, is not regarded as problematic. Also

temporary problems related to inability pay ones bills, disposal of money or debt is explicitly considered beyond the current Government's understanding of poverty.

50 per cent of the median is selected as the poverty limit. To justify this limit, the Plan simply refers to what is common nationally and internationally. Yet, it is acknowledged that when the income limit is drawn in this way, no answer is given as to whom has insufficient income in relation to meeting basic welfare needs. It is pointed out that several have argued to add calculations of costs of living to the current income measure of poverty. "The Ministry of Social Affairs has therefore asked SIFO to develop a material for a minimum standard for necessary costs of living..." This latter statement is the backdrop for the project SIFO has undertaken and which partly provides the basis for this paper.

The Minimum Budget

The consumption approach utilizes the classical tradition by specifying the basket of goods that are necessary to satisfy basic needs in a given society. This does not mean that the selection of goods is the primary goal, on the contrary; the basket must be seen as a method to estimate the cost of having a specific consumption level, or – that is the same – a specific income level. The primary goal is thus to define an income level – the basket of goods is only part of a method to reach this aim. The basket of goods has two important advantages to the income approach. Firstly, it serves as a mean to specify an income level; secondly it gives confidence to the view that it is possible to have a given consumption level for a certain amount of money. As the items in the consumer price index, the items are only representative of a given level of living and could be substituted by a variety of alternative items.

For many years, The National Institute for Consumer Research (SIFO) has applied a basket of goods to define a reasonable expenditure level, the so called Standard Budget. The Norwegian standard budget consists of – in principle – a complete list of goods and services which are considered necessary if the household is to maintain a reasonable consumption level over a great number of consumption sectors. The ambition of the Norwegian Standard Budget is to define a «reasonable» consumption level. This is neither a subsistence nor a luxury level, but a consumption level satisfying the welfare ambitions in the Norwegian society. The budget is not dedicated to distinct social or economic strata, but is in principle suitable for the «average» household in Norway.

SIFO's commission was to develop a proposition to a low cost budget utilizing the existing Standard Budget. The Government needed this as an input to the development of a recommended minimum level for social assistance. The Standard Budget defines a modest, but adequate consumption level, assuming that families living on this budget are able to preserve this level in the long run. This assumption has several practical and theoretical implications. First of all it has a consequence regarding the items included. In addition to items used in the daily consumption, the budget also includes durable goods, such as furniture, household equipment (washing machine, stove etc), radio, TV, PC, camera etc.. All durable goods are depreciated, taking the actual price divided on the items lifespan, broken down to cost per month. The implication is that the calculated consumption expenditure contains a certain share of savings each month. These savings are meant to be used to pay for rare purchases. The saving part of the consumption expenditures in the standard budget is important because it safeguards a certain economic freedom. This economic freedom may be interpreted in two distinct directions. Firstly, as it literally means, i.e. as freedom to buy durable goods, with a duration for more than one month, without reducing the spending on daily consumption. Secondly, the economic slack combined with the assumption that the budget only is valid for families who actually are living on a reasonable level of living. The implication is that this economic and material "slack" opens the opportunity for investments

in assets. This distinction - investment in assets and buying durable goods - is crucial. A good investment usually means increasing an asset's (money) value in the future; residence, education, investing in children, spouse etc. Combined with a calculation on future income, this kind of investments are important for securing the family's welfare in the future. In other words, the standard budget gives not only the family living on its consumption level an opportunity to preserve this level for the future, but also some economic opportunities for investments. The depreciation of durable goods and the subsequent "savings" are - of course - not sufficient for heavy investments as buying a house, but it contributes substantially.

The main principle underlying the minimum budget is to change the investment perspective built into the standard budget. There are - however - no rational arguments for defining a minimum level for consumption based on the assumption that *all* income is consumed during a short period of time, for example from one wage period to another. This would very soon end up in payment problems and poverty, or deepen the poverty level of those who are poor at the outset. Even a minimum level of consumption expenditure requires a minimum of savings.

In defining the minimum budget we suppose that the families are living on a minimum, and that this level should be *maintained*. The maintenance assumption is met through the calculation of daily consumption and short time savings. On the other hand, long term savings that are depreciating durable goods with long life span (for example furniture, household goods) are not included in the minimum budget. The practical implication is that families living on a minimum budget level have to reduce their short time consumption (which includes clothing, leisure activities and in some cases food consumption) in order to be able to buy household goods, for example a refrigerator. The principal argument for this is that the expenditure level for the remaining consumption is on a level that permits short time cut backs without ending in a poverty trap.

The Governmental guidelines for calculating social assistance benefits

The official norms for calculating social assistance are issued annually by the Ministry of Social Affairs. In existence since 2001, they are intended to serve as guidelines for the local social assistance departments. Before that time, the Ministry was reluctant to set norms because it did not want to interfere with local democracy. As a consequence there was huge variation in the amount of money social recipients received in social assistance. The Ministry (Circular 1-34/2001) stresses that the norms should merely serve as a guideline and a "tool" for calculating benefit, and that the Social Assistance Department has the right and the obligation to use professional discretion when applying the governmental norms as well as the norms issued by the municipalities (Circular-34/2001). The Circular further maintains that the local social administration should always perform concrete and individual means test, and assessing the applicant's expenditures as well as incomes, before deciding the amount of the benefit. The Circular further emphasises that social assistance should contribute to a "proper, but sober means of sustenance"/ lifestyle/way of life ("levesett"), but on the other hand the benefit should motivate the client to work, to participate in an ALMP or other activities that may enhance work (Circular 1-34/2001: Introduction).

In short then, we compare three poverty measures and the amounts of money they give rise to that differ conceptually, but that are all in use in Norway. The official income poverty definition counts people with income below a certain threshold as "poor" because they lack the means to "fulfil basic welfare needs", or to enjoy an "acceptable" living standard. The minimum budget is built on the assumption that a household's incomes need to be sufficient to give a sustainable financial situation, i.e. an assumption met through the calculation of daily consumption and short time savings. The rationale for the Ministry's guidelines for minimum norms is based on the premise of what is needed to live a "proper, but sober" way

of life. This means that in practice all three measures are justified by reference to a certain level of consumption or living standard. They differ, however as to what the appropriate level should be, as soon will become evident.

4. Data

Norway uses the OECD's equivalence scale from 1982 to calculate equivalised household income in order to derive the poverty line. This scale assigns the weight of 1 to the first adult, 0.7 to the second and 0.5 to each child below the age of 17. The rationale for using the OECD82 scale is simply that it has a "moderate" economy of scale (St.meld. nr. 6, 2002-2003, appendix) as compared with other commonly used scales like the one used by EU and the square root scale. Income data are derived from Statistics Norway's 2005 Income statistics which cover the entire population and are based on the tax forms. Since we are interested in the official Norwegian poverty line, we stick to the OECD82 equivalence scale. By this measure, 50 per cent of the median income in single households, i.e. "the poverty line" for an individual, was 96 000 NOK in 2005 (<http://www.ssb.no/emner/05/01/ifhus/>).

The minimum budget levels for different household types are based on the principles and the calculations accounted for above. The consumption categories included in the calculations are food and drinks, other daily consumption items; clothes and shoes; health and personal hygiene; leisure; media; travel and transportation. The actual costs of the defined items within each of these sectors add up to the consumer expenditure level.

The Ministry draws a distinction between the part of means of sustenance ("livsopphold") that *always* should be covered by the benefit, and a part of the means of sustenance that *could* be met. To the "always" category belong items such as food and drinks, clothes and shoes, personal hygiene, leisure activities, travel expenses, housing, power and heating. The "could" category includes "special" costs and items such as presents and celebration of Christmas, sports and leisure equipment, equipment for infants, child care, school start, medical costs, a car, and other "special needs" (Circular 1-34/200,1: 5.1.4)². Further, these costs are not included in the calculations of actual amounts of money the Ministry recommends. Also, the guidelines, and the sums of money they imply, are explicitly limited to short term receipt of social assistance. This means that at the outset, official guidelines includes less items and costs than the minimum budget.

The minimum budget (MB) - as well as the official guidelines (OG) - excludes housing costs. This implies that the income poverty line (IP) cannot be directly compared to the minimum budget and the official norm. In order to make IP comparable with to the two latter, we have to make some assumptions about housing costs.

It is difficult to calculate the housing cost, especially for home owners who are most common in Norway. There are several reasons for this; the size, quality and the local market prices vary considerably. In addition, the cost is dependent of the phase in the housing career. Newcomers in this market pay more in interest rates and instalment than families late in the self-owner career. Even if instalments, in economic terms, are investments, and not included in the cost of housing, the question is still; how do we assess the housing cost in the short term perspective; is instalment payments not a necessary expense that has to be prioritized against other necessary expenses? In other words; the cost structure of home owners varies according to life phase, social class and geographic localization and it is almost impossible to come up with a simple numeric expression for housing cost for home owners.

² See also Borgeraas & Øybø (2003), for a more detail.

Rent rates, however, do not vary in the same way. Even if there are substantial differences in prices between local markets within the same geographical location, it seems reasonable to use the average rental costs in different regions in Norway for flats with different numbers of rooms. The cost structure is less complicated than for home owners. Even if most Norwegians own their own dwelling, the poor are more inclined to rent than other socio-economic groups (ref?). It seems more reliable to use rent prices as the estimate of housing cost; it is simpler and probably more reliable than an estimate of the housing cost for home owners. We have therefore used empirical data of rent prices from Statistics Norway. These prices vary considerably by region and number of rooms.

For our analysis this implies that we have to compare these three poverty measures for different regions in Norway. We have chosen to compare Oslo, as a representative of the big cities, with densely populated areas. These two regions constitute the extremes in the cost structure in the rent market; Oslo is the most expensive, while the densely populated areas are among the cheapest.³ As we see in table 1 and 2, the average monthly rent for a one room flat is 4 748 in Oslo and 2 805 in densely populated areas. A single person in Oslo has to pay 1 943 more per month than a single person in densely populated areas.

A rough procedure is to assume that the number of rooms are the same as number of members in the household with 4 rooms as the maximum. For households with more than 4 persons this procedure will underestimate the cost for families with many members and must be seen as a minimum. In spite of this uncertainty, this estimate is the best available. It will provide a reasonable valid basis for comparing the IP measure with the two consumption measures.

We compare figures indicating poverty calculated from the income survey, those calculated from Borgeraas and Øybø (2003), and the Ministry of Labour and Inclusion (the former Ministry of Social Affairs) that serve as guidelines for the social services in the municipalities when measuring out aid (Circular 1-34/2001, Circular U-2/2004). Comparisons are made in relative terms.

5. Results

In Table 1, first column we show the income poverty lines for different types of households in 2005 (<http://www.ssb.no/emner/05/01/ifhus/>). In column 4 and 5 the average for rent prices in Oslo are entered. The entries in the last column, i.e. livelihood per year, indicate the amount available for consumption after subtraction of housing costs.

³ Areas with scattered settlement have the lowest rent prices,

Table 1. Income poverty line (IP), housing costs in **Oslo**, and livelihood in different types of households. All figures pertain to 2005

Household Type	Income povety ⁴	Number of rooms	Rent per mnth ⁵	Rent per year	Livelihood / year
1	96000	1	4748	56976	39024
1+1	144000	2	6354	76248	67752
1+2	192000	3	7335	88020	103980
1+3	240000	3	7335	88020	151980
2	163000	2	6354	76248	86752
2+1	211000	3	7335	88020	122980
2+2	259000	4	8277	99324	159676
2+3	307000	4	8277	99324	207676

Table 2 Income poverty line (IP), housing costs in **densely populated areas**, and livelihood in different households. All figures pertain to 2005

Household Type	IP Year ⁶	Number of rooms	Rent per mnth. ⁷	Rent per year	Livelihood / year
1	96000	1	2805	33660	62340
1+1	144000	2	3808	45696	98304
1+2	192000	3	4508	54096	137904
1+3	240000	3	4508	54096	185904
2	163000	2	3808	45696	117304
2+1	211000	3	4508	54096	156904
2+2	259000	4	4547	54564	204436
2+3	307000	4	4547	54564	252426

Table 2 shows the equivalent data for densely populated areas. We observe that because rent rates are lower in densely populated areas (and the IP is fixed), the people living in densely populated areas have considerable more money to spend than people living in Oslo. This

⁴ OECD scale, 50% of the median income. See: <http://www.ssb.no/emner/05/01/ifhus/>

⁵ SSB: Leiemarkedsundersøkelsen 2005:39. Average numbers for Oslo

⁶ OECD scale, 50% of median income.

⁷ SSB: Leiemarkedsundersøkelsen 2005:39. Average for densely populated areas.

applies to all types of households. For this reason alone the application of a nationwide income poverty line is questionable.

Table 3 compares the three poverty measures. As long as the income poverty level (IP) varies geographically, this measure is compared with the two others in Oslo and densely populated areas. The minimum budget (MB) and the official guideline (OG) are defined nationally and can thus be compared directly.

If we focus on the comparisons of the poverty measures, three important findings stand out from Table 3.

Table 3. Poverty levels according to three poverty measures in different household types. Oslo and densely populated areas. Relative differences. 2005.

Household type	MB/OG%	Oslo		Densely populated	
		MB/IP%	OG/IP%	MB/IP%	OG/IP%
1	139	177	127	111	80
1+1	132	159	120	109	83
1+2	130	141	109	106	82
1+3	129	123	95	100	78
2	149	142	95	105	70
2+1	142	132	93	103	73
2+2	138	127	91	99	71
2+3	136	116	86	96	70

First, turning to MB compared with the official guideline (OG), a conspicuous and consistent feature is that the MB levels by far exceed the levels of the OG. Since none of these concepts include housing costs, the figures are identical for the two areas. The percentages fluctuate quite a lot depending on the type of household in question: For adult couples the MB level is 49 per cent higher than that of IP. For one adult and three children, the MB level is 29 per cent higher than the IP level.

Secondly, in most cases SIFO's minimum budget standard (MB) has, as compared with the income poverty level (IP), a higher level of livelihood. The relative disparities vary, however, quite a lot by household composition and area of residence. The differentials are largest in Oslo for single households and households including one adult and one child. The differences between IP and MB are – of course – smallest in densely populated areas because housing costs are lower here. In fact in these regions the MB level is lower than IP for couples with two and couples with three children.

Thirdly, the official guidelines (OG) turn in most cases out to be lower than the income poverty level (IP). The exceptions are found in Oslo for three household types: single adults, single adults with one child, and single adults with two children. Else, the OG level is from five per cent to 27 per cent lower than the IP level. Hence, the local social assistance departments that adhere to the official guidelines will often offer a sum of money which is lower than the level of the official income definition of poverty. This means that recipients of social assistance receiving the recommended minimum level will be living in poverty, and some households (couples and couple with children in densely populated areas) will have to accept a level quite far below the income poverty line.

6. Discussion

In this paper we have identified, defined, operationalised, calculated and compared three different measures of “poverty” in Norway: income poverty and two measures of a minimum budget standard, one scientifically and one politically defined. The three measures rest on different underlying concepts and serve different purposes. The official income poverty (IP) definition assumes that people with income below a certain threshold do not have the means to fulfil basic welfare needs, or to enjoy an “acceptable” living standard. The minimum budget (MB) rests on the assumption that a household’s incomes need to be sufficient to give a sustainable financial situation in the longer run, an assumption met by calculating a sum of money which covers daily consumption costs as well as some savings. The third, i.e. Ministry’s official guidelines (OG) for minimum norms prescribe the amounts needed to achieve a “proper, but sober” way of life. Our comparisons of the “poverty lines” these three measures give rise to show that the MB measure gives higher amounts of money than the IP definition, which, in turn is clearly higher than the OG level. One important point is that if followed, the governments’ official guidelines will not raise beneficiaries of social assistance above the income poverty level adopted by the same government.

IP compared with OG

At first glance it seems like a contradiction that the government has declared that poverty shall be eradicated in Norway, while at the same time setting the social benefit norms so low. The chief means to eradicate poverty in Norway is to assist, motivate, stimulate and require people to become self-sufficient through ordinary work. There is a political consensus that work is the major strategy to combat poverty and long-term receipt of social assistance. At the same time, a common view is that benefits and packets of benefits should be targeted and calibrated so that they provide incentives to work. Another issue is that the governmental apprehension of income poverty is that it is by definition long-term, i.e. lasts at least three years. However, when the same government defines and calculates OG, social assistance is by definition short-term. It is as if income poverty, in order to be acknowledged as “poverty”, has to be long-term. However, for social assistance receipt to be acknowledged, it is required to be short-term. It is not easy to detect the logic in this.

IP compared with MB

The problem with IP, as argued earlier, is that it is strictly formal. Variations in expenses, with an exception of equivalence scales, are only indirectly accounted for in IP. We do not know if individuals living on this level have unacceptable living conditions because we do not know their actual level of living/living standard. Introducing housing costs IP become even more difficult to interpret in terms of living conditions; does it cost 25 % more to avoid poverty in densely populated areas than in Oslo? There are no or little evidence that this is the

case. The principal argument is, however, that IP is not concerned with expenses, only with income. On the other hand, MB is constructed as a consumption expenditure measure, which means that income – in principle - is a dependent variable. Both the IP and the MB has a longer time perspective built into them. Seen in this perspective one may say that the significant discrepancies between the two measures are somewhat surprising. Since the IP measure basically is arbitrary and rests on international, i.e. European conventions with little empirical substantiation, the justification of this measure is weak. The comparisons of IP with MB therefore suggest that the official governmental income poverty line is set too low, especially in Oslo. It should be remembered that in the EU the relative income poverty line in each member state is drawn at 60 % of the median, and not at 50 % like in Norway. Under this perspective, this analysis may be seen as a way of validating the income poverty measure. In the long run incomes on this level will exhaust the household's economic resources, and may lead to stripping of its assets. After all, our MB is the measure that is best evaluated and justified of the three measures, although it is far from perfect.

MB compared with OG

The differences between these two poverty measures are related to the fact that the OG does not include items that MB does include, and OG assumes lower cost estimates of the items both measures include. It is quite remarkable that the MB and the OG yield so different amounts, the former lying between 47 and 28 per cent above the latter. It is reasonable to relate these differences to important conceptual distinctions between the two measures. First, the depreciation, or more principally the time horizon, differs between the two concepts. The items built into OG have no lifetime. It is, more or less, taken for granted that recipients of social assistance have some durable goods, but it does not assume that recipients need to buy most of the durable goods. It is, for example, assumed that social assistance covers TV license, regular telephone fees, but it is not assumed that the recipients need to buy a new TV or a telephone. Moreover, MB includes more items than does OG. PC, internet costs, printers, mobile phones – both their use and depreciation – are all included in MB but not in OG. The question as to what should be included in the minimum budget and to what price and quality will ultimately lean on normative arguments. However, when the minimum budget includes costs for PC and internet it is because access to these goods must be seen as a social necessity in post-industrial society. For example, in many schools today, young students download their assignments from, and submit their homework on the internet. Under the broader aim of social inclusion it is therefore hard to reject that such goods are social necessities. EU has acknowledged this while including internet access as one of a wide range of indicators of social exclusion. A second feature underlying the OG is that “work should pay”, a view shared by most political parties in Norway. The principle requires that social assistance benefit should not exceed the lowest wages in the labour market. Two justifications are invoked for this principle. First, the income maintenance system must provide work incentives, and second, if benefits are higher than the lowest wages, the moral fabric of the society is challenged and so is the legitimacy of social assistance. However, emphasising these consequences, must not lead one to disregard other important consequences also. The comparisons of MB and OG also suggest that individuals and families living on these official norms will exhaust their resources after some time, since the minimum budget is not a sustainable long term budget.

7. Theoretical assumptions and social reality

Let us now turn to some more substantial, empirical and political ramifications of our analysis. Answers to three empirical questions are crucial to assess the low benefit level

recommended by OG. Do low benefits encourage work? Do ALMPs lift poor and long term social assistance recipients out of poverty and into work? Finally, is no one living on social assistance for extended periods of time in Norway? The shorthand response to the first is that no unequivocal answer may be given. Yet, decent benefits may be a prerequisite for recipients to achieve self-sufficiency through ordinary work. Comparative evidence from different social assistance regimes in Europe indicates that harsh means-testing may function as “asset stripping” and might complicate rather than facilitate the route (back) to work (Saraceno 2002). To the second question: The arguments put forward by the political establishment by and large hinges on the assumption that active labour market programs work for the most disadvantaged, i.e. the long term poor and social assistance recipients. Evidence is now accumulating which clearly indicates that these programs are not helpful for these vulnerable groups (Lorentzen and Dahl 2005). The answer to the third question is that a significant proportion of social assistance recipients receives benefit continuously for several years, or appears as recidivists (Dahl and Lorentzen 2003, Frisch 2004). For some, social assistance is the main source of income over extended or recurrent periods of time. This is against the intentions of the social assistance system, but is nonetheless a reality which should be reflected in the design of social policy and benefit levels. According to our analysis and the justification underlying the minimum budget, if these people have to live on the OG for years, they will inevitably exhaust their financial resources. One consequence is a gradually deteriorating standard of living. An equally important consequence, from the perspective of the Work Approach, is that if people become stripped of assets in the long run, their possibility to get back to work may be severely hampered. In light of this knowledge, the arguments favouring low assistance norms are not tenable. The view that social assistance is (assumed to be) short term is contradicted by empirical evidence. In the Circular (5.1.5.1) the Ministry does not accept responsibility for long term needs among social assistance recipients. The Circular simply states that regarding long term recipients some may be in need of financial assistance for renewal of household contents and white goods. In light of available evidence the official guidelines should be revisited. Effective combat of long term poverty and receipt of social assistance must also include decent income support of some sort.

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Attachment

*Table A1. Income poverty line (IP), housing costs in **Oslo**, and livelihood in different types of households. All figures pertain to 2005*

Household Type	Income Poverty ⁸	Number of Rooms	Rent per mnth ⁹	Rent per year	Livelihood / year
1	96000	1	4748	56976	39024
1+1	144000	2	6354	76248	67752
1+2	192000	3	7335	88020	103980
1+3	240000	3	7335	88020	151980
2	163000	2	6354	76248	86752
2+1	211000	3	7335	88020	122980
2+2	259000	4	8277	99324	159676
2+3	307000	4	8277	99324	207676

*Table A2 Income poverty line (IP), housing costs in **densely populated areas**, and livelihood in different household. All figures pertain to 2005*

Household Type	IP Year ¹⁰	Number of rooms	Rent per mnth. ¹¹	Rent per year	Livelihood / year
1	96000	1	2805	33660	62340
1+1	144000	2	3808	45696	98304
1+2	192000	3	4508	54096	137904
1+3	240000	3	4508	54096	185904
2	163000	2	3808	45696	117304
2+1	211000	3	4508	54096	156904
2+2	259000	4	4547	54564	204436
2+3	307000	4	4547	54564	252426

⁸ OECD scale, 50% of the median income. See: <http://www.ssb.no/emner/05/01/ifhus/>

⁹ SSB: Leiemarkedsundersøkelsen 2005:39. Average numbers for Oslo

¹⁰ OECD scale, 50% of median income.

¹¹ SSB: Leiemarkedsundersøkelsen 2005:39. Average for densely populated areas.

Table A3 “Poverty” levels according to three poverty measures in different household types. Relative differences. *Oslo*

Household type	Income Poverty (IP)	Minmum Budget (MB ¹²)	Official Guidelines (OG ¹³)	MB/IP%	MB/OG%	OG/IP%
1	39024	68640	49680	176	138	127
1+1	67752	106740	81360	158	131	120
1+2	103980	145560	113040	140	129	109
1+3	151980	185580	144720	122	128	95
2	86752	121440	82560	140	147	95
2+1	122980	160260	114240	130	140	93
2+2	159676	200280	145920	125	137	91
2+3	207676	239100	177600	115	135	86

Table A4 “Poverty” levels according to three poverty measures in different household types. Relative differences. *Densely populated areas*.

Household type	Income Poverty (IP)	Minmum Budget (MB ¹⁴)	Official Guidelines (OG ¹⁵)	MB/IP%	MB/OG%	OG/IP%
1	62340	68640	49680	110	138	80
1+1	98304	106740	81360	109	131	83
1+2	137904	145560	113040	106	129	82
1+3	185904	185580	144720	100	128	78
2	117304	121440	82560	104	147	70
2+1	156904	160260	114240	102	140	73
2+2	204436	200280	145920	98	137	71
2+3	252426	239100	177600	95	135	70

¹² In one person households and single parents the adult is a woman. For two parent households there are one man and one woman. All children are females between 11 – 14 years.

¹³ http://www.odin.asap-asp.com/aid/norsk/dok/andre_dok/rundskriv/044031-250014/dok-bn.html

¹⁴ In one person households and single parents the adult is a woman. For two parent households there are one man and one woman. All children are females between 11 – 14 years.

¹⁵ http://www.odin.asap-asp.com/aid/norsk/dok/andre_dok/rundskriv/044031-250014/dok-bn.html

Women dining alone in restaurant rooms

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Abstract

The purpose of this project was to discuss women's single dining by investigating the reception of a woman arriving alone in the evening and ordering a dinner including glasses of wine in upper class restaurants. Methods used: Visits to ten different restaurants in a large city in Sweden. Field observations were done and interviews, i.e. colloquies, were held with both women and men who had experience of single dining in restaurants. The results show, that there is neither any hindrance for a woman to enter an upper class restaurant and dine alone; nor were there any special treatments offered. The colloquies were interesting, women talked with fear of single dining in restaurants, they talked about being exposed and placed in public view as a body of womankind. She and her sisters may need some other kind of concept to feel relaxed when visiting restaurants. What can be done to offer comfort? How can she become a satisfied customer? A new group of customers, women in urban society, needs a new consumer policy, which makes them feel comfortable when dining in modern restaurants.

Introduction

Sweden is said to be an equal society, not only concerning gender but also concerning ethnicity, age, sexual disposition, etcetera, where all people should have the same rights, the same opportunities, but also the same obligations (Regeringen, 2002/2003). In Sweden, as well as in other parts of western society, modern urban women have need of solo dining in restaurants. She is maybe a business woman with a travelling occupation or an educator, giving lectures in conferences or in university context. She needs admission to public dining at lunchtime as well as in evenings. These women have their own money, and often a rather good economy and want to enjoy a comfortable urban life. Both in US and UK there is a wide interest in solo-dining. Internationally there is an ongoing discussion on a website called SoloDining.com™ (www.solodining.com, 2007).

SoloDining.com serves up 'solo dining savvy' for you – whether you despise or delight in a solitary meal in a restaurant or at home; whether you're fond of fast food or fine dining (or something in between!) and whether you're married or divorced, single or solo, bachelor or

bachelorette, widow or widower; business/pleasure traveller or stay-at-home-lover. So pull up a chair and join in. The company's fine. Sooner or later; everyone faces the challenge of eating alone.

From SoloDining you can link up to a blog *Diners' Journal* of thoughts on, and explorations of dining in New York and elsewhere, from the dining staff of the Times. Here you can read that Solo diners are popping up more frequently than you might think and that the increase is noticeable but not enormous.

If you want to study social differences in consumption of food you could study meals in restaurant as well as the choice of restaurant (Warde & Tomlinson, 1995). Restaurants can be defined as places of emotions and as instrument for the experience of the emotions (Finkelstein, 1989; Lashley, Morrisson, & Randall, 2004). The purpose of our study is to investigate the reception of a woman arriving alone in the evening, ordering a dinner including glasses of wine in an upper class restaurant. The purpose is also to study how a solo dining woman reflects on her situation when dining alone. And the over all purpose of this project is to reflect on women's right and possibilities to get access to male coded areas, in this case the restaurant area. Modern women are not always pleased with the narrow choice of a meal experience offered by pizzerias and fast food restaurants like McDonalds. Eating in fast food restaurants causes no problem neither for men, nor for women or families (Ritzer, 1996). So, therefore first class restaurants are chosen for the research purpose.

As we, the authors of this article are both objects and subjects in the study – as will be shown later in the article - we want to give a short presentation of ourselves. Our research area is social and cultural sciences with a focus on food. In our private life we have left behind the everyday responsibility for preparing meals. We both have grown up children but do not any longer live in a family. We have a professional interest in the broad spectra of performances of food and meals as social and cultural expressions. We both are working as teachers and researchers in department of culinary arts and meal sciences. At Örebro University and at Göteborg University there are educational programmes for restaurant managers, chefs, and sommeliers but also doctoral programmes and research done concerning this areas, in which we are involved. Therefore we follow with interest descriptions in newspapers of trendy restaurants. The whole concept of “eating out” (see Warde & Martens, 2000) is of interest.

Our imaginations about visiting “first class restaurants” can be described as a longing for a specific place where you can have excellent food and wines in a comfortable and pleasant situation. In the book *Eating Out, social differentiation, consumption and pleasure*, (Warde & Martens, 2000) eating out is expressed as “people's attitudes towards, and expectations of, eating out as a form of entertainment and an expression of taste and status” (ibid, i).

In the 1960's a book titled “The Meal Experience” was published (Campbell-Smith, 1967). The concept the Meal Experience has had an importance for the commercial understanding of customer's satisfaction of eating out. Internationally sociologists and researchers in hospitality management have shown interest in the field (Finkelstein, 1989, 2004). (Lashley, Morrisson, & Randall, 2004; Warde & Martens, 2000). Within the research area of Culinary Arts and Meal Science a model with five aspects of the meal experience is often used; the aspects are the Room, the Meeting and the Product as well as the Atmosphere/Ambiance, and at last the Management Control System. This is called the Five Aspect Meal Model (FAMM) with an aim to point out that meals consist of much more than just food (I-B. Gustafsson, 2003; I-B Gustafsson, Öström, Johansson, & Mossberg, 2006). In our research we want to widen the

perspective by including women's access to different places and rooms as well as to explore the subjective experience and its constituents in a solo dining context.

We will take a closer look at gender aspects on the restaurant room. This room has so far, within the Swedish area of Culinary Arts and Meal Science, mostly been studied from an architectonic point of view: light, colours and table arrangements (Watz, 2004) floors, walls, and roofs (Silfverhielm, 2004) or the restaurant interior connected to the behaviour of customers and staff (I-B Gustafsson, Öström, Johansson, & Mossberg, 2006). But it is said that there is a genderization of the city, which means that streets and public areas have a distinct gender coding, either female or male (Forsberg, 2003, 2005) Human beings relate their identity to places and places develop their identity (Forsberg, 2003).

Gendering the room is a two-way process; Coding of rooms can be interpreted in gender aspects; it also becomes a coding of the man/woman in the room, where he or she is. There is sometimes a "regenderisation" of public rooms, where a typical area, during daytime coded as female, during nights transforms into a male room (Forsberg, 2005). In rooms where the public life takes place it is important not to be in a wrong place in a wrong time. It is important in an urban society to have safety, especially during evenings and nights. According to Domosh and Seager in their book *Putting Women in Place* (Domosh & Seager, 2001) it is not only a risk to be in the wrong place, this attitude can also be used as a tool to keep women in place.

Women's perceptions of risk from crime in the city, and the gendered association of the city as male, are mutually reinforcing. There are real risks to women who venture into the wrong street at a wrong time, but our culture also tends to exaggerate those risks, thereby keeping women in their "place" (at home) (Domosh & Seager, 2001)p.100).

Thereby this kind of coding becomes a part of the gendered control system. Train compartments as well as restaurants are closed rooms, a sphere, which in Friberg's (Friberg, 2005) discussion is not available in the same conditions for women and men. She asks if it is of any importance to "have a female body and not a male when you travel by train" (Friberg, 2005). In Friberg's article she asks: "Can you sit calm and cosy? Can you feel safe a late evening? Are the toilets in good condition? Are there alternative exits if you feel threatened? Do you have to go through an unpleasant tunnel? Do you dare to take the elevator? Is there anybody to ask for help?" Some of these questions, we think, can be of interest to use as instruments when analysing the importance of being a female guest when visiting a restaurant.

Already in the beginning of the 20th century the sociologist Simmel reflected about the restaurant as a place where new ways of thinking, new feelings and codes to behave were created. The reason he said was that people sat in public places and enjoyed to be in the middle of a vivid public life, were they were looked upon as well as they were looking at others. But at the same time a blasé attitude of a passive voyeur was practiced. A way of acting as a part of urban life (Simmel, 1950,1993).

Purpose and methods

As described, the purpose of our study was to investigate the reception of a woman arriving alone in the evening, ordering a dinner including glasses of wine in an upper class restaurant. The purpose was also to study how a female solo diner reflects on her situation when being in

a first class restaurant. The restaurants were chosen in one of the biggest cities in Sweden. Modern women in the urban society have interest in dining out in restaurants. As said before, they are not always pleased with the narrow choice of a meal experience offered by pizzerias and fast food restaurants like McDonalds. Eating in fast food restaurants causes no problem neither for men, nor for women or families (Ritzer, 1996). But, as we see it, and as we have been told from other women, it is not easy for a single woman to enter an upper class restaurant. Why is it so?

Methods used in the project were visits with field observations in restaurants; the method can be describes as active participating observations, and additional reflective data were: repeated discussions between the two researchers during the field study, and repeated colloquies wherever and whenever we, the researchers, met people (during seminars, meetings, parties, among friends, when travelling etc.). Also discussions were carried out with students from hospitality education in universities. This method was inspired by Thomsson, who describes how she actively searches for places where she met her target groups. We used this method with a purpose to let reflections “come falling like a rain”, as Thomsson (Thomsson, 2002) describes it.

The field observations consisted of “eating out” at twelve different restaurants in a large city January - July 2007. We visited in total six different restaurants alone in evenings (Table 1; visits no. 2, 4, 9, 10). Together we also visited four different restaurants in lunchtime the same days as the evening visits, in order to discuss how to observe and what to observe and also to discuss experiences and findings during the data collection (Table 1; visits no. 1, 3, 5, 8). As comparison we also made two visits together with other persons, men and women. Visit no 6: here we were accompanied by a man. Visit no. 7, in a group of totally ten women (see Table 1).

Table 1. Visited high class restaurants from January to July 2007

Visit Jan- July	Number of persons	Type of meal	Number of restaurants
1	2	Lunch	1
2	1+1	Dinner	2
3	2	Lunch	1
4	1+1	Dinner	2
5	2	Lunch	1
6	2+1 (a man)	Dinner	1
7	1+9 (women)	Dinner	1
8	2	Lunch	1
9	1	Dinner	1
10	1	Dinner	1

We made up an observation schedule, based on experiences from an earlier pilot study in restaurant environment (Jonsson, Nygren, & Pipping Ekström, 2006). This earlier study was focussed on gender aspects among restaurant staffs only. This time everything was related to the single woman as a guest. The different observation themes were about

- a) The single guest's emotions, sense experiences and feelings; i.e. the researcher observing herself
- b) Service, treatment when arriving, when ordering and during the meal, and when finishing the visit in the restaurant, i.e. observing the interaction with the staff
- c) Behaviour, comments etc. from other guests
- d) The restaurant room including furnishing, lighting, equipment, colours and table arrangement

This means that we, as the researchers, are at the same time both objects as well as subjects in the study.

There were no notes made during the visits. We, the research team, made the observations in different restaurants, twelve restaurants in all. In restaurant business it is common to scrutinise the quality of restaurants by doing hidden visits as it is done in for example Guide Michelin (Guide Michelin, 2007) and therefore our visits were done in the same manners.

Each evening two different restaurants in the same district were chosen. It was decided beforehand that a dinner could include at a maximum a drink, or a glass of champagne, a main course and a dessert or a starter and a main course. Wine during the meal, and coffee afterwards. The different dishes and beverages on the menu were not the objects for this study. We decided to be in contact with each other via mobile phone but only silently, by short messages¹. After each visit notes were written and the experiences were discussed together by the research team. All the time during the research period we reflected on the findings and experiences from the visits. This was done in the light of the colloquies we had with other persons on the topic "women dining alone in restaurant rooms".

The colloquies were taken spontaneously. To be short: wherever we, the research team, met women (our target group), we discussed the project idea, and whenever we two met, we discussed our findings. This is what we call the "additional reflexive data".

Results and discussion

The restaurant room is a closed area, where you enter a scene and become a part of a performance (Goffman, 1959/2004). The interior of the restaurant rooms varies due to time and fashion. Now in the beginning of the 21th century one of the trends is the "Feng shui"-style, simplicity, steel and wood. Very few details, no decoration. Air and space. As a single guest you can feel that the restaurant is a bit deserted, of course depending on where you have been seated.

A lady eating by herself

A typical visit could be described as follows. A table for one person at 8.30 pm., a Friday afternoon was ordered by telephone beforehand. The restaurant staff said "No problem. You are welcome". One of us, here called the lady, arrived in time and was met by one of the staff

¹ We had decided to go home together after the visit and to immediately afterwards discuss our experiences. Mobiles are seen everywhere although in a Swedish book on etiquette it is said that in the most famous restaurants a guest could be asked to leave her mobile in the wardrobe (Ribbing., 2005).

who escorted her to a table chosen for her. “Do you like a table where you can look at the other guests or do you like to sit a bit aside instead?”, a female waiter asked. She was dressed in black trousers and an apron that touched her shoes. The lady ordered a glass of wine, and got the menu and some bread and butter as an extra starter. She ordered and then she sat there looking around slowly nibbling at her bread and sipping the wine, in order to fill up the time, when waiting for the main course.

Citation from the notes, written after the visit:

When the “fish arrives” I have almost finished my glass of wine, and I ask the waitress for another glass. “May I recommend a red wine”, said the waitress, “it is red wine in the sauce”. “Yes, please”, I answer. The fish tastes good; I eat and look at the other guests in the restaurant. Discreetly I send a short message to my colleague, who is in a restaurant in the neighbourhood, telling her that I have nearly finished my main course. I try to look as if I am having a pleasant time all by myself. Not quite nice or easy! When I ordered the main course, I thought about having a dessert as well, and now I ask for the menu once again. I decide to take an Espresso with a small glass of cognac and some small pieces of chocolate. That is very good! And well enough. Then there is nothing more to do and I ask for the bill. After a short time I leave the restaurant.

The service was good, but the staff acted a little bit reserved, silently and hesitantly, as if they wondered, why the woman dined alone. Nothing was wrong, but nothing was on the other hand done to give pleasure and pleasure for this special guest. We, the researchers, afterwards checked the restaurant with a help of a list from “The art of making people feel welcome”, a guideline for people in hospitality industry (Gunnarsson & Blohm, 2003).

When I walk into a restaurant, there are several things that make me feel welcome:

- ✓ Information – There should be a menu outside the door
- ✓ Design – That someone cares
- ✓ Cleanliness – Everything from the hostess’s blouse to crumbs swept off the floor
- ✓ Safety – If it’s below ground, I want to see an emergency exit
- ✓ Greeting – someone should notice I am there
- ✓ Attention – I don’t want to sit and wait forever
- ✓ Friendliness – It doesn’t hurt to smile
- ✓ Listen – I want to be heard
- ✓ Speed – Service, service, service
- ✓ Price – I don’t want to be overcharged.

Figure 2. Checking list (Gunnarsson & Blohm, 2003).

It was possible to tick all the different listed steps according to this handbook, everything was OK and in order, but despite all this, the lady did not feel comfortable. From a newspaper interview with a Swedish actress we cut a colourful description of this situation:

She very much likes eating out. Then it sometimes happens that the head waiter asks:

“One person, are you alone?”

“No I am by my self”, she usually answers.

...”I love to be served a good dinner with a fine glass of wine and perhaps have a book or just sit and think” she continues. (Carina Lidbom /Lisbeth Tell, DN Gratulerar/Family,

20070208.p. 26²).

The other guests in the restaurant did not notice the lonely lady. They were all busy experiencing their meals together with their companions. During all the visits in the evenings we observed only one single person dining, a man. But he seemed to be a regular customer, as he behaved as if he was at home, relaxed and talking to everybody.

Keeping women in place

A Thursday evening in February 2007 we, the researchers, visited two different high class restaurants situated rather nearby in the centre of the city. Each of us had a five course dinner including wines of high quality. The experiences were the same as described in the first example above. Good and polite service. But although the lady (A) tried to discuss the wines and asked questions about the food, the staff showed no special interest. No extra comment, no discussions. Politeness and distance may be the words to describe the situation.

Lady (B) in the other restaurant rather quickly finished her meal. Her five courses were served in a row one after another without any pauses or conversation to help her to stretch out the time. She therefore - as agreement – sent a short message to the other lady (A). “I have finished my meal. Have you?” Lady (A) answered “My God, just started my main course! Come, take a glass of wine with me”. She also asked the waiter if it was OK if a friend could come for a glass of wine. “Yes of course”, the waiter said. A few minutes later lady (B) arrived and was cordially met in the door and escorted to the table. She immediately got a glass of wine on the house and an extra plate to share the cheese; she also was offered a dessert and coffee. Suddenly there was a remarkable change in the atmosphere in the restaurant room as if everyone felt relieved. - The lady (A) was no longer alone! She did not have to sit alone any more. She had got a companion. The atmosphere suddenly became more comfortable. This showed us the big difference between sitting alone in a restaurant room or being together with someone – our own experience as well as the staffs’. We also felt that the other guests in the restaurant smiled with a sigh of relief. In a way one can say that there was “order in the court”.

How can this be understood? We realise that we, in one way or another, have transgressed the rules for what women are supposed to do. There is a tacit and implicit meaning that a woman's place is at home. Goffman, in his book *Behaviour in Public Places*, says that “rules of conduct in streets, parks, restaurants, theatres, shops, dance floors, meeting halls, and other gathering places of any community tell us a great deal about its diffuse forms of social organization” (Goffman, 1966)(p.3-4). He also suggests that in many situations certain categories of persons may not be authorized to be present, and that should they be present, this in it self will constitute an improper act. Etiquette manuals could be a guide to the manners expected, Goffman says. When we looked in the well known Swedish Etiquette guide (Ribbing, 2005) we found a chapter on eating out³. There was nothing written about single persons eating in restaurant. Only about how to behave in company! Is it so that we, the two researchers, have not understood or place and position in society? But as modern women, we want to take part of the public rooms of the city, like restaurant rooms etc, both as private persons but even more as professionals (being teachers and researchers in the area of food science). Or is it so, that we as single persons have transgressed the rules already by spending

² Our translation.

³ ”Restauranghyfs”/Decent behaviour in restaurant (p. 276-285)

an indecent sum of money on eating and drinking by ourselves? An article in Dagens Nyheter⁴ writes about a change in the urban club culture towards VIP cards and guestlists: "...some persons are more welcome than others. The nightlife in the city [Stockholm] consists not only of rich gentlemen and beautiful girls. Even young and handsome boys and women with cool titles and money are favourites" (Björklund, 2007; Sandström, 2007).

Colloquies

All people that we discussed our research with were immediately interested and wanted to share their own experiences on the matter with us. Everyone had something to say. They commented the project in either positive or negative ways. Here are some of the comments:

"Oh, what a wonderful idea! Please tell me more about it."

"What an interesting project! Why haven't we thought about this before?"

"Who wants to go alone to a restaurant?"

"Eating out is the same as community".

"My God, how do you dare to....?"

"How dull, sitting there alone! I never go out eating alone, at least not in the evenings".

We were also told about women's strategies to avoid eating out in an evening when travelling alone. Instead they either ordered something to the room or brought some bread and cheese or a pizza slice. There was even one woman who told about her car, extra equipped with a fridge box, where she could keep the evening meal, thereby avoiding eating out. All this was eating only for hunger, not for pleasure. Maybe these women better knew the rules and the proper things to do; better than we, in our research project, where we try to take place and get access to a male coded area? Is it so, that not only women, but even single men not have the right to sit alone, dining in an evening? One of the men we discussed this with said: "I do not feel well when I have to dine alone. I often spend too much money on the wine because I pity myself for being alone". Other men confirmed his saying.

All this comments made us reflect on what the project really was about. Our starting points were to get access to the restaurant room in the urban society as well as our professional interest in the subject. When mapping the field we found how researchers in their gender studies try to explain the problem for women to take place in society especially in urban rooms (Domosh & Seager, 2001; Forsberg, 2003, 2005). That led to a deeper reflection on our roles and positions in society, as women, as researchers, middle class and middle aged. Is our demand on getting access really reasonable?

There were also questions about the economic side of eating out. Some women said that they rather would spend the same amount of money on a visit to a SPA or buy a new dress or go to the hairdresser. This made us think about the abundance of eating. "For a single woman to have a 3 – 5 courses dinner including wine is on the border of indecent wastefulness! Vulgar? Most unsuitable!", we asked each other. Not even the books on etiquette tell us how to behave as single persons visiting a restaurant (Ribbing, 2005).

Towards a new consumer and a new consumer policy

In our colloquies we met comments as "How dare you...? I should never..." But many of

⁴ Dagens Nyheter the biggest daily newspaper in Sweden.

them at the same time told us that they really wanted to be part of the comfortable milieu in a high class restaurant with a glass of wine and a well tasted dinner. Some of them also wanted to enjoy service and attention. From the Diners' journal a quotation:

All the time people are dining at bars but...a solo diner is more likely to arouse curiosity or even pity, more likely to feel conspicuous. It's usually a businessman travelling or someone from the restaurant business who's herein New York to check out some restaurants. It's almost always men. Men will have dinner alone before women will.

When finding these American comments we, as female single diners, realise why it has been so demanding to take the steps and enter a restaurant and dine alone also in Sweden.

In Sweden there are more than 2 million peoples aged 55+ (out of 9 million) with the view of living an active life during their future 20-25 years. They have a rather good economy and many also save money for "good life experiences". Amelia Adamo, head editor of the magazine "M" recently asked on a seminar for the Swedish fashion industry: "Why don't you invest (go in for) grown up women with their wallets full of money - and nothing...to buy?" (www.levom.nu, 2007a, 2007b). In the same manner, we would like to put the same questions to the restaurant industry. It's time for new consumers and a new consumer policy.

Some efforts are done to make the visits more comfortable. In UK and US (<http://www.solodining.com>, 2006) there are something called *communal tables*. There you do not take reservations and leave the way open for as many customers as can be catered to. It means that the single diner doesn't have to eat alone. They say that it's a democratic approach "We're popular because we don't discriminate. We don't take reservations". What more can be done? A restaurant manager tells that when a solo diner wants a private table she wants to give that person a really good table. She almost feels sorry because they are alone and want to make their experience better. Because they don't have somebody to have a conversation with, you want them to see some action. She also keeps some magazines and newspapers on hand.

Finally we would like to argue for the importance of continued research on this area, both on opinions from male and female solo diners, but also on opinions on the matter from restaurant owners' and staffs' points of view on the phenomenon. All this for the benefit for customers, restaurants, staffs and not least for the educational programmes at universities and vocational training schools.

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Women's sporting events in Finland: from physical enjoyment to recreation of mind

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Abstract

In Finland, different sporting events directed only to women have been vital over two decades. During the time these sporting events have become commercialized and sponsorships are an essential part of the economics and the nature of the events. Women are attracted to participating events by celebrities and famous fitness instructors. This study addresses the emotional and hedonistic area of sporting events and focuses the motives and experiences women place for such events in participating them. The data were collected from three women's sporting events called Supertreenit, Naisten Kuntovitonon and Naisten Kymppi, during the spring 2007 by survey questionnaire. The results will be presented in this paper.

1. Background of the study: from a passive spectator role to an active participator of sporting events

In sociology and in physical education the traditional research approach to mass events of sports has limited to a passive spectator role (Heinonen 2004). In this sense, the focus of research has been in passive spectator's different motives of watching sport. Passive spectators have been described as ones drinking beer and watching sport on tv (e.g. Guttman 1986). Instead, the research directed on active participation in mass sporting events is a less studied area. For example, in Finland, which is a promised land of different mass sporting events, the study covering active participation on such events is not very widely studied field in sociology. Little is, therefore, known about the phenomenon. Two billion euros is spent every year on different sport activities in Finland. It is estimated that Finnish people use approximately 427 euros to sport in a year. (Liikunnan talous 2007.) In spite of its economic impact, quite little is also known about the dimensions and motives underlying active participation in sporting events.

In the relevant literature conceptual differences are made between different passive - and to some extent also active - spectators' roles of sports, depending on how the societal position of sport is pieced together in the field of sociology. The theoretical orientation adapted in this study springs from the conceptual field of consumption. Hence, this paper

applies with theoretical constructs and tools of sociology of consumption as those are applicable to study active participation in women's mass sporting events. It follows that participation in these events is understood as one kind of consumption activity: it is question about consumption of sports /exercise services. This theoretical reasoning makes use of literature concerning consumption of skill performance, especially passive consumption of sports performances.

A fruitful ground is offered by Madrigal (2006) and Heinonen (2004). Both the scholars discuss about how to investigate passive sports' consumption, Madrigal offers an empirical testing of this multidimensional concept by developing measurement scale of sporting event consumption labeled as FANDIM. Heinonen for his part, searches for new theoretical ways to analyze sport spectators by exploiting cultural research. This paper piggybacks both writers and applies their research in study of active consumption of sport services. The paper begins, however, with a general description of the societal significance of sports.

Sport is undoubtedly one form of entertainment and leisure activities of masses of people. According to Madrigal (2006, 267), it is experiential in nature and involves absorbing the symbolic meanings which then are associated with more subjective characteristics. Together with attending sporting events (by media or directly) also active participation of various mass events of sports and physical exercise have raised their popularity during recent decades. For example, many happenings from run to rowing have established there place in Finland.

The passive spectators of sport have been called as a new mass audience which follows sport like popular entertainment. While sport and entertainment have become closer to each other (Rowe 1999, 158), the sport audience has started to empathize more visibly the action itself. According to Bath (1995, look also Heinonen 2004, 97), passive sporting events' consumption can be characterized by the metaphor of carnival. This metaphor can justifiably be applied into active participation to mass events of sport although it is question about active consumption of sport services/events, not passive following of athletes in competitions. Mass events of sport have become more entertaining and the atmosphere is often an essential part of the program. The motive of participation to these events is not always the desire to raise physical condition but have fun with friends. In this sense the carnival way of dressing oneself is part of the fun.

The difference between passive spectators of sporting events and active participants is, however, clear. When it comes to passive spectators the carnival atmosphere refers to a strong and tasteful excitement of crowd of people, often interpreted as dangerous to the order of society (Heinonen 2004, 97)¹, while active consumption of sporting events refers rather to Maffesoli's theories of new tribes, feelings of togetherness and emotional aspects of taking physical exercise (Maffesoli 1995). In his book, *The Contemplation of the World: Figures of Community Style* (in this paper the Finnish version of the book is utilized: "Maailman mieli: yhteisöllisen tyylin muodoista"), Maffesoli names as example body building, which can be understood instead of manifestation of individualism as manifestation of tribe hedonism.

¹ A profound description of violence and sport in Dunning 1992.

Dunning (1992) has pointed out that there exist an abundance of different contributions to the sociology of sports among them post-modernist orientation. With that it is referred to a search of post-modern lifestyle by attending to mass events of sport (cf. Wilska 2002). According to Lehtonen (1995), it is possible to speak about certain kind of community language, which "gives birth to a post-modern lifestyle and an admiration of community." Protestant ethic emphasizes individual and his/her working morality while the new community emphasizes the raise of happiness of the new tribe. This post-modern form is manifested, for example, in the social aspects related to leisure activities, not to mention friendship, hobbies related to risk, and body-type, gestured and linguistic fellowship related to fashion and style (Maffesoli 1995, 70; Lehtonen 1995).

2. Trends in consumption – trends in sport

The recent trends of consumption are based on bonding together antipodes. Such antipodes can be listed as follows: scarcity and abundance, old and new, standardized goods and luxurious ones, real and artificial, individual mass products, more of less, and lastl, heavy work – complete relaxation (Fakta 2007).

It is argued that we live in a society of experience and mass consumption. In a society rationalized by calculability and efficiency also the leisure time is characterized by rationality. Efficient and extreme experiences are strived after along work. Heinonen (2004, 99) calls this as rationality of experience, which means that there is a pursuit to organize the exogenous conditions so that they contribute as well as possible to achieving intrinsic effects. This is the trend in the consumption of goods and also in the consumption of physical exercise and sports this has become a goal. As a counterbalance to the hectic life, people ache for relaxing massage and gourmet food. They want to eat healthy but also to feast on delicacies. Respectively, people take exercise but want also to have fun and good time with friends for example. Such goals can be achieved simultaneously if participating to mass events of sport.

Mass events of sport represent consumption products that are consumed by the participators of the event. Products and spectacles not only govern the economy but also the whole society (Ritzer 2001, 134) and people become part of this spectacle. The mass events of sport have during the last two decades become commercialized and are marketed professionally. For example, in Finland the running and walking event directed to women called Naisten Kymppi (Women's Ten), organized for the first time in 1984 has grown from 368 participants to a number of participants over 14 000 women (2006). The culmination period was timed around '80 and '90, when a record was made. In 1990 the amount of participants had grown to 32 000 purely consisted of women. This event worked as an example and a breeding ground for several others, only-for-women - type of mass events of sports and especially of running or (Nordic) walking in Finland. Among the most popular ones in today's Finland are a Fitness event called Supertreenit in Naantali, which moves thousands of women of different ages, running / walking events labeled Naisten Kuntovitonon (women's five) organized in Turku, Likkojen Lenkki (Wenchs' Run), organized in Tampere and also the above mentioned Naisten Kymppi. People are attracted to these events by famous fitness instructors and also by celebrities. Also sponsorship and commerce are essential part of the happening.

The traditional motives of physical exercise relate to rational and utilitarian health-based motives, for example, raising and maintaining physical condition, matters related to outward appearance, such as slimness, muscularity etc. Utilitarian motives do not exclusively explain hobbies like physical exercise but hedonistic motives become often more important. Such are well-being, pursuit of good life and experiences. (Telama 1985.) Experiences have social value, and social relationships are a remarkable component of well-being and life satisfaction. Experiences also help individuals to achieve personal goals in ways that material goods usually cannot, such as challenging oneself to overcome fear by rock climbing, learning a new skill such as dancing, or cleansing one's soul by volunteering for a summer. (Wagner 2007, 6.)

Hedonistic consumption is typically consumption occurring in leisure time (Jallinoja 1991; Wilska 1992). When finding reasons for the popularity of different mass event of sport it is possible to apply post-modern consumption motives, such as community, new tribes and lifestyles (Maffesoli 1995; Ritzer 2001). For example, the Fitness event Supertreenit (Super Work out) is marketed in the following way: "Besides exercise we offer recreation of mind in form of lectures. Professionals give lectures about themes related to health and well-being." (Supertreenit 2007). Alike Naisten Kymppi (Women's Ten): "Women's Ten is a joyful, multifaceted and experiential exercise happening to all women. In the event you can run, jog, walk or Nordic walk ten kilometers in good company, in your own pace. Come and sense the unique, warm and easy-going feeling and enjoy the top artists." (Naisten Kymppi 2007).

The balance of many people's consumption has shifted from goods to services (Bryman 2004, 16). As people's leisure time has during last decades increased, people has also put more time on consuming different sport services. Different forms of sport activities and exercises have been introduced recently, e.g. aerobics and work out have been divided into numerous different types of fitness forms such as body balance, pilates, pace, gymstick, balletone, hydro-spinning etc. These different types of exercise offer consumers of sport services a huge variety from which to pick the most suitable one.

3. Purpose of the study, data and methods

The societal relevance of sport and physical exercise is undisputable. As well as food of good quality also physical exercise maintains physical and mental health. With help of exercise many diseases can be prevented. According to the National Public Health Institute (Helakorpi et al. 2005), adult's hobbies related to physical exercise in their leisure time have increased during last 30 years in Finland but at the same time also the amount of over-weighted people has increased. According to the study, the technological revolution partly explains the change, since machines have replaced the physical work. The increase of leisure time has, however, created new possibilities to take exercise. Also the versatility of physical exercise has importance, in its best it bonds together both the many forms of leisure activities and exercise related to work. Physical exercise promotes general quality of life. (Liikunta – Terveysten lähde 2007.) In 2005, 68 percent of Finnish women took as their leisure activity physical exercise at least half an hour twice a week, of men respectively 60 percent (Helakorpi et al. 2005; 10).

This study focuses primarily the mass events of sport directed to women, represented by already mentioned Naisten Kymppi (Women's Ten) organized in Helsinki or a fitness

event called Supertreenit. *The purpose of the study is to find out the intrinsic meanings of mass sporting events directed to women and the importance of physical exercise for them.* As mentioned already above, in addition to the physical and sportive goals, also the significance of experiences has become more important.

In order to study the above mentioned purpose a survey was carried out at spring 2007. The following women's sport events were selected as research subjects, Supertreenit (11 March 2007 in Naantali), Kuntovitonon (19 May 2007 in Turku) ja Naisten Kymppi (25 May 2007 in Helsinki). This first sample works as a pilot survey and about 100 questionnaires were collected as a random sample from each event, altogether 296 respondents were asked to fill up the questionnaire and altogether 276 were adequate for the analysis. The collected data was coded into a statistical form with SPSS-program.

The mean age of the respondents was 35.5 years (SD = 12.32; range = 15-66), the majority of respondents was married or cohabitated without marriage (59 %), 54 per cent lived in a big town, household type was two parents household (41 %), semi-higher or university degree (54 %), working (74 %), and the households' gross income per month ranged between 1500-3000 euros for 31 per cent of respondents.

4. Results

The motivational bases to take part in the sporting events directed to women was scrutinized by using a five-point scale ranging from not at all important to me (1) to very important to me (5). Respondents were asked to indicate how well each item described their motives to participate to these sporting events. Table 1 below summarizes the results generated. The first column contains the items of the questionnaire, in the second, the means of each statement are presented and the third and fourth column shows how attitudes towards these different items were divided. As can be seen, only the poles of each statement are brought fore.

First, the means distribution indicates that there is a clear differences between motivational importance related to celebrities and the rest of the statements. The means remain under three with both of the first two arguments measuring the importance of celebrities in participating to women's sporting events while the means of all the rest of the arguments rouse above four. This quite apparently indicates that having a famous fitness instructor is not an important motivating factor to women neither is that of having some famous person as compere in the event. On the contrary, the results point out that social and emotional factors work as stronger motivational bases. The highest mean, 4.81, is produced by the search of good feeling that participation to the kind of events can create. Besides emotional and experiential motives a high mean is related also to social factors, such as possibility to have fun with friends (4.69) and to take exercise with friends (4.67).

Table 1. Motives for participating women’s mass sporting events (1=not important at all, 5=very important)

	Mean	Not at all important (%)	Very important (%)
Famous instructors	2.84	14.9	9.6
Celebrities as comperes	2.86	20.5	10.3
Possibility to meet friends	4.39	1.1	54.7
Possibility to have fun with friends	4.69	0.0	72.5
Possibility to take exercises with friends	4.67	0.0	72.3
Raise physical condition	4.33	1.9	54.2
Experiment new forms of exercise	4.11	2.8	39.9
Escape from everyday life	4.56	0.4	62.8
Good feeling	4.81	0.0	80.8
Feeling of togetherness	4.37	1.2	51.9

Second, the percentual share of opinions confirms the findings. Respondents have felt both the experiential and social aspects related to participation to mass sporting events very significant to them. That is, the share of those totally agreeing with the statement related to the desire of good feeling is over 80 per cent while the option “not at all important“ was selected by no one. The opinions were divided in the same manner regarding questions that measured the importance of social factors; having fun with friends and taking part together with friends to women’s mass events. Both these motives were regarded very important by almost three fourth of the respondents.

The following table (Table 2) presents responses concerning general attitudes towards exercise and sports. Altogether 18 different arguments related to them were proposed and descriptive results are shown below. Surprisingly, the looks that one might reach by taking physical exercise did not have support. The mean of this argument was 1.91 and over 38 per cent of the women of the sample strongly disagreed with it. An explanation to the low acceptance of the argument might be found from the effect of social acceptance related often to the survey polls. That is, an individual may respond to a question in a way that he/she thinks is expected. In this case, the respondents may have thought that it is not a socially acceptable and expected response to the question to admit that one takes exercises in order to look good and have a better appearance.

Table 2. Attitudes towards exercise and sports (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree)

	Mean	Strongly disagree (%)	Strongly agree (%)
It is important to raise physical condition	4.64	0.0	67.3
I take exercises in order to improve and maintain health	4.73	0.4	74.0
I take exercises in order to loose weight	3.79	7.1	25.6
Appearance does not count	1.91	38.6	1.2
Nowadays far too many forms of exercises are offered	1.59	63.3	3.0
Taking exercise makes you feel good	4.87	0.0	87.5
Physical exercise e offers me experiences	4.58	0.4	62.9
Physical exercise contributes to well being	4.85	0.0	86.0
With exercise I get new friends	4.06	1.8	40.3
Being sporty is important to me	4.08	3.3	42.0
It is important to me to take exercise together with friends	3.89	3.2	31.7
It is important to me to take exercise together with my family	3.58	9.0	22.2
Physical exercise is a life style to me	4.11	2.5	41.0
I look after strong experiences from physical exercise	3.34	8.4	18.8
I want to test my limits with exercise	3.44	10.6	22.5
My physical condition is very good	3.55	7.1	23.0
If I had more leisure time I would take more exercise	4.29	2.4	49.2
The versatility of exercise is important to me	4.09	1.2	37.2

The attitudes that, on the other hand, were strongly supported, were also in this question setting related to emotional and to individualistic ones. As can be noticed from the table, the good feeling (mean 4.87) and well being (4.85) fine characterized women's attitudes towards sports and physical exercise. It can be found again that no one selected the response alternative "strongly disagree" while the share of those agreeing with it rose over 85 per cent. Important factors were also health aspects, 74 per cent of the respondents agreed with statement "I take exercises in order to improve and maintain health". The significance of friends (31.7 %) was valued more than own family (22.2 %) when working out and taking exercise. Sportive lifestyle was also regarded important to 42 per cent of the women.

In the following stage, both the item settings were further analyzed in order to find out first, the underlying motives to participate in women's different mass sporting events and second, a general level attitude dimensions concerning sports. These goals were reached by conducting a generalized least square factor analysis. This multivariable method helps to reveal the latent structures of groups of items that are created to measure certain aspects. Furthermore, generalized least square analysis is an explorative factor analysis method that helps to unveil new dimensions from the datum.

In table 3, three motive dimensions that were produced as the outcome of the factor analysis conducted are shown. These were labeled as social aspects, celebrities and experience. The items that were loaded to the first dimension comprised of four statements especially related to the social aspects of consumption of sporting events. These included arguments dealing with importance of having friends with whom to share the fun as well as an argument emphasizing community and togetherness. The second dimension, celebrities, was consisted of two items related to the importance of famous persons as instructors or as comperes in the event. The third factor dimension was built upon motives concerning experiential elements and three statements were associated with this one. Those dealt with escapism, experimenting new forms of exercise and good feeling. The first dimension was best explained by the loaded items with its 21.6 per cent share of variance. Total variance explained was quite high, 51 per cent.

Table 3. Factor analysis of motives for participating women's mass sporting events

	Social aspects	Celebrities	Experience	Communalities
Possibility to have fun with friends	0.895			0.816
Possibility to take exercises with friends	0.705			0.572
Possibility to meet friends	0.627			0.476
Feeling of togetherness	0.358			0.378
Celebrities as comperes		0.968		0.943
Famous instructors		0.649		0.471
Escape from everyday life			0.781	0.629
Experiment new forms of exercise			0.484	0.336
Good feeling			0.439	0.360
Eigenvalue	1.944	1.453	1.160	
Explained (%)	21.598	16.139	12.894	Σ 50.63

Extraction Method: Generalized Least Squares, Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization
Cronbach's alpha: 0.594

The last table, Table 4, presents four dimensions of attitudes towards sports and physical exercise. The produced factor dimensions were named as Experiences, Social aspects. Health, and Well-being. Not all the items that in the original setting were loaded, for example those dealing with loosing weight and outward appearance. This tells first of all that those items are not important motivating factors to women. Instead, as the results of the factor analysis point out, experiential, social and well-being issues are more crucial motivators. The total explained share of the variance was 54 per cent and all the dimensions explained the attitudes towards sport and exercise quite well. The last factor was, however, loaded by only one statement, but nonetheless it explained well the dimension.

Table 4. Factor analysis of attitudes concerning sport and exercise

	Experiences	Social aspects	Health	Well-being	Communalities
I look after strong experiences from physical exercise	0.683				0.731
Physical exercise is a lifestyle to me	0.673				0.643
I want to test my limits with exercise	0.650				0.682
Being sporty is important to me	0.592				0.485
My physical condition is very good	0.552				0.405
Physical exercise offers me experiences	0.505				0.546
With exercise I get new friends		0.661			0.629
It is important to me to take exercise together with my family		0.617			0.393
It is important to me to take exercise together with friends		0.537			0.345
The versatility of exercise is important to me		0.503			0.357
I take exercises in order to improve and maintain health			0.718		0.606
It is important to raise physical condition			0.684		0.587
Taking exercise makes you feel good			0.435		0.334
Physical exercise contributes to well-being				0.937	0.893
Eigenvalue	2.58	2.26	1.71	1.08	
Explained (%)	18.46	16.13	12.24	7.74	Σ 54.56

Extraction Method: Generalized Least Squares, Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization
Cronbach's alpha: 0.816

5. Discussion

It has been suggested that we live in an entertainment economy and in an experience economy. Such leads people to expect entertainment also in such cases where the entertaining is not the main activity. (Bryman 2004, 16.) This is also why consumer's enjoyment of certain activity or service, like consumption of sporting events, is only partly conditioned by the activity itself. Therefore, services, in this case mass sporting events directed to women, are expected to be enjoyed more if they offer a lot of positive experiences and fun.

When considering whether the features of consumption can be translated into the world of sports and physical exercise it can be referred to the following quotation of Daroff. According to her, "More than anything, what we believe and what we're seeing is the consumer wants more than a meal. They want an adventurous experience in a hyper-immersive, cinematic environment that emotionally, intellectually and physically transports them. If only for a moment, the guests leave their lives behind and become part of the story." (In Bryman 2004, 27). All in all this applies to consumption of sporting events and individual hobbies related to work out. Women look not only for health aspects and improvement of their physical condition. Major striving forces are experiences and emotions not to mention sociality and having fun with friends. No wonder that nowadays mass sporting events directed to women offer physical exercise spiced with experiences and emotional aspects.

However, the results also showed that women look after the "real thing", i.e., they are interested in sports and physical exercise in order to keep themselves fit. Health aspects are (still) important in taking work out. Working out and physical exercise needs to something which is a holistic experience: you feel it in your skin and in your body.

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Consumption as a field of participation

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to increase the understanding of how Nordic low-income families get by in a society characterized by affluence but with restricted possibilities to take part in it. The theoretical framework is build upon how the society is differentiated in subsystems or fields and how consumption can be viewed as one such field governing processes of inclusion, exclusion and participation. The findings imply that consumers with low and insecure income tend to develop different coping strategies to consumption in order to get by in their everyday life. The paper aims also to highlight the need for more interdisciplinary research on consumers who are marginalized, and emphasizes the benefits of integrating theories on consumption and welfare.

Introduction

The Nordic societies have during the last decades undergone significant changes. We are witnessing consumers who live in wealth, consuming luxurious products and services and

buying expensive cars and lavish handbags. At the same time, we can also observe consumers who cannot afford to consume, but live a more frugal life. The opportunities to consume seem endless by just looking at the abundance of goods for sale. The fact is, however, that free choice does not always exist (e.g., Gabriel and Lang 1995). This is illustrated in the old Swedish proverb “When manna (i.e. semolina) falls from the sky, the poor has no spoon”. Some consumers are not able to take advantage of possibilities when they are offered to them; they lack the necessary resources to be able to grab the offer. Caplowitz (1963) wrote during the 1960s that the poor pay more and shed light on the conditions that the poor had to accept as consumers in the United States. Poverty was common in the Nordic societies about 100-150 years ago, but has since then become less prevalent as the Nordic societies have developed into a welfare economy during the 20th century. What is relatively new, however, is that poverty has recently started to increase in the Nordic countries at the same time as affluence is also increasing. This growing polarization between the rich and poor is a world-wide phenomenon, even though the gaps in the Nordic countries are less than in most parts of the worlds. The most significant change concerning the distribution of income, at least in Sweden, during the recent years is, however, not between rich and poor, but the widening gap between the average income level and the poor (SCB 2003). It is a situation where some consumers live in a society characterized by consumption and affluence without being able to take part of it. They are not able to consume the goods and services which a majority of the population sees as something naturally to afford.

Considering this development, the lack of consumer research focusing on consumers living with limited resources is somewhat surprising. Little is known about how poor consumers cope in a society where consumption seems to play a more significant role in people’s life. There is, however, some research in this field, mainly carried out in the US and in the UK. The aim of this paper is to increase the understanding of how low-income families in the Nordic countries get by in their everyday life. The intention is also to highlight the need for more interdisciplinary research on consumers who are marginalized, emphasizing the benefits of integrating theories on consumption and welfare. In addition, the aim is trying to relate and analyze consumption as a field amongst other fields in society where social processes as inclusion, exclusion and participation is at stake (c.f. Luhmann 1995.)

The catwalk of consumption

The possibilities to consume have changed dramatically during the last decades. An abundance of goods, Internet, new forms of credit and leasing, more intense and different forms of marketing are just a few examples of different aspects that have changed the landscape of consumption. The Western society can be seen as a consumer culture, a spinning wheel that spins faster and faster, irrespective if you are well-off or poor. Everyone is participating in the catwalk of consumption, exposed and judged based on consumption. It is through our consumption that we show our identity, who we are or who we would like to be. To not be able to afford involves social and psychological risk taking, to be perceived as deviant or poor, a stigmatisation that most people wants to avoid. Whether the basic meaning of consumption has changed from a material or functional meaning to a more symbolic one is subject for discussion (Aldridge 2003; Edwards 2000). Aldridge (2003) questions this and means that a lot of consumer activities are still often based on functionality, for example, a car is bought as a means of transport and not merely as an expression of identity. He emphasizes that a lot of consumer activities are built on routine and rationality rather than the wish to express oneself through symbols and signs to others.

Whether or to what extent consumption can be understood as a dimension of exclusion or inclusion and in which ways consumption creates processes of marginalization in society deserves more attention in research. Research on welfare has not highlighted consumption as an important issue in studies on poverty or social exclusion. Neither has research on consumption in consumer behaviour, sociology, anthropology nor cultural studies sufficiently discussed the meaning of scarce financial resources in relation to consumption or the consumer society. Lodziak (2002) states that culture studies if anything, has misinterpreted the new consumer society when it comes to inequality. While culture studies often interprets the new consumption society as a way towards equality in that everyone can choose the style and identity they want, Lodziak emphasizes that this is not the case, but that inequalities instead creates new forms of stratification and marginalization. It needs to be recognized that consumers live under different conditions. There is a need for more research on what it means to live in an affluent consumer society having less financial resources than the majority of the consumers.

Theories of welfare and consumption

We believe that it would be beneficial to integrate theories on welfare with theories on consumption, something that is easier said than done. As a starting point, we would like to

identify three theoretical fields dealing with poverty, welfare and consumption. The first field deals with how low-income consumers in a structural meaning are discriminated against in different ways (e.g., Allwitt and Donley 1996; Anderasen 1975; Caplovitz 1963; Hill 2002; Kempson 1996; Kempson et al. 2000). Maybe it is difficult to call this a theoretical field, it is more like a research area that focuses on market relations and has its disciplinary home in economics, marketing and sociology. The theories imply that consumers with scarce financial resources meet specific hindrances and barriers that seem to depend on the “laws of the market”. Examples of hindrances and barriers are aspects like access and price. To live in a poor area often means fewer opportunities to buy cheap and poorer conditions when it comes to credits etc. This implies that poor consumers are being ignored; they are not seen as interesting “segments” of customers. This means that poor consumers have to play by the same rules as groups having more established financial situations including a buffer and advantageous credit conditions. The poor consumers are not able to take advantage of all the consumption-related offers that other groups frequently use, for example, special offers or bonus for purchasing large quantities. Also, actors on the market of goods and services take advantage of the poor consumers, for example by offering instalment plans or credits with high costs.

There is not one single answer as to why there have not been many studies on this issue in the Nordic countries. However, a reasonable explanation could be that poor and socially vulnerable households usually have been studied as recipients of welfare services and not as actors on a market. Financial vulnerable groups have mostly been a subject for the research of poverty and social politics, in areas of research where consumption play a major lead and have significance to whether or not a household can afford to buy a stereotyped collection of goods that represent the idea of necessary consumption. In this kind of research the social dimensions of consumption are often ignored. Within the research body of consumption, on the other hand, predominating issues like the meaning of consumption, consumption as social and communicative, seldom emphasize the situation of groups that are poor or social vulnerable (Löfgren 1996, Hohnen 2006).

The second theoretical field, theories dealing with welfare, involves concepts such as exclusion, inclusion and marginalization (e.g., Bowring 2000; Gough, Eisenschitz and McCulloch 2006; Kronauer 1998; Lister 2004). They usually have the question of inequality as a main issue. In general, the theories on welfare try to explain how the welfare of different

groups is changing in response to changes on, for example, the labour market. Researchers dealing with welfare theories also focus on the relation between institutions/security systems of welfare and vulnerable groups (e.g., Pierson 2001). A main issue here is vulnerable groups and their relation to the established society.

We argue that consumption has to be contextualized as one field among others that are significant to the welfare of the citizen; other fields are for the example labour market, the social security systems, health and education. According to Luhmann (1995) society has been differentiated in systems and subsystems during the last decades. Every system and subsystem has its own norms and codes that govern entrance, participation and establishment. This implies the possibility to be included in some systems and marginalized or excluded in other. Our aim is to analyze how social vulnerable families relate to different significant systems in general and the system of consumption in particular. We choose to use the concept of field instead of system. The reason for this is that Luhmann describes the systems as closed and to a higher degree isolated from each other. There are reasons to argue that the systems or the fields are more open and to a different extend communicate and influence each other.

Defining social exclusion is a difficult task. Elm Larsen (2004) argues that the concept emanates from poverty. Social exclusion is, however, something that includes more than limited material and financial resources. Elm Larsen (ibid) means that social exclusion is more multidimensional and contains a range of social problems that makes participation in significant areas in society difficult for individuals or groups. Social exclusion can, in addition, be viewed as a dynamic process – an individual or group can be more or less excluded in different fields. In this paper we use the concepts scarcity and vulnerability. By scarcity we want to emphasize a situation characterized by a low and insecure income, not necessary beneath the poverty line. Our aim is to study a position characterized by insecurity and vulnerability. ‘Vulnerability’ can include several types of disadvantaged positions in relation to significant fields in society such as education, work, income and network. In this paper we focus on aspects that are linked to work, income and relation to the welfare state. The definition for vulnerability that is used here includes a low and insecure income and a weak position to the labour market and the social security system. To be vulnerable is not necessarily the same as being poor or unemployed; rather it refers to a situation (or a process) of having a weak and insecure position in relation to the labour market and the social security systems. Vulnerability can in this context be understood as a situation where a household find

themselves exposed to a risk for poverty and exclusion. From a consumption perspective this increased risk implies a weak preparedness to the slightest changes regarding income or expenditure. Micheli (1996) use the concept 'critical normality', which is not the same as poverty, but rather describes limited margins and an increased risk to 'fall into' poverty. Micheli (1996) also stresses the dynamic dimension of this situation, it is complex containing different processes, and a change towards an even more vulnerable situation is called "downdrift" by Micheli.

The concept of *vulnerability* is used in this paper as an analytical tool to describe the circumstances of not yet having arrived at the end of the line (poverty, homelessness etc), but on being exposed to the *risk* of moving one step closer. Such steps can for example be caused by sickness, or unemployment or when unemployment benefit period determines. Youth, single parents (mothers) and immigrants are groups or categories among the citizens in the Nordic countries that to a higher degree than others are exposed to the risk of vulnerability (cf. SOU 2001, Bonke et al 2005).

The third theoretical field has been developed in disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, cultural theory, and marketing (e.g., Bauman 1998; Douglas & Isherwood 1996; Featherstone 1991; Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Slater 1997). These theories discuss consumption from several perspectives but we have in this paper mainly concentrated on two issues. One issue deals with the increased significance of consumption in society. Consumption is from this point of view seen as something that is one of the most important activities that individuals use in order to display how they want to be understood by people in their surroundings. Bauman (1998) for example consider consumption as something more significant than work as a socioeconomic criterion (c.f. Ransome 2005). A related second issue is the symbolic meaning of consumption. For example, the issue is not merely whether a teenager should have a mobile phone or pair of sneakers, but which mobile phone brand or sneakers brand he/she should have. To view goods and services as something symbolic is of course nothing new, already Veblen (2000/1925) and Simmel (1990) discussed consumption in these terms. A new aspect discussed by the post-modern theories (e.g., Baudrillard 1998; Featherstone 1991) is that the functional or material meaning of consumption does not matter anymore. By this they mean that consumption, in the western world, no more is questions of needs and function, all that matters are symbols and wants. Some researchers (e.g., Lodziak 2002; Löfgren 1996; Miller 1998) have criticized this perspective in that they mean that the postmodern view on

consumption neglects the everyday- and routine consumption. Post-modern consumer theory also suggests that consumption gives everybody the ability to choose their identity and be, or at least appear, as anybody they want to be. It might be interpreted as if consumption can take us away from the class society or inequality, a view we would like to warn against. Consumption opportunities are not offered to everyone, but limited to people having the resources. A critique of post-modern theories is that they do not treat aspects like inequality or the significance of economic resources as an important issue in the consumption society. On the contrary, they tend to consider consumption and the consumer driven society as a solution to the problems of inequality (e.g., Lodziak 2002). Even though consumption offers opportunities to consume, it needs to be recognized, that these opportunities are limited based on the resources available.

In summary, neither post-modern theories nor other theories on consumption have paid enough attention to groups that tend to be marginalized in society, groups which do not have the financial resources to be part of the consumer society to the same degree as others. An understanding of the consumer society of today requires us to deal with processes such as marginalization, exclusion and vulnerability. We argue that without these perspectives the picture of the society tends to be limited and only cover some parts of it.

The welfare development in the Nordic welfare states

In the Nordic countries, a welfare crisis originating from decreased output in the manufacturing industry in combination with high costs to maintain the welfare state institutions, resulted in the 1990s in high unemployment rates and cuts in the social services (Abrahamsson 2001, Stjernö 2001, Bergmark & Palme 2003). This problematic period was a new experience to the welfare states, since the economic growth and the political reforms (for example, enlarging the state financed social security system in different ways) in the preceding years looked like a never-ending story. In the middle of the 1990s, the financial situation started to recover and the unemployment levels decreased. The following years showed a growing economy and positive development in the labour market. However, in the end of the 20th century it seemed as some group had fallen behind and had not been able to take part in the economic progress made. These groups consisted mainly of immigrants, youths and single parent families. They had problems in getting established on the labour market, facing more temporary and insecure forms of employment, rather often in combination with social assistance (SOU 2001).

The interpretation of how the Nordic welfare succeeded to manage the welfare crisis differs among the scholars. Some argues that the weakness of the Nordic welfare regimes became apparent with its dependency on low unemployment rates. Other point at the strength of the Nordic welfare states and that they despite the turbulence managed to secure the welfare to the majority of the citizens (Abrahamson 2001, Stjernö 2001, Bergmark & Palme 2003).

However, some groups where hit harder by the changes on the labour market and in the social security systems. Abrahamson (2001) argues that the future challenge of the Nordic welfare states is the succeeding in counteract exclusion and marginalisation regarding certain vulnerable groups:

While the “old” project of the welfare state was to abolish (income) poverty, the challenge of the “new” welfare state is to be able to integrate marginalised and excluded, and to prevent that processes of marginalisation and discrimination arise and develop. (Anderson 2001:14) My translation

In connection to discussions of unemployment, cuts in the social service system and a increasing dependency on social assistance the word poverty was more frequently used in the political, medial as well as science debates (e.g., Halleröd 1991). The meaning of poverty in this context was relative; it means that the income level has to be compared to the majority of the citizen, and that this level is so low that you can not live a life that can be characterized by others as normal. Sweden is a country which during the 20th century developed equality in income distribution. The development of the welfare state in Sweden has almost reached the level that it is in general considered strange if you can not buy things that are taken for granted by a majority. This is comparable to Townsend’s (1979:31) definition of poverty:

“...individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources necessary to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions which are customary, or at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they, are in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities.”

In this paper we aim to ask questions about how households, which can be seen as vulnerable, experience their situation. What does it mean to live in a consumer-based society and not be able to participate in way that is considered as 'normal'? How can we understand the meaning of vulnerability and what processes of exclusion and inclusion can be identified in the consumer society?

Method and material

The following analysis is based on two different studies. They both had similar focus and the method was in both studies semi-structured interviews. The first material contents of 26 interviews with 26 Swedish families with children. In addition a focus group interview was conducted with four families. All the families had in common that they have a scarce financial situation. About half of the families were single mothers with a limited establishment on the labour market (for example unemployment, part time or casual employment). The other half was immigrant families who arrived to Sweden in the end of 1980s or in the beginning of the 1990s. This means that they arrived just before the increased unemployment and have had problems integrating into the Swedish society, both regarding establishment on the labour-, housing- and education market. Also, their income levels were lower than appropriate considering their families previous education and work experience. A majority of the households were selected from the fact that they during the last ten years had received accommodation allowance. A few were selected because they had asked for economic help from a church-based organisation and those who participated in the focus group were selected from an organization for single parents.

The second material is based on 75 interviews with Danish, Norwegian and Danish families with children. They lived in low-income neighbourhoods in Copenhagen, Oslo and Malmo. The families were chosen from the fact that they during the last ten years had received accommodation allowance. These families were selected according to income level, residence and source of income. 24 of the 75 parents are from middle class families, with two incomes. The reason for these interviews was to constitute a contrast regarding consumption patterns.

It was problematic to get access to the interviewed families. To talk about consumption in relation to money is already a moral sensitive issue in the Nordic countries and it is getting far more sensitive when it comes to a scarce financial situation. The fact that the family, by being a part of the study, is categorized as “vulnerable” can also be a reason to say no, maybe they do not see themselves as belonging to such a category. Another reason is that several of the households were recipients of means tested allowances. This is a sensitive issue and could be a reason to say no. Some could have considered it as a risk to talk to someone, even a researcher, about their financial situation, and give information that could possibly reach local or federal authorities.

Restricting conditions and strategies

The result shows structural factors that create specific conditions for low-income consumers as well as different mechanisms restricting these families consumption. Also, prevailing societal norms and codes regarding how households in general and in particular households with scarce financial resources should consume. Furthermore, the results indicate that the families interviewed used certain strategies for managing their consumption, in other words how they did cope with scarce financial resources in comparison to other groups of households in a consumer society. However, strategy is a complex and problematic concept. An alternative is to interpret the families’ actions and considerations as efforts to cope with a difficult situation, which indicates a more passive conduct or attitude. Coping is, however, different from strategy. The latter implies a more goal-oriented behavior (Pennartz and Niehof, 1999). We choose the concept coping strategy even if we think it is problematic. Strategy overemphasizes dimensions as planning and coping focuses too much on a passive behavior. Even a household in a vulnerable situation can be a very active consumer. The processes that we try to understand are too complex to be included in one concept and it seems like we, as so many others, were captured in the field between agency and structure.

Structural factors

There are certain structural factors that create specific conditions for low-income consumers. The results indicate that the interviewed household’s position on the labor, housing and education markets, as well as their possibility to have access to the welfare security system, is crucial for their possibilities as consumers. A marginalized or excluded position in these fields tends to hinder and raise barriers for consumption. For example, unemployment can be seen as a marginalized position in the labor market that also hinders consumption. It is therefore of

importance to study the mechanisms in the field of consumption as interrelated to those which create processes of inclusion or exclusion in other fields. The study shows for example how unemployment or overdebtness (which is rather usual among low-income households) exclude some families from signing contracts or credit arrangements.

Mechanisms restricting consumption

The field of consumption has also its own mechanisms that create various possibilities for different groups. The study shows that households with scarce financial resources mainly face three mechanisms that in different ways restrict their possibilities as consumers. First of all, there are mechanisms excluding households with scarce financial resources from different types of consumption. These mechanisms rule the possibilities of admission. If you do not have certain qualifications, for example, if you are unemployed, you are not allowed access to different types of contracts and credit arrangements. Second, there are mechanisms making consumption more difficult for households with scarce financial resources. These mechanisms govern access to certain kinds of consumption. The possibility of buying goods or services at lower prices can be more difficult if, for example, households do not have access to a car or the Internet.

One example of hindrances and barriers that makes consumption difficult is the supply of goods in the neighborhood. In Avedøre Stationsby (the Danish neighborhood), the selection of stores is limited. Those living in the area are forced to go to other neighbourhoods to meet the needs of consumption, which makes the consumption more expensive. There is one grocer's store which several among the interviewed are critical of; they said for example that they could not be sure to find usual staple commodities. It is interesting to note that there seems to be an establishment of new stores in areas around Avedøre Stationsby. While the supply is increasing in some areas the opposite is the case in Avedøre Stationsby:

Avedøre Stationsby is just like dried up soil – nothing can grow there. We shop in Friheten or Brøndby Strand.

Do you know what, here lives – yes we were surprised when we read it in a folder that came in our mailbox here in Avedøre Stationsby – here lives as many people here as in Sorö (another area with a different socioeconomic composition). Could you see that in front of you: Sorö with just one Netto (the store in Avedøre Stationsby), but that is what is like here.

The defective supply of goods and is, according to the interviewed, due to that the stores do not make enough profit or that is simply does not make even. One aspect that became explicit regarding the spatial access is the significance of the local supply. Several households, as well describe in detail the problems that arise when a store is closed and a new is established. It could be aspects like higher prices or a more limited supply in the new store which maybe results in trips to other areas in order to shop for reasonable prices. Without access to a car changes like this became considerable regarding money as well as time.

The third mechanism has to do with price. Households with scarce financial resources often have no buffer that they can use in their consumption to save money. Therefore, their consumption is often more expensive than that of other households in that they cannot take advantage of quantity discount, sales, good quality (for example clothes, shoes and goods of better durability) and are often forced to make expensive credit arrangements when buying durable goods.

Dominating norms

Another issue related to norms and codes in the field of consumption is the dominating societal perceptions of how households in general, and those with scarce financial resources in particular, should consume. This has to do with how to be rational and economical (e.g., Aléx 2003; Horowitz 1985; Löfgren 1996). But it has also to do with being an active consumer of goods and services in order to be like everybody else and not deviate (e.g., Dellgran & Karlsson 2001). An informant expressed:

They have been given to me or I have bought them second hand. The sofa I have, it is very torn, yes, it looks like hell. You do not really dare to invite people spontaneously. I feel embarrassed if I should invite my neighbours over for a cup of coffee. The society has become much more... that you are judged or greeted based on income. If you have an income which is below, yes, if you are poor, then you have to fight much more to show who you really are if you are poor. And it is therefore you do not want to invite anybody when you do not have it nice-looking. If you see what I mean, you do not want to show... even though I am a good person after all.

Another example is the prevailing norms made visible regarding appearance in different situations. A single mother expressed:

And then there is entering a bank, you might not be as well dressed, you might not have the nice-looking/appropriate clothes. You have an old pair of jeans which you have had for a couple of years, still without

holes and clean and everything, but still. And then you should be encountered by that 'nice' person. Just that part can probably stop a lot of people.

The households in this study talked about shame and the internal and external expectations that often lead to that they as parents experience a feeling of being trapped. On the one hand, they are supposed be economical, rational and not buy anything that could be understood as unnecessary. On the other hand, they are supposed to have a consumer pattern so that their children can have the same goods as their peers and take part in activities arranged by schools or pre-schools or in their leisure time. Demands and expectations to consume as 'ordinary' families do can be perceived in different ways, one way is to see it as reasonable and as a consumption pattern worth striving for. A single mother express:

I have this principle; it shall not be possible to see that my children have a single mother. If you walk through the house you will not find anything that is cheap in their room... What you see when you look at the drier is fashion clothes, there is Timberland... these is clothes that I have chosen because I am single. I can't resist it, it has been a lifestyle and something that I spend a lot of money on. I have a little bit of a fixation with clothes. I don't buy at sales, I mean of course I do but I do not look active for it because I do not like to stand in queues and crowds. I can see that this is like that when I pass the shops. I do not buy at Bilka (*a low-price store*), maybe I should with my financial situation, but I have chose to say... we do not travel, I do not smoke, we do not have a car and I do not own a house. I rather use the money to more expensive things for my children.

Another way to view demands regarding for example branded clothes is to see it as a problem and as something that intrudes and disturb parents with a low income trying to manage these demands by talk to their children about limited recourses. A mother expressed:

... this trend that I suffer from, it is not just me that suffers, a lot of mothers do. The children want things with certain logos, it is not just enough that things fit them, it has to be certain brands. Sneakers have to have a certain brand otherwise he does not want them. It is a problem in our neighbourhood. I try working it out by explaining to him that we can't afford it. I am lucky, sometimes my daughters help me to buy nice things for him, but there are many that can't manage that.

These external expectations can be perceived as paradoxical. There seems to be a tension between the idea of the 'decent' poor and the participating consumer. The vulnerable consumer is expected to conduct according to both types. The decent poor is rational, restrained and do not buy anything unless it is necessary. The participating consumer is the

parent that from time to time allows themselves and the children something unneeded, just because the children or the parent wants it. The participating consumer tries to follow trends and keeping up with what is considered as a normal consumption pattern. The participating consumer is fuelled by the opportunities that are offered in the field of consumption, different kinds of (expensive) credit arrangements opens up for items like DVD-player, flat-screen TV and branded clothes. The field of consumption appears as open and inviting in contrast with fields such as work and education that for groups and individual in vulnerable positions be experienced as closed and harder to enter.

Coping strategies to consumption

The families interviewed used different coping strategies to handle the needs of basic necessities and at the same time attempting to keep up with social necessities, being able to consume like everybody else. The strategies should not be seen as a description of how the families managed their consumption, instead they should be considered ideal types (Weber 1977) in order to categorize a complex picture of different actions.

The first coping strategy, *compensation*, consists of using consumption as a compensation for a situation characterized by scarcity and privation. The parents talked about their children as innocent victims of the bad financial situation and that the children should be sheltered as much as possible from the financial difficulties.

Maybe you buy them the little extra that you actually can't afford, because you feel that it is not their fault that the situation is like it is. Sometimes I can feel that I buy things to the children that are too expensive in relation to my income because I know that they can never get as much as their friends. And also because you see yourself as insufficient, you want to compensate for it.

The parents bought their children branded clothes, toys and TV- and computer games or let their children attend the cinema or McDonalds etc. These are things that do not fit into their budget, and the parents had to cut down on something else for themselves that they see as a basic necessity, for example, the dentist or home insurance. Another way was to buy goods on instalment rather than paying for it all at once. In general, the parents did not see the goods or activities they compensated their children with, as luxuries. Instead, it was regarded more as a question of the children having the opportunities to have or do the same things as other children.

If compensation is a coping strategy directed towards the children in the family, the second one, *keeping up the facade*, is concerned with covering up a scarce financial situation from those close to the family such as peers, staff in school etc. Besides buying goods and activities, as mentioned above, this strategy can also include arrangements in schools or pre-schools etc. that parents have to pay for, such as school-trips. The parents wanted their children to take part in these activities and the children were important for representing the family to the “outside” world. A mother said:

Sure, I feel the pressure to maintain a certain standard, mostly because I have children. That is very explicit with things like a computer and a mobile phone and everything like that. I really feel the pressure. I bought a mobile phone, I rarely use it, it is expensive to use. But it is incredible important that you have things like that. To be like everybody else, I really feel that.

The parents did not seem to run the same risk to be pointed out as deviant or poor. They described the children and the teenagers as being more exposed to social judgement in relation to consumption. The parents also expressed concerns for being judged by other people in that scarce financial resources sometimes is associated with bad parenthood.

The third coping strategy, *privation*, includes being without goods and activities that everybody else seems to have or do. Privation entails being extremely economical, to have a carefully calculated shopping list which is often the same week after week. Privation also involves buying second-hand clothes, mending clothes and using hand-me-downs. This disposition might indicate that a family can save a small sum of money to cover unforeseen expenses. Privation also means that the family expose themselves to the risk of being seen as poor and deviant. A single mother expressed:

... because I never buy anything. If I had been such a person who had lived a normal life like most people do, I think it would have been very difficult. But I do not think like that, I always think economically. I get by because I save and scrape, otherwise I had not managed, I don't think. Because I have three children and I am single. A lot of things get suffers...

Several parents talked about how they tried to keep their children outside the discussions about money, to protect their children from the scarce situation so they do not need to worry. But this protecting strategy often seemed to be in vain. The children and teenagers seemed to

be aware of the situation. Instead of just asking for things for themselves they asked if the parent(s) could afford, for example, renting a movie on a Friday evening.

The fourth coping strategy, *acute solutions*, is about not paying or buying anything before it is absolutely necessary. This last minute strategy is a way to control money, to have it in the purse or in the bank as long as possible, or not paying for something without a specific reason. It often tends to be more expensive since it does not allow planning of purchases including possibilities to take advantage of opportunities. This should be seen in the light of that these families seldom have an economical buffer and that they do not only have low but also an insecure income. If they receive social assistance, they can not be sure of how much money they will get next time. Several families said that they have to choose between which bills to pay, since they can not afford them all. To pay bills were moments of worries: should there be enough money or how much money will there be left when the bills are paid. A mother talked about the current bills:

No, it is very difficult. It is so bad that I put the envelope with the bills on the desk a few days before they have to be paid. Then I go around this table two or three days before I can manage to sit down and start with it. I get pain in my stomach when I shall add the sums of the bills. I have to look at them a few days before I have the guts to deal with them, it is too bad.

The fifth coping strategy, *avoidance*, is linked to the second one that involved trying to cover up the financial scarcity by buying goods that the parents see as social necessities. However, it means covering up in another way; to avoid situations where either the children or the parents (or both) can appear as poor or deviant. This can mean saying no to invitations such as birthday parties when there is no money to buy a present or, avoiding to invite people over. One single mother expressed:

The social life suffers when there is a lack of money. I can not invite people over coffee or dinner, for example. I do not want to reveal my situation to other people. You feel a sort of shame.

Another mother expressed the difficulties involved when going on a school trip:

He is 13 years old. Now he probably starts to become aware of... yes there are more pupils in the class who have single mothers, so they probably talk... but of course he sometimes becomes sad when he can not get things like

the others, cool shoes or go to camps or such things like the others do. There will also be less (money) for him to bring than the others if they are going on a school trip.

Another example mentioned was to report the child as sick when there was a school trip that the parents could not afford to pay for.

These five coping strategies can be something that families in general use from time to time or in a temporary financial downswing. However, in regard to the families in this study, it is more of a permanent situation. The financial scarcity has been going on for a long time, for most of the families at least eight to ten years. These coping strategies are not exceptions for the interviewed families; on the contrary it is something that characterizes their everyday life.

Controlling consumption

The household that represents the middle-class differ from the vulnerable in several ways. When the two groups describe their relation to consumption the feeling of control seems to be important. When the vulnerable stressed the lack of control regarding what to consume, the middle-class describes self-confidence and ability and competence to choose. The vulnerable seems to experience certain goods and activities as social necessities as they “ought to” consume. These items and activities can also be described as signs of participation. The middle-class families are already secure in their inclusion through participation in other fields such as work. The lack of inclusion in other fields indicates an increased importance to participate in the field of consumption.

Another dimension of control regards the household budget and the expenses. While the middle-class describes their purchases in terms as needless and impulsive the vulnerable describes tougher prioritizations between family members and considerations on the necessity to buy a pair of shoes or a jacket. The middle-class families have an overview of their budgetary situation but the vulnerable had more detailed control. A mother express:

I wish I didn't always have to think of how much there is left on the account when I buy something.

The need for control over the limited resources can also be interpreted as anxious to face an even more vulnerable situation. Micheli (1996) use the word “downdrift” to describe the risks that an already vulnerable situation, with the slightest push, can increase the difficulties

considerably. The quote below illustrates the tension of living with limited resources and the feeling of not having control:

I just want to emphasise what you just said about always being so bloody pressed, every time I read in the newspaper that there is going to be a charge for withdrawals, you always become angry and feel, every little thing makes me feel threatened, because there are no margins. It's very irritating, I feel pursued.

Discussion and conclusion

It is puzzling that some consumers, in spite of a well-developed welfare state, can not afford necessities required in the society. The context of this paper is the Nordic countries, which are societies characterized with lesser gaps regarding the income levels between different groups than most parts of the world. But the gap is widening and this development has an impact on the conditions of consumption for the low-income groups. This study has pointed to three important issues regarding vulnerable consumers.

First of all, the prevailing idea of the market of goods and services as a free market, offering equal opportunities, regardless of socioeconomic position, is problematic. The study has shown an interrelationship between the field of consumption and other significant fields such as labour, housing, education markets and the welfare systems. There are credit arrangements that give low-income groups access to more expensive and durable goods, but on the whole there seems to be a lot of barriers. Lack of access and too high price make the consumption more difficult for households with scarce financial resources. The ideal consumer is the one who either has a high income or lives in a household with two salaries. He/she has a car, own their home, and have a buffer to meet unforeseen expenses, as well as purchase bargains when the opportunity occurs. The families in this study are not ideal consumers, but they have to act in a market of goods and services that seems to favour the ideal consumer. The processes of marginalization that function in the fields of labour market and welfare systems are linked to the processes in the field of consumption. In addition, there are certain demands of how families with a low and insecure income should behave as consumers. They are supposed to be even more rational and long-term planning, something that is difficult when the conditions on the market of goods and services seem to be disadvantageous to these consumers.

Secondly, there is the gap between material and social necessities. If we assume that households with a median income set the standard for what is seen as social necessities, it

ought to be more problematic for low-income households to manage the gap in times when inequality in incomes increases. In this study, we have found that the households struggle to consume the material necessities and to some point keep up with the social ones. The income gap in Sweden between the median and the low-income families with children has increased between 1993 and 2001 (SCB 2003). The question is if the gap between material and social necessities has also increased. If the gap continues to increase in the future, it will be more difficult for some households to manage the gap. For example, it can lead to an increase in debts if low-income households have to use more and more credit-arrangements to keep up with the standard for social necessities. Another possibility is that the households cut down on what is seen as material necessities.

As an example of the widening gap is an ongoing Swedish debate about using the Internet as tool for communication between school and parents. Some school no longer use papers but all information and communication goes through e-mail or websites. There is an ecological edge in this discussion, promoting the paper-free society. However, all families do not, of economical reason, have a computer with the Internet in their home. When these families apply for financial help at the social services they are rejected on grounds that computer with the Internet is not included in the federal norm of social assistance that constitutes a reasonable standard of living. The coordination between two significant institutions in the Swedish welfare state, social services and the public school, seems thus to be insufficient.

The third issue concerns the children, but also the parents. In this study the children have been discussed as victims but also as being given high priority by their parents. Of course, it can be tough to grow up in a family with scarce financial resources, but parents do at the same time shelter their children against scarcity. In the study, some parents even talked about their children almost as if they were princes and princesses. Another possible interpretation is that the parents are the real victims, not allowing themselves to consume, but making sacrifices in their basic consumption for their children's symbolic consumption.

Future research need to take a closer look at what is really going on inside vulnerable families when it comes to consumption and what ways a scarce financial situation influences the interaction between the family members regarding to consumption. There is also a need to develop a broader theoretical framework when it comes to understand different groups' position in and relation to the consumer society. It is important to highlight questions about

inequality and different access to goods and services. We therefore stress the need for more interdisciplinary research on consumption and welfare. This highlights the importance of identifying and studying the forms of exclusion and inclusion which the consumer society creates. If the Western societies are considered as societies driven by consumption, then there are presumably new forms of processes that create differentiation and stratification. There exist a considerable bulk of knowledge regarding exclusion and inclusion in relation to the labour market and the welfare state; it is now time to direct the searchlight towards the consumer society. However, we need to develop new theoretical tools and concepts to get a deeper understanding of how those mechanisms works in the consumer society.

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Towards a new model citizen? A qualitative analysis of new responsibilities and forms of individualized social security for consumer-citizens in the Nordic welfare state.

‘Citizenship is not primarily realized in a relation with the state nor in a uniform public sphere, but through active engagement in a diversified and dispersed variety of private, corporate and quasi-corporate practices of which working and shopping are paradigmatic’ (Rose 1999; 246 quoted in Power 2005).

The aim of the present paper is to analyze the development of new forms of ‘consumer-citizenship’ as part of the increasing political significance of ‘marketization’ and emphasis on consumers and consumerism in the Nordic welfare states (cf. Østerud et al. 2003). The analytical aim is to investigate the possible development of a new ‘citizenship role’ in the Nordic welfare state, related to what Needham (2003) for Britain has termed the development of ‘market-place democracy’. (Rowlingson 2000; Needham 2003; Trentman 2007). We do so by analyzing individual ideals of consumption and economic planning in terms of their implications for the social construction of citizenship in the Nordic welfare states. The paper draws on recent theoretical debates concerning citizenship and consumption as well as on new forms of government in, what Rose (1999) has termed, ‘advanced liberalism’.

Changing citizenship in Europe

Recent debates on the notion of citizenship in European welfare states have suggested a change in the traditional concept of citizenship towards more 'active or 'participatory forms' (e.g. Turner 1990; Kvist 2002; Johansson & Hvinden 2007). Traditionally, citizenship has been understood as a social field of human equality consisting of a set of legal, political and social rights and obligations for all members of a community (Marshall 1950, 1992). However during the nineties, several researchers (fx Janoski 1998; Kvist 2002; Turner 1990) pointed towards a change in welfare regimes' *'raison d'etre* from a principle of 'decommodification' aimed at sustaining persons outside the labour market to a system of 'recommodification' conditioning that such citizens re-enter the labour market in order to regain social citizenship rights. The result however, seems also to include a change towards a more 'conditional' understanding of citizenship depending on labour market participation:

The traditional focus on social, legal and political rights is expanded (here) in two ways: first by a renewed emphasis on obligations, and second, by developing an additional set of 'participation rights and obligations covering a right to 'labour market intervention and an obligation to 'labour market participation' (Hohnen 2004: 207)

Based on empirical research in the Netherlands and Denmark, Hohnen concludes that for Denmark, the development of 'conditional participation citizenship' has had 'serious shortcomings in terms of establishing universalistic social rights for 'the weakest' groups of citizens e.g those who for various reasons are jobless or occupy marginal positions at the labour market (ibid. 225). Recently, this new understanding of 'participation citizenship' in terms of 'active labour market participation' has been expanded to cover even broader areas of social, personal and especially economic life. Johansson and Hvinden (2007) argue that the development of citizenship in the Nordic welfare states 'call for a new, dynamic and multifaceted understanding' including a renewed understanding of citizen self-responsibility and choice and citizen participation in planning and decision-making. Among other things this entails that 'citizens are expected (and themselves expect) to play more active roles in handling risks and promoting their own welfare' (ibid: 5). Rowlingson (2000) in an intriguing paper on new demands on citizens to act economically rational and 'responsibly' theorizes such changes in terms of what she calls the emergence of a 'New Model Citizen' in Britain, constructed by 'certain normative assumptions about how citizens should think and behave'. She describes the *New Model Citizen* as follows:

This citizen values education and training, has a strong work ethic, a strong nuclear family ethic, and a strong savings ethic. The citizen makes rational decisions and behaves 'responsibly' in both economic and social life. Central to much of this, the citizen both thinks and plans ahead, deferring gratification where necessary. (Rowlingson 2000: 1)

As mentioned, the framework of Rowlingson has the advantage, that it analyzes 'citizenship' as a normative concept. In addition to the legal changes e.g. increasing demands of labour market participation as conditional for sustaining rights to social security (workfare) she is able to identify a specific set of values and norms around which new forms of individualized government in Britain is reconfigured. Finally, her empirical findings suggest that the flowing away from collective state planning towards individual planning seems to be detrimental to those at the bottom of the income/Wealth distribution, because they have little capacity to plan ahead and thereby 'take over' the responsibility of securing against future risk etc. (Rowlingson 2000: 41-42).

Along the same lines, but focusing more explicitly on the consequences of the increased focus on individualization of welfare, Power (2005) poses the question: 'What does it mean to be a lone mother living in poverty in consumer society'? Her analysis shows how lone mothers on social security are socially constructed as 'other' through a combination of 'liberal-therapeutic, disciplinary and morally coercive techniques in their dealings with the social authorities. She suggests that such strategies are part of a disciplinary mode of governing those on social assistance by showing their inability to exercise 'freedom'. Power shows how all participants were aware of the negative ways in which they were being perceived. She suggest two main ways in which this 'othering' took place. First, by being perceived as '*welfare bums*' in the meaning of being lazy and irresponsible and getting something (payment) that was undeserved. Second, by being perceived as a '*flawed consumer*' in the sense of not being able to provide ones children with 'a normal' childhood e.g. treats, presents for birthdays and Christmas and opportunities for recreation. Power's work suggests a change in what she calls '*economic citizenship*' towards what we would call '*entrepreneurial citizenship*' promoting individualized market solutions instead of social security. This shift, furthermore epitomizes a changing definition of 'social problems' by reducing them to individual life events and making it an individual responsibility to deal with them (ibid.).

Consumption as government

The studies of Rowlingson and Power can both be understood as empirical studies of government of 'advanced liberalism':

It (advanced liberalism) entails a new conception of inherent rationality of the different domains to which government must address itself – the market, the family, the community, the individual – and new ways of allocating task of government between the political apparatus, 'intermediate associations', professionals, economic actors, communities and 'private citizens (Rose 1999; 139-40).

Rose contends that liberal government produces certain forms of 'freedom' by government via individual 'responsibilization'. Researching such new forms of government must therefore, in contrast to a 'traditional' search of any hidden unity behind the various social forms and political procedures, focus on the analysis of the *programmes* and *procedures* that appear to be assembled to govern ourselves (ibid, 276-77).

The field of consumption can, as shown by Power above, be understood as one important arena, where such individualized forms of government are being enacted and, where specific normative assumptions about economic practices are being promoted. In a study of political consumers in Denmark, Sestoft (2002) writes:

The political consumer (in this way) becomes a new political subject of power in the national state because the government transfers political rights to the consumer and the consumer receives rights and duties from the governmental system (Sestoft, 2002:82, *our translation*).

Based on an empirical analysis of government campaigns concerning ethic consumption, Sestoft suggests that the field of consumption has become politically (as well as morally and culturally) invested in the sense that consumers are increasingly *expected to* 'automatically' *evaluate their own consumption patterns* in terms of social and ethical values. The important argument in Sestofts book is that the term 'political consumption' may be expanded to cover not only 'political activism' or 'ethically correct consumption areas, but the field of consumption as such is part of a shift in government. Sestoft therefore, along with Rowlingson above, points towards a change in forms of governing, including the creation and a new political significance of consumer-citizenship.

In this paper, we investigate consumption practices and peoples' reflections concerning their role as economic agents as a part of the social construction of a new form 'active consumption-citizenship', where individual economic performance is linked to the construction of citizenship. We furthermore want to show that the norms and cultural values that are a part of this new 'active consumer-citizenship' also *reproduces traditional social distinctions* or perhaps creates new ones.

The field of consumption is here analyzed as a vehicle for the understanding of citizenship roles as well as possible new forms of social exclusion associated with the consumer-citizen welfare state. In other words, we set out to empirically investigate the growing political significance of consumption in contemporary Nordic welfare society. Do citizens in fact experience certain 'dominant' expectations concerning their abilities to act rationally and to be economically independent of the welfare state? What kind of cultural values or ethics concerning various aspects of consumer-citizenship are reflected in interviews with Nordic consumers about their economy? Last but certainly not least, what are the possible contours of social differentiation and/or social exclusion that such expectations and indirect government of individual consumption may (re)produce? In order to answer these questions, we are going to analyze the experiences of a group of consumers in Norway, Denmark and Sweden. We are going to analyze their experiences as consumers and parents giving special attention to what such experiences can tell us about the development of a 'Nordic Model citizen' and the individualization of economic and social responsibilities. The empirical focus is on economically and socially vulnerable consumer-citizens and their experiences of own and others' expectations. Their experiences will be contrasted with that of a number of middleclass –two-parent families. We focus on the experiences of parents because research on consumerism and poverty points to the fact that children's consumption in particular has become a social and moral battlefield for low-income families (Hjort 2004; Kochuyt 2004; Power 2005; Bonke et. al. 2005) It must be added that our analysis is explorative in the sense that there may be limitations as to the extent that the governmentality of advanced liberalism are empirically founded. Therefore, the extent to which people are actually experiencing an obligation to make a choice or in the words of Trentman 'whether people have indeed begun to dream in terms of choice' (Trentman 2007: 150) is also part of the analysis.

Immigrant parents and lone mothers at the margins of consumer-citizenship

Østerrud, Engelstad & Selle (2003) as well as Tøgeby et. Al. (2003) in their analyses 'Power and Democracy' in Norway and Denmark highlight two groups of citizens facing *limited access to de facto rights of equality of citizenship*. First, in the Norwegian report, Østerrud, Engelstad & Selle (2003) point towards new forms of class divisions, where *immigrants* form a new ethnically fragmented underclass 'outside' society, often unemployed and with limited access to political participation. Likewise for Denmark, Tøgeby et. al. (2003) points to the fact that 'the divide between 'them' and 'us' has increased, and that it has become more difficult for immigrants to become a part of Danish society' (ibid 336) Second, both reports are concerned with *gender inequality as a structural feature*: 'There are continuously problems of gender inequality in the Danish Society and that is viewed from citizenship angle a breach with the principles de facto of equal social rights for all citizens' (ibid; 81). The Danish report furthermore, points towards the fact that gender inequality remains largely implicit within the political and public debate. In sum, both reports suggest a possible breach of the principle of universalistic social rights and duties along the lines of gender and ethnicity.

Following this, we have chosen to give particular attention to the analysis of experiences of lone mothers and immigrant parents as citizen-consumers. We have chosen to focus on them, because their position 'at the edge' works as a 'window' for understanding the processes of socially constructing 'the New Model Citizen, mentioned above. Their descriptions of the choices and narrow 'space' of economic conduct not only sheds light on economical values of 'rationality' and 'planning', but it also reveals that there is a huge pressure on how to act as consumer-citizen-parents and consumer-citizen-nationals'. Their experiences as being consumers 'on the edge' of 'normality' clearly reveals the largely implicit expectations imposed on them by the image of the Model Parent and Model Economic Rational, Responsible, Long-term planning Citizen.

Methods and Material

The following analysis is based on 75 semi-structured interviews with Swedish, Norwegian and Danish families with children living in predominantly low-income neighbourhoods close to the cities of Copenhagen, Oslo and Malmo. The families interviewed were strategically selected according to income level, residence and source of income. We interviewed 51 parents in low-income families and, to create a space of comparison with dominant consumption patterns, we also interviewed 24 parents

from middle-class families, with dual incomes. All had children living at home. Most families had two or three children, a few had only one, and a few had five or six.

About half of the low-income parents interviewed worked as low- or unskilled workers in healthcare, cleaning or the social services, whereas the other half received income support, unemployment benefits, or sickness benefits. On average the low-income families had £500 - £600 a month for food and personal expenses for a family of four¹. Some families, especially those with debts, had considerably less. Finally, about half of the low-income households consisted of single parents (almost all women). All the middle-class parents had a stable income, and many had secure positions in the labour market, where they occupied a range of skilled jobs or leading positions within both the private and the public sectors. The amount of money at their disposal for food and personal expenses was between £1.000 and £1.800 a month. We refer to the experiences of these middle-class families and their answers constitute a contrast to low-income consumption.

It is worth noting that parents in low-income households were generally rather uncomfortable and sometimes nervous when talking about consumption patterns (see also Bonke et. al. 2005; Hohnen 2007). Often interview persons would not turn up for an interview appointment, in spite of having initially agreed to be interviewed, and the atmosphere during an interview were rather tense, with the interviewee replying to questions with obvious unease. This we suggest reflected a position as 'constrained' consumers in the sense that having limited financial resources resulted in experiencing each purchase as a burden rather than a pleasure. Consequently, the persons interviewed did not find it very attractive to talk about the anxieties and feelings of guilt related to their everyday consumption. The interviews with the middle-class parents formed a striking contrast. These interviews often included joking and laughing, giving examples of needless consumption and superfluous purchases by either the husband or the wife. These interviews reflected their role as privileged consumers in the sense that they felt secure in their role as consumers vis à vis the market, and had sufficient means to regard each purchase with confidence.

Consumer-citizenship experiences in Norway, Denmark and Sweden

¹ This amounts to what remains after the payment of bills, e.g. rent, utilities, and taxes.

In the following we will analyze the interviews with the specific aim to delineate the contours of 'the Nordic Model consumer-citizen' in terms of the ideals of economic action and orientation as well as in terms of forms of 'othering' e.g. the problematic space of economic and moral agency allocated to immigrants and lone mothers. Although there are obvious differences between the economic preferences of the middle-class and the low-income group in question, there are also similarities pointing towards common values of economic conduct.

1. Economic ideals

The ideal of 'needs before wants'

When we look at consumption patterns and the economic ideals that are expressed in the interviews, it is striking how both middleclass and low-income parents are 'rational' planners specifically in the sense that they voice a strong preference for securing money for food and regular expenses. Although this was not an issue in some of the middle-class families, this seemed to be because such payments were regarded as 'obvious'. In other words the economic concerns of the middle-class parents would sometimes appear 'conspicuous' but this was only because the payment of basic needs and regular expenses were regarded as 'given'.²

I am very careful with spending and regular expenses always come first (NE6, middle class woman)

We are not 'great spenders' who go out and party...vi stay home and use our money on sensible things. We do not use money that we don't have....we also have a savings account if we should need a new couch or(NE7 middle class women)

The same ideal concerning 'rational spending patterns' can be found if we look at consumption patterns of low-income families:

The way we prioritize is so that there's food and toilet paper and shampoo and all that sort of thing. We stock up well on things like this on the first of the month if we are short, so that we have enough for the whole month. And then we try to fill up the freezer and so on, so that we have food for the whole month...

(DU4 low income, single mother)

² In earlier papers on this subject Hohnen (2006 and 2007) has discussed the differences in consumption patters between middle-class and low-income consumers, emphasizing the fact that middle-class consumption is less planned and more 'impulsive'. However, this does not mean that the consumption of basic needs is ignored, but rather that there are sufficient means to engage in more 'playful' consumption patters in addition to the fulfilment of basic needs.

I can say with pride that I have not had problems paying regular expenses...I have kept us out of trouble... In that way I have managed really well!

(NU4, low income mother)

Although, there were indications pointing to the fact that in practice it is not so easy to stick to this ideal of careful planning the interviews clearly support a certain economic discourse of '*needs before wants*'. Families, who did not follow this ideal, especially those belonging to the low-income group would be singled out and commented upon:

Although people are free to choose for themselves how they spend their money – I thing that if you can't afford food on the table you shouldn't spend thousands on clothing....and some people do that (DU9, low income single mother)

Sometimes I wonder what is going on when I see a child with a cell phone, when I know that the family hardly has any money....and even then they buy a cell phone....Time and again I see children who don't get anything whatsoever including lunch and then suddenly they have some expensive or prestigious commodity (DU26; Teacher Danish School)

Independency

Our empirical material also suggests the prevalence of a set of ideals concerning independence and 'individual coping'. Basically, all families interviewed voiced a strong preference for 'being able to cope' as a parent and/or as an economic unit.

It is important for us to have savings *in order to cope* with unexpected expenses. We have that and that is really nice. We don't have to wait two weeks in order to buy a washing machine – or to have to ask anybody for a loan... (NE2, middle class women)

You *have to manage* with the money you *get* – it isn't much but you must manage...(SU9, low income mother)

(It is important) to manage with the money that I have until next payment. I want to live in such a way that I can manage until then...in such a way that I don't have to borrow from others.....(SU7, single mother)

However, these ideals of economic independency are managed and interpreted differently by middle-class and low-income consumers respectively. Noteworthy, for both groups, ideals are not necessarily reflected in economic practices. For example, although middle-class consumers to some extent match the image of the independent self-sufficient consumer-citizen capable of insuring themselves against future risks, middle-class consumers also depend on others, especially parents.

All and all we are able to cope, and that really makes a difference to be able to say that...and what is even more important for us is the fact that if we at some point were to get economic problems we would never have to go and beg for help at some public office, because we would get help from our parents. We won't ever be dragged through any public administration...and who knows what these 'nice' social workers might do to you. We won't have to depend on that! (DE 21; Danish middle class, married man)

Whereas the above man is rather explicit about his parents being a potential economic resource for his family, among most other middle class families, there is a tendency to 'undercommunicate' and underestimate the transfer of money (and security) from parents to grown-up children. Døving (in Bonke et al. 2005) points to the fact that communication and 'frontstage' management of such money transfers are aimed at diminishing their economic importance as well as at emphasizing that the money is given freely, as 'a gift' as something extra, and that the family therefore could easily have managed without it. As Døving describes it: 'There is no doubt that they (the middle-class families) find that they are *and ought to be* economically autonomous....' (Døving in Bonke et.al. 2005: 306, our italics). In sum, the middle-class families take great trouble to secure an image of financial independency in spite of the fact that they often receive considerable amounts of money, e.g. a car or down payment for a house from their relatives, mainly parents.

Low-income parents, who also struggle to live in accordance with the ideal of independency and self-sufficiency, not surprisingly have greater difficulty applying such visions to everyday economic practice. Their 'failure' to be economically independent, however, is regarded as 'problematic' and they are not able to present themselves as economically independent:

When I have trouble making ends meet *I ask my mother for help. I have never asked for social security* (SU5, lone mother).

If I needed 10.000 I would have to try to loan money from my brother or my grandmother (SU2)

If I got some extra money I would use them for food, because my mother buys a lot of my food and I *should really do that myself* (SU5, low income single mother).

The above examples on the one hand suggests that low-income families to a large extent accepts the fact that they are economically dependent on others, however on the other hand they still express a moral discourse where one 'ought' to be independent. In addition, they reflect a moral 'ranking' of 'dependencies' where it appears to be more of a failure to ask for social security, than to ask your

mother for economic assistance. Finally, it should be mentioned, that although it might not feel good to be dependent on others, the low-income families, who do not have anyone to ask for help are even worse off:

If something happen we would not know what to do. We don't have rich friends who can help us...so I wait for green light when I cross the street (NU3 low income single father)

Uhh I don't know what I would do if I needed of a larger sum of mony...maybe try to get a loan, but I don't know if I could do that...I don't know anybody that I could ask for so much money (SU3, low income single father)

Rational conduct and access to financial responsibility

In spite of their ideals and the help they receive from others, many of the low income parents are struggling to make ends meet and often they do not manage:

I have tried to apply for extra social security, because my daughter is growing out of her clothes so fast – but I have never received anything extra...I have also asked them for money to pay the dentist, but they say no. *They only pay when it is an emergency.* (SU 9 low income lone mother)

The money we get from social security is not enough. The last week in the month we usually don't have any money....sometimes I borrow from my friends (SU16)

One feels so small when one deals with the social office...I didn't like the fact that I had to ask them for help in order to cope...(NU13, low income women).

The Nordic Welfare states are often regarded as providers of 'generous' social benefits, however, the group of low income families dependent on social security seemed to be the ones having the most difficulty making ends meet. The interviews, furthermore, implicate conflicting ideas about what social benefits are supposed to cover, and thereby conflicting ideas of rational conduct.³ Similar conflicting ideas of rationality prevail, when we look at the low-income group with large amounts of high interest debts, which added considerably to their difficult situation. Several of these families had actually tried to apply for bank loans, calculating, that transferring small amounts of high-interest loans into a larger bank loan with a lower interest could give them an advantage in

³ We suggest that this also reflects conflicting rationalities inherent in social benefits, e.g. are such benefits supposed to cover expenses? Or are they not supposed to cover expenses thereby creating an economic incitement for example to get a job? The implications of economically rational conduct is rather different in each case.

bringing down their debts. However, their stories of their encounters with the banks suggest a considerable difficulty in getting access to such ‘financial rationality’.

I have a lot of debts so I tried to get a loan in the bank in order to pay off some of it. But the bank says no, because I have debt. That is the most stupid – if I needed a loan to buy a house or a car I could probably get it... (SU11 Low income, single farther with ethnic minority background).

I went to the bank and asked if they would give me a loan so that I could out of my (high interest) debts... they refused to do that because I had debts...but the reason I wanted a loan was to be able to start paying these high interest loans. Furthermore, I figured that if I got a loan from the bank we would then have something to bargain with e.g. offer creditors to pay a little less than the full loan if they would write off the rest in return. I might have been able to get it down – but banks don’t think like that...they were afraid I wouldn’t pay. They also said my living expenses would be too low, and in order to get a loan from them I would have to have a certain amount of money for living...I didn’t have that, and then they wouldn’t do it (DU4 low income lone mother)

These quotes highlights the fact that belonging to a low income groups simply makes it more difficult to act economically rationally, e.g. transferring debt to the lowest rate loan, because one is considered a ‘flawed consumer’. Although the bank would probably have been able to offer a cheaper loan, their services (rightly or wrongly) do not target this group of customers. The consequence is that it becomes difficult to act financially rationally for low-income consumers.

2.Processes of ‘othering’ in the consumer-citizenship regime: the case of immigrant parents and single mothers

In this section we are going to discuss the specific role that is allocated to single mothers and immigrant parents. There are several indications that these two groups in different ways experience specific barriers when it comes to being included as consumers (parents) and citizens. This may be connected to having a more limited *agenda of choice* (understood as available alternatives, Bauman 1999), but it may also be connected to what we find to be a specific set of paradoxes facing single women and ethnic minorities as consumer-citizens⁴.

Non-national consumers

⁴ It should be emphasized that these two categories of citizens each represent a large variety of families. We have categorized them as homogeneous entities here only in the sense that they are socially and politically constructed as specific groups of consumers and citizens – and that because of this, the images of rightful, rational and national conduct are more problematic to appropriate for these two groups.

First and foremost, the allocation of a specific citizen-position for families with an ethnic minority background, seems entirely linked to having a low income. In other words, we did not find that 'ethnicity' played any explanatory role for middle-class parents with an ethnic minority background, when analyzing their experiences and ideas of themselves as consumers and citizens. This suggests, not surprisingly, that the images of 'ethnic consumers' have connotations of 'poverty' and 'marginality'. In addition, their citizen-role seems to be characterized by a specific paradox: On the one hand, families with an ethnic minority background seems to be connected with 'conspicuous consumption' e.g. that they use (too much) money on expensive commodities. On the other hand, interviews with ethnic minority parents also reveal experiences of exclusion as consumers on the basis of 'non nationality':

We, men we use a lot of money on clothing (brands) because this signals that one is 'respectable' and able to take care of one's family (DU8 young man with Turkish ethnic background)

It is first and foremost immigrant boys, who have (such) expensive mopeds. Likewise when we lived at M... the most expensive radio-controlled cars amounting to 4000 kr and electronic cars, tractors, you name it...they had so much stuff these immigrant boys...it's the same with cars. For example my ex-husband (from Turkey) he has an old car, but he wants a BMW...you should see his brothers – they have such expensive cars... (SU5 low income lone mother)

The group pressure from peers are very strong. If my son wears a jacket, they don't look at it, they just ask how much it costs...if one has a jacket of a certain prize then all the others must have a jacket at least as expensive....He gets very influenced by this and I don't want him to feel bad... (SU25, mother with a Palestean /Lebyan background)

The above citations suggest that immigrants are somehow expected to buy expensive goods and to be concerned with expensive commodities such clothing of expensive brands or specific cars. We find it interesting that the image of immigrant consumption is linked to the purchase of expensive commodities in low-income neighbourhoods, when at the same time a number of families with ethnic minority backgrounds picture the consumption of the majority population as being out of reach:

Our children learn from the Danes...The Danes buy a lot of things... (DU10, married man with an ethnic minority background on social security)

We don't have access to Swedish shops, because they twice as expensive...so we do our shopping at the Lebanese shop and the rest we buy at the market (SU 12 low income political refugees)

Sometimes we look at the other customers and we look at the Swedes who have their shopping carts filled with all sorts of things, and I just wonder how they can afford it? (SU16, married woman with ethnic minority background).

The Swedish children they take their bags and go to various leisure activities – our children sit at home instead... If I had only had the money I would have attempted to develop the talents that he has got. (SU12, low income political refugee)

What is noteworthy here (apart from the fact that this suggests a rather polarized image of social positions in the Nordic countries) is the fact that the field of consumer-citizenship seems to be socially constructed along lines of ethnicity. Low income parents with an ethnic minority background are positioned by themselves as well as by others as ‘immigrants’ versus ‘nationals’, in spite of the fact that such positions are clearly normative. Prevailing images of ‘ethnic consumers’ are by and large contradictory and mutually incompatible. ‘Ethnic consumers’ are simultaneously presented as a group who buys a lot (too much) more than ‘nationals’ and a group whose financial situation makes position them as being ‘below’ or outside the consumption regime of the ethnic (national) majority.

Single mothers: Earning respectability as consumers

In contrast to the group with an ethnic minority background, almost all of the single mothers interviewed in this project belong to the group of low-income consumers. It is therefore more difficult to determine the extent to which single motherhood is associated with poverty. However, on the basis of the interviews that we have made with low income single mothers, it is quite obvious that they, themselves are afraid to be regarded as poor. This is particularly emphasized when we look at these mothers’ reflections concerning the appearance of their children:

The children’s clothes must look clean and neat. I am very concerned about that, because I am a single mother and it doesn’t take much before people start talking. Therefore, I want them to be clean and neat – not new clothes but neat... (DU 9, single mother)

I wash their clothes every night – even their coats if they are dirty. I dare take credit for them being clean and neat. (DU12, low income single mother)

I don’t want my children to look like children of a lone mother...I don’t know how to explain it really, because it is not that one is not sort of allowed to be a lone mother, but

often one gets like stigmatized and I don't want my children to be stigmatized (DU15, low income single mother)

Being 'neat' is the key word here. Being 'neat' can be understood in terms of being respectable and 'this is usually the concern of those who are not seen to have it' (Skeggs 1997: 1). Furthermore, not to be respectable is to have little social value and legitimacy (ibid.). The importance of 'respectability' for single mothers when analyzing their practice as consumers, therefore suggests a gendering of the ideals involved in establishing citizens' economic responsibilities. As a part of this gendering we find that constrained financial resources are conflated with legitimacy and morality. As Hohnen has previously stated, for women, especially single women, economic choices are transferred to moral concerns, and the limited economic space becomes limitations in moral legitimacy (Hohnen 2007). An additional pressure on such 'respectability' seems to be the increasing expectations to develop children's competencies and giving them experiences 'for the future'. In light of increased 'responsibilization' and conflation of economy and moral legitimacy, the failure to fulfil such increasing expectations may also be interpreted as a breach of 'responsibilities'

I wish I could afford to give him swimming lessons. He just jumps around in the water and pretends that he is swimming (SU16, low income married mother)

I would like to give them (my children) something different a little more... Sometimes, when I look in the cupboard I think it's a bit bare... I would really like to give them a little more...but it isn't possible...sometimes I feel sorry for them...I think that they ought to have some of the things that other children get... (D9, mother, social welfare recipient, two children)

If we look at the 'position allocated to single mothers as consumers and citizens it consists both financially and morally of a rather narrow 'space of legitimacy'. All parents are supposed to make ends meet, be financially independent and be responsible for their children's participation in society as consumers. At the same time single mothers' economic choices are to a large extent interpreted as an indication of their morality. The paradox in the position both as women and consumers is therefore that on the one hand they are supposed to provide their children with the same opportunities as others (among other things via consumption) yet, they are to an even larger extent that others judged by their ability to live up to a traditional motherhood role of securing children's clean clothing and neat appearance. Failing to do both is easily to be considered not a symptom of poverty, but a breach of morality. They could and ought to have performed differently.

3. Consumption as a vehicle for the future?

Following up on the theoretical ideas concerning the 'New Model citizen', as mentioned in the beginning of the paper, citizen's position towards and preparation for their future, financially, are increasingly conditional for fulfilling the role as a responsible citizen. In the following we show some empirical examples of how the future is being perceived and enacted upon by the middle-class as well as by low-income families.

Saving for the future or saving all the time

Middle-class consumers give saving and having a financial 'buffer' high priority in their economic planning:

That (our financial goal) would be to have financial security that is to know that we have a 'buffer' large enough to cope....if we continue living as we do now...that would be fine... (NE4, middle class male)

...It is nice to have money for a rainy day... if our dishwasher or washing machine should break....(NE6 middle class couple)

In contrast to this, the group of low income-parents, haven't got the means to save in order to insure themselves against future risks. Although such shortcomings can be directly linked to their limited financial resources, it is still regarded (by themselves as well as by others) as a 'individual' failure very similar to the image of the *flawed consumers* described by Power (2005) as mentioned above.

(my goal is) ...To make ends meet every month...that we have a place to live, electricity and food..(NU9, low income man.

My goal is to make ends meet with the money I get. I always hope to make it through the whole month and that I won't have to loan money from other people...but I can't help it sometimes. (SU7)

To be honest I think one needs to work really hard in order to make ends meet ... (SU17)

It is important to note that when comparing the 'ideal of saving' for the two groups, the meaning of 'saving' is by no means unambiguous. Although, middle-class consumers express that they give high priority to 'saving', whereas the low-income group does not, it is quite

clear from the following quote, that ‘saving’ has a totally different meaning for the low-income families but also that in a way they see it as a part of the daily economic routine, and consequently do it all the time:

I would really like *not to have to save...for once not to say no...*for once to be able to not to think about if I should buy the large piece of cheese or the smaller one... (SU14, low income single women).

The differences in experiences and reflections regarding ‘saving’ also suggest that whereas saving in terms of ‘pooling’ for the future is considered a virtue, saving as a means to everyday coping is not.

Different temporalities

A middle class married man expressed the following wishes about his own future:

When I am able to get an early pension, I would like to have a shop...a place of my own, and where I would earn more than I do as a teacher...I have a friend who has a café and that is rather profitable... I would also like to move to a more peaceful place... where people were perhaps a bit higher up the social ladder. I would like to have my own house where people don’t pee on the staircase... And I expect my children to get an academic education (if they have the talent)... You get a broader perspective if you get a good education...the future of our children is very important...they must be put on the right track (DE 18, middle-class married man).

This story not only expresses a rather detailed plan, including ideas about how to put his children on the right track, but it also shows a rather long term perspective. Although many of the other middle-class interviews were less explicit and detailed they generally reflected the same long term view of the future. In contrast, the low-income interviews seemed to express a different vision of the ‘temporality’ of the future:

Our goal is to pay our bills and get our financial situation straightened out. Then we will be able to keep to our budget (DU14, low income married woman).

If I get a job, it might get better... a little better...(SU9)

I would like to get my own apartment – not to have to rent one (NU 13)

Although, stories or dreams about the future were also sometimes expressed by low-income consumers, there is a clear tendency to regard the future as ‘that which arrives as soon as we are

over the next hill'. Future for many of the families experiencing a difficult financial situation therefore, not surprisingly, did not view 'future' as a long road, but rather in terms of the immediate 'bumps' ahead.

Future risks or happy eternity?

When considering the ideal of individual responsibility for the future, there seems to be a marked difference in attitudes towards the future, not only in terms of 'how one may picture the road', but also of that which lies ahead. Middle-class parents are generally content about the present – and feel that they can create and control the future. In other words, they are happy with the present and not afraid of the future, and furthermore express the view, that they themselves may influence their future situation:

I have the most beautiful child – I am surrounded by my family – I have a nice job – I have an apartment and I am happy – really I am... I don't dream about having a career or making a lot of money. I am content about making enough to cope....I don't think I would be happier in a larger house or if I were really rich.(NE3, middle class women)

We have a situation where we are able to keep the house even if one of us should get unemployed (DE25 middle class married woman)

If I lost my job – I would get another one!
(SE8, middle class married women)

In contrast to this, low income-parents experience the presence as rather a strain (though not necessarily unhappy) and feel that the future is risky and uncontrollable.

Our financial circumstances are tedious...it influences my mood. I am an optimistic sort of person and that helps sometimes. But it can be tough and my husband thinks it's tough. The worst is really the children ..not to be able to buy them the things we would like to give. (NU10, low income married women).

I can get terrified about the future, when I think about what teenagers need such as Adidas and Nike.... (SU5 low income lone mother).

I ask myself what kind of friends will he get – where is he going to turn to and what are they going to do? Will he become a criminal...end up in prison? What kind of life is he going to get? What kind of life is waiting for our children and grandchildren? What has become of their childhood? ...(SU25 low income Syrean/Palestinian married couple)

If we compare the middle-class and low-income group views on the future we find another paradox, namely that on the one hand, low-income citizens have very limited choices as ‘political and ‘ethical’ consumers due to their limited financial resources and to the limitations of the ‘citizenship role’ that is (directly or indirectly) allocated to them, yet on the other hand, they seem to be even more depending on participation in the field of consumption than the middle-class consumers. Contrary to this, the middle-class parents are confident consumers yet their social identities seem less influenced by consumption – and they more easily comply with the image of a self-sufficient citizen, insuring oneself against future risks. Below is an example of such a ‘fear’ of the children’s future which in the eyes of the mother quoted is closely linked to the risk of not being able to provide them with a sufficient level of consumption:

As a parent obviously you are responsible for you children to bring them up. I try the best I can with my son, but as soon as he leaves the home he is influenced by others. All the children influence each other. What if I refuse to buy something that my son wants and he gets stigmatized because of that? Then perhaps the others do not want to play with him – I have tried that. SU25 low income Syrean/Palestinian married couple)

Images of the future and the role of the future for present agency seems crucial for understanding the position of low-income consumer-citizens in contemporary Nordic societies. Different understandings of the future are significant in several ways. First, middle-class consumers aim at and are able to save for the future to a much larger extent, than the low-income group. Second, wishes for the financial future differ between the two groups. The low-income group concentrate on a definition of a future rather short term as ‘*that which follows the immediate survival of the present*’, whereas the middle-class group has a view of the future connected to ‘*an idea of keeping their standard of living ‘forever*’. Third, when thinking about the future more generally (not confined to finance) the low-income group seems terrified about all the things that could happen and picture the future essentially as *a series of risks*, whereas the middle-class group views their future as *possibilities that one can control*. Fourth and important regarding the increased emphasis on citizens as consumers, the present and future *participation in field of consumption is regarded as crucial by the low-income group, when thinking about their children’s future social position*, whereas consumption does not signify the same social significance for the future by the middle income group. Paradoxically, it is, as we have seen, in many ways more difficult for the low-income group to participate in this future oriented individualized and ‘entrepreneurial’ kind of

‘consumership’, reconditioning an ability to continuously develop one’s abilities to create one’s own and one’s children’s future by engaging actively in economic as well as ‘political’ consumption.

Towards consumer-citizenship in the Nordic welfare states?

Above we have tried to explore analytically as well as empirically the development of new forms of consumption-citizenship in the Nordic welfare states. Especially inspired by Rowlingson 2000; Sestoft 2002; Trentman 2007 and Power 2005), we have aimed at empirically investigating possible contours of a ‘New Nordic Model consumer-citizen’.

In doing this we have posed the following questions: How do citizens in the Nordic countries engage in self-government as consumers? What ideals and values concerning economic agency and consumption patterns are implied? An finally, What happens to low-income families e.g. lone mothers and immigrant parents as citizens and what do their changing roles imply about new distinctions concerning social inclusion and access to citizenship?

It is always rather difficult to identify changes, because theoretically and empirically changes are always combined with continuity. In several ways therefore, to suggest that we are witnessing a new form of citizenship is both risky and difficult to validate. However, our purpose have been less ambitious and more explorative in trying to find empirical evidence for the proposed increased integration of market rationalities into the ‘public’ field of citizenship, as well as in analyzing the consequences for economically marginalized citizens, who have so far been ‘covered’ by the principles of collective social protection in the traditional Nordic welfare system. Based on our analysis of individual experiences among low-income and middle-class families, we suggest that there are also indications in the Nordic welfare states of a new emerging consumer-citizenship regime. This however, not surprisingly looks different from British and other more liberal European welfare state regimes. We suggest that such changes of the welfare state regime can be identified in several ways. First, economic security is, also in the Nordic countries increasingly becoming a field of (self)government. Second, ‘rational economic conduct’ including ‘coping’ and economical independency is generally regarded as important economic goal of individual households. Third, there seems to be an increased pressure to ‘individualize’ the responsibility for the future economically as well as socially. Fourth and related to all the previous points, there are some clear tendencies of ‘othering’ within the consumer-citizenship regime along the lines of

gender and ethnicity/nationality. Finally, there are quite clear indications that citizens view their rights and responsibilities as consumers as a condition of participation in society more generally.

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**Needs, wants and bicycles:
Financial resources, cultural priorities and marginalization
in Nordic families**

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Abstract:

The paper discusses the relationship between a household's financial resources, cultural priorities and children's experience of belonging and integration particularly in the Norwegian society. It suggests a theoretical connection between a relative definition of poverty (Townsend 1979) and Conrad Lodziak's work (2002) on basic needs, needs and wants, and shows how belonging and integration for ethnic minority children is related to consumption possibilities.

A. Introduction

Since the 1970's the Norwegian society has received an increased flow of people from non-western countries, both as refugees and as 'ordinary' immigrants. From 1975 the Norwegian state followed other European welfare states in restricting immigration (Brochmann, Borchgrevink & Rogstad 2003). Nevertheless, the amount of people with non-western backgrounds has increased remarkably all over Norway, but particularly in the biggest cities such as Oslo. In general, these people tend to occupy low salary jobs and are often found working in restaurants, as cleaners or as taxi drivers. Their possibilities to consume are therefore limited (see Wikan 1995). This paper discusses and explores the relationship between a household's financial resources, cultural priorities and children's experience of belonging and integration particularly in the Norwegian society.

Modern childhoods are commercialised in many respects, which have consequences for family dynamics and consumption patterns (NOU: 2001:6, Frønes 2004, Cook 2004, Cross 2004). Social inclusion and participation cost money: organized leisure activities, ordinary leisure activities, to socialize, clothes and other material items. Commercialised childhoods thus challenge family budgets and are experienced as such in many families. A Nordic research project called 'Vulnerability and Consumption in the Nordic welfare states', found that children are prioritized in all kinds of families irrespective of socio-economic situation and cultural background (Bonke, Borgeraas, Døving, Hjort, Hohnen, Montesino, Rysst, Salonen 2005). It seems that parents in most families try their best to 'keep up with the

Jones's' in regard to children's needs and wants in order to avoid them being stigmatized and marginalized. This tendency is also confirmed in other studies (see Kochuyt 2004, Sloth 2004). This means that low income families may be more strained than more well off, privileged families and that the intra-familial negotiations concerning consumption is strongly biased in disfavour of the parents (ibid., Bonke et al. 2005, Nygaard 2005). The Nordic project also pointed to the relationship between low income and ethnic minority families, particularly in the Norwegian context. In addition, my PhD thesis overlaps and includes 9 of the same families as in the Nordic project, and suggests and points to a relationship between possibilities of consumption and children's popularity and sense of belonging in the peer group (Rysst 2006).¹

There exist a vast amount of theories on consumption,² but this paper draws primarily on the works of the Marxist inspired sociologist Conrad Lodziak, particularly the book *The Myth of Consumerism* (2002). His work is more situated in the tradition of 'ordinary consumption' than consumption as symbolic (see Gronow & Warde 2001). In the mentioned book Lodziak criticizes what he terms the "latest ideology of consumerism" for putting too much emphasis on consumption as an "arena of choice and individual freedom", its "symbolic value rather than its material use value" and thus on consumption as "maintenance and expression of self-identity and lifestyle" (ibid.:1).³ Lodziak argues that this reasoning only holds for a minority of people, where the majority is more concerned with consumption as basic needs rather than wants. In a similar vain, ordinary consumption encompasses items mostly taken for granted argued to have no communicative potential, such as water, petrol and electricity, but also 'ordinary' clothes which I will return to soon (see Gronow & Warde 2001).

Parents play an important part in how their children relate to material objects. As long as children live with their families and don't earn their own money, they are totally dependant on parents for their consumption. But that doesn't mean they don't influence family spending (Ekstrøm 1999). They

¹ The present paper is based on data collected in the mentioned Nordic project (Bonke et al. 2005) and my PhD thesis (Rysst 2007). The former includes qualitative interviews with a parent in 25 households in Sweden, Denmark and Norway (a total of 75 families) primarily selected according to degrees of 'vulnerability'. This paper does not use this label for classification of families, but the work of Conrad Lodziak, as will be shown on page 3. My PhD thesis is based on ethnographic fieldwork among sixty-seven 10-year old girls and boys in the same geographical area as the Norwegian families in the Nordic project, called "Eastbroke". The ethnographic field site was first and foremost in a school setting, where I participated in lessons and activities in the school year 2002-2003 but also sporadically throughout 2005.

² See for instance Warde, A. & J. Gronow (2001): *Ordinary consumption*; Paterson, M. (2006): *Consumption and Everyday Life*; Miller, D. (ed.) (1995): *Acknowledging consumption*; Miller, D. (1998): *A Theory of Shopping*; Douglas, M. & B. Isherwood (1996): *The World of Goods- Towards and anthropology of consumption*.

³ 'Consumption' is here understood as 'all that is consumed', and 'consumerism' to 'unnecessary consumption' that does not address needs (Lodziak 2002: 2).

⁴ The data for this part of the paper, and on children in general, is primarily from my PhD thesis (Rysst 2007).

do, in different ways and with different methods. Some children are affected more than others by the parents' degree of authoritarian child-rearing practices. However, what that means is that parents tend to have a say in how money is to be spent. Of the girls and boys I got to know, no clothes or expensive objects were bought totally independent of the opinions and help of their parents.

On this background, this paper discusses, first, some results from the Nordic project concerning household members' cultural priorities and financial resources in relation to consumption patterns. Secondly, the paper discusses the importance of consumption in the relationship between ethnic minority and ethnic majority children in Norway.⁴ More precisely, it focuses on the implications of participation or not in the consumption defined and experienced as necessary for belonging and integration in ethnic majority contexts. In this regard I argue for the fruitfulness of considering the issues of needs and wants in relation to the relative definition of poverty (see Townsend 1979).

Inspired by an article by Martens, Southerton and Scott (2004) for 'bringing children and parents into the sociology of consumption' the above research questions include and are discussed in relation to four themes: learning to consume; lifestyle and identity formation; children's engagements with material culture; and the parent-child relationship (Martens et al. 2004). The first two themes are discussed in the following two sections (B and C), and the last two included in sections C, D and E.

B. Lifestyle and identity formation

Classification of families

In the Norwegian setting, the local junior school served as a gate opener for selection of families to the Nordic project and my PhD thesis. For comparative reasons we included families assumed to have a strained economy, 'vulnerable families', and more well off families called 'established' (middle-class) families. The last mentioned families consist of two-income households in which the attachment to the labour market is stable and secure. The opposite is the case in the families labeled 'vulnerable': they are loosely attached to the labour market, if at all, and have only one (low) income. Details in all the parents' socioeconomic background are not known except for the parents of the children I got to know the best. Therefore when I categorize families as one class or the other, it is primarily based on the parents' present occupation. In this I draw on Lodziak's work (2002) because of his conceptualization of social stratification which I find to be more illuminating than the terms 'established' and 'vulnerable' families.

Lodziak refers to Will Huttons' categorizations of the population of the UK into 'the disadvantaged', 'the marginalized and insecure' and 'the privileged' (Lodziak 2002: 111-112). The classification is primarily based on how people are connected to the labour market, as unemployed, part-time, temporary, fixed-term contract, full-time and so on, and consequences

thereof concerning income, employee rights and consumption behaviour (ibid.). People in the first two categories have a loose connection, those in the first maybe none at all as unemployed, while people in the second category have decent, but insecure employment. Therefore their consumption is sparse and careful because the future is uncertain. 'The privileged' have full time and secure jobs and employment, although not all of them are 'rich' (ibid.).⁵

Related to the people included in this paper, Eastbroke (in Norway) is traditionally a working-class area and remains so today, although some families with higher education also live there. In general, both income and education levels are relatively low compared to Oslo as a whole, and immigrant families, even though they may have an upper or middle-class background from their homeland, usually occupy unskilled and low salary jobs in Norway (Rysst 2005a, see Wikan 1995, Gullestad 2001). Most of the Nordic ethnic minority families included in this paper are not 'privileged', which influence their consumption patterns in that most consumer goods are purchased in cheap chain shops. As such, a family's consumption pattern is a result of the intersection of class and ethnicity, but as we shall see, also gender and age. In passing it is worth noting that the leading and most popular children at Eastbroke live in privileged families, such as Nina, Marit, Ida, Mona, Toril, Morten and Yaran. This also gives an indication of a relationship between economic capital and popularity which I return to later, but which is related to living in and experiencing life in a family context.

The family as experiential space

Every family has a history that consists of different kinds of capital: economic, cultural and social, which are parts of the body structures and dispositions of individual family members, or family 'habitus' (Rudie 2007, Bourdieu 1995, Tomanovic 2004). Economic capital consists of material objects or judicial guarantees concerning such objects, such as money or property. Cultural capital consists of individual characteristics such as education, upbringing and appearance and social capital of social networks and social relationships (Bugge 2002). According to Bugge, it is the uneven distribution of capital that is the basis for how Bourdieu understands class distinctions and power (ibid.), which is the position taken in this paper.

The family history is embodied in individual members and can be identified in appearance, speech, behaviour, manners and taste; they are often habitual and part of family routines and thus related to social stratification or class (see Rudie 2007). The family, but also media and school contribute in the construction of gendered bodies and different forms of personal capital: individual characteristics, material objects and social relationships. As this paper suggests, personal capital influences girls' relationships to both adults and particularly peers, in that popularity is related to forms of capital.

⁵ For instance, a family with one permanent, full-time but low-salary job as cashier in a shop will have difficulties in making ends meet (see Bonke et al. 2005). In the following I use the term 'non-privileged' for the disadvantaged and the marginalized and insecure families if the distinction between the two is irrelevant for the argument. What is important is the experience and implications of little money in the non-privileged families.

The children included in this paper have deliberately been selected based on different socioeconomic backgrounds, or class, in order to investigate how that dimension in intersection with age, gender and ethnicity, influence consumption patterns. Empirical investigations show that significant class differences still exist in Norway (Gullestad 1989, Lien, Liden & Vike 1999, Vike 2001, Helland 2005, Wikan 1995) which lately inspired the Norwegian magazine *Sosiologi idag* (*Sociology today*) to dedicate one issue solely to class analysis. The editors emphasise that despite the changes in working relations, class analysis is still relevant and fruitful. The core of the concept is also today related to authority structures and position in the labour market in addition to education level (ibid.).

Vike argues that expressions of class in Norway today are not by class segregation, ideological differences and political mobilization, but “lifestyle, health, individual choices, individual resources and taste” (Vike 2001:147, my translation). In other words, a consumption pattern with intended visible and conscious elements, not only habitual and ordinary. And as Bourdieu convincingly argues in *Distinction*, education is a good point of departure for marking social class and position. Education and taste form the principles for differentiation, in that people with the same educational level have more in common concerning taste than others (Bourdieu 1995). Implicit in this is also the importance of social background in general, which the concept of habitus encompasses (ibid.). Bourdieu says:

Research shows that all forms of cultural activity (going to museums, concerts, art galleries etc.) and all preferences concerning literature, art or music are closely connected to education level (measured in education title or number of years) (Bourdieu 1995:44).

The cultural and social traditions laid down in a family’s experiential space have an influential role in shaping lifestyle, taste and preferences, but the economy influences the possibilities for implementation. This also includes spending on children and the way they are presented as boys and girls. This is implicitly related to the issues of needs, wants and preferences, to be discussed below.

C. Needs, wants and preferences

Another relevant conceptualization from Lodziak’s work briefly mentioned above concerns needs, wants and preferences. He criticizes the post-modern inspired “ideology of consumerism” for focusing solely on symbolic consumption, on consumption as being only concerned with the freedom of choice and identity construction (Lodziak 2002). It is his contention that consumption primarily is about satisfying basic needs for the majority of people, not preferences and wants, and that ‘needs’, ‘wants’ and preferences are concepts wrongly used synonymously:

Underpinning this difference between needs and wants is the recognition that there are universal needs relevant to an individual’s survival and well-being, whereas wants tend to be associated with the mere preferences of particular individuals. Likewise, as sources of our motives, basic needs are altogether more substantial,

more enduring, and generally, if not always more powerful than wants (Lodziak 2002:4).

He argues that it is difficult to make a clear distinction between the one and the other, and suggests differentiating between “basic or survival needs and other needs, desires or wants” (ibid.: 95). He underlines that a clear distinction is not necessary but a ‘*general*’ distinction that enables most people broadly to establish priorities for courses of action’ (ibid.: 95, italics original).⁶ Most importantly, inspired by Marxism, he argues that the relevance of basic needs for analyzing consumption ‘resides in the consequences of the alienation of labour, and the consequences of employment for our total range of action’ (ibid.: 3).

It is my contention that basic (or survival) needs, needs and wants will always overlap to some extent. The same concerns symbolic and ordinary consumption. In a similar vein, Douglas and Isherwood hold that consumption encompasses both an economic and a cultural dimension (1979). A pair of expensive branded jeans may fulfil both basic needs (to keep warm and hide a naked body) and needs more as wants (*that* pair of jeans secures inclusion in the peer group). If social inclusion and belonging is looked upon as a need, as implied in the relative definition of poverty,⁷ the difficulty of clear separation of the concepts is emphasised. This is because of the relativity and context dependant quality of needs and wants, but also because some choice is possible with the cheapest commodities, regarding for instance colours and style. This makes it feasible to create “their own style” to some extent also among non-privileged families. For instance, they can buy second hand clothes and furniture instead of new ones. However, this option is only realistic if second hand is accepted by the social group the family identifies with, including the children’s peer groups. Of the families I got to know, not one shopped in second hand shops. One father of foreign background living in a marginalised and insecure family said their culture forbade using clothes worn by strangers, while passing down clothes among family members was ok. This indicates that cultural models of suitable clothes are learnt in the experiential space of family which motivate certain forms of consumption.

The terms ‘needs’ and ‘wants’ are closely linked to Lodziak’s concepts of ‘necessity’ versus ‘post-necessity’ spending where only the last variant is compatible with notions of priorities and preferences, which again relates to taste (Lodziak 2002). Different tastes have to do with different preferences and cultural capital, as elaborated by Bourdieu (1986, 1995). He asserts that the economy puts limits on taste, and introduces the concepts of ‘taste of necessity’ and ‘taste of luxury (freedom)’ (ibid.). The first is limited by sparse

⁶ In this paper I understand ‘basic needs’ as absolute survival needs: food, water, clothes and housing to keep warm, in other words as ‘ordinary’ consumption. ‘Needs’ are then relative needs similar to wants.

⁷ Peter Townsend’s definition concerns poverty as a social phenomenon which must be studied in relation to the material standard of living in the society (Stolanowski & Tvetene 2005). He defines poverty as ‘the absence or inadequacy of those diets, amenities, standards, services and activities which are common or customary in society’ (Townsend 1979). Basic needs concerns fulfillment of these conditions.

financial resources, in other words a 'constrained taste' (ibid.), and is in this paper connected to the categories of 'the disadvantaged' and 'the marginalised and insecure' (Lodziak 2002:111-112). The taste for luxury distances itself from necessity and is the taste of the 'winners' (the privileged), they have a real choice, a choice 'the disadvantaged' and 'the marginalised and insecure' don't have. I interpret Lodziak's notion of post-necessity spending and Bourdieu's concept of the taste of luxury to encompass the same phenomenon.

How a family presents itself and its members is thus related to the fulfilment of material and social necessities, preferences and tastes, for instance what clothes children wear and which organised activities children attend after school. These activities may be understood as per se being examples of post-necessity spending. However, related to the relative definition of poverty and the empirical situation in non-privileged families, I hold that children stand the risk of being marginalized if they do not possess a minimum of relevant material items and attend some organized leisure activities. Thus these are more correctly conceptualized as needs rather than wants, and thus as necessity rather than post-necessity spending. Spending on children is thus normatively motivated and connected to a sense of shame and morality (Nygaard 2005).

The issue of 'need' versus 'want' is underlined when children ask for branded clothes or sports gear more expensive than the family can afford. It is in these situations that the relationship between cultural priorities and financial resources become particularly apparent, such as in the disadvantaged Swedish family Sumar, immigrated from the Middle East. In this family the youngest son of nine siblings is 11 years of age and experienced by his parents as having 'expensive' wants or needs. His oldest siblings have moved out of the house and are working. The father is out of job and the mother borrows money every month from her daughters, in order to buy ordinary consumption goods such as food and clothes. They live in an area in which the peer group has defined having branded clothes as necessary for social inclusion. The mother says:

Imagine me opposing to buy what my son wants. If so, he will become stigmatized, the others will not play with him, I have seen that myself. Once they tried to convince him that "it is only your family that exaggerates about not being able to afford buying things".

In a strict sense, the strained family budget thus gave in to post-necessity spending by not buying the cheapest clothes. Or better, that it is a variant of necessity spending because the son would otherwise be marginalized or socially excluded.

A similar situation concerns the Norwegian family Hassan in which Mitha lives. The family consists of mother and four children, Mitha being the third child. The mother has an unsure connection to the labour market and the family is supported by the social services when the salary is below a certain limit. During the interview with her mother, Mitha says: "I need a new bi-

cycle". Her mother agrees and answers that her present bicycle has become too small. But Mitha does not get a new bicycle, she inherits that of her older sister, who gets a new one. Getting an old big enough bicycle is better than using one too small, and in this case both Mitha and her mother are interpreted to think that getting suitable bicycles are more needs than wants. If a child does not own a suitable bicycle, she is not able to move with the other cycling children and might also be teased for not having one. This loss was strongly felt among those children not having a bicycle on the day of school when getting a cycle certificate was on the agenda. On such a day all the children bring their bicycles to school, and the different bicycles are discussed and admired. The day I attended, some five children, all with ethnic minority backgrounds, did not have a bicycle. Luckily for them, they were offered to borrow someone else's bicycle for the test. Nevertheless, such an occasion highlights either cultural priorities in the family to the children's disadvantage, or a real lack of money. It is my suggestion that in the above cases insufficient financial resources caused the lack of bicycles, as the children all lived in disadvantaged families.

The last illustration of the relationship between cultural priorities and financial resources is taken from the Danish family Lødrup. This family of 5 experienced a dramatic change in their family situation through divorce. From being a privileged family living in a villa near Copenhagen, the family had to move to a flat and get financial support through the social services. The mother was an artist but had not worked regularly while raising children, and was not able to get enough work to support herself and the last two children living at home. They surely experienced the situation as 'falling from grace' (Newman 1994). The children had all attended an English private school, and the mother wanted the last two children to continue doing so. This priority might be understood as post-necessity rather than necessity spending, all the time the Danish public schools are free. To keep the children at a private school is thus a result of wants rather than needs, and strains the family budget. In addition, the mother also uses money on other post-necessity spending: going to the theatre and paying the son's ballet classes. Attending dancing lessons was also something the son did before the divorce, which the mother very much wanted him to keep on doing. As such, it was more her wish than his. The interview does not reveal any experienced pressure on behalf of the children for certain items or activities to secure social inclusion. This may be because they moved to a relatively homogeneous area in which most families were non-privileged, making it common to express that 'we can not afford' to buy this or that. Besides, the leisure activity the son attended together with his friends was the 'Club', which is free for children living in families supported by the social services. In other words, families may experience reduced strain on the family budget and less chance of social marginalization by living in a social and economic homogeneous area. The Norwegian field site did not share that homogenous dimension to the same extent, making it easier for children to experience social exclusion, which also is related to popularity. The last two sections discuss cultural priorities, financial resources and the implications thereof from a 'popularity' angle.

D. Popularity, Belonging and Marginalization

Children's relationship with material culture and consumption can not be understood independently of that of their parents, whose taste influences and is exhibited on their children, particularly the very young. It seems important that children do not symbolize a family's poor financial situation, which is strongly connected to feelings of shame (Nygaard 2005, Bonke et al. 2005). As such, children in non-privileged families seldom wore passed-down clothes or garments bought in second-hand shops (ibid.).

In general, parents, particularly mothers, and through them family history and structures, have a great impact on how children look and what activities they find attractive (Rudie 2007, Klepp & Storm-Mathisen 2005, Allan 2005), but children are also influenced by their peers (Frønes 1995). Central to the negotiations between parents and children concerning which clothes to buy are colours and how much of the body is to be shown by tight clothes or little fabric, but certainly also the price of the clothes. In general, non-privileged families buy their clothes in the cheap chain stores. *Hennes & Mauritz* is particularly popular with the girls, but as they approach the teen age they often want more expensive clothes from special youth shops, as the Swedish boy mentioned above. Mitha's mother expressed that her eldest daughter (14 years) particularly wanted such clothes, which she tried to meet as far as she could. The consequence for her was that she very seldom bought anything for herself, and did not socialise by inviting guests etc. In general, this neglect of own needs and wants was common in non-privileged families in the Nordic material. Therefore to put children's needs and wants first is a cultural priority motivating a family's financial dispositions to the disadvantage of the parents' needs and wants.

Obviously, it is easier for privileged families to meet children's demands for consumer goods than for marginalised, insecure and disadvantaged families. The popular girls at the Norwegian site all live in privileged families, and also the housing standard, particularly in the case of Nina, was referred to a couple of times in conversations with Farou and Mitha. "Nina's house has such a huge living room!" I overheard questions concerning the number of rooms in their flats and houses and comments on housing in general. One boy's house was cited because it had an indoor swimming pool, something very rare among ordinary Norwegian people. Mitha, who lived in a small flat with her family, sharing a room with siblings, said she wanted to move to Sinsen, because "there are so many nice villas there".

Some of the children even wrote "my own room" on their wish list for Christmas, because they shared a room with a sibling. Sharing rooms with siblings is not a wanted situation and does not inspire children to invite friends home. The most attractive organization for a house to have is a living room in the basement, where the children and later teenagers can stay without interference from adults. Nina's mother expressed a desire for this, as the only drawback with their present house, even though it had enough rooms and a big living room. In other words, having the financial wherewithal to meet consumer demands from the children and to be able to demonstrate an adequate income is an asset for children aspiring to a place

among the popular. Adler and Adler hold that socioeconomic background was one of the most powerful factors in this regard, particularly among the girls. All the popular girls in their research had upper or upper middle-class background (Adler & Adler 1998), which, as just mentioned, is the situation at the Norwegian site as well. But it is worth remembering that not all children living in privileged families belong to the popular group, but that the ones who do have such a background.

Popularity popped up as an issue shortly after I had started the fieldwork among the 10 year old children at the Norwegian field site. The most visible social activities in class and during breaks circled around certain girls, namely Nina, Marit, Ida, Mitha and Farou. The latter regularly exclaimed something about the first three girls being popular and therefore “deciding everything” and “always getting much attention”. Peer power definitely existed in the relationships between the children and was directly related to popularity. All the children were affected by the popular in one way or other, which became most evident regarding ethnic minority children seeking belonging in the popular group.

The following conversation between Farou and me provides some clues as to how the children experience popularity and serves as an introduction to what is to be discussed in the following. The conversation took place in January 2005 while seated in a café at one big shopping mall in the area. Farou is soon to be twelve years old.

Farou: At my old school I got teased because I had such an old bicycle, which I didn't want to get rid of. It was yellow and it had a basket in front, and the most popular, they always had such big, tall bicycles...with 21 gears and such, and I only had the silly old childish bicycle with three gears!

Mari: But do you mean that in order to be popular you must possess many kinds of things?

Farou: Yes, when you are popular there are in fact people who (admire you and) look up to you, or think they are cool and don't want to do anything else than what they do, and then, if you think about the clothes, then they would probably not go and buy them at a jumble sale.

Mari: So you don't think so? Where do you think they would buy their clothes then?

Farou: Definitely in such expensive stores like *BikBok*, everybody has started to wear such pullovers (she points at her own red hooded, fleece sweater with *FEVER* decorated on the chest).

Mari: Yes, you have bought this at *BikBok*...

Farou: Yes, and then I thought they were so expensive, because they cost a little more than 300 kroner, and then I just wanted to look around a bit, because sometimes they have some things at reduced prices, and then I found this, and then I bought it, and it is quite comfortable to wear (her tone of voice indicates that fashion clothes are not always comfortable....)

Mari: But it is your opinion that you cannot become popular if you don't have some things, like clothes and...

Farou: You only become popular because people think you have cool clothes and such. Mona, she is popular because she is good at football.

Mari: But she has cool clothes and such?

Farou: For the most part, yes. She always wears, almost every day she wears something from *BikBok* or such shops.

Mari: But what is needed in order to become popular, do you think? Do you think you can explain that to me?

Farou: In our school?

Mari: Yes.

Farou: It depends. Solveig and Synne they don't care much about being popular, maybe Solveig a little, but Synne doesn't bother at all. And then it happens that we sometimes are divided into gangs, the sports gang, horse gang, such things...

Mari: Yes. The sports gang....who is this gang?

Farou: The ones who play football.

Mari: Ok. That's mostly the popular children, isn't it?

Farou: I cannot say that I am popular, for I don't know that.

Thus according to Farou it is necessary to have something (economic capital: material objects) or to master an activity (cultural capital: personal characteristics) the others admire or want if you are to become popular. She points to the popular children having expensive bicycles with many gears, clothes from expensive shops, or being good at activities like football. Ida's big asset is probably her talent as a dancer, which is an activity with high prestige. She travels abroad and participates in international dancing contests and does very well. Mona is a talented football player, is pretty and has heightened her position and popularity during the period I have known them. The above-mentioned girls are also scholastically clever. Together, as popular girls with power, they have decided that the most attractive activity after school is either dance, skiing and particularly football. As a result, most of the ethnic Norwegian girls do play football, and the ones who do not experience a degree of marginalisation and pressure to join, as in the cases of Farou and Mitha. All the cited activities cost money. Dance is the most expensive activity, and it would not be financially possible for Mitha and Farou to participate in dancing competitions like Ida does. However, they did join the football team, which is a cheaper activity.

It is particularly among girls (and boys) who don't have stable friendship circles that the experience of belonging and integration is most severely felt (see Ginsberg, Gottman & Parker 1986). 10 girls of ethnic minority and 6 girls with ethnic-Norwegian backgrounds don't belong to a stable friendship circle, but associate with dyads or one another from one situation or day to the next. Of those girls are Mitha and Farou, who constantly try to associate to the popular group of Nina, Marit and Ida, and who are excluded and included depending on the situation and the mood of these three girls. This was emphasised when the three popular planned going shopping without adults. Mitha wanted very much to join them, and overheard the planning while accompanying Nina and Marit to and from school. Still she was not allowed to come "because they should only be three, not four". The exclusion has been most seriously felt by Mitha because she lives closer to them than Farou, and because, according to Mitha, "she and Nina were best friends in the 1st grade". They had known one another for a longer period of time as Farou only moved into the area in the 4th grade. And Farou has been trying out the relationship with Nina every now and again. The most stable

relationship concerned mutual interest in the *Witch* magazines, something that united them in a *Witch* club lasting a couple of weeks.

The most conspicuous of the much exclusion experienced by Mitha and Farou (at least the ones I know of) was not being invited to Nina's birthday party in the 5th grade. According to Mitha, this was because Nina said there was not enough space in their home, which is not very credible: she lives in a big house. Farou, however, said they were not invited because they are 'brown', in fact no 'browns' were invited. The same pattern occurred when Ida arranged a pyjamas party a couple of months later, and also when their classmate Ellen invited no 'browns' to her birthday party. When I asked her about her party, her eyes started to wander and she started to talk about something else before she walked off. The teachers had repeatedly talked to the children about not discriminating or excluding others based on race or skin colour. All the children knew that was strictly forbidden and any racist assaults never went unnoticed either by children or teachers. Therefore the children knew that inviting only children with white skin colour to parties was not really acceptable and those who did, such as Nina, Ida and Ellen above, would never say that cultural origin was the reason for not inviting certain children. They made other explanations such as not having enough space, permitting only a certain number of children etc.

However, the school policy and official social inclusion and anti-racist attitudes in the Norwegian society in general, resulted in few overt conflicts with racial content. During the fieldwork period I sensed that the relevance of skin colour for friendship and belonging had nothing to do with the skin colour as such, but to how much alike or 'same' the child was experienced to be in relevant social contexts. This is directly related to the relationship between possibilities for consumption and lack of marginalization, as exemplified by the boy Yaran. He lives in a privileged family with Asian background and he participated in relevant social contexts for integration such as birthday parties and football. In addition his peers interpreted him to have cool enough clothes, good looks and attractive possessions, such as a cellular phone and skiing gear. As a result, he was probably experienced as more the 'same' to ethnic-Norwegians than the other boys with ethnic minority background and thus seemed more integrated. This is better achieved if children of ethnic minority backgrounds attend activities after school, such as football, dance, handball and birthday parties, but which strain the family budgets in different degrees.

Much effort has been made by Mitha and Farou in their struggle to be included among the popular girls. It is not easy to understand why they do this, why cannot they just be a dyad and create their own little circle inviting others to join? As 'birds of a feather' they should 'flock together', but apparently this strategy does not attract them. They could also get a stable attachment to one of the other friendship circles, which does not attract them either. I suggest that the desire to belong to the popular and cool group has such a strong motivational force, making them choose an offensive strategy rather than withdrawal or isolation. This is the strategy that other girls, irrespective of ethnic background, have chosen in relationship to the popular

group. They adapt to or withdraw from their dominance. Nevertheless, the agency of Nina, Marit and Ida is the perfect example of how peer power works: the structuring of a peer hierarchy and culture with few words and weak opposition.

Ragnhild Brusdal points to similar social processes among children and youth living in less privileged families (Brusdal 2004). She emphasizes that social participation often costs money and requires material items of different kinds, for example certain clothes. Children unable to match these demands have a tendency to withdraw or choose an offensive strategy trying to buy or get hold of the material items needed. This they do with the help of small jobs and sometimes even by using white lies (ibid.). Of the children I got to know these strategies were present, and a dominant impression is that it costs money to be cool and thus popular. When the social setting consists of families with significant variations in income, as the situation was in varying degrees at the Nordic field sites, the financial cost of social inclusion is felt more deeply among less privileged families. Moreover, when the situation is that the popular and dominant group of girls, who have the power to define what is in and worth having for being cool, the postulation that coolness and inclusion cost money increases in relevance (see Pountain Robins 2000, Cross 2004). I'll therefore explore the postulation of coolness, belonging and price below.

E. It costs money to be cool

The following table of the distribution of positive answers to possession of popular material objects among the children serve as a point of departure.

5A and 5B Eastbroke: Children who answered "yes"					
	Ethnic Norwegians		Ethnic minority		
	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Total
Have their own room	10	11	7	6	34
Have their own cellular phone	6	3	5	4	18
Have a TV set in their room	5	3	5	8	21
Have a family PC with Internet	8	13	5	7	33
Have their own bicycle	10	13	8	11	42
Have their own cross country skis	8	11	2	1	22
Have their own slalom skis	3	7	3	1	14
Have their own snow-board	4	5	1		10
Have their own slide board	9	12	7	9	37
Have their own slide	7	10	3	3	23
	10 boys	13 girls	10 boys	13 girls	46

The most marked difference concerns having their own room or not. The table shows that 21 out of 23 ethnic-Norwegian children and only 13 out of 23 with ethnic minority background have their own room. The second marked difference concerns having a family PC with internet, and the third concerns winter sports gear. It comes as no surprise that ethnic-Norwegian children are better equipped in the latter. In addition, gear is offered at variable prices, where expensive brands are most attractive. It is worth noting that the distribution of cellular phones is modest and shows no marked ethnic difference.

My PhD thesis finds that children become consumers in their own right in increasing degrees with age. They express a desire for own money making them do small jobs and ask for pocket money, but few received this on a regular basis. By explicitly asserting needs and wants that cost money, including what activities to attend after school, they become potentially expensive for the family economy. This is more deeply felt in non-privileged families having children wanting to be 'cool', than in families with children not aspiring such a position. This is because being 'cool' implies imi-

tation of teenage consumer culture. This means more expenses for the family in that teenagers cost more money than children, teenage style and clothes are often more expensive than that of children (Brusdal 2004). The aspiration to begin following teenage style was manifested for the popular girls in their desire to have and buy clothes in more expensive shops than the cheapest chains. As Mitha and Farou live in marginalised and insecure families they can only afford this style to some extent, and their parents cannot afford giving them expensive sports gear giving status in the peer group, such as expensive bicycles, snowboards and different skis. The importance of having (and doing) the right things even make some children lie. Mitha said she owned a snowboard when she in fact brought none when the class went on a winter tour. Once she also said the family was going on summer holiday to Cyprus, which never happened. The lies were revealed and thus never became assets in the quest for social inclusion and popularity. Last Christmas Farou's greatest wish was for a pair of slalom skis, which she did not get. But she was given money to buy them. It was evident that what mattered most was the admiration she hoped to inspire when the others found out she had her own slalom skis. This echoes the conversation concerning the cool or childish bicycles in Farou's definition of popularity. The experiences with Mitha and Farou wanting to buy and use cool material items in order to increase their chances of becoming best friends with the popular group, inspire the assertion that "it costs money to be cool", and thus has special implications for children living in families with little money (Rysst 2005b).

The circles of children of ethnic minority backgrounds do on the whole live in marginalised, insecure or disadvantaged families (see Wikan 1995, Gullestad 2001). In general they lack fashionable bicycles, winter sports gear and other sports gear necessary for participation in relevant ethnic-Norwegian social contexts. Many share a religious and cultural background imposing constraints on how to socialise in Norwegian society. The lack of relevant material items is more widespread among the Muslim girls than the boys, and they do not participate much in the contexts of paid, organised activities. In other words, consumption relevant for social inclusion is gendered, illustrating the intersection of gender, age class and ethnicity in this regard.

The lack of participation of particularly girls with Muslim backgrounds in ethnic-Norwegian social contexts also concerns private arrangements. Few children of ethnic minority backgrounds attend birthday parties or arrange parties on their own birthdays (see also Hagevold 2006). In this Mitha and Farou were exceptions, along with a few others. It is not known if the reasons for not attending birthdays or after school activities for girls are financial or cultural, but given the variety of girls' participation in ethnic minority families sharing similar financial conditions, it is likely that it is cultural priorities that result in girls' lack of participation. The consequences for many girls are a lack of belonging and integration in the ethnic-Norwegian society. Instead "birds of a feather flock together"; the brown-skinned have their friends among the brown-skinned and thus experience some sense of emotional belonging in parallel societies. It is a be-

longing that isolates them from what is going on among their peers of ethnic-Norwegian background. It is beyond doubt that after-school activities create social milieus and belonging for the children participating and often do so for their families as well (for instance if they come to football matches etc.). Which activities it is most important to attend in order to experience enough belonging and integration is a matter which to a large extent is defined by the peer group and influenced by peer pressure.

Vacation is also a field of consumption in which the relationship between cultural priorities and financial resources are revealed. Ethnic Norwegians expect to leave home, while some ethnic groups such as the Pakistani and Iraqi, have no tradition of going away on their days off. Parents told me that their children exert pressure to go away on holidays, which led the Iraqi family to “put a tent in the car and go camping to different places in Norway”. Going away on holidays, especially abroad, is attractive among ethnic-Norwegian children and something they tell about when back in school. This is probably the reason why Mitha lied about her Cyprus vacation. Exciting vacations are also assets in the popularity game and directly related to culturally motivated consumption patterns.

F. Concluding remarks

The mentioned Nordic project and my PhD thesis highlight a clear connection between cultural priorities and financial resources regarding children’s belonging and integration in the ethnic Norwegian society. As noted, modern childhoods are increasingly commercialised in that social participation, including clothing and socialising, cost money. What ‘objectively’ could be regarded as post-necessity spending, such as ‘over-the-average’ expensive clothes and attending paid organized activities is today better understood as necessity spending and a variant of ordinary consumption. As such, it is difficult to distinguish between needs and wants, if turning a child’s ‘wants’ down results in marginalization and social exclusion. These relationships made me argue in this paper for a theoretical connection between a relative definition of poverty and Lodziak’s understanding of basic needs, needs, wants, necessity and post-necessity spending.

What exactly is ‘needed’ to experience social inclusion and belonging will vary according to social and geographical contexts, place of living and socio-cultural identification. If it is a political aim in the Nordic countries to promote social equality and social integration for as many children as possible, it is necessary to map the extent of marginalization and the reasons why this is so. This paper thus points to an intersection of particularly class, gender and ethnicity regarding consumption patterns and risks of marginalization. It is a political challenge to bridge the gap between low-income, cultural priorities, belonging and integration for particularly girls living in ethnic-minority families.

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The Influence of Prices on a Healthy Diet

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to identify to which extent budgets and consumers' potential low valuation of health attributes from food might be a barrier for them to eat healthier. The estimations are based on an extensive panel dataset with monthly purchases of food, in terms of prices and volume, linked with nutrition data. An econometric model is formulated which estimates implicit prices for changing diets in a more healthy direction. These "prices" are used to calculate the change in food expenditure associated with fulfilling the dietary guidelines and to identify households which value the health attributes of food less than other households. The results suggests that information campaigns alone are not enough to provide healthy eating, the costs of changing diets in a more healthy direction and low valuation of health attributes of food for some households have to be taken into account.

1. Introduction

Health problems related to bad diets and obesity are among the major nutrition problems in most industrialised countries, as they lead to increased blood cholesterol levels and risk of various lifestyle related illnesses. During the last two decades the Danish health authorities have conducted massive campaigns aimed at the whole population to encourage a decreased intake of saturated fat and an increased intake of fish, fruit and vegetables. There is evidence that consumers have reacted positively towards these campaigns by lowering their intake of saturated fat and increasing their intake of fish and vegetables (Astrup *et al.*, 2002, Haraldsdóttir *et al.*, 2005, Astrup *et al.* 2005). Despite these positive signs, statistics show that the share of the population with severe overweight is still growing, especially for the lower educated and low income groups. This fact underlines the need to understand possible barriers for further improvement in diets to intensify the effort against overweight and lifestyle related illnesses. One explanation might be that some consumer segments value health less and taste more than other segments, making the implicit costs of changing diets in

a healthier direction larger for these groups than for others. In modern society, there is often a trade-off between taste and health, concerning many foods, where taste, on the one hand, especially encourages consumption of fatty, salty and sweet food, whereas health awareness, on the other hand, especially discourages consumption of the exact same food. Which of these effects dominate remains an open question, although an important one to answer if we want to understand the drivers behind obesity and diet related lifestyle illnesses. The objective of this paper is to estimate whether consumers' valuation of the health characteristics inherent in foods might be a barrier towards healthy eating and if consumers meet substantial additional food expenditure associated with a change in diets in a more healthy direction. To find the values attached by consumers to health we therefore estimate a hedonic price model, where six different health characteristics are treated as inseparable parts of an entity, the total diet. The theory of hedonic pricing originates from the seminal work of Lancaster (1971). The main idea is that characteristics or attributes of goods yield utility to the consumer through a process where goods (alone or in combination with other goods) produce outputs (consumption services) valued by the consumer. Assuming consumers' value goods for the characteristics they yield, the fundamental insight that Lancaster provides for demand analysis is: The price of a commodity can be decomposed into the sum of the implicit prices for each attribute multiplied by the amount of each respective attribute provided by that good (Ladd and Suvannunt, 1976). The theory has mostly been applied to durable goods, but is also applied to aggregate categories of foods (e.g. Lenz *et al.*, 1994) and individual food categories (e.g. Shi and Price, 1998). Lately Ranney and McNamara (2002) infer the implicit market valuation of dietary quality from the total expenditure on food. The implicit values for dietary attributes (or implicit prices) are estimated holding constant the other factors that affect food expenditures. The contributions of this paper are twofold. First, due to the fact that our data are panel data it is possible to remove individual heterogeneity from the estimates and secondly, it is possible to follow the valuation of nutrients over time. The rest of the paper is organized as follows; section 2 describes the used panel data and how these can be used to describe the healthiness of diets, Section 3 is devoted to the theoretical background for the hedonic price model, section 4 describes the empirical considerations and estimation procedure and section 5 the results. The last section 6 includes discussion and conclusion.

2. Data and eating patterns in Denmark

Data

The analysis is performed using a household panel data set from GfK-Denmark covering approximately 3000 households representative for the Danish population spanning the period 1999 – 2004.¹ This data set contains weekly records of purchases of a large variety of food types on a detailed level covering 80% of the total household grocery budget. These purchase data are coupled with nutrition data for more than a thousand foods from the Food Composition Databank from the Danish Institute for Food and Veterinary research² on the most detailed level. The connection of GfK data with the nutrition data from the Food composition databank makes the purchased quantities of nutrients available together with total expenditures on and prices on foods. Apart from the purchase registrations the households fill in a questionnaire on a yearly basis on their background including socio-demographic characteristics (family size, age, number of children, level of education, region, income etc.), body mass index, exercise and media habits (e.g. preferred newspapers and magazines) For a detailed description of GfK data see Smed (2002) or Andersen (2006). From these data a Healthy Eating Index (HEI) is constructed measuring how far the individual households are from fulfilling the official diet recommendations published by the Danish Ministry of Family and Consumer affairs. These recommendations consists of six guidelines: Eat 600 grams of fruit and vegetable a day, eat 200-300 grams of fish a week, eat 22 grams of fibres per day, max 35 percent of total daily energy intake from fat, max 10 percent of total daily energy intake from saturated fat and max 10 percent of total daily energy intake from added sugar. To make the dietary guidelines comparable the guidelines for the intake of fish, fruit, vegetables and fibres are converted into recommended intake as percent of total energy intake. For a detailed description of this transformation see Smed (2007). Each household get scores between 0 and 10 measuring how close they are to fulfil each of the six dietary guidelines. 0 is the lowest, representing an intake as far as possible from fulfilling the guideline while the number 10 is given to an intake which is in accordance with the guideline (or better). Households with an intake between the maximum and the minimum are assigned scores proportionally according to a linear scale. These six numbers are weighted equally in the HEI and the healthiness of the diet for each household are

¹ The panel is only a pseudo panel since there is a replacement of 20% of the panel each year.

² http://www.foodcomp.dk/fcdb_default.asp

calculated as a Euclidean distance measure telling how close the individual households are to fulfil all the dietary guidelines:

$$HEI_m = \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^N (z_i)^2} \quad (1.1)$$

N is the number of dietary recommendations (six in this case), z_i is the score for each of the dietary guidelines ($z_i \in [0;10]$), m account for the individual household. For a more rigorous description of the construction of the HEI see Smed (2007).

Description of the healthiness of diets

The diets of the Danes have been approaching the official guidelines from 1999 to 2004 as it appears from Figure 1 below, showing the HEI value averaged over all consumers in the panel. The increase in the HEI is based on consumers getting closer to the recommendations for fat, saturated fat, fruit and vegetables. There is a strong seasonality in how healthy the average diet is, with a large increase in the HEI each year in January. This seasonality is found for each of the dietary guidelines except fish (Smed, 2007).

Figure 1: Development in the HEI value over time averaged over all consumers in the panel



The panel is divided into groups according to the age and education of the main buyer. Figure 2 shows the distribution of the HEI value, averaged over 2004, for each of these. According to these figures there larger shares of households in the higher end of the scale (eating healthier) in the groups of older households than in the groups of younger households. For

educational groups³ there are a larger share of households with a medium or longer theoretical education in the higher end of the scale (eating healthier) while there are larger shares of households with a shorter theoretical, vocationally oriented or no education in the lower end of the scale (eating less healthy).

Figure 2: The frequencies of HEI values for different age groups and different educational groups, average 2004

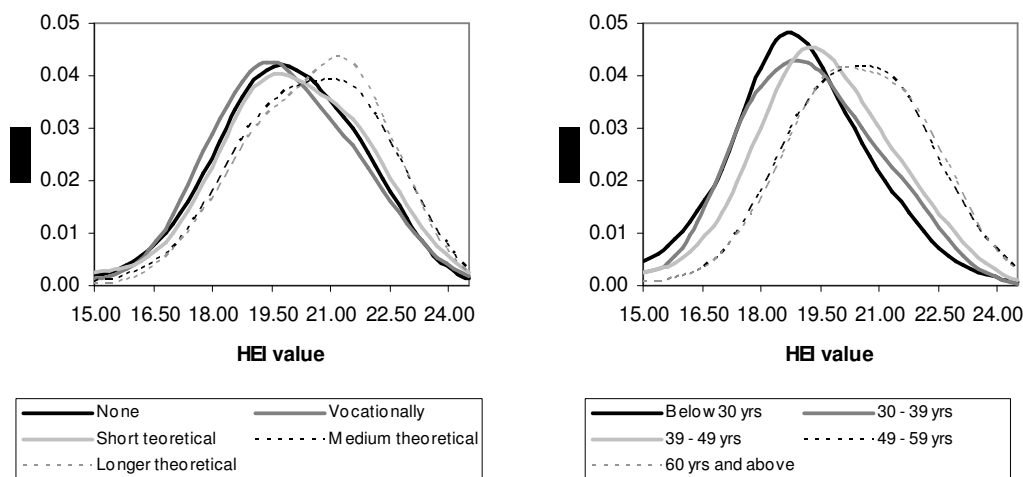
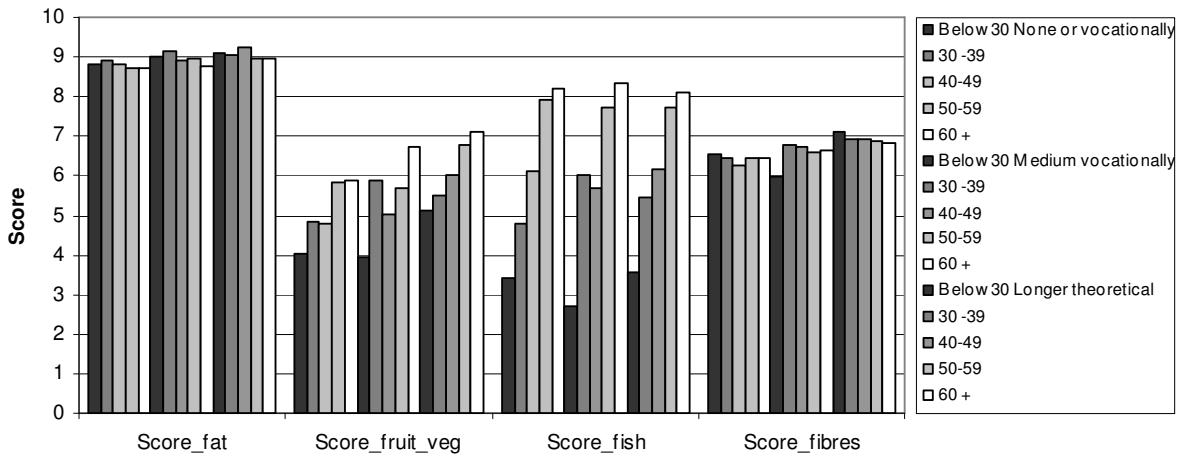


Figure 3 indicate that the main causes to the observed differences in healthiness of diets for age and educational groups are differences in how close the individual households are from fulfilling the guideline concerning vegetables and fruits. Older households and households with a medium or longer theoretical education are closer to fulfil this guideline than other households. For fibres and fat it is the younger and more educated household which are closest to the guidelines. There are no significant and systematic differences between how far the average household in each of these groups are from fulfilling the guidelines for saturated fat and sugar. Other studies show that younger individuals have a larger consumption of sugar than older households (Fagt *et al.*, 2001), but the fact that the data used in this study do not include consumption outside the household (e.g. sweets, chocolate and ice-cream) can explain this difference.

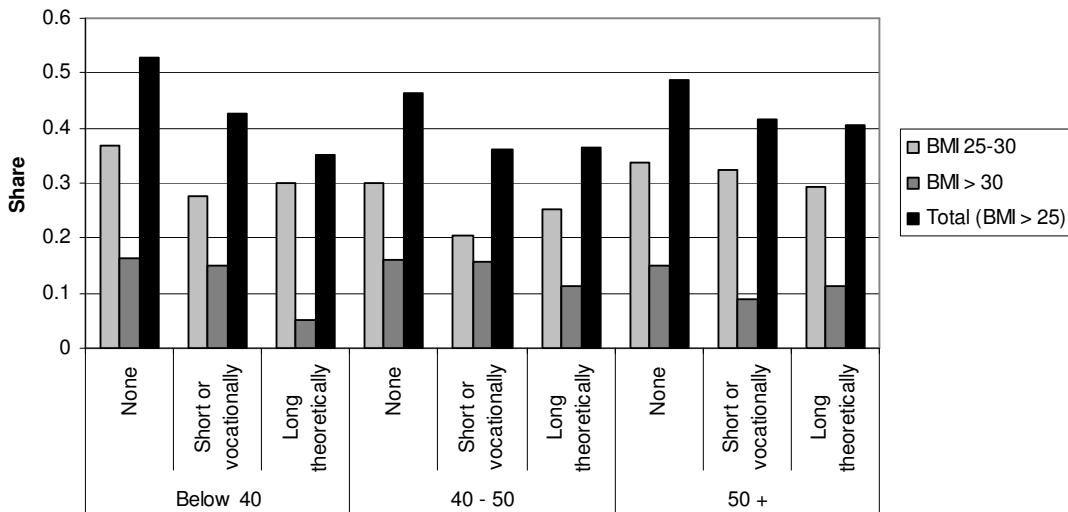
³ A longer theoretical education includes e.g. university degrees and medical doctors. A medium theoretical education includes e.g. nurses and bachelors. A short theoretical education includes e.g. police officers and technical educations. Vocational oriented educations include e.g. nurse assistants and brick layers. No education includes all households where the main buyer has no further education.

Figure 3: The scores for selected guidelines averaged over households in different age and educational groups, average 2004



If the dietary patterns evolving from Figure 3 and Figure 2 are compared with the calculated shares of overweight and obese individual for different age and educational groups shown in Figure 4, there is evidence that at least part of the difference in the prevalence of obesity in each of these groups might stem from differences in diet composition.

Figure 4: Share of overweight and obese individuals in different age and educational groups, 2004



3. Theoretical construction of implicit prices

The following section explains the theory of hedonic pricing, which is used to estimate consumers' valuation (implicit prices) of changing diets to be in accordance with each of the six dietary guidelines. The approach follows Ladd and Zober (1977), Lenz, Mittelhammer

and Shi (1994), Shi and Price (1998) and Ranney and McNamara (2002). Like in the papers above we only consider demand-side interactions (opposite Rosen, 1974), since the individual consumer is assumed not to be able to affect prices nor the amount of health characteristics in each good.⁴

A consumer purchases a vector of J (running index j) foods. Let g denote the vector of purchased food quantities. The consumer purchases health (or the opposite), described by a vector of health characteristics, h , characterising the healthiness of the vector of purchased foods. (In the actual estimations these health characteristics might be the scores that the households have been assigned according to their proximity to each of the dietary guidelines or it might be the HEI value). Together with health the consumer purchases non-nutritional characteristics (like taste), which we assume can be described by a unique characteristic associated with each good in the vector, g . Households are assumed to derive utility from health h , the non-nutritional characteristics of food and consumption of non-food goods y . In the following derivation of the hedonic price equation the subscript of household m is suppressed due to ease of notation.

$$U = u(g_1, \dots, g_J, h, y | \Omega) \quad (1.2)$$

Ω is a vector of socio-demographic variables characterising each household and

$y = X_{tot} - pg$ where X_{tot} is total consumption. This reduces to

$U = u(u_X(g_1, \dots, g_J, h | \Omega), u_Y(y | \Omega))$ in the case of separability between food consumption and consumption of other goods. Health is a function of the health characteristics, z , which again is a function of the purchased food.

$$h = h(z(g)) \quad (1.3)$$

In principle exercise and the expenses for medication ought to be a part of the health function, but due to lack of panel data on this, it is omitted in the equation. The connection between the health characteristics and food purchased is assumed to be described through a

⁴ On a long-term basis consumers might be able to influence the health characteristics of food due to the introduction of new products caused by demand effects, but this effect is assumed to be of minor importance on a short term basis.

linear function, the technology matrix A . $z = A' g$. If (1.3) is inserted in (1.2) utility in the case of separability will be defined as:

$$U = u_X(g_1, \dots, g_J, h(z(g))) | \Omega \quad (1.4)$$

Consumers maximize this utility function subject to a budget constraint, $p' g \leq X$, where p is prices and X is the budget for foods. Consumers maximize this utility function where the n first order conditions are:

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial g_i}(g, h(z(g))) + \frac{\partial u}{\partial h}(g, h(z(g))) \frac{\partial h}{\partial z}(z(g)) \frac{\partial z}{\partial g_i}(g) - \frac{\partial u}{\partial X}(g, h(z(g))) p_i = 0 \quad (1.5)$$

The derivatives, $\frac{\partial z}{\partial g_i}$ are described through the elements in the technology matrix a_{ij} . $\frac{\partial u}{\partial X}$ is the marginal utility of money. Following the traditional theory and holding constant the marginal utility of money over time and households (see e.g. Lenz, Mittlehammer and Shi, 1994; Ladd and Zober, 1977; Ladd and Suvannut, 1976) prices are isolated

and $\frac{\partial u}{\partial h} \frac{\partial h}{\partial z} \Big/ \frac{\partial u}{\partial X} = MRS$ between expenditure and the health characteristics or $\frac{\partial u}{\partial h} \Big/ \frac{\partial u}{\partial X} = MRS$

between expenditure and the health function. These marginal rate of substitution can be interpreted as the marginal implicit price π of each of the health characteristics (or the

marginal implicit price of the health function) while $\frac{\partial u}{\partial g_i} \Big/ \frac{\partial u}{\partial X} = MRS$ between non-nutritional

aspects of food consumption and expenditure i.e. the marginal implicit price of non-nutritional characteristics of food consumption (e.g. taste) τ . This means that the price of a food can be divided into a non-nutritional part unique to the good in question and a part which depends on the amount of health characteristics. With no restrictions apart from that the marginal utility of money is constant the implicit price of the health characteristics and the non-nutritional characteristic at time t will depend on the amount of all goods purchased, the amount of healthiness, which is a function of the health characteristics (which again is a function of the goods purchased) and socio-demographic variables according to (1.6) below

(The equation is here expressed with subscripts for household in order to specify which variables are dependent on individual household variables) .

$$\begin{aligned}
 P_{jm,t} = & \tau_{jm,t} \left(\sum_{j=1}^J g_{jm,t}, h \left(z_{im,t} \left(\sum_{j=1}^J g_{jm,t} \right) \right) \middle| \Omega_m \right) \\
 & + \sum_i^I \pi_{m,t} \left(\sum_{j=1}^J g_{jm,t}, h \left(z_{im,t} \left(\sum_{j=1}^J g_{jm,t} \right) \right) \middle| \Omega_m \right) \cdot a_{ij}
 \end{aligned} \tag{1.6}$$

If these first order conditions (1.6) are inserted in the budget constraint we get the following equation where total outlay on foods is a function on total outlay on non-nutritional characteristics (the implicit price of non-nutritional characteristics times the amounts of goods bought) and total outlay on health characteristics (the implicit price of the health characteristics times the amount of each health characteristic since $\sum_{j=1}^J a_{ij} \cdot g_j = z_i$ due to the assumption of additivity of nutrient across goods):

$$\begin{aligned}
 X_{m,t} = & \sum_{j=1}^J \tau_{jm,t} \left(\sum_{j=1}^J g_{jm,t}, h \left(z_{im,t} \left(\sum_{j=1}^J g_{jm,t} \right) \right) \middle| \Omega_m \right) \cdot g_{j,t} \\
 & + \sum_{j=1}^J \sum_i^I \pi_{m,t} \left(\sum_{j=1}^J g_{jm,t}, h \left(z_{im,t} \left(\sum_{j=1}^J g_{jm,t} \right) \right) \middle| \Omega_m \right) \cdot z_{i,t}
 \end{aligned} \tag{1.7}$$

Some assumptions apply throughout this paper. These are: separability of total consumption from food consumption; and secondly that the non-nutritional characteristics of food are independent of the health characteristics and visa versa. Thereby (1.7) reduces to:

$$X_{m,t} = \sum_{j=1}^J \tau_{jm,t} \left(\sum_{j=1}^J g_{jm,t} \middle| \Omega_m \right) \cdot g_{j,t} + \sum_i^I \pi_{m,t} \left(h \left(z_{im,t} \left(\sum_{j=1}^J g_{jm,t} \right) \right) \middle| \Omega_m \right) \cdot z_{i,t} \tag{1.8}$$

4. Empirical considerations and estimation

The following section describes the empirical considerations connected with estimation of equation (1.8) where each household's monthly food expenditure is inserted as a function of the amounts of j different foods and the amount of i different health characteristic in order to estimate households valuation (implicit price) of the non-nutritional characteristics in foods

and the valuation (implicit price) of health characteristics. Several versions of the model (1.8) are estimated imposing varying assumptions. Following Ranney and McNamara (2002) a cross-section model, where the part of expenditure used on non-nutritional factors is assumed to be described totally by socio-demographic variables, is estimated. This is equivalent to assume linearity in both the non-nutritional characteristics and in the health characteristics (assuming that the implicit price of health and non-nutritional characteristics are independent of the level of consumption):

$$X_{m,t} = \Omega_m + \sum_i^I \pi_i \cdot z_{m,j,t} + \varepsilon_{i,t} \quad (1.9)$$

If the individual heterogeneity is not totally covered by the socio-demographic variables this approach will give biased parameters since unobserved non-nutritional characteristics will be correlated with the choice of health characteristics as pointed out by Bartik (1987).

$$X_{m,t} = \Omega_m + \sum_i^I \pi_i \cdot z_{m,j,t} + \eta_m + \varepsilon_{i,t} \quad (1.10)$$

To solve this problem we can apply that the dataset actually used is a panel dataset and the function can be estimated in differences. To the extent that the socio-demographic variables are assumed to be constant over time the equation will reduce to:

$$\Delta X_{m,t} = \sum_i^I \pi_i \cdot z_{m,j,t} - \sum_i^I \pi_{i,t-1} \cdot z_{m,j,t-1} + \Delta \varepsilon_{i,t} \quad (1.11)$$

This will imply the assumption that the amount that a household use on non-nutritional characteristics is constant over time and that the implicit prices for the health characteristics are the same across consumers.

When estimating (1.11) the total expenditure for each household on the left hand side is inserted as expenditure per person⁵ per month in order to make households of different sizes equivalent for comparisons. The health characteristics, z_i , representing each of the dietary recommendations takes the value $z_i \in [0;10]$. The problem with this variable is that it is censored at the value 10, since households which do better than the guideline (e.g. eat more vegetables or less saturated fat than recommended) only get a score of 10. This will result in

⁵ This variable is calculated using the OECD consumption unit equivalence scale. On this scale, the first adult is given a weight of 1.0 and all other adults a weight of 0.7. Children get a weight of 0.5 (for details, see Atkinson, 1995, pp. 80-1).

biased parameters. To avoid this, the health characteristics are inserted as energy shares in the estimations, and the estimated implicit price is translated into a price for getting one unit closer to the guidelines subsequently, according to Smed (2007). This calculation is necessary since the implicit price estimated for the shares are not easily interpreted.

The model is effectively treated as a fixed effects model and is estimated with OLS. It appears as a repeated cross section, but estimated in one model, where the explanatory variables are a block matrix with one block for each time period. The m for household is suppressed due to ease of notation.

$$\begin{pmatrix} \Delta X_{m,t} \\ \Delta X_{m,t+1} \\ \vdots \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} \sum_{i=1}^I \beta_{z_i,t} \cdot Z_{m,i,t} - \left(\sum_{i=1}^I \beta_{z_i,t-1} \cdot Z_{m,i,t-1} \right) & 0 & \dots + \Delta \varepsilon_t \\ 0 & \sum_{i=1}^I \beta_{z_i,t+1} \cdot Z_{m,i,t+1} - \left(\sum_{i=1}^I \beta_{z_i,t} \cdot Z_{m,i,t} \right) & \dots + \Delta \varepsilon_{t+1} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots \end{pmatrix} \quad (1.12)$$

A Wald test is performed in order to test whether it is appropriate to put in restrictions across time periods i.e. to test if the parameter $\beta_{z,t}$ at time $t = t + 1$ is equal to the parameter $\beta_{z,t}$ in time t . The result of the Wald test is that it cannot be rejected that the parameters are equal across time in either of the model specifications, $\text{Pr} > \text{Chisq} = 0.42$. The model are estimated in levels and in differences and the results are compared in the first part of the result section.

In equations (1.10) and (1.11) there are two restrictive assumptions. One is that the implicit prices of the health characteristics are the same for all types of households and the other that the expenditure on taste is equal in each period. The first of these assumptions are released in the subsequent following Shi and Price (1998), still assuming linearity and that the amount spent on taste is constant. Equation (1.8) therefore transforms into:

$$X_{m,t} = \sum_{i=1}^I \pi_{i,t} \Omega_m z_{mi,t} + \eta_m + \varepsilon_{m,t} \quad (1.13)$$

And again in differences

$$\Delta X_{m,t} = \sum_{i=1}^I \pi_{i,t} \Omega_m z_{mi,t} - \sum_{i=1}^I \pi_{i,t-1} \Omega_m z_{mi,t-1} + \Delta \varepsilon_{m,t} \quad (1.14)$$

The choice between which and how many socio-demographic groups to insert in the estimations is a trade-off between having as many groups as possible in order to model the differences in the implicit prices for the health characteristics as accurate as possible and not have too many parameters in the model. Especially three socio demographic parameters are found to have influence on the composition of food demand in earlier research (Smed, 2002) and for the healthiness of diets (Smed, 2007). These are geography, age and education. Generally, we assume that differences in implicit price for the health characteristics only depend on these observable socio-demographic characteristics.

5. Results

Table 1 show the results of an estimation for the year 2004⁶ of equation (1.10). The original model contained more variables, but only parameters with a significant effect on expenditures are retained and shown in the results.

Table 1: Parameter values from the estimation of the hedonic price equation in levels and in differences.

Parameter	Levels(equation 1.10)			Differences (equation 1.11)	
	Estimate	Std	Pr> t	Parameter	Estimate
Constant	172.25	22.59	<.0001		
Main_buyer_age	15.17	0.75	<.0001		
Main_buyer_age_sqrt	-0.12	0.01	<.0001		
Main_buyer_short_theoret_edu	6.4	4.4	0.146		
Main_buyer_long_medium_theoret_edu	47.38	3.71	<.0001		
Spouse	-193.36	3.5	<.0001		
Buyer_male_both	13.2	3.36	<.0001		
Capital	59.37	4.17	<.0001		
Urban	4.62	3.42	0.1766		
Young_kids	-80.31	6.34	<.0001		
Old_kids	-113.11	5.47	<.0001		
Main_buyer_active_weight	19.04	3.12	<.0001		
BMI of main buyer	1.39	0.32	<.0001		
Fat*	14.79			Fat*	-3.1
Fibres*	-25.73			Fibres*	-7.74
Fish*	4.83			Fish*	2.58
Sat_fat*	-24.95			Sat_fat*	-17.93
Sugar*	4.65			Sugar*	-11.13
Fruit_Veg*	41.44			Fruit_Veg*	39.12
R ² =0.4859				R ² =38.28	

* Since the model is estimated for 12 time-periods this gives 12 implicit prices for each of the six dietary guidelines. Due to space limitations, the implicit price for each of are averaged over the 12 months i.e. there is no standard variation shown, but generally all parameters are significant except the parameter for fat for most months in the estimation in differences and the parameter for sugar in the estimations in levels

⁶ This part of the model is only estimated for 2004 since this is the only year where we have data for BMI and questions concerning attitude towards own weight, exercise and dietary habits.

The results show that there is a relation between expenditure and the healthiness of the diet (the amount of health characteristics in food) and that food expenditures depended on socio-demographic variables. The basic household is located in a rural area with no education, no kid, consists of a single woman who is the main buyer and she does not do anything actively to change her weight. Most of the socio-demographic variables are inserted as dummies except age, BMI and number of kids which are continuous. The results show that expenditure on food increase with age until a certain level and then decreasing. Households with a longer or medium length theoretical education spend 47.38 D.Kr more per person per month on food. Capital location increases expenditure with 59.37 D.kr per person per month, while spouse and young kids decrease expenditure with -193.36 D.kr and -80.31 respectively. Those who have done something actively to change their weight also use more money on food. Expenditures are increasing with BMI. A household where the male is main responsible for shopping or where both shops equally often also spend a little more on food.

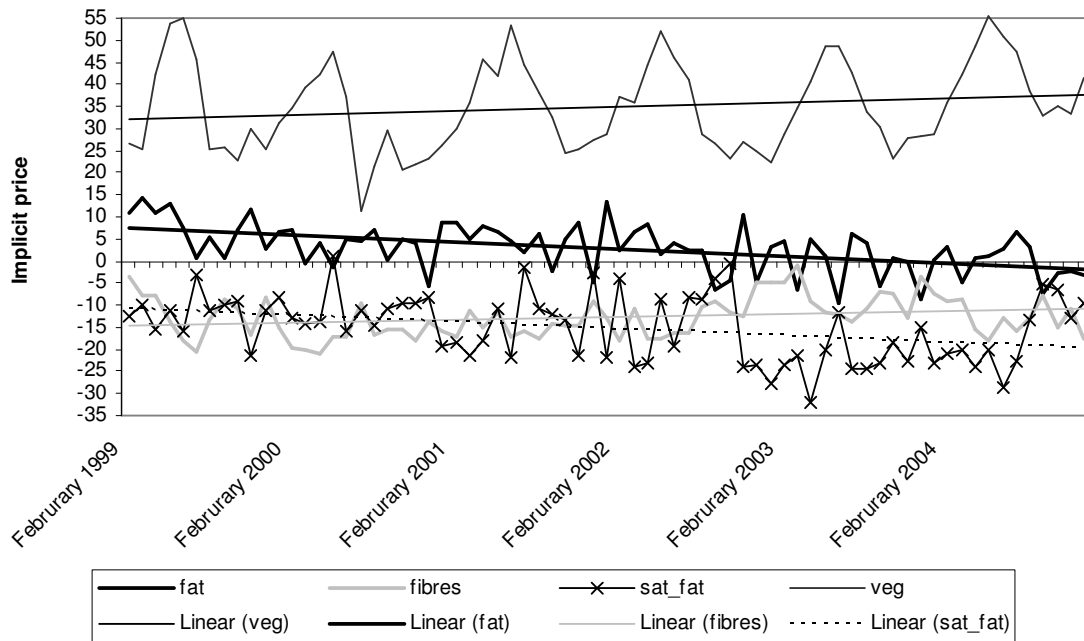
Equation (1.11) is estimated in differences, differentiating out all socio-demographics, leaving only the implicit prices for fulfilling the dietary guidelines to be estimated.

Comparing these implicit prices estimated in levels with the same estimated in differences show more or less the same patterns. The implicit price for improving the diet to be closer to the guideline for fish and vegetables is positive in both models, while the implicit price for improving the diet to be closer to the guideline for fibres and saturated fat are negative in both models. The implicit price for improving the diet to be closer to the guideline for sugar and total fat is diverging between models, but as the parameters for sugar is insignificant in the model in levels and the parameters for fat is insignificant in the model in differences this are assumed not to be to important. The movement over time for the parameters estimated either in levels or differences is more or less equal with a few exceptions, while the differences in the magnitude of the parameters are considerable for some of the health characteristics. This emphasises the possible thread of getting biased parameters in the estimation due to unobserved heterogeneity. The results below are all from the estimation of equation (1.11) in differences. The implicit price for fruit and vegetables show that a household which comply the guideline for the intake of fruit and vegetables (*score* = 10) pay 391.20 D.kr more per person per month than a household which are most far from fulfilling the guideline (*score* = 0). The implicit price for saturated fat show that a household will save 179.30 D.kr by fulfilling the guideline (*score* = 10) compared to a household which are most

far from fulfilling ($score = 0$). This can also be interpreted as that consumers value cutting down on consumption of saturated fat negatively

Figure 5 follows the estimated implicit prices for getting closer to the dietary guidelines from 1999 to 2004. There is an increase in the implicit price for getting closer to the guideline for fruit and vegetables over time. Furthermore, there is a decrease in the implicit price for getting closer to the guideline for fat as it becomes negative in the beginning of 2003. The negative value for saturated fat and sugar is decreasing, for saturated fat especially in the beginning of 2003. The implicit price for sugar is insignificant and positive until mid-2002 where the value becomes negative and significant (i.e. consumers change from valuing positively getting closer to the guideline for sugar to valuing it negatively). The implicit price for getting closer to the guideline for fibres are also negative, but this implicit price gets less negative over time.

Figure 5: Development in the estimated implicit prices for getting closer to the dietary guidelines from 1999 to 2004, estimation in differences



Until now the only large-scale instrument used to fight obesity has been information to consumers about healthy eating, mainly through campaigns aimed at a large audience. These seem to have had an effect due to an improvement in the aggregated healthiness of the Danish

diets, especially driven by an increase in the consumption of fruit and vegetables and a decrease in the consumption of fat and saturated fat. If the number of articles in newspapers linking consumption of specific foods and nutrients are assumed to reflect the level of information to consumers, there seems to be accordance between the levels of information and the implicit valuation of health characteristics in food. From 1999 to 2004 there has been a huge increase in the number of articles in newspapers about the positive health effects of fruit and vegetable consumption⁷ and from 2003 and onwards there has been an increase in the number of articles linking health with an increased fibre intake. This is in accordance with increased changes in the implicit price of fruit, vegetables and fibres. Furthermore, in 2002 information about the adverse food guide pyramid by Walter Willets were discussed eagerly in the Danish press (Willets, 2001) together with the Atkinson diet. The adverse food guide pyramid introduced the concept of good and bad fat encouraging a large intake of “good” fats while the Atkinson diet encourage an increased intake of fat in general and a decrease intake of carbohydrates.. This discussion were followed by a change in the implicit price for getting closer to the guidelines for fat from positive to negative and the negative implicit price for saturated fat t become even more negative. To analyse if these correlations are causal is a proposed extension of this paper.

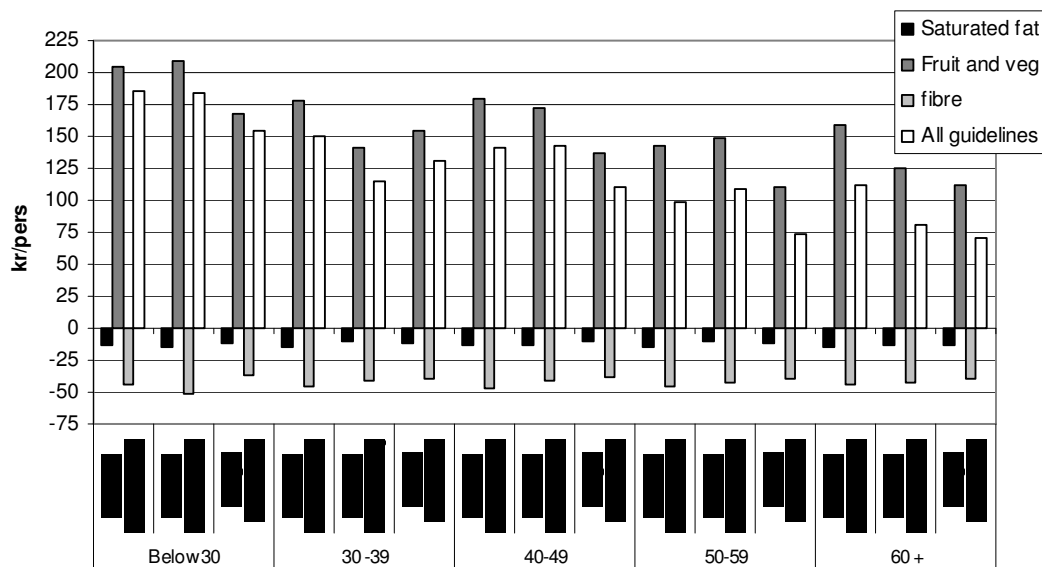
Cost interpretation of implicit prices

As shown in Figure 3 in section 2 of this paper each household fulfils each of the dietary guidelines to a varying degree. This means that the extra expenditures associated with a change from the current diet composition to a diet which fulfils the dietary guidelines will depend on both the implicit prices and on the initial level of healthiness. These additional expenditures are calculated for different types of households using the estimated implicit prices in differences in Table 1 and the result of this calculation is shown in the following Figure 6. Due to the negative implicit prices for getting closer to the guidelines for fibres and saturated fat, households will save money if they get closer to the guidelines for these two nutrients, while it will be costly to adjust diets to be in accordance with the guidelines for fish, fruit and vegetables. The additional expenditures associated with adjusting diets to be in accordance with the dietary guidelines are therefore especially high for households which initially are far from fulfilling the guidelines for fruit, vegetables and fish, i.e. younger less educated households, while it will be smaller for households which initially are far from

⁷ This number is based on a search of articles linking health effects and consumption of specific nutrients or foods in INFOMEDIA, a database reporting all articles in Danish newspapers.

fulfilling the guideline for saturated fat. For a younger less educated household the extra expenditure associated with changing diets to fulfil all the dietary guidelines are approximately 180 D.kr. pr. person pr months while more than 200 D.kr extra are needed if only the guideline for fruit and vegetables are fulfilled. A well educated household between 50 and 59 yrs only needs an extra expenditure at 75 D.kr to adjust diets to be in accordance with the dietary guidelines.

Figure 6: Cost per person per months for various types of households to fulfil selected guidelines and to fulfil all dietary guidelines

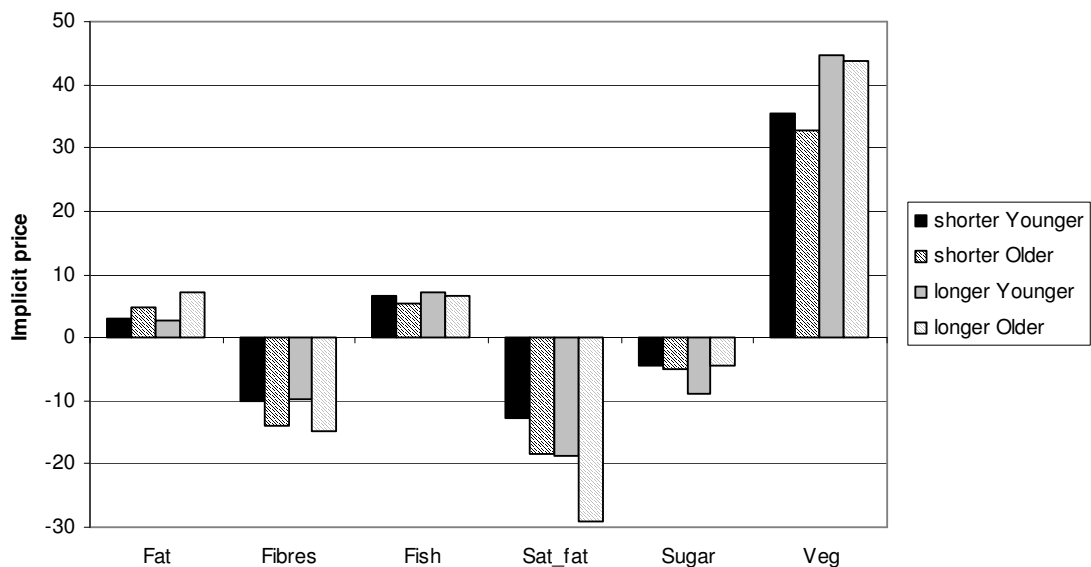


As the data used for this analyses do not cover purchases outside the household as e.g. food purchased from and consumed in fast-food outlets or restaurants or individual household members' purchases in kiosks of e.g. soft drinks or sweets which are consumed outside the household. This implies that the additional expenses associated with a change of diets might be either higher or lower for households with a considerable share of purchases outside the house. Whether it is an increase or decrease in expenses depends on whether the household cuts back on these purchases (usually the cheaper solution) or choose to maintain the purchase outside the house, but purchases something healthier (usually the more expensive solution). The purchases of foods outside the household seem to be of minor importance since only 20 % of the Danish population eat in grill bars or restaurants more than twice a month (Groth and Fagt, 2003) and the smaller intake of sugar has been taken into account in the construction of the Healthy Eating Index as the guideline has been down adjusted accordingly (For a discussion of this see Smed, 2007).

Willingness to pay interpretation of implicit prices

The estimated implicit prices can, as also traded prices in a market place, be interpreted as consumers' willingness to pay for a specific good or attribute. According to equation (1.14) the implicit price for health characteristics might vary with socio-demographics and this variation can be interpreted as differences in the marginal valuation of getting closer to the dietary guidelines. If these differences are significant and systematic they might explain differences in the healthiness of diets. The panel is divided into four segments; younger versus older households and households with longer or medium theoretical education versus households with none, vocationally or shorter theoretical education, based on the results in Figure 2 and Figure 3 above. The implicit prices for getting closer to each of the six dietary guidelines are estimated for households in each of the four segments of the panel using equation(1.14). Wald tests show significant differences between the implicit prices for getting closer to the dietary guidelines for all four segments. The only exception is that there is no significant difference in the implicit price for fibres and added sugar between the two levels of educational in the younger segment. The picture emerging in Figure 7 shows that older households value approximations to the guideline for fat more than younger households, but have a larger negative valuation (willingness to avoid) of an approximation to the guidelines for saturated fat and fibres than the younger households. Higher educational groups have a higher valuation of getting closer to the guideline for fruit and vegetables.

Figure 7: Estimated implicit prices for getting closer to the dietary guidelines for different segments



6. Conclusion and discussion

The extensive information to consumers concerning the link between consumption of certain foods and nutrients and health during the last ten years seems to have had an effect, both on the healthiness of diets and on consumers' estimated valuation of health characteristics of foods. But this is not satisfactory since there is still only approximately 1.1 percent of the Danish population fulfilling the dietary recommendations, and there is a considerably lower compliance from lower educated and younger households. The results in this paper show that it will be costly for most households to change their diet in order to obey the dietary guidelines concerning the intake of fruit, vegetables and fish. On the other hand, it is possible to save money cutting back on saturated fat and increasing consumption of fibres. This means, that in total it will not be costless for consumers to change their diet in a more healthy direction and it will be more costly for lower educated and for younger households taking initial diet compositions into account. Together with the fact that lower educated households generally are more sensitive to changes in relative prices between healthy and unhealthy foods (Smed, 2007), this suggests that the increased expenses tied up with a change of diet composition in a more healthy direction, might be a barrier for especially these households. The results from the estimation of implicit prices for different household types show a larger negative valuation of increasing the consumption of fibres and decreasing the consumption of saturated fat for older households and a larger positive valuation of an increase in the consumption of fruit and vegetables for households with a longer education. These findings are in accordance with actual consumption patterns. This suggests that the barrier for some consumer segments, in order to change dietary behaviour in a more healthy direction, might be larger than just the actual change of budgets involved with the diet changes. This is due to these households valuing a change in a more healthy direction less than the average consumer, or even values a change negatively. A further extension of this paper will be to take these costs into account. Another extension might be to estimate consumers' valuation of non-nutritional characteristics of food consumption as e.g. taste, since reluctance to change diets also might be due to a strong valuation of a specific taste. In general, the results from this paper strongly suggest that information campaigns have an effect on consumption, but they cannot stand alone if the aim is to have all consumers to fulfil the diet recommendations. Other instruments as e.g. relative prices between healthy and unhealthy foods and instruments which increase consumers' valuation of a healthier choice have to be taken into use.

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Theme 13. Political consumption

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Papers

Autio, Minna & Visa Heinonen: Representation of Consumerism in the Finnish Consumer Policy Programmes 1983-2007

Boström, Magnus & Mikael Klintman: Green Labelling and Green Consumerism: Challenges and Horizons

Christensen, Tove, Sigrid Denver & Morten Raun Mørkbak: Food safety and the reversed political consumer

Dubuisson-Quellier, Sophie: From consumerism to the empowerment of consumers. The case of ethic food movement in France.

Kjærnes, Unni, Randi Lavik, Henric Barkmann & Michele Micheletti: Buying welfare friendly food – a case of political consumerism?

Pellizzoni, Luigi: Three challenges for political consumerism

Terragni, Laura: From the White Label campaign to the No sweat initiatives. A journey at the roots of political consumerism

van den Burg, Sander: The political modernization of sustainable consumption policies

Representation of Consumerism in the Finnish Consumer Policy Programmes 1983-2007

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Abstract

The focus of our paper is to examine how consumers are seen as social actors of the consumer society in the five consumer policy programmes during 1983-2007. In order to find out how consumers are presented in these texts as subjects and objects of the policy, we analyse these five policy programmes by the method of close reading. Our aim is to interpret and to contextualise influential ideologies in the background of the programmes. According to our analysis representation of the consumer from the 1983 programme to 2004-2007 has changed from a rather uninformed agent living in abundance, to an active social actor facing a number of social and ecological issues and dilemmas. However, the concern about the vulnerable consumer is present in all these programmes.

1. Introduction

The tension between the consumer as subject expressing his or her own interests and the consumer about which other groups speak has persisted throughout the history of the politics of consumption. (Hilton and Daunton 2001, 25)

As British scholars Hilton and Daunton argue in the quotation above, political consumerism has a long history. One important phase in the birth of the modern consumer movement was the activities of the Rochdale Pioneers. They were the founders of the consumer co-operativism in England in the 1840s (Hilton 2003, 36, 80). The entry of the public sector as a player of the consumerism took place later: In the USA around the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and in many Western European countries around the same time. In the Nordic countries the public sector has been a very important player and even the leader of the national consumer policy after the Second World War. In Finland the role of civic organisations has not been as

strong as in England, e.g. (Heinonen 1998; Hilton 2003). Thus, the state-led consumer policy following the Swedish example has been the dominant model.

The notion of consumerism has several interpretations. Following Miles (2002, 4) we think that consumerism has a broader meaning than a simple concern for the process of purchasing and consuming goods in the modern society. In the post-industrial societies it can mean even a way of life, and it has shaped people's culture. Firstly, consumerism is considered as a position in a division of labour of the society, and secondly, the word has an ideological content. As Gabriel and Lang (1995, 8) argue, consumerism includes different dimensions, such as ideology of conspicuous consumption or the political ideology of consumerism emphasising consumers' freedom of choice in a market economy. They also highlight the meaning of consumerism as a social movement strongly emphasising the protection of the rights of consumers (also Forbes 1987, 30-31). During the course of the time the consumer movement has been committed to a variety of different ideologies, which has interestingly been pointed out by Hilton (2003) in the British case, Williams (1991) in the French case and Cohen (2003) in the American case, e.g.

In social sciences there is also a wide discussion concerning the notion of ideology. According to Stuart Hall (1992), ideologies can be understood as systems of representation that help us to outline the world to ourselves or to share it with others. Ideologies can be collective and subconscious or conscious and openly political. As Hall (1992, 269-270) argue subconscious ideologies can be considered more powerful than conscious ones, as they are considered 'self-evident'. It is, for example, 'natural' to think that women wear lace underwear, whereas men usually don't. In the same way an expensive car purchased by a man is considered a 'penis extension', while we rarely discuss the significance of such a purchase for a woman. Ideologies also define concepts and give them different meanings. According to Hall (1992, 269) freedom in a liberal ideology is articulated with 'individualism' and 'free markets', while in a socialist ideology it is associated with 'equality'.

The notion of consumer policy covers a narrower scope or has a narrower meaning than the concept of the politics of consumption used in the literature (Cohen 2003; Hilton 2003, e.g.). Consumer policy refers to more administrative and practical activities than the politics of consumption, which can be understood as a more general concept. The politics of consumption has a more ideological content as well. However, consumer policy is also based on a some dominant ideology, as we are arguing in this paper.

Finnish consumer policy and administration

In Finland the era of the national consumer policy started during the 1970s. Already during the 1960s certain institutions like the Consultative Committee of Consumer Affairs (Kuluttaja-asiain neuvottelukunta) in 1962 and the Consumer Council (kuluttajaneuvosto) in 1965 were founded. The Minister of Social Affairs responsible for price and wage issues acted as the chairman in the Consumer Council. Besides

civil servants and politicians, representatives of business, different organisations of citizens and the press were members of the Consumer Council, which took a rather active role in consumer affairs. (Heinonen 1998, 297.)

In the beginning of the 1970s the Council of the State appointed a committee to draft guidelines for a national consumer policy. The committee gave its report in the end of year 1972. The following year the Commerce and Industry Board was founded. It was the central authority responsible for consumer affairs. The most important development during the 1970s was the establishment of the Finnish Consumer Law that came into force in 1978. In the same process an office of Consumer Ombudsman was founded. Also, two new institutions were created: the Market Court and the Consumer Complaint Board. Finally, the municipal consumer advisor system was established. (Heinonen 1998, 298.) Besides, the Consumer Council became a parliamentary organ acting under the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

The Finnish consumer administration was reorganised thoroughly in 1990. The Commerce and Industry Board was abolished and the Consumer Agency was founded. The Ministry of Trade and Industry was responsible of consumer affairs. The authorities besides the new Consumer Agency were the Consumer Ombudsman, the newly established National Consumer Research Centre, the Consumer Complaint Board and the Food Agency (Elintarvikevirasto). In the last reorganisation of the authorities in the late-1990s the Consumer Ombudsman's office was united with the Consumer Agency. (Heinonen 2007, 99-100) Currently, the Ministry of Trade and Industry is responsible for the administration of consumer affairs. Thus, it has a very central role in the operational consumer policy.

2. Research Material and Method

The focus of our paper is to examine how consumers are seen as social actors of consumer society in the five consumer policy programmes during 1983-2007. The first programme prepared by the Consumer Council was announced in 1983. Later on the programme has been formulated by the Advisory Council on Consumer Affairs, which consists of different interest groups influencing in Finnish society. The Chairman of the Council is the Minister in charge of consumer affairs. Other than him/her, the council features representatives of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Justice, consumer organisations, and political parties as well as representatives from employee organisations and organisations representing industry, trade and agriculture.

In recent years, representatives of governmental agents from the Consumer Agency and Ombudsman, the Consumer Complaint Board and National Consumer Research Centre have also participated in the preparation. Although the council consists of representatives of various quarters, the Finnish Government invites members to the council. Thus, these programmes can be considered as governmentally driven policy guidelines.

The first 1983 programme was presumably valid until 1991, when the second programme was formulated for the years 1992-1995. By 2007 three other programmes (1997-1999, 2000-2003, 2004-2007) have been produced by the Advisory Council on Consumer Affairs, and through these programmes they have given guidelines to governmental policy institutions (e.g. the Consumer agency, National Consumer Research Centre) as well as private ones (e.g. banking sector, trade, insurance companies). It is another question entirely, how many agents will have read these programmes or perhaps acted upon them. According to our view, these types of declarations should be analysed as documents reflecting and constructing present culture and mentality (e.g. Hall 1992; Johnson et al. 2004), rather than considering their significance in society.

We analyse these five policy programmes with the method of close reading and interpreting the text in order to find out, how consumers are presented in these texts as subjects and objects of consumer policy (see e.g. Moisander & Valtonen 2006). This means that we focus our attention on individual words or sentences that may in many cases even seem irrelevant. These can in fact reveal thought patterns hidden 'inside' the text. Thus, our aim is to 'unveil', interpret and contextualise ideologies influential in the background of the programmes.

Since the early 1990s, state-led consumer politics and drafting consumer policy programmes have been based on consideration of the views of various interest groups. These broadly prepared programmes reflect general consumer interests rather than bringing out specific, politically polemical consumer issues, such as the debate on grocery shop opening hours.¹ The political struggle for consumer issues can therefore not be read in the programmes as such, but rather 'between the lines'. Examining and presenting opposing or conflictive issues would require a different kind of research material and approach. To achieve this, one would have to concentrate specifically on the policies, declarations and actions of social actors.

Although the programmes are drafted in a spirit of consensus, they also reflect multifaceted views of good consumerism and the objectives of consumer policies. This means that any individual programme may also feature conflicting views or thought patterns, due to the presence of various different ideologies in our society. There is a constant struggle between different ideologies on what 'good' consumerism is (e.g. green consumer, rational consumer, hedonistic consumer, see Gabriel & Lang 1995). This variety in consumer policy programmes can be understood on the one hand due to the heterogeneous nature of the council and, on the other hand, due to the diversity of the consumer. Common consumer interests are in part difficult to define because consumers, as wage-earners, entrepreneurs, farmers, pensioners, investors, housewives, unemployed etc., are divided into different interest groups (Forbes 1987).

¹ Groceries in Finland are only allowed to open seven days a week during the summer months and in December. Establishments with a sales-surface of less than 400m² may, however, open on Sundays with the exception of church festivals stipulated in the legislation on business hours, which means that the views of the church are also taken into consideration in decision-making.

When analysing consumer policy programmes one must bear in mind the temporal changes and shifts in concepts and ideology. To be more precise, it is possible to read these changes in the programmes, as they cover a period of just over 20 years. Thus, what the programmes describe best is the moment when they have been drafted and written out, that is to say the years 1982, 1991, 1996, 1999 and 2003. Thus, the rhetoric of Consumer Policy Programmes has changed along with transformations of the operational environment in society.

One rather drastic change took place during the 1980's, when financial regulation was gradually abolished and Finland began to develop towards an open market economy. Another important event was the Finnish membership of the EU in 1995. After this occasion, the consumer policy programmes of the European Union started to influence the rhetoric of our national programmes (Ilmonen & Stø 1997, 215). Economic fluctuation can also be seen in the texts. The 1983 programme was drafted in economically stable circumstances, while the 1991 programme was written in the middle of a deep depression. In the programmes of the 21st century, on the other hand, one can observe the challenges consumers are facing due to globalisation.

The consumer policy rhetoric has also changed, when the ideological emphasis in society has transformed, especially following the transition of economic policy. Thus, the consumer policy is subordinated to general economic policy. Also the view on consumers has changed and become more diverse over the last decades. On the one hand, this has happened through changes in consumption habits (e.g. the ecological burden of consumption, rapid development of ICT, wealth as well as inequality of the society) and, on the other hand, in consumer theories.

For example, according to the work of the Frankfurt School the consumer was seen as relatively passive, powerless and manipulated agent in the society. In the 21st century consumers are seen as active, empowered, innovative agents, who are co-producers and content providers with firms that willingly participate in research and development processes (e.g. von Hippel 1988, Hilton & Dauntton 2001). This, in any case, is the ideal. This change in the position of the consumer from an object to an active subject can be seen particularly clearly when comparing the 1983 programme with the 2004-2007 one.

3. Incapable and uninformed agent living in an affluent society

When the first consumer policy programme was being drafted, Finland had already developed into a Western welfare society following a rapid structural change. The economic recession was left behind (e.g. the oil crisis, high inflation and unemployment of the 1970s). The nation was slowly recovering and moving towards the boom of the late 1980s. Up to the early 1980s, Finland still lived in a rather closed national economy, which had little international competition², in addition to the

² E.g. The arrival of Swedish furniture giant IKEA could be avoided until the 1990s by refusing them a construction permit. The first centre was not opened until 1996.

regulation of the financial market. Product selections and the range of available services were also modest compared to the 21st century.

The experience of the quality of life and wealth are however also tied to their time, which can be seen in the 1983 programme. The quote reflects the ideology of international solidarity of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the economic contentment.

In a highly industrialised country like Finland, consumption or the use of goods and services to satisfy human needs is substantial on a global scale [...] The consumer's own options for taking advantage of the goods provided by society and economy are also relatively good: The average level of income and education are high on an international scale, and the different sectors of society have a conscious aim of reducing people's inequality as citizens and consumers. [CPP 1983, p. 1, 3]

The aspiration of eliminating economic inequality can also be seen in the programme on a national level, among Finnish consumers:

Citizens are however still economically unequal [...] it is necessary to pay more attention than we have previously done on consumers who are in a worse than average position and on strengthening their position. [CPP 1983, p. 3-4].

In the 1983 programme, like in the subsequent ones, the concern over the position of vulnerable consumers is rather strong (CPP 1983, p.14). These groups are defined in the programme as the unemployed, people with small incomes, pensioners with limited means and young families with children. During the depression, in the 1992-1995 programme, consumers in a vulnerable position were considered to be those heavily in debt, especially ones encumbered with mortgages.

Declarations on behalf of vulnerable consumers reflect the ideologies of solidarity and equality in a Nordic welfare state (Ilmonen & Stø 1997, 211), which have remained a feature of the programmes all the way up to the 21st century, even though the emphasis in the programmes of the 1990s and 2000s is not as strong, and is in fact rather tied to the changes in the operational environment (cf. Housing debts).³ The policy programme of 2000-2003 emphasises above all impartiality in the allocation of necessities. The programme means the distribution of electricity, water, mass transport, postal services and basic telecommunication services. During the 1980s these basic necessities were still considered to be self-evident, as Sassatelli (2006) has argued referring to the studies of IMF and Worldbank. She has pointed out that "economic inequality grew more than ever before during the 1970s and 1990s" (Sassatelli 2006, 226). The growth of inequality has taken place especially since the 1990s due to the gradual transformation in politics and the process of globalisation.

³ The 2004-2007 programme for example refers to new technology putting consumers in unequal positions: "All consumers do not have equal opportunities of acting in a society whose functioning is to an increased extent based on new information technology" (p. 13).

The vulnerability of the consumer refers not only to economic position but also to a lack of consumer knowledge and skills. This 'lack of skills' also refers to consumers as a whole, as the educational aim of a competent consumer, able to use his or her knowledge and skills to get by in an increasingly complex and risky world is common to the programmes (from 1983 to 2004-2007). The 1983 programme also expresses what the perception of the level of knowledge of the common consumer is:

The economic knowledge of consumers are, according to research, unsubstantial [...] The consumers' awareness and skills as regards their rights and their position are insufficient [...] Consumers' knowledge of goods is often ostensible, and often with an emphasis on the secondary properties of goods due to the commercial nature of information on offer. [CPP 1983, p. 11-12]

This rather critical view concerning consumers can be understood, if the short history of the Finnish consumer society and consumerism is taken into account. The consumer research does not have a long history in Finland. The general knowledge about consumers' skills was rather modest at the beginning of the 1980s. However, the issue of the consumer competence is still topical. For example, the consumer policy programme 2000-2003 states: "There is, however, still room for improvement in consumers' knowledge and skills".

In the beginning of the 1980s, commercialism as a concept still bore a negative connotation, and the belief in true, impartial information was strong. The information supplied by authorities, research centres and universities was considered to be impartial whereas that provided by commercial agents was seen to be even 'misleading'. In addition to true information, changes in operational environment also posed new risks and problems to consumers. In the second programme, that of 1992-1995, the possibilities of the consumer for acting rationally were seen in a pessimistic light due to the European economic integration:

Along with the expansion of the markets consumers are likely to receive conflicting information as well. This makes the purchases harder to decide upon, choices more open to mistakes, and product information less reliable. Well educated and critical consumers can manage in the changing markets, whereas the position of risk consumers will be further weakened. [...] All consumers should therefore have access to impartial educational material and counselling [CPP 1992-1995, p. 24-25].

The concern over the incapacity of consumers is especially evident regarding vulnerable consumers while competent consumers control themselves as economic agents. Thus, the programmes of the 1990s take into account the diversity of consumers as users and exploiters of information. The third programme (1997-1999) also features the demand for the authenticity of information expressed in the spirit of the previous programmes, but this time the consumer himself was also able to estimate whether the information was to be trusted or not. The evaluation of the useful information becomes more and more a part of consumer competence. In other words

the consumer is beginning to acquire features of an active agent – there is a shift from object to subject:

Reliable consumer analyses and studies are needed for the support of consumer education activities [...] Consumers, however, must be able to distinguish between commercial communication and other information, and to judge them independently. [CPP 1997-1999, p. 18].

In the 21st century the reliability and usefulness of information is at least as problematic as in the 1980s and 1990s, if not even more problematic. However, the way of thinking about objectivity of information scientific information included is however changing. One current example of this is the debate on the state, causes and consequences of the climate change. For example, there are also numerous views and theoretical standpoints as to the role of the consumer as a promoter of sustainable development (e.g. Fuchs & Lorek 2005, Autio & Heinonen 2004).

Both scientific knowledge as well as political views on acute problems and their solutions vary and change as time goes by. This change in the point of view on the authenticity of information can be seen in the 2004-2007 consumer policy programme, which continues to emphasise the importance of the objectivity of information, but also states that not even experts are able to provide unambiguous answers (CPP 2004-2007, p. 22). If we compare the 1983 programme with the 21st century programmes, the main difference is that the early 1980s programme reflects a conception of the world where the difference between 'right' and 'wrong' was still considered to be more clear than today.

Additionally, the view of the consumer is based on a hierarchic government-subject standpoint, where the consumer is seen as a rather infantile and unskilled agent, although one living surrounded by wealth. However, it is interesting that the programme expresses the significance of consumption to modern man/women and a wish that the consumer should move towards more immaterial values: “Despite the central significance of consumption to people, the Consumer Council also underlines the importance of other than material values to man” (CPP 1983, p. 1).

4. Ideological change: towards an open market economy and sustainable society

Main aims of consumer policy can be seen controlling and regulating the excesses of the market. In practice, it has been proved that the idea – or ideal – of neoclassical economics of a perfectly functioning market will always remain unfulfilled. It is nevertheless strong as an ideological argument: liberating competition and abolishing the regulation of the public sector have been central Western and Nordic economic aims ever since the 1980s (especially in EU). In the 1983 consumer policy programme the failure of perfect competition in the market is commented on:

The situation of perfect competition in economic activity cannot be reached in practice. The reason for this is the increasing concentration of economic activity in

large and rare units, the deficits of information received by producers as well as consumers, the regulation of production and consumption carried out by public authorities, and the irrational behaviour of consumers themselves. [CPP 1983, p. 4]

The quote is revealing. It states that public regulation keeps competition from being carried through. It is thus in line with the economic and consumer policy guidelines selected in the early 1980s, which aimed for the process of deregulation and decentralisation (Ilmonen & Stø 1997, 212). One of the main measures of this policy in practice in Finland was the liberation of the financial market from regulation, which took place over the 1980s. What makes this quote so interesting is the fact that the concentration of entrepreneurship in large units was seen as being problematic. This concentration has, however, only kept advancing and strengthening (e.g. the dominating position of Microsoft). Also Finnish industrial production and the banking and insurance sectors have become more international and their ownership has concentrated in 'fewer and fewer hands'.

The 1983 programme also shows the belief in the importance of information for enabling rational decisions on production and consumption. Although the consumer policies of the European Union have traditionally been seen as more information-centred, the same guidelines can be seen in Nordic consumer policies. It would appear that there has been a place for emphasising the importance of information alongside the legislation and consumer protection-centred politics so typical of Nordic countries (von Bergmann-Winberg 1992, 177).

As we have seen above, Finland began to move towards an open market economy in the 1990s. This political choice contained the idea of promoting competition and reducing state regulation. In the 1992-1995 programme the capacity of Finnish national economy was however still seen in a rather pessimistic light, apparently due to the deep depression.

Finland has a high price level. The purchasing power of consumers is lower than in other corresponding countries. [...] The high price level depends on many factors, such as the limited competition, the cartelization among firms, the economy's relative unopenness, and the lack of the competitive effects of a liberal import trade. Today, Finnish consumers have to pay an excessive price for their indispensable purchases. Domestic concurrence is barely nominal in certain sector, and private customers obtain increasingly poor service. [CPP 1992-1995, p. 23-24]

The rhetorical change is rather drastic in comparison with the 1983 programme, where the economic position of Finnish consumers was considered to rate high internationally. In the 1990s, consumer policies began to be seen through risks and threats. The ideological choice of economic policy as free competition and privatisation of public services can be seen in the programmes. The fourth programme of 1997-1999 states that the political guidelines have worked out well for indispensable services although the lack of competition is still a problem.

The range of services offered by society has been declining. Decreased costs and increased efficiency have led to the conversion of public service suppliers into companies, to privatization of public services and to their opening to competition. [...] In spite of the liberalization of competition, consumers' possibilities to choose among different kinds of essential services are more limited than in general and mechanisms of the market economy usually work unsatisfactory in the case of these services. [CPP1997-1999, p.15-16].

At the turn of the millennium, the 2000-2003 programme already ponders the problems caused by deregulation, such as increasing consumer inequality.

The aim of the global deregulation of economy is to promote economic growth and, in that way, increase welfare. There is, however, a risk that the differences between consumer groups grow even bigger. Multinational companies gain importance on the one hand, but the same time there is a tendency to emphasise alternative courses of action in the business sector. Emphasising local and traditional production and ethically sustainable activity is a new marketing route that is gaining more and more importance. [CPP 2000-2003, p. 16]

The quote brings out local and ethical production as forces to counteract global competition, and the power of international companies over consumers. This local aspect also refers to ethical consumption, which is believed to grow in the current millennium. Sustainable development and consumption have been central points of emphasis in all the consumer policy programmes of the 1990s. Already the 1983 programme mentions the problems caused to consumers by environmental contamination (CPP, p. 1, 16). Emphasising environmental issues has continued in the 21st century and the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Trade and Industry established so called KULTU⁴ Committee in 2003 to create a programme to promote sustainable consumption and production.

However, the programmes have not set requirements for different agents from an environmentalist point of view. Rather, an attempt has been made to promote sustainable development as market-driven. Measures to limit the behaviour of consumers or companies, such as an environmental tax on fuel have not been claimed, either. The freedom of choice of the consumer has been limited based on health politics (restricting smoking in workplaces and restaurants) rather than on consumer politics.

Belief in free competition is, however, partly wavering, even though the 2004-2007 programme still emphasises the deregulation of world trade. The cause for concern, as in the previous programmes, is consumers whose knowledge and skills leave them in a vulnerable position.

⁴ See *Getting More from Less – Proposals for Finland's National Programme to Promote Sustainable Consumption and Production (2005)*. Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Trade and Industry. Helsinki.

All countries are concerned by the integration of the world economy. Markets are broadening and competition increases. National objectives and decisions are to a larger extent than before linked to international agreements and rules. The average consumer is still, however, to quite a large extent dependent on local and regional services. Not all consumers are capable of utilising the opportunities offered by the enlarged market and some consumers may be totally excluded. Utilisation of the new expanding markets also involves new kind of risks. [CPP 2004-2007, p. 12-13]

The threat is depicted as new technology which is seen as a factor to put consumers in unequal positions (p.13). At the same time it is believed to at least partially solve environmental problems, as virtual consumption is considered to be more eco-efficient than the old energy-intensive consumption (see Autio & Heinonen 2004). The consumer policy programme expresses a hope that new information technology will be able to create sustainable and competitive alternatives: "It would be desirable that technology could be placed in the background and the needs of the user be given priority by creating environmentally compatible and consumer-friendly products and services" (CPP 2004-2007, p. 13).

5. Consumers' changing role: from unskilful and passive object to an active and competent subject

The first consumer policy program emphasised empowering of consumers by providing consumers information and resources and improving their skills as market actors (CPP 1983, 10). Consumers were seen rather uninformed, incapable and even passive social actors. Consumer protection and the role of institutions was stressed. However, this is quite understandable. The Consumer Protection Act (kuluttajansuojalaki) was newly established in 1978, the Consumer Ombudsman was a new authority and the system of municipal consumer advisors was rather new. For these reasons the consumer him/herself did not have such a central role in the society and in the economy as he/her has today (see Gabriel & Lang 1995).

In the 1990s, the position of the consumer started to transform towards a more active actor. This development follows the common international trend towards more liberal economic policy that meant the reduction of regulation and market liberalisation. These measures were followed by the strong need of emphasising consumers' own active participation as market actors. This ideological transformation is clearly seen in the following quote:

The larger the markets, the less the consumers feel they can do influence things. For an individual consumer it is, in fact, rather difficult to influence the conditions of consumer as a body ... Consumers have very limited means of influencing decisions relating to production... Consumers themselves can make their voice better heard by being more **active**. An ideal way for individual consumer to do this to join one of the consumer associations which have recently shown great activity in the improvement of the consumer's position. [CPP 1992-1994, p. 25-26]

The consumer policy programme stresses the need of the participation of active consumers, it guides them to join consumer organisations and to act collectively. This was the emphasis in the beginning of the 1990s. In the latest programmes (2000-2003, 2004-2007) the image of consumer seems to be more individualistic as an active agent. However, the consumer him/herself is not seen as an actor truly governing the market. In the 21st century, the image of the consumer is in the process of reshaping. The neoclassical economics' idea of consumer sovereignty seems to be strengthening in the consumer policy programmes. Simultaneously the notion of sustainable development and the rise of ethical and ecological consumerism become parts of the mainstream view. Thus, the idea of a competent consumer are crystallised in the latest consumer policy programme: "The ultimate goal is having active, skilful and responsible consumers... (CPP 2004-2007, p. 14)".

6. Conclusion

The ideological transformation from the welfare state point of view of the 1970s to a more market-driven open economy is quite evident interpretation after the close reading of the data. However, it is interesting that some elements of the Nordic welfare state perspective still remain in the programmes. The vulnerable consumer is one of the key concerns in all five consumer policy programmes, although it was clearly more emphasised in the first programme (1983).

On the one hand, the ideology of free competition and the image of rational economic man is articulated in the latest programmes more clearly than earlier. On the other hand, the ambivalence about the consequences of the working of the market forces is present. Even the latest programme (2004-2007) stresses the risk of growing inequality between the consumer groups. Although a competent consumer as an objective is understandable and even eligible, it is harder and harder to achieve. Firstly, the sufficient level of consumer competence is very difficult to define: What are all the needed skills required today? Secondly, the current fragmented and highly technological consumer society strongly challenges the possibilities of the vast variety of consumers to participate and act in a fast transforming environment.

The crucial question is, how to prevent vulnerable consumers from social exclusion. This question does not only concern consumer policy. It is also a more general social and economic issue, which requires co-operation between different administrative sectors and all the actors of the economy nationally and internationally. However, the question remains, what are the means available to administration to relieve the problems caused by the working of market forces? It is possible that in the future the emphasis of the consumer policy will be even more on the identifying and assisting vulnerable consumers. This can be seen as one form of the consumer policy of the 1980s, when a general equality was the aim of the policy. Now the measures are applied to those people, who are at the risk of being marginalised from society.

It is interesting to see, what is the fate of the Nordic welfare state ideology in the world of globalisation, where free market and freedom of competition is emphasised above all and it is believed – at least by some rightwing politicians – that free competition solves all the problems. Referring to Hall's (1992) and Bauman's (1988; 1998) discussion concerning the notion of ideology and freedom: Nowadays freedom mostly means freedom of the choice of consumers in the competitive market rather than freedom from poverty, exclusion and exploitation.

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Green Labelling and Green Consumerism: Challenges and Horizons

- Magnus Boström and Mikael Klintman

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Draft of concluding chapter in the forthcoming book: Magnus Boström and Mikael Klintman, *Eco-standards, Product labelling, and Green Consumerism*, accepted for publication by Palgrave Macmillan in 2008, in Consumption & Public Life Series

To be presented at the Conference *Towards a New Consumer? Towards a New Consumer Policy?*, Helsinki, October 3-5, 2007.

OBS: Note to the reader:

This is a draft of a concluding chapter in a forthcoming book (see above). Below, we first provide a brief summary of the book (which actually needs some updating), and a table of contents; which hopefully makes it a little easier to read the concluding chapter. **Any comment to improve the text is welcome.**

Brief summary of the book:

The purpose of the book is to provide the reader with a broad, policy-oriented, and social analysis of a main set of tools aimed at realising an increasingly appreciated aspect of late modern democracy: *green political consumerism*.

Ordinary people are increasingly faced with news about potentially negative consequences of genetically modified products, contaminations of food, over-fishing, clear-felling of forests, loss of biodiversity, climate change, chemical pollution as well as many other environmental, health-related and social risks. As a response to these widespread, often globally oriented, concerns among the general public – and to a partially reduced public trust in traditional policies and regulatory arrangements – politicians, state agencies, social movement organisations, business actors, and consumers are increasingly engaged in finding and developing new, market-based, and consumer-oriented instruments. These instruments include eco-labels, stewardship certificates, voluntary negotiated agreements, green mutual funds, environmental management systems, codes of conducts, and a plethora of trademarks with an eco-friendly profile.

This book analyses the practical *tools* of green consumerism, with a focus on green labels, that is, particularly eco-labels, certificates and green mutual funds. Green labels belong to the family of eco-standards. We are interested in why and how eco-standards are produced, introduced, debated, and – in effect – what preconditions they offer in terms of a ‘greening’ and ‘democratisation’ of society. We are also interested in the relation (e.g., competition) between green labels (at the national and supra-national levels) and other kinds of eco-standards, with green, social or animal-welfare-related profiles.

By acknowledging knowledge uncertainties and ideological diversities surrounding standardizations of all kinds, the book aims at moving beyond a rather common focus on consumers on the ‘front-stage’ decision-making process. Instead this book investigates processes on the ‘back-stage’, ‘behind’ the final label, which is placed on the product or service. It is therefore important, we argue, to analyze how framing and organizational processes affect standardization processes, as well as the impact of different policy contexts. The chief objective of the book is to discuss the opportunities and dilemmas of green labelling processes specifically, and green political consumerism more generally. A point of departure is that the tools of green political consumerism are created and negotiated within a broad continuum *between* science and politics.

Based on our findings, we maintain, among other things, that there is a discrepancy between what is presented to consumers on the front stage (through categorical and over-simplistic ecological messages) and what is actually taking place on the back-stage (where the eco-standards are created and negotiated). The book argues that a bridging of this gap would have clear ecological and democratic advantages. A main argument is that ecologically and democratically effective green consumerism – if this is called for – requires that its tools (and the policy procedures behind them) be designed, modified, and informed about in ways that stimulate a broader, deeper, and more reflective type of consumer involvement than what is commonly assumed in debates about eco-standards and green consumerism. Such involvement would include opportunities to gain insight about the inherent knowledge fallibility, ideological diversity, and political priorities of environmental policies, as well as getting means for engagement, participation and communication.

The empirical basis of the book is case studies with eco-standardization projects in various sectors and countries. The sectors include forestry, paper products, fishery, organic production/food, GM-food, green & ethical mutual funds, and green electricity; the countries that are covered are especially Sweden and the U.S., due to their different cultures in policy making (i.e., consensual and adversarial, respectively). Moreover, in order to provide a broad, international picture, we make use of extensive secondary data from other European countries, and elsewhere. As certain standardization schemes are being developed towards international convergence (as a part of economic globalisation processes), developments on the international scene (e.g., WTO and ecological umbrella organisations) become crucial to cover in the analysis.

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Chapter Nine: Green Labelling and Green Consumerism: Challenges and Horizons

Many producers, consumers, and policy-makers see a good use of green labels. There are many who believe that green labelling has to be part of the action repertoire in the struggle towards a more sustainable society. In this concluding chapter – and based on the findings of this book – we want to discuss what preconditions green labels offer in terms of a ‘greening’ and ‘democratisation’ of society. It should be clear, however, that we do not aim to draw firm conclusions about policy instrument’s specific ecological consequences. First, we are social scientists. Analyses of ecological dynamics are beyond our task and expertise. Second, assessing the effectiveness of a specific policy tool is extremely difficult, because of complex, causal relations between standard criteria and industry practices, including multiple direct, indirect, unintended and mutually counteracting effects (cf. Stokke et al. 2005). Yet, we may approach this question by investigating how *social* structures, processes, and actions may hinder or facilitate reflection, dialogue, activism, and political collaboration around environmental problems. This is what we try to do in the chapter. In parallel, we allow ourselves to engage normatively in the issue, and to address some critical policy implications. Our intriguing point of the departure, introduced in the first chapter, is that labelling is about translating social and environmental complexities into a simple, categorical – ‘this is the green(est) choice’ – label.

Unsurprisingly, we argue that green labelling has limits. Moreover, we think the imperative ‘Consume Less!’ is a more crucial and urgent task than consciously choosing among green products, for at least all rich and rapidly developing countries in the world. Labelling relies on the latter strategy, and is probably even contributing to the difficulties for the former to enter green political agendas. We maintain, moreover, that many producers, consumers and policy-makers are overly optimistic about the potential of green labelling for solving various issues; however, others may be overly pessimistic.

The very fact that green labelling has certain limits is not a valid reason for rejecting it. In the chapter, we argue that green labelling has interesting potentials, but not necessarily for

the reasons that many optimists emphasize. Green labelling has also weaknesses, we argue, but not necessarily those that many critics address.

To us labelling is part of the repertoire of policy instruments, eco-standards and other consumer strategies. Labelling alone cannot solve any environmental problem. In the book, labelling practices have been analysed in their discursive, organizational, regulatory, political, and transnational contexts and processes. Any discussion about the potentials of labelling has to take into account such contexts and processes. We structure the discussion according to the four broad themes that we introduced in the first chapter (see table 9.1).

Table 9.1: Themes, myths, horizons

THEME:	Politics and Science	Reflective trust	Symbolic differentiation	Relation production and consumption
MYTHS and MISCONCEPTIONS:	<p>‘Politics distorts labelling’</p> <p>‘Labelling is objective and neutral; it reflects or should reflect pure science’.</p>	<p>‘Labelling relies on consumers’ (simple) trust’</p>	<p>‘Green labelling cannot be effective because it cannot fully scale up’</p> <p>‘Green labelling should scale up’.</p>	<p>‘The existence of many labels is confusing to consumers’</p> <p>‘The simpler and more clear-cut the labels are, the better’.</p>
KEY ISSUES and HORIZONS:	<p>Political consumption (A) How to maximize consumption of labels vs. how to maximize ‘responsible’ consumption, followed from a political or ethical principle</p> <p>(B) Political empowerment outside of labelling institutions; ‘the private is political’.</p> <p>Sub-politics (A) Opening up core corporate economic</p>	<p>(A) Creating organizational forms and frames that allow reflective trust to be developed among broader audiences</p> <p>(B) Facilitate frame reflection.</p> <p>(C) Create forum for education and discussion – learning the limits and opportunities of labels, eco-</p>	<p>(A) Labelling can be effective and powerful, not despite but because of its ‘marginality’.</p> <p>(B) The power of labelling is related to the dynamics involved in symbolic differentiation</p> <p>(C) Managing and reflecting upon this symbolic differentiation (balancing between</p>	<p>(A) Metapolitics as well as organizational forms and framings allow for consumer empowerment.</p> <p>(B) Consumer empowerment includes cognitive, material, and emotional/aesthetic aspects.</p> <p>(C) Labels cannot attach every citizen, which is a fact to be taken seriously by labelling agents when</p>

	<p>and technological decision-making to stakeholder input</p> <p>(B) Stimulate co-production of politics and knowledge, including science and other forms of expert and lay knowledge</p> <p>(C) Hopes and disappointments with inclusiveness</p> <p>Meta politics</p> <p>(A) Unveiling the sub-politics of labelling</p> <p>(B) Debating labels vs. other eco-standards, consumer tools, and policy instruments</p> <p>(C) Stimulating frame-reflection</p> <p>(D) Stimulating create collaboration among public and private authorities</p>	<p>standards, and other consumer tools.</p>	<p>marginalisation and mainstreaming).</p> <p>(D) Developing labelling as supplementary to other policy instruments, eco-standards, and consumer tools (and vice versa)</p> <p>(E) Acknowledging competition among labels and other eco-standards.</p> <p>(F) Acknowledging that the symbolic differentiation is arbitrary and relative; a topic for meta politics of labelling that can encourage development of reflective trust.</p>	<p>they orient to consumers.</p> <p>(D) Efforts to close the gap between production and consumption could include issues around consumer representation; preservation of SMOs' critical distance, the simultaneous marketing of pros and cons; the participation in meta politics; and the framing of the labelling instrument as a 'communicative tool' rather than 'information tool'.</p>
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9.1 POLITICS EMPOWERS LABELLING

In chapters one and three, we addressed the misconceived notion that labelling should be rejected because it is impregnated with politics and therefore cannot be neutral and objective. The opposite but equally problematic position is that labelling is good because it is objective, neutral, in the sense of being free from politics. Labels simply show us the

greenest choice. However, we have wanted to challenge this common view that green labels are, or should be, reflectors of a 'pure' and neutral (scientific) knowledge. Both expert and lay knowledge are needed, as well as strategic and ideological visions. Indeed, it is political envisioning that ultimately empowers labelling.

As we maintained in the first chapter, green labelling is inherently a political activity, and the political nature of labelling appears on different levels, i.e. on levels of political consumption, sub-politics, and meta politics. Science also appears in all these levels, and from a normative standpoint, one could argue that science along with other forms of knowledge should be part of all levels. However, science should not be seen as a self-evident authoritative centre but be treated critically and reflexively. Let us look how politics empowers labelling at all these levels.

9.1.1 Political consumption

It is clearly not self-evident that the purchase, for example, of organically labelled vegetables should be seen as a political act, or as responsible in the sense guided by an ethical intention (Boulangier and Zaccari 2007). We may, quite in contrast, argue that there are mixed motives behind purchasing organic vegetables. Some motives are more political in that the consumer wants to get rid of environmentally objectionable practices, whereas other motives are only concerned with individual health and product quality. Indeed, the existence of such mixed motives largely explains the relative strengths of various types of green-labelled products, particularly in the food area. Green electricity is more abstract and less clear how it can connect to individuals' self-interests, aside from as an indicator of a green image and identity (Lindén & Klintman, 2003).

Yet, if there is a wish among many people for looking for more flexible, spontaneous, everyday channels to express political engagement and responsibility, and if traditional political parties are seen to be inert, and as having difficulties in integrating new problems in their ideologies and actions, green labels can be used to accord with the identities and

agendas of political consumers (Micheletti 2004). Such politically minded acts can be important drivers for green labelling. On the surface, this appears not to be the case in certain sectors. In, for example, forest certification we have seen that 'real' political consumers play a marginal role; so far, it is quite rare in this sector that everyday consumers explicitly demand eco-certified furniture (although the demand is increasing, albeit slowly). Still, it is the potential threat of negative EMO- campaigning and consumer boycotting that largely explains the willingness among DIY and other retailers in the forest market to push for certification (Gulbrandsen 2006). Thus, even if there is a good reason not to exaggerate the capacities and willingness among a broad group of consumers to engage in everyday green consumerism, which many academics remind about, one should by no means disregard the potential consumer power. As long as businesses are concerned about their reputation and brand, the 'imagined' and 'represented' consumer can play decisive roles as well (van den Burg 2006). Even if consumers stick with conventional shopping behaviour, they can nevertheless play latent roles in that they are mentally prepared to discriminate between products because of a concern and solidarity with other people, animals, and the environment

To be sure, there are, arguably, several good reasons for labelling advocates to frame the win-win scenarios of shopping green (organic is good for environment, animals, taste, safety, quality, health, nutrition, etc). If the goal is big market impact and more businesses converting to green practices, it is wise for labellers and marketers to reflect upon possible mixed motives. On the other hand, if one instead adopts the goal that a maximum amount of consumers should act 'responsibly' by deliberately following a political or ethical principle, this big and broad strategy is not necessarily the best one (cf. Boulanger & Zaccai 2007). Increasing potential for reflection should at least be part of the goal.

The embryonic infrastructure for creating more political and ethical consumers in the full sense of the terms is already 'out there'. Yet, we think it is critically important that this infrastructure is not merely built up by labelling institutions and other eco-standard setters. Perhaps it is difficult for labelling administrators to be engaged in other issues than marketing, credibility issues, policy monitoring, and fine-tuning of standard criteria. There

need to be other groups without vested interests in a specific labelling programme that engage in debating and informing about labelling specifically and green consumerism in general. Hence, the political empowerment of consumers should develop elsewhere, prominently within civil society or within educational institutions. To speak with Giddens (1991), this concerns identity politics or life politics. Actors such as teachers, the media, EMOs, consumer associations and other social movement actors will have potential key role in this regard. One of the key issues that new social movements actually have been engaged in the recent decades is that they have told people that the private is public, that lifestyle patterns and consumer choice matter; that every single consumption act matter precisely in the same way as one vote in the political system matter. . Still, to claim that the private is political is still very far from commonplace in everyday thinking, because in Western cultures we have learned that we are, and should be, self-interested actors as soon as we enter the market. If green labelling is

- tightly connected to green consumerist agendas,
- pushed by various social movements, and,
- related notions of politics and ethics are communicated in deliberative manners,

its substantive (i.e., green, ethical) and democratic potentials are likely to be significant, we argue, something which will be further discussed below.

9.1.2 The sub-politics of labelling

Sub-politics, as understood by Ulrich Beck (1986/1992), includes the opening up of economic and technological decision-making in the closed corporate world to broader stakeholder influence. Labelling fits this description perfectly, because the setting of standard criteria involves struggle, negotiation, and communication among a broad group of organized actors. Labelling efforts indeed concern core corporate activities, including economic and technological issues (although free trade rules may impinge on the possibility to discriminate among technologies – see chapter six). In labelling processes, external stakeholders get an opportunity to debate whether certain corporate practices are

sustainable or not. In this sense green labelling goes much further than Environmental Management Systems (EMS) and Environmental Reporting, as these latter eco-standards do little more than addressing core corporate administrative *procedures*. One might even say that EMS is built on an obsession with procedures, or on such management doctrines that are already commonplace and uncontroversial in the corporate world. A potential with labelling is that it may trigger sub-politics in Beck's sense of the word more than any other form of eco-standard setting.

In labelling practices we have noted that there are always combinations of politics, science, and other forms of knowledge. Although science and other cognitive authorities appear as grand standard setting ideal (see chapter seven), all our cases indicate that actors involved in the labelling practice are normally well aware of the political nature of labelling. They participate in communication and compromises. Therefore, they develop a reflective understanding of the process as such, including the indispensable strategic and political input. This reflexivity nourishes an understanding also of the uncertainties involved, that science is necessary but insufficient, and that the translation of social and environmental complexities to a simple categorical label necessarily includes pragmatic compromises and a degree of arbitrariness.

Contrary to much rhetoric of the importance of simplifying labelling and standards, key notion in this book is that a more reflexive view on science and the inclusion of a broad array of knowledge claims is arguably enhancing the potential of green labelling as regards reductions of various environmental problems (i.e., the 'substantive' potential). It is difficult for a single organisation or a single discipline to know what is the ultimate combination of strategies for dealing with environmental problems (from all angles). On this basis, several scholars, who examine environmental policy-making more broadly, have argued for a more inclusive policy-making (e.g., Lafferty & Meadowcroft 1996; Mol et al., 2000; Tatenhove et al., 2000, Pellizzoni 2004). Through constructive dialogue, reflection, negotiation, and compromise, groups with different concerns, knowledge and experiences may be able to shed light on different aspects of the problem and stimulate reflection as well as take responsive measures. Labelling is interesting in this respect because several

labelling programmes involve a great array of groups in the policy-making (see chapter five). Yet, hopes around inclusiveness have their quite vivid opposite in fears and disappointments, founded on cumbersome decision-making, stalemate, over- and under-representation of certain actor categories, power shifts, and painful compromises (see Boström 2006a). Moreover, despite the inclusiveness, there is particularly one group that is particularly absent: the (political) consumers.

What might be surprising is that labelling initiators often fail in two respects. Firstly, they fail to develop novel ways to get political and ethical concerns represented, as such concerns are seen as represented by retailers or SMOs such as EMOs. Secondly, the initiators fail to disseminate this reflective understanding of the co-production of politics and knowledge to a wider audience. The labelling is marked by sub-politics, that is, by the opening-up of core corporate economic aspects to stakeholder dialogue and negotiation. But the sub-political nature of it largely remains hidden. The sub-politics of labelling are concealed behind the label, behind an expert-oriented rhetoric, behind talks of objectivity, neutral information, and scientific evidence. The sub-politics rarely involve wider audiences, and it does not involve the concerned consumers. If sub-politics regards the opening up of core corporate economic and technological decision-making to a wider group of stakeholders, there is yet a need for opening up precisely this sub-politics to a broader audience of concerned consumers. This requires a meta politics of labelling.

9.1.3 Meta politics of labelling

Labelling is also empowered or obstructed by politics and policy-making that takes place 'above' (or before, or in parallel with) labelling processes. We may call this meta politics of labelling. Whereas sub-politics concerns debate and negotiation about labelling principles, procedures, and criteria, meta politics concerns debate and discussion about labelling and its relation to the eco-standard setting and to green consumerism in general, as well as reflections on the frames underlying various labelling programs. Meta politics would involve reflections on the general conditions of labelling. (A book such as this one

would hopefully stimulate such reflections). Meta politics of labelling could potentially play an important role regarding both the empowerment of individual political consumers and the unmasking of the sub-political nature of labelling processes. Such politics could involve all kinds of actors and initiatives. Precisely as pupils learn about the political system in early ages, they can learn the principles and practices of political consumerism. Given their key roles in processes of political consumerism, social movement actors would have a natural role to play in arranging various types of adult education (evening classes, study circles, folk high school) and practical applications on the subject. Radio and television could broadcast programs with debates on consumer power including the scrutinizing and comparison of consumer tools and strategies. Moreover, state actors can also assume a strong role in the meta politics of voluntary regulation such as labelling.

We have seen, particularly in chapter six, that political (policy) context creates favourable or unfavourable structural or cultural conditions for labelling. On the one hand, the state may be too involved, such as in the case of organic standardisation where actors in both the US state and EU seeks to take control of it. This centralisation of the eco-standard setting appears relating to aspirations to facilitate trade and the internal market than to promote green political consumerism. Fear of pluralism of labels is at play here. On the other hand, we have seen that state actors in a more creative fashion can provide practical and symbolic support to green labelling initiatives. Compared to the organic case, the Swedish forest case illustrates a more collaborating atmosphere between state actors and state regulation, on the one hand, and voluntary forest certification initiatives on the other (see chapter six). It is clear that EMOs among other actors demand more command-and-control regulation in this sector. Yet, state rules have facilitated and provided a platform for the development of private rules. State actors demand that the industry 'voluntarily' take relevant measures to protect the environment; otherwise, they might need to act. Consequently, the industry has felt a need to keep good relations to the state. Certification has in effect been a method to show that they really shoulder their responsibilities. If Charles Lindblom characterised the state as having a 'strong thumb but no fingers'; this kind of jointly adapted regulation clearly indicate some room for both a strong thumb and some fingers playing.

Another opportunity for the state in a meta politics of labelling is that state officials could learn from new knowledge, ideas, and experiences gained from labelling initiatives and make use of such expertise in their own policy-making and rule-setting. However, we think this is more a potential than actual practice. From our cases, we see, particularly in Sweden, a varied degree of willingness, among state actors to learn from the private initiatives.

Meta politics would probably look different in the US and Northern Europe. A challenging aspiration, particularly in the US, would be to find constructive relations between private labelling initiatives and public authorities, since it appears to be scarcity of such relations in that country. In the Swedish consensual policy climate, more challenging would probably be to find ways to facilitate frame reflection. Knowledge about the different pathways towards labelling (cf. chapter six) – and the pros and cons with each – would enrich such meta politics. Much politics ‘above’ the labelling practices also takes place within and among organizations such as ISEAL and IFOAM. We believe such organizations will have to play key roles in the continuous transnational policy monitoring for carving out a regulatory space. In part, these efforts will include struggles against other general doctrines (embodied by e.g. the WTO and ISO).

9.2 REFLECTIVE TRUST EMPOWERS LABELLING

Our next aspiration was to challenge the common view within green labelling literature and policy-making that green political consumerism necessarily is, and should be, based on a *simple* trust among consumers. On the contrary, we claim that reliance on simple trust threatens to undermine green labelling in the long run.

To be sure, labels are substitutes for our senses. Thus, green (political) consumers have to place some type of trust in the label, including the general labelling process and its organization. But what kind of trust is implicated when this view of the relationship is

addressed? We notice that labellers and stakeholders surrounding labelling processes very seldom think about this matter, instead, they are typically geared towards stimulating a simple trust, something which is closely connected to the knowledge objectivist view.

Interestingly, we have seen from chapter five and seven that several labelling arrangements help to encourage the development of mutual reflective trust among participants involved. Other times labelling debates rather entail an increasing mutual mistrust. Both context factors – (A) a political culture of readiness to negotiate (see chapter six), and (B) process factors such as organizational design (chapter five) – combined with repeated interaction, may facilitate the development of a mutual reflective trust. External reference points, such as cognitive authorities, may fuel such a process of trust as well (see chapter seven). Although it can be difficult to change the context in which labelling agents operate, they may elaborate skillfully on abovementioned variables. For example, the Swedish seafood labelling showed that labelling agents designed procedures with the intention (i.e. partly reflecting previous power asymmetries and mutual mistrust) that these procedures eventually would lead to a friendlier general atmosphere. If successful, the gradual development of mutual reflective trust establishes a social capital that can be exploited in subsequent policy processes.

It is important to emphasise that the mutual trust of stakeholders that has been developed is far from a blind, unreserved, passive, and simple trust. Mutual, reflective trust means that participating actors are aware of possible unspoken agendas of other parties. We should never expect complete mutual trust to be developed among such different types of organisations as EMOs and corporations. Instead, mutual reflective trust implies a degree of suspicion, scepticism, and mutual checking, simultaneously as actors learn that it is possible to engage in a dialogue, and to develop mutual expectations.

As has been mentioned already, however, only modest efforts have been made by labelling actors, other stakeholders and policy-makers to stimulate such trust relationships among the broader public. Mutual reflective trust is restricted to participants directly involved in labelling. *Reflective trust* is a trust in that the standards are possible to improve, and that

consumers and a wide group of stakeholders are needed in these processes of continuous modification – as individuals and as members of organisations. If that had been the case, we assume that consumers would be better equipped to comprehend the inherent knowledge fallibility, the ideological diversities, and the political priorities of labelling policies. Such reflective trust would be facilitated by the opening up of the sub-politics of green labelling by way of meta politics. Encouraging a combination of commitment and sound scepticism among concerned consumers would have to entail notions of how to involve or represent various groups of consumers better and ways to facilitate frame reflection. Again, forums are needed of education, discussion, and of debates in which consumers can learn about the limits and opportunities of labels, eco-standards, and other consumer tools.

9.3 SYMBOLIC DIFFERENTIATION EMPOWERS LABELLING

As we have maintained throughout the book, green labelling – by definition -- relies on symbolic differentiation. Based on this claim we challenge a common critical view that green labels cannot be effective because of their limits to ‘scaling up’. Some say that the green labelling strategy is ineffective as a means to tackle environmental problems, because green labelled products will only appear as small niches (REF.). Should not the goal be the reforming of entire industries towards sustainable practices?

In contrast, we argue that green labels can be effective due to the very fact that green-labelled products appear as a ‘top’ niche within markets. To be sure, the goal is not that the labelling instrument alone should reform entire industries. However, it could help initiate a process in such a direction.

Differentiation is essential for the dynamics of green labelling. A great challenge for labellers is, arguably, mechanisms which counteract symbolic differentiation and which work in a mainstreaming direction.

However, the niche cannot be too small and too detached from mainstream markets. It has to be visual. It has to be a niche that appears intriguing or to a certain extent threatening to a much broader audience, including important parts of the ‘conventional industry’. Labels visualise and communicate ‘the best choices’ to consumers, but also in relation to many other audiences, including competing producers and a broad network of policy-makers. Labels must threaten to increase market share without absorbing entire markets. It is probably most powerful when it appears to be increasing. Jordan and colleagues observation is very relevant to our discussion:

‘Once a critical mass of businesses has applied successfully for an eco-label within a certain market segment, the remaining companies find themselves under considerable market pressure to seek the label for their competing product(s)’ Jordan et al. (2005:176).

9.3.1 Why does not the labelling strategy have to ‘scale up’?

To be sure, for environmental or ethical reasons, it is sometimes desirable to withdraw entire product categories from markets. The labelling tool appears ineffective if the goal is to ban a whole product category; traditional command-and-control regulation is the typical means to such ends. Moreover, in its current designs and variations, labelling cannot tackle the urgent imperative ‘Consume Less’. The possibilities with labelling are more modest, yet more substantial than some pessimists would have it. To be sure, it is clear that we should be a bit cautious in prognosticating. We do not want to echo the grand promises and hopes around green consumerism expressed by various policy-actors. Yet, we assume that green values, norms, and ideas channelled through green labelling indeed can matter and make a difference, both in terms of green adaptation and of broadened democratic engagement.

If we distinguish between the direct impact that labelling has on certified practices and other more subtle indirect impacts that the introduction of labelling can have, it is clear that symbolic differentiation is likely to play intriguing roles. Certification and labelling can of course affect the practices that they address directly: the certified practice. For the long-term credibility of a programme, it is probably essential that labelling organizations can

report or convince of positive substantive outcomes of certification and labelling. Yet, such causal links are normally extremely difficult to support with hard evidence that everyone approves of. (cf. Stokke et al. 2005). Labelling agents rather tend to provide anecdotic evidence. Social and ecological complexities are normally too overwhelming. It is probably the case that labelling agents have to rely on reflection, counter-factual reasoning, and persuasion by the use of concrete, 'good examples' placed in their broader context, and by highlighting key factors, and so forth, in their reporting on the effectiveness of certification.

Dynamic, indirect effects complicate the picture even more, but such effects also make it more interesting. It would be drastically misleading not to reflect on scenarios in which indirect effects play no role. It appears to be central that the introduction of labelling can have effects far beyond the operation of single, certified businesses in the market arena. In all sectors that we have studied, the introduction of labelling appears to have provoked or stimulated the introduction of new ideas, dialogues and reflections on how to make any practice more environmentally or socially sustainable. Labels refer to new visions of practices, by being based on systematic and co-ordinated experience and knowledge about such practices. For example, it is apparent that ideas surrounding organic agriculture have stimulated much green thinking in the conventional part of the industry, and among public authorities, not least in Sweden in which organic agriculture is generally appreciated. In this way, we should not evaluate results merely by counting market shares, converting rates, and certified hectares. We should also try to assess the many new – perhaps competing – initiatives that have been taken partly as a result of the first labelling initiative. Counterfactual thinking is important here. Would we have seen the SFI initiative in the US without FSC? It has often been said that FSC is marginalised in the US. But such a statement can only be made if one ignores important dynamics in the labelling strategy. In fact, FSC was seen as threatening among key industries in the US, and this is a fundamental reason why SFI was established. Cabbage & Newman make a very relevant comment about the competition between FSC and SFI when they hold that this competition has led to business adopting standards, within both systems that are stricter than 'those that could have been achieved by government mandates' (2005:271). Consequently, even the lower of these two standards go well beyond legal compliance. The symbolic

differentiation at play is part of the sub-politics that sets off new ways to think about green practices. This is not to say that there is always a 'race to the top'. It is rather the case that the symbolic differentiation plays an important role in the development of new green ideas and framings.

Hence, the label can also be seen and used as a template – a good example – that relate to a much broader field of politics and policy-making that, in turn, helps to create pathways towards sustainability. That labelling organizations compete about market shares, and try to convince audiences about the competitor's flaws is not necessarily a bad thing, although many commentators think that competing labelling schemes cause consumer confusion. Rather, such competition may stimulate broader public debate. Labelling agents and stakeholders can use their voices in such (meta-)politics, thus contributing their knowledge, experiences, and interests that have been developed through their involvement in the labelling programme. Given our assumption that symbolic differentiation is a key power mechanism in the labelling strategy, it becomes relevant to explore the question about compromises in the labelling strategy.

9.3.2 What are the general compromises in the labelling strategy?

It follows logically from our insistence on differentiation that this strategy can never be a self-sufficient means for solving a specific environmental problem. Green labelling should never be seen as a sufficient strategy or instrument for dealing with environmental problems, but always one tool in the action repertoire among state and private authorities. Indeed, this strategy is dependent on its opposite: the relatively unsustainable, poor, dirty, conventional, risky and grey product. Other regulatory tools have to deal with these poorer products, and as soon as they are becoming 'greener', labelling principles and criteria need to be revised continuously. Otherwise, the entire programme may lose its 'political' strengths. Potentially, state actors could play a creative role in making use of the new ideas introduced by the labelling programme. From this platform of knowledge and experiences, they may design tougher regulations addressed to the non-certified share of the market. The state could therefore set a new, higher bar for what is acceptable in the market, whereas

labelling agents then would be able to raise their standards in an upward spiral. Unfortunately, we are unable to report examples of such creative and dynamic interplay between state and voluntary regulation, so this appears so far to be more of a potential than reality.

Another fundamental compromise of the labelling strategy has to do with its reliance on market dynamics. Even if we would want to stress the critical role of symbolic differentiation in front of integration and mainstreaming, the labelling strategy is contingent upon the relation to existing market and industry structures – including the chains of production and distribution – in order to enable some visual market impact. Such integration normally requires making compromises of the environmental message. Products have to be made marketable. They have to look normal and cannot be too expensive. Environmental issues are often framed in holistic terms, of which organic agriculture is a good example. The development of standard criteria that are to be practicable in a market setting always imply, however, that the environmental theme is dissected into component parts, which necessarily implies a degree of reductionism (Allen & Kovach 2000; Barham 2002). The dynamics of the marketplace forces the labelled practice to be economically efficient, and this pressure may combat some of the ideals and values that once motivated its very establishment. As Reynolds (2000) maintains, there is always a risk that the space for alternative trade, which was opened up by social movements, will be subverted by profit-seeking corporations that appropriate the values added by the labels, without adhering to the movements' underlying social and environmental values. There appears to be a general trend towards mainstreaming in those labelling programmes we have analysed and in 'ethical markets' in general (Crane 2005; see also Le Velly 2007 on fair trade). This, we maintain, is more threatening to the power of labelling than the difficulties in 'scaling up'. For some product categories such as detergents, the Nordic Swan label appear on almost every product, but there is a negative side of such success stories because then the label appears as a symbol of the 'average'. Through this strategy, the label becomes more of a licence for market entry than of trigger for green and ethical visions of alternative practices and technologies. However, licenses for market entry could probably be achieved

more efficiently through command-and-control regulation or through industrial self-regulation.

In chapter five we discussed another problematic side of symbolic differentiation. Symbolic differentiation may in practice support big business and discourage small ones. Symbolic differentiation is in one sense arbitrary and relative, and the distinction between green and grey is always social and political in nature although actors may strive to find valid ecological criteria to discriminate between practices and technologies. Such arbitrariness may lead to an unintended and unfortunate distinction between big and small. In several labelling programmes we see that it has been a challenge to involve small, often community or family-based businesses, in labelling for a number of reasons (e.g., economies of scale, risk averse attitudes, lack of expertise in management and marketing, and poor links to market structures). An important challenge would be how to transform the symbolic differentiation to something positive, in which small actors have good chances to appear among the ‘good’ guys. Again, it is arguably too much reliance on, and integration with, existing market and industrial structures that in part explain the current patterns.

Various actors may counteract symbolic differentiation. Some greens would argue that all products should be green, and that there is no need for differentiating among products: ‘We should get rid of all unsustainable products’. Yet, we would still insist that the labelling strategy needs many ‘conventional’ products. If all products were ‘green’ we would not need labelling, and continuous reductions of environmental harm would have to be triggered by other regulatory tools. However, in practice, EMOs usually favour symbolic differentiation, because they want to single out the ‘top’ business actors – thus favouring an exclusive label, using various boundary framings (chapter four). Other players, such as trade association, often want to label the whole industry as green – thus favouring a highly inclusive label while aggressively counter-acting any attempts at symbolic differentiation. Similarly, when there are competing models, such as FSC versus SFI, actors favouring the EMO-initiated alternative have an interest in explaining why this model is superior to the other. Actors promoting the competing industry-led model may want to tone down the

differences between the labels, telling consumers that their label is also credible and that it reflects sustainable corporate practices (see Cashore et al. 2004:238-9).

However, Cashore and colleagues push the interesting argument that the relationship is reversed in the relation to producers at the beginning of the production chain. EMOs want to convince producers that it is not overly difficult to comply with the 'best' standard, compared to the industry-driven standard, whereas promoters of the competing industry-standard try to convince about the costs involved when using the EMO-initiated standard (Cashore et al, 2004). Hence, there is a political dimension in the communication about the differences. EMOs and other actors (for example business actors that approve of labelling for reasons of green image, market entry, and green premiums) stress the symbolic differences, but cannot exaggerate this point in their communication with potential producers. Marketing and frame-bridging efforts towards new producers prevent such excessive symbolic differentiation. Promoters of industry-driven competing models on the contrary stress the symbolic differences in relation to producers who might be willing to comply with the EMO-supported label, but tone down the differences in their communication with consumers. Retailers stand in a mediating position (see chapter five). They do not have to bear the cost associated with environmentally friendly production (except for distributing environmentally friendly, but this has — been quite a marginal issue in labelling (at least prior to the renewed public concerns about global warming, in 2007). What we see in our cases, therefore, is that they accept symbolic differentiation, and this is especially true when green labels are an integrated part in their efforts to develop a green public image and offer products to a segment of ethically sensible consumers. Yet, they also want considerable market share, sales volume, a continuous supply over the year, and they want to frame labelled products as 'normal' (see chap. four). This, in turn, requires a prevention of excessive symbolic differentiation.

In sum, symbolic differentiation is an essential part of the labelling strategy, part of the sub-politics of labelling. We think the same factors that try to undermine symbolic differentiation can undermine consumer power and the potential power of labelling. This is not to say that symbolic differentiation is beneficial all the times work. As has been

mentioned, there is a degree of arbitrariness involved in the differentiation, a result of social and political dynamics. Again, this arbitrariness should be an essential part of the meta politics and frame reflection of labelling. Reflective trust can only be achieved if consumers learn about such dynamics. On the one hand, symbolic differentiation must be part of the management and strategies of labelling agents. They have to build capacity for constant adjusting of ecological criteria in the labelling schemes in relation to what other labellers, eco-standard setters, and policy-makers do. On the other hand, such strategic decision-making should be transparent also to those not involved in this game.

A final note relates to credibility (cf. Boström 2006b). Maintaining symbolic differentiation in labelling is an enormously challenging effort in terms of trustworthiness. This is actually what we have repeatedly stated in our book. Claiming that something is better for the environment than something else is fundamentally provocative and sets off an entire fabric of activities, which we hope this book has illustrated, as in the following straightforward quote:

(In order to be credible 'ethical' differentiation requires a whole company effort /.../ Compare, for example, the difference involved in backing up a claim that a company is more 'socially responsible' than a competitor or a product 'more ethical', with the rather more straightforward task of claiming that a sofa is more comfortable, a drink better tasting, or a manufacturer better at designing stylish automobiles. (Crane 2005:227)

9.4 HOW TO EMPOWER THE CONSUMERS

How should the gap be closed – or at least narrowed – between the production and consumption of labels? All our research behind this book has led to our last claim, namely that the production of tools for green political consumerism does not adequately correspond to the hopes, thoughts, uncertainties, ambivalence, and reflective capacity of the 'average' concerned consumer. We have maintained that the insistence on objectivity, simplicity, and neutrality generally seen among advocates of green labels does not support a development

of reflective trust. There is a mismatch between the production side and the consumption side of green labels. Social and environmental complexities are typically translated into a simple and categorical label. In one sense, it has to be so. Labels are simple and categorical. Yet, there is nothing that in principle hinders that consumers could be invited to deliberate about challenges and choices surrounding the translation of complexity to simplicity.

Likewise, the very common idea and fear among debaters of green political consumerism that the existence of many, partly competing, labels is confusing to consumers is to a large extent, we would argue, based on a simplistic view of the consumers. In the area of traditional politics, we very seldom observe a corresponding fear that there are too many political views or interest organizations out there. Existence of mutually competing political organizations are generally seen as beneficial for democracy and correspond to the differing visions and hopes among citizens. In a similar way environmental problems are complex and uncertain – even more so when they are placed in social contexts. The solution necessarily has to involve the taking into account a breadth of visions and priorities. In the end, the reflexivity and ambivalence of consumers could very well undermine the potential of labelling in case it sticks with a simplistic notion of the consumer. We believe that it is critically important to keep in mind that not every consumer is concerned, not all consumers will identify themselves as political or ethical consumers, and not every consumer will ever be interested in expressing their visions in the supermarkets.

Perhaps the labelling instrument cannot and should not be designed to suit a consumer category that is inclined to make use of free riding, that is cynical or that includes a strong sense of powerlessness. Labelling agents cannot engage the entire population, only a part of the population (perhaps even half of the population, as in Sweden). And it is among this part of the population that we find people who are already interested in politics, and in ethical thinking as well as the most well-educated and ambivalent citizens. (For a critical discussion about this middle-class bias of political consumerism, see Klintman & Boström, 2006a; Klintman et al. 2007). Again, it is wise to see labelling as a tool that has to

supplement a wide range of other mandatory and voluntary tools, and as one form of democratic participation.

Attempts at closing the gap between the production and consumption-side within labelling in particular, and green consumer politics in general, could be initiated from both sides. It has both to do with enriching the labelling process and with empowering consumers. Regarding the production of labels, relevant measures would be those that concern meta politics (see above) and the organizing and framing of labelling processes. The critical issue is not necessarily to achieve a maximum inclusion of consumer input in the standard setting. Reflecting upon the organizing and framing of labelling, with the purpose of closing the gap between production and consumption of labels, would rather include the following issues:

critical evaluations of how consumers and consumer groups have been represented in the standard setting procedures (e.g., what are the biases in seeing consumers represented by organized interest groups such as retailers and EMOs?)

continuous evaluations of, and searches for, novel ways to include consumer's concerns, including getting ideas about the ambivalences confronting consumers (surveys, focus groups, panels, web-based interaction, etc.).

research aimed at developing ways of improving interaction with consumers. Such research would enrich the standard-setting, while helping consumers and professional buyers with interpretations and practical uses of standard criteria.

co-operation without co-optation to prevent power shifts that are advantageous only to specific players, such as retailers. This would require self-reflection among SMOs. It would require reflecting upon organizational design such as how to involve various players, reminding that forms may shape (but not determine, cf. chapter five) standard contents. It would entail a critical eye on the development of common frames, for instance meta-frames that create cognitive path-dependencies in labelling programmes (cf. chapter four).

developments of ways to market specific advantages and uniqueness with each label, simultaneous with information about the general reductions, limitations and compromises that have been made during the standard-setting process. This should include communication about labelling as ‘only one step ahead’

participation in meta politics of labelling, and (self-)critically assessments of different programs and of the different framings underlying various programs

framing of the labels as ‘communicative tools’ rather than ‘information tools’.

The last point would imply that the goal with labels is to initiate a dialogue (in relation to competitors, policy-makers, consumers, etc.), rather than to inform about ‘best choices’. Seen in this way, consumers could have something to contribute. From this perspective, consumers are not merely information takers, expected to behave rationally once they receive information on buying options. To be sure, labels are, and should be, used as information; but in addition, they could also be seen as a way to open for dialogue.

Engagement of consumers in such a dialogue would require that consumers be empowered. If there is a hope that consumers should express their ‘consumer power’ in the market arena, there has to be ways to look beyond the individualistic view on consumers. Consumer empowerment could include dimensions that are cognitive (e.g., knowledge gained about the sub-politics of labelling), material (e.g., the access to affordable and accessible products), and emotive/aesthetic aspects (e.g., attachment to products and services in which consumers see meaning and aesthetic value of products based on the green and social implications of these products and processes).

Would a closing of this gap have ecological and democratic advantages? We cannot really provide strict evidences about to what extent a closing of the gap would have positive ecological consequences. What should be counted as ‘positive ecological consequences’ is itself subject for subjective valuation, and should be open to debate. The answer also

depends on what goals various actors have defined for labelling. For instance, potential goals could include the reaching of maximum market impact or of a maximum number of responsible consumers. If the latter is the answer, closing the gap is close to a necessity.

Closing the gap would have democratic advantages, as it would improve channels for everyone to express and talk about green political visions. As has been mentioned, green political consumerism must, however, been understood as one among many channels. It will never engage all citizens, and citizens will never have equal cognitive, material and emotional capacities for using this form of political participation; the material dimension is particularly intriguing seen from a North-South angle. Its fundamentally private nature as well as Northern focus – it is also fair to say bias – set certain limits regarding democratic participation (Raynolds et al. 2007).

Labels cannot be designed to reflect an absolute state of the affair such as ‘good’ or ‘sustainable’, although labellers sometimes frame it in that way. This book has shown that labelling is partly arbitrary and always relative, due to its inherently political nature and its reliance on symbolic differentiation. The book has also argued that this fact with all its nuances should be open to consumers through active, dialogue-based communication. This should have the purpose of helping consumers develop their reflective trust, and to help them become better equipped to engage critically and reflexively in this policy tool. In the ideals of green political consumerism lies not only hope for more market shares, but also a hope for more reflexive consumers, who shop, think and observe with an open mind.

Food safety and the reversed political consumer

(work in progress)

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Abstract

We address the question of whether people act as political consumers in relation to food safety. By linking evidence from economic valuation studies on consumers' willingness to pay with sociological studies on consumer behaviour and market studies, we find that food safety does not call for political consumption – rather, food safety calls for reversed political consumption.

1. Introduction

The term a political consumer is often used to describe a person who uses consumption to show his political beliefs. In example, a political consumer could buy Max Haavelaar coffee to show that he supports local peasants in Nicaragua. Also, a political consumer can be a person who shows his support for e.g. environmental issues, animal welfare and healthy life style by buying food products that provide these attributes.

By following this terminology, we define a reversed political consumer to be a person who does not reveal his preferences for political topics through market behaviour but instead tries to influence the political agenda through other channels than the market – such as using political referendums to vote for politicians that represent that person's preferences for particular topics, joining NGO, charity work, private donations to organizations, etc. In other words, a reversed political consumer is simply a person acting as a citizen, not a consumer.

The purpose of the paper is to improve our understanding of consumers' preferences for food safety and how they are reflected in a willingness to pay for food safety. In particular, we are interested in identifying potential relationships between political consumption (or the reversed) and food safety. These interests are related to ongoing research projects on consumer behaviour in relation to food safety control and organic consumption¹.

By considering multiple strands of research, our findings suggest that food safety is a characteristic that calls for a reversed political consumer. The paper is organized as follows. First, we use the literature to define a political consumer in general terms. Second, we describe consumer demand for food safety and the need for political intervention in food safety markets.

Third, we present the core of the paper where we link differences between stated and revealed behaviour towards food safety to the existence of a reversed political consumer.

2. The political consumer

Stenger (2007) defines political consumption as consumption through which a consumer wants to influence the political agenda. Stenger (2007) also refers to political consumption as an alternative way to reveal ones political views where the consumers act politically through their shopping decisions in a market context. Political consumption can be viewed as a political activity similar to joining a political party and/or political organisation, participating in referendums, etc. Consumption becomes political when the consumer apart from employing only traditional consumer motives as price and quality, also incorporate a range of other criteria in their shopping decisions such as ethical, environmental, social criteria.

Several studies suggest that the degree of political consumption is rather large. In example, Beckman et al. (2001) note that 50% of consumers buying organic products state political motives such as wanting to sustain the environment. Also Andersen & Tobiasen (2001) found that 53% of consumers always or often chose products based on a perceived relationship between the products, the producer, and environmental concern, animal welfare or human right concerns. At the same time, Jensen (2001) found that consumers to a large extend buy organic products for personal health reasons.

Stenger (2007) raises the very relevant problem that consumers might be categorized as political just because the products they buy contains some political aspects. Stenger (2007) points out that only if a consumer reflects upon his political role in relation to his consumption – then the classical understanding of consumption is expanded and consumption becomes political. Determining exactly when such a political reflection is present requires

¹ (The projects are described on the websites <http://www.dffe.dk/Default.asp?ID=33727> and <http://www.foejo.dk/forskning/foejoiij/concepts.html>).

deeper insight in consumer behaviour and is subject to further research. A noteworthy study that seeks to elicit private and altruistic preferences for public goods is provided by Russell et al. (1999).

Similarly, Andersen & Tobiasen (2001) define political consumption in relation to what a consumer does when he as a consumer makes considerable value-related choices in order to support a certain political goal. The observed increased political consumption is seen as a way for individuals to increase their political influence. As political interest and political consumption are highly related, Andersen & Tobiasen (2001) do not see political consumption as an alternative but as a supplement to being politically active.

In Jensen (2007), political consumption is defined as a social phenomenon that particularly has been analysed in the attempt to understand changes in consumer participation in the political agenda. According to Jensen (2007), the market mechanisms are used increasingly to supplement other channels for political engagement and therefore it is relevant to consider consumers as political players. This trend is related to a general change in policy making where consumers increasingly are being involved in the solution of political agendas. In Denmark, for example, the Minister of Environment has launched a campaign where all household are asked to reduce their CO₂ emission by one ton. In relation to food safety, Halkier & Holm (2006) observe that there has been a change in food safety policy from aiming at simply protecting the consumer from food risks towards a policy aiming at providing the rational consumers with sufficient information to make his own food safety choices.

From an economic point of view, the market constitutes a very important place where producers as well as consumers can reveal their preferences through their supply and demand of goods and services. Our interest in consumer behaviour is easily extended to include the behaviour of a political consumer as the influence of a political consumer is exercised through his demand in markets. How does the reversed political consumer fit in? We define a reversed political consumer to be a person who does not reveal his preferences for political topics through market behaviour but instead tries to influence the political agenda through other channels than the market. In other words, a reversed political consumer is simply a person acting as a citizen, not a consumer. Hence, understanding when and why citizens act as political or reversed political consumers might an important key to understanding to what extent consumer perceptions of various food quality attributes are reflected in willingness to pay for those attributes.

3. Economic valuation of food safety

Using an economic approach, food safety is a commodity whose price is determined by market supply and demand. There are markets that are characterized almost exclusively by their safety attribute. These include Salmonella and/or Campylobacter-free chicken and pasteurized eggs.

However, the markets are not able to capture the actual demand for food safety. Firstly, market prices only reveal demand when markets satisfy certain efficiency requirements. One of the efficiency requirements is that all market participants use all existing knowledge concerning the commodity in their decision making (cf. Russell & Wilkinson, 1979). This requirement is not satisfied in the case of food safety, primarily because food safety attributes

are *credence attributes* (meaning that their values cannot be discerned even after consumption (Roberts, 2005)²). The pricing of such attributes is subject to informational problems in terms of general uncertainty (none of the parties know the exact characteristics of the attributes) as well as asymmetric information (one party – typically the producer, has superior information about the true characteristics of the attributes and has the economic incentive to use this information for private profit). From an economic point of view, the problem concerning lack of informational efficiency is that market prices do not reflect the socially optimal values of the products.

Secondly, if a market is too small, then non-economic factors such as availability, shelf-placing and, simply knowledge of the existence of a given food product can dominate to such an extent that market prices do not provide reliable estimates of consumer demand. This is exactly the case with the markets for Salmonella- and/or Campylobacter-free broilers. In Denmark, only one pct. of chicken products sold can be characterized as non-standard (which includes Campylobacter-free, Salmonella- and Campylobacter-free or produced free-range/organic). The pasteurized eggs, which is another example of a food product that is almost exclusively distinguishable by its food safety attribute have obtained a much higher market share in Denmark, supposedly due to heavy media coverage of serious Salmonella infections around the year 2000.

Stated preference methods provide alternative means for eliciting consumers' preferences when markets for one reason or another are incomplete or are not efficient. It is apparent from the rapidly increasing number of economic valuation studies of food safety that this poses an interesting research question. A general conclusion when looking at the stated preference studies of willingness-to-pay (WTP) for food safety indicated that consumers are willing to pay for food safety and that the WTP estimates for safer food generally were higher than what is reflected in the market behaviour - through the demand and the market prices.

There might be several reasons for this difference. First, the difference between economic analyses of stated and observed preferences for food safety can also be found in the differences between the focus in the media on food safety and the market shares. Despite the large focus on food safety over the recent years, the market shares for products that offer high levels of food safety (as for example, Salmonella- and Campylobacter-free meat products) are still small. The mismatch between interest and market size could be due to market failures – but could also be due to reversed political consumer.

Earlier research of consumer behaviour with respect to organic consumption shows that priority is given to taste, freshness, health and other quality attributes (Wier et al., 2004), despite the fact that these attributes are subjectively experienced and assessed, and in contrast to such aspects as environmental impact or animal welfare are not adequately documented. Households function as market actors insofar as premium prices are paid for the benefits yielded by organic products. These results are supported by Jensen et al. (2001). However, Wier et al. (2004) found that a considerable number of people appear to be willing to act in the role of *citizens*, rather than *consumers*, insofar as they are willing to pay tax that supports organic agriculture. Among these, one third do not purchase organic products to any notable extent but they would be willing to support organic production through tax payments. In our

² By providing information about handling of food, the risks associated with old food, differences in risk levels across different types of foods and for different countries of origin, the credence characteristic could be reduced.

terminology, this part of consumers (who do not buy organic products) do not act as political consumers – they might be denoted as reversed political consumers (or simply citizens).

One of the obvious caveats in stated preference surveys is that by posing questions concerning food safety perceptions, and in particular setting up choice experiments, consumers' attention is drawn towards food safety which maybe is not the case when the respondent acts as a consumer in his every day shopping. Sociological studies indicate that consumers perceive all food to be safe and that they believe food safety is the responsibility of the public authorities rather than something they as consumers should worry about (Lassen et al., 2002). This result suggests that food safety should not be determined by consumers in a market place but rather by citizens affecting the political priority setting in society. Hence, food safety calls for a reversed political consumer. It follows that a possible explanation for the difference between the high WTP for food safety as stated in consumer surveys might be because consumers state their social preferences rather than their private preferences for food safety in the surveys. Stated preference methods possess the ability to elicit private as well as social preferences – and exploiting this facility in future research would certainly increase our understanding of consumer behaviour.

4. Public intervention to provide public goods

An additional interesting research question related to food safety is the degree of public interventions needed to secure a socially optimal food safety policy. From an economic point of view, food safety has private good characteristics (the person consuming a product has a very direct interest in the food being safe and thereby avoiding unpleasant infections) but it also has public good characteristics (a foodborne infection that requires hospitalization is a burden to the public health budgets and this affects all taxpayers – at least in principle). Using an economic term, this unintended effect that one person's consumption of risky food has on the public health expenditures is denoted an externality effect. The markets can typically not secure a socially optimal level of food safety when externalities are present – and public intervention is called for. From an economic point of view, the public good characteristics of food safety provide the justification for public intervention in terms of setting food safety standards, information campaigns, taxing risky food or subsidising safe food etc. The private good characteristics of food safety on the other hand, only call for public intervention in relation to securing informationally efficient markets.

Hamilton et al. (2003) offer a very interesting contribution to the debate about public intervention by going into more detail about the effects on consumer welfare of public intervention. They consider public intervention in food safety in terms of mandating a reduction in agricultural use of pesticides. In addition to having a positive effect on the environment (increasing the amount of a public good), regulation increases food safety (here, health risk is considered a purely private good) but the regulation also increases prices and reduces the variety of goods and thereby consumers choice options are reduced. They argue that consumers' preferences might pull in opposite directions. In example, a consumer might have a high WTP for absence of pesticides but place a high option value on retaining future choices. This consumer might oppose a ban on pesticides even though she is willing to pay a price premium for pesticide free products. Another consumer might have a low WTP for pesticide free food but care deeply for the environment. This consumer would not buy pesticide-free food but would vote for regulation of pesticides.

Hamilton et al. (2003) argue that referendum behaviour may be a poor predictor of WTP, and that consumption behaviour may be a poor predictor of support for public policies that change product quality. The observation that consumer behaviour may differ markedly from political behaviour has implications for using techniques that infer the value of public interventions from consumer choices, and for methods that attempt to value public goods by examining referendum behaviour (p. 802 Hamilton et al. 2003).

Stated preference methods possess the ability to address these questions – it has just not been adequately done so far. Hence, we suggest that in addition to pursuing WTP estimates for specific attributes as food safety, future research should be directed towards specifically focusing on eliciting social values of public goods and preferred ways to provide them. This has only been done to a very limited extend.

5. Conclusion

Merging all these findings suggests that even though consumers place a value on food safety, they also feel that food safety is the responsibility of the public authorities. In particular, identifying when the respondents act as political or reversed political consumers might be one of the keys to understanding the divergence between stated and revealed behaviour, and furthermore the link to determine how much food safety that can be expected to be provided using the market mechanisms and how much that needs to be provided through public interventions.

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Nordic Consumer Policy Research Conference 2007

Towards a new consumer policy?

Theme 13: Political consumerism (Magnus Boström and Visa Heinonen)

From consumerism to the empowerment of consumers. The case of ethic food movements in France

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Political consumerism is a former and long-lasting form of collective action. It was developed during the 19th century, with the cooperative movement, and expanded in the turn of the century through various social movements aiming at civilizing the market (Bevir and Trentmann, 2004). Many of these movements succeeded in building a power coming from the consumption side and able to achieve certain goals that are not solely related to the consumer advocacy (Cohen, 2004). For example, consumers have been mobilized by trade unions to circumvent difficulties encountered in strike organizations during the 1910s or to support workers struggles during the 1950s in the United States (Friedman, 1999). But consumers were also called to support many different causes, through out the last and the current centuries, from the advocacy of civil rights, to the defence of social justice or the protection of the environment. So, consumers have been built through history as a political and social strength that cannot be neglected.

Today we still witness, in developed but also in developing countries, several forms of political consumerism (Micheletti, Follesdal and Stolle, 2003). But, in many countries the conditions within which the collective mobilization of consumers is possible have profoundly changed. Meanwhile, new kinds of solicitations of consumers' involvement in collective action emerged within the sustainable development context (Cohen and Murphy, 2001). Especially, after the summit for sustainable development held in Johannesburg in 1992, consumption issues have been stressed out as one of the main questions developed countries should focus on. Many organizations try today to mobilize consumers towards a more responsible behaviour and attempt to rely on them in order to put pressure on other actors such as government or firms. But, even if many consumer surveys show that consumers may be very receptive to ethical or environmental issues, as showed by the results of fair trade awareness for example, evaluations of changes in consumer behaviour are quite deceptive.

This contribution aims at trying to explore the possibilities and limits of consumers' involvement within sustainable consumption, by analyzing the contemporary conditions of political consumerism. In the first part, we will present some elements coming from the literature that explain the different forms of consumers' involvements in political

consumerism through history. We will show the main limits encountered by present consumers' mobilization. Then in the second part, we will describe the specificities of political consumerism within sustainable development in France, based on our empirical material coming from different ethic food movements. In particular, we will stress out some attempts to empower consumers, in social networks, in order to provide change in their economic but also political behaviour. The main result coming from our study of political organization of consumers involved in promoting sustainable development stresses that market may not be the only arena for changing consumer behaviour.

1. From a political power of consumers to a disciplined consumerism

In this part we would like to describe historical and institutional conditions of the construction of consumer identity. Through the history of the consumers' movements in western countries, we observe the progressive institutionalisation of several figures of the role of consumer in political economy. They went from an economic citizenship to an institutionalisation of a consumer capitalism. The fragmentation of consumer needs and interest by the states, firms and consumers movements may explain why today, consumers organizations are no more social movements aimed at involving consumers within political actions.

Building rights of citizens through market action

The market is not only an arena designed to organize pacified exchanges of products between buyers and sellers; it also progressively became a place where social groups try to express, more or less violently, their rights as citizens. To understand political consumerism as a collective action of consumers we need to rely on an analysis of the ways some solidarity has been built between them. Recently many historical studies provided such fruitful evidence. In particular, they show that this solidarity among consumers may be aimed at different goals. Two of them may be identified: asking consumers to show collectively solidarity with another social group, or building solidarity among consumers themselves in order to defend their consumer's rights.

One of the first national boycott in the United States was organized by the Knights of Labor, the national trade union (Friedman, 1999), at the end of the 19th century, in a specific context where strikes were considered as not efficient enough. Boycotts progressively became means to extend pressures on production side, by a strong mobilisation of consumers on the market side. The American Federation of Labor systemizes this idea by publishing a black list of firms that were accused of social dumping on workers. The pressure became so important on firms that they decided to organize the American Anti-Boycott Association in order to deal with these boycott calls and try to rebuild the confidence of consumers on markets. Of course, the attempts to ask consumer to show solidarity with workers were, in certain circumstances inefficient, especially when workers and unions try to claim for some, very local and specific, raise of wages. However trade unions won some legitimacy in building collective action on the market side, by empowering consumers. One of the main evidence of this power was provided by the table grapefruit boycott organized by César Chávez during the mid-20th century in the United States. The boycott was launched by the National Farm Workers Association in 1965 in order to support a strike of farm workers in California, who wanted access to labor rights of which they were denied. The boycott got the support of other trade

unions and also students in religious groups, its economic effects was very strong and prices collapsed, forcing farm owners to enter negotiation with the just created United Farm Workers Organizing Committee. The final agreement occurred in 1970, involving the signature of 26 other farming firms. This boycott showed the capacity of consumers to be involved in a strong mobilisation for a cause that is not directly of their concern.

But these example should not let think that consumers are only a group that can be mobilized by others social movements whose struggle they adopt. Consumers also struggled for themselves to defend their rights as citizens, but also as consumers.

The first situation of consumers mobilization, as it has been shown by historians, were the earlier boycotts and consumer protests during the 18th and the 19th centuries in Great Britain and in the United States (Glickman, 2006). They demonstrated that mass boycotts, such as the boycott of British products during the 1760s by American pioneers contributed to pattern the emerging US nation, since citizens get the consciousness to form a social group first of all as boycotters of British products.

Some of these movements and especially the free trade movement against slavery settled the groundwork of the modern political consumerism by focusing on the political dimension of economic exchanges. Consumers get the awareness of being able to be members of a social group to build a new politics of solidarity through the market. As Glickman said, “their understandings of the social consequences of consumption and of the consequent power of long-distance solidarity, while not ends in themselves for these groups, became the means by which modern citizens believed that they could promote social change” (Glickman, 2006, p.23.). This analysis provides evidence for understanding why different social groups agree to defend their rights by using protests on markets. For example, during the early 20th century the civil rights movement organized several protests known as the “don’t buy where you can’t work” campaign, or the “spend your money where you can work” campaign which were designed both as building labour rights for African American people and as building their rights as American citizens. The market became an arena where people could fight for their rights and produce a strong connection between consumption and citizenship.

The connection between consumption and citizenship

The strong connection between consumption and citizenship has been deeply studied by numerous historians. In particular, they showed that this connection has been jointly produced by states and firms. Frank Trentmann described the shift on consumer politics that may be observed by comparing the social protests about the cheap bread, during the early 20th century and social protest about clean milk after the Second World War in great Britain (Trentmann, 2001). Organized consumers deeply changed their view about their own action but also about the politics that should be implemented concerning the production and the consumption of these necessities. While different consumers organizations such as cooperative had a strong radical-liberal vision of consumption in the 1910s, asking for the state to provide economic actors with the condition of free trade and making the cheap white loaf as the central icon of this consumer politics, the pure milk campaign of the 1940s asked, on the opposite, for a strong involvement on state in market regulation. Trentmann demonstrates that this shift should be explained as a deep transformation of the tie between citizenship and consumption. During the free trade campaign, consumers viewed state regulation and especially protectionism as an invasion by the state of the domestic (especially the female) sphere of the household. They grounded the consumer citizenship in the community self-help system provided by cooperatives, reinforcing civil society as a strong social group founding citizenship on autonomy from both firms and the state. This consumer politics evolved to a more social-democrat vision as several difficulties arose: the privation during the First World

War called for a more interventionist food policy, several official reports on food adulteration and disease problems required state regulation on the exchange conditions. "For organized consumers, the milk question went to the heart of the need to reform Britain's political economy" (p.143). In this new vision, the state is an essential element of the connection between consumption and citizenship: by protecting consumer's interest, in the name of civil society, the state built a new democracy of consumers based on economic citizenship.

Lizabeth Cohen provides a comparable analysis for the American case (Cohen, 2004). On behalf of the New Deal, the state intends to protect consumers' interests from workers' and firms' interests which are already established, by representing consumers within the administration and by voting the first significant law regulating consumption. Consumers' Organizations such as the famous National Consumers League considers that the duty to protect consumers must belong to the state. During and after the Second World War, the state symmetrically asked consumers for new duties: restrictions during the war, and consumption after the war became the best way for consumers to express their citizenship, completing the construction of this new connection between consumption and citizenship. The American citizenship is based, as described by Lizabeth Cohen, around the new idea of Consumers Republic, in which mass consumption should become the way for increasing the wealth of the country. A new social contract is built, through market and consumption, based on a specific identity of the consumer that a great diversity of actors intends to define and protect: organized consumers such as Consumers Unions and the newly created National Associations of Consumers, consumers' bureaus within the administration, and of course marketing departments within firms and universities. The protection of general interests of the consumers rely within the hands and the choice of each consumers, whose choices are now atomized, autonomous and source of both economic growth and citizenship.

The development of the Marshall Plan in Europe will contribute to import a new vision of the role of consumption within economic development. Even if the idea of mass consumption would not be used as an element of a democratic ideal before the 1960s in most Western Europe countries, the role of the consumer within the reconstruction effort is emphasized by the state both in France and Great Britain (Kroen, 2004).

These different studies in history provide evidence of the social construction of the role of consumers within political economy, they also show through notions of economic citizenship of consumers and consumers republic, how the state, in agreement with consumers organizations, contribute to portray the consumer as an individual with specific rights and duties within the democracy. His social identity comes at first from his (her) capacity to choose, purchase and consume products which have been designed by firms for him (her) to create wealth, while the state helped by consumers organizations will take care of his (her) rights.

The atomization of consumers and institutionalisation of consumers' organizations

In these conditions, the role of consumers' organizations has deeply evolved. They may be different from one country to another but they all contribute to the atomization of consumers and the fragmentation of their need to be protected.

Following the results proposed by Patricia Maclachlan who compared consumers politics in Great Britain and in the United States and presented a deep study of the Japanese case (Maclachlan, 2004) and Gunar Trumbull who compared the French and the German cases, three main models of consumers politics can be identified (Trumbull, 2006).

The United States are characterized but the Consumers Advocates model. The legitimacy of the state to intervene in consumers affairs was settled after Kennedy pronounced his famous speech on the 4 rights of consumers: to be secured, to be informed, to choose, to express.

Observing that the consumer is the only man in the economy “without a high-powered lobbyist” (Cohen, p. 345), the President intended to be that lobbyist and create the Consumer Advisory Council. In 1973, an independent regulatory agency was asked to create new protection rights for consumers, and the authority of the Consumer Product Safety Commission, of the Federal Trade Commission and of the Food and Drug Administration were extended. This new consumer politics open new opportunities for consumers’ organizations for lobbying. Within this favourable context, Ralph Nader created his network of audacious consumers advocates, the raiders. Using a wide repertoire of tactics (from classical consumers protests such as boycott to expert class action), the American Consumers Organizations are very powerful, but at the same time their space of actions is narrowed by both the capture of the consumer representation by the administration, and the segmentation of consumers’ needs by marketing techniques of big companies. The French case is similar to the American case from the point of view of the state implication in the protection of consumers, especially because the French government took its ideas from the American ideology of consumer politics. But as consumers’ organizations became stronger during the 1970s, especially because they got important financial support from the state¹, they also became specific allies of the state in the standardization and information policy. This progressive capture of the main consumers’ organizations led to a specific model of consumer protection through standards and laws and a specific and important consumption policy that protect consumers’ interests from firms’ interests, which strongly differentiates the French model from the American one.

In Germany and in Great Britain, consumers’ organizations are less politicized and are more inclined to cooperate with both companies and the state. The information model which characterizes the two countries comes out from a strong upstream cooperation between the government, consumers’ organizations and the firms to built regulations which produce less constraint for economic actors.

Trumbull uses the term of “consumer capitalism” to describe the form of the political economy in which institutionalized interests of consumers contribute to define the terms of public policies and companies’ strategies. As observed, this institutionalization depends on the nature of the cooperation between consumers’ organizations and public authorities, which in turn is connected to the organisation of the consumers’ movement and its relationship to companies. This is why consumers’ politics models may be so different from one country to another. But this reality shows that consumer political identity today is built at the intersection of business strategies, public policies and actions of consumers’ movements. Today, some of the representation of consumers’ interests has been captured both by the state and by large companies, the proportion of earlier and former type of capture varying from one country to another. For example, according to Patricia Macmachlan, the Japanese case constitutes the extreme case of the capture process by the state, since some consumers organizations may act as public policy instrument, while the British case may be a case of capture by large companies (Macmachlan, 2004).

For states, companies and consumers movements, the consumer is portrayed as an individual whose choice must be oriented and equipped with several devices: the market provide the consumer with specific needs, the state and consumers organizations provide him (her) with rights and duties (Hilton et Daunton, 2001). The three of them contribute to reduce consumer expression within an atomized demand, for goods or protection. The consumer movement evolved in technical consumer advocacy which aims at defending specific and segmented interest, with regards to specific situations, whether this advocacy uses justice court (Rao, 1998) or technocratic standardisation.

¹ This situation explains why some trade unions and family organizations have developed activities in consumer advocacy in France.

This fine fragmentation of consumer interests within purchase choices makes the construction of collective action of consumers difficult today. In the second part of this paper, we would like to explore the condition of a possible involvement of consumers within what could be identified as a political action.

2. Involving consumers within ethical consumption in France

As in many other countries, consumers organizations are strongly institutionalized and are the core of an impressive consumption policy that make the French consumer one of the most protected consumer in the world. But at the same time, they have to face a main critic: they do not have a large grassroots, and in a way find it difficult to pretend there are representative of consumers. A good example of this difficulty of French Consumers' Organisations to pretend to act on behalf of consumers is that they were not identified as the first spokesmen in the development of the conditions of sustainable consumption. As in other countries, the idea of the role of consumers within sustainable development emerged in France at the end of the 1990s, sometime after the Johannesburg Earth Summit where consumers of Northern countries were pointed by Southern countries for their direct responsibility in the deterioration of the environment. Several NGO or social movements tried to involve consumers more deeply in what could be a political project on sustainable consumption. They were quickly joined by companies and public authorities. Most of them find it difficult to make deep changes in consumers' behaviour and also build the condition of what could be called a political awareness of consumers' responsibility. Some of them succeed as we will see in the last part of this section, but they do not use as much market tactics as others groups to do so. This draws to the conclusion that market may not be an arena for political involvement of consumers.

Patterns of political consumerism in France

If the French consumer intends to change his consumption patterns in order to be more environmentally friendly or to show his concern for social justice, he (she) can be proposed a wide range of supply and prescriptions. Some of them are advice proposed by public authorities, such as the National Agency for the Environment (ADEME), regarding the use of water, household appliances, energy for the home, transportation in urban areas, or label identification for products. They are available within brochures or websites for consumers, designed by the government, or may be diffused through media channels (commercials or radio).

Other propositions come from NGO or companies which offer labelled products such as green products, organics food, and fair trade products. In France, several green labels exist for products, some of them come from public authorities, and others are private initiatives. “*NF-environnement*” is the French official label for environmentally friendly products, 19 types of products may be sold using this label which is the property of the French Agency for Standardisation (AFNOR) also in charge of the certification process. The European eco-label created in 1992 may also be used, but less often than is in Belgium or Germany. A label for organics food, called the AB Label (*Agriculture Biologique*) has been created in 1985 by the French Ministry of Agriculture, to signal products that comply with the French requirement on organic food production². Then other labels coming from abroad may also be used to sell products. The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) label is controlled by three types of actors

² In France, only 1.8% of the farming field produced organic food in 1995, with a 5% increase since 2004 (Fédération Nationale d'Agriculture Biologique)

(NGO working on environmental issues, NGO working on social justice issues and companies exploiting or distributing wood) and may be used to sell sustainable wood products in home improvement stores. The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) label is proposed by the NGO WWF and Unilever to certify products which comply with requirements about sustainability. In France, about 12 frozen fish products use this private label. The private Max Havelaar trademark is given by the Fairtrade Labelling Organizations (FLO) to products that comply with requirements about fair trade. These are the main labels supplied in France; most of them are available both in supermarkets and specialized shops (organic food shops and world shops).

According to figures produced by the French Agency for the Environment (ADEME), the total sales in France of eco-labelled products grew from 50 millions euros in 98 to 800 millions euros in 2005. But the market share of eco-labelled products may vary a lot from one segment of the market to the other. For example, eco-labelled products represent 25% of the market share on garbage bags market, but no more than 1 to 3% market share on most segments. No figure is available for the market share of organic food product, but the amount of sales has been evaluated by the French Agency for organic food at 1.6 billions of euros in 2005, with a rate of growth of almost 10% per year. Finally, the figures of fair trade provided by the Max Havelaar Company show also a important increase but stay low: 120 millions of euros in 2005.

These mixed results showing important increase of consumption of what remains very small share of market have to be compared to sensibility of French consumers to political consumerism. A recent survey by the Center of Research of Life Conditions (CREDOC)³ on political consumerism show precisely a gap between what French consumers say about their political involvement trough consumption and what they actually do, while doing their shopping. In 2006, 44% of French consumers say they care about ethical involvement of companies while choosing their products, which is 6 points more than in the 2002 survey, and 61% would accept to pay 5% more for a product produced by such a company, which is 9 points more than 5 years ago. They would also be able to boycott products that are coming from companies with unethical practices. When they have been asked about their purchases during the last six months, 21% assert they purchase a product for ethical reason and 30% say they may have done it (they are not absolutely sure), this political choice being more important for high income consumer (72%) than for low income consumers (45%). Such a survey has some limits, notably it is based on statements instead of acts, and then cannot describe real consumption patterns regarding political consumerism of French consumers. But, it shows that ethical framing of consumption may be used as a common knowledge between consumers, and perhaps as a social norm: consumers admit, and the more they earn, the more they admit it, they may shop for the environment or for social justice. The high score of answer show that consumers incorporated that it is socially and politically correct to show such a political involvement in their purchase choices.

Those different data portrayed the French situation as a case in which consumers are aware of the power of their purse but use it parsimoniously, especially when they are economically challenged. We will provide in the next section a theoretical explanation of the limit of such a political involvement of consumers in the marketplace.

³ Patrica Croutte, Franck Delpal et Georges Hatchuel, « Représentations et pratiques de la consommation engagée : évolution 2002-2006 », Cahier de Recherche du CREDOC, N°213, décembre 2006.

The limits of market action to build political consumers awareness about sustainable development

It seems to be important to replace the development of a supply of ethical products (fair trade products, organic food, eco-labelled products) within the context of mass consumption.

As described by Lizabeth Cohen (Cohen, 2004), the development of a mass consumption economy was a fruitful context for the articulation between general interest for growth in the post-war period and individual interest for spending in consumption. State, companies and consumers movements were all concerned by the organization of the best conditions for each consumer to spend his money (Strasser, McGovern and Judt, 1998), they all worked to design and implement what would then be known as the market segmentation, introduced by Wendell Smith and Pierre Martineau in the late 1950s, which was, with trademarks and distribution chains (Strasser, 1989), one of the pillars of the making of the mass markets. One of the main assumptions of the principles of market segmentation is that these groups of consumers or consumption patterns already exist in the society: they are kinds of sub-cultures that regularly emerge to gather individuals and differentiate them from other groups⁴. The market appears then as a suitable arena for individuals to express their identities through their consumption choices. It is admitted even for market specialist, that markets produce the fragmentation of consumers in isolated groups (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). In this vision each critique of the mass consumption society could be reinterpreted as the development of a new sub-culture, as were the hippie or the beat generation cultures, which the market should end to incorporate within its supply. Capitalism is founded on a great capacity to integrate its own critique (Boltanski and Chiapello, 1999). This mechanism has been deeply assessed by academics in consumer studies, especially by academics who proposed a theory of the post-modern consumer based on his (her) great capacity to be reflexive on his (her) consumption behaviour (Holt, 2002 ; Kozinets 2002; Gabriel and Lang, 1995 and 2006; Kozinets and Handelman, 2004).

In France, the first alternative supply which was proposed to consumers in order to make them responsible for the protection of the environment or the development of social justice was proposed by groups, which intend to challenge some of the conventional market rules. In the 1970s, some fair trade products were sold by *Artisans du Monde*, an NGO which adopted the new ideology of development based on "trade but not aid" and available for consumers in specialized boutiques. The *Biocoop* network, a consumer cooperative, was also developed in the 1970s to organize the distribution of the newly available organic food production through different stores. Most of these groups of producers, importers, sellers and consumers had the feeling to belong to a politically involved social group characterized by concerns on environmental or social justice issues.

For many marketing departments of food or retailing companies, these positions sounded like a new sub-culture, perfectly congruent with the post-modern consumer concept, and likely to be incorporated in new market propositions: most supermarket companies had a variety of organic products on their shelves by the end of the 1980s and sold different fair trade products under the Max Havelaar trademark, by the end of the 1990s. The point is not, in this paper, to show whether fair trade and organic food were a sub-culture or not, but it is to show that large companies in food processing and retailing, dealt with them as they were fruitful critiques that should be incorporated as new market segments. In France, today the supply of fair trade products and organic food are still available in specialized stores (*Biocoop* or *Artisans du Monde* shops for example), but they are also largely available in supermarkets.

⁴ Even the development of what historians called consumers society has been described as the social construction of a sub-culture in the 19th century, based on Romanticism, that made consumption a major occupation of this group (Campbell, 1987)

In a former contribution, we showed that consumers learned to choose their products in supermarkets by relying on what we called a “delegation process” (Dubuisson-Quellier and Lamine, 2006). This idea is aiming at emphasizing the role of some immaterial and technical devices to inform and guide consumers, such as trademarks, logos, label or certification. As they are able to check the supply chain, they just rely on some delegates which they decide to trust. In this perspective, eco-label, fair trade or organic food labels are just some extra delegates within the supermarket that consumers may decide or not to follow or to trust. In the marketplace, sustainable, ethical or political consumption appears essentially as new market propositions intending to specific market segments of consumers who are willing to exert their responsibility by shopping.

By saying that we do not want to exclude this consumption from what is called political consumerism. In other words, this is not because most ethical consumption is also produced by large companies that its political dimension disappears. We agree with the analysis proposed by Michele Micheletti who defined such consumption as an individualized collective action (Micheletti, 2003). Even, expressed in the marketplace and drawn by business strategy consumer choices are politicized. For Micheletti, in a context where involvement becomes more flexible and network oriented, individuals try to combine their daily life with political causes. Consumption provides a good occasion for such a combination since it is led by both self-interest, as every other purchase choice, and the general good for the ethical message it contains. The collective dimension of what remains an individual choice does not rely only on this post-modern reflexivity theorized by Beck (Beck, 2005), but also on the aggregative effect of every individual purchase act, as the concept of the ecological and ethical footprint of daily private lives stands, and also on the amount of knowledge which must be translated about consequences of consumption on the environment (Klintman and Bostrom, 2003; Klintman, 2006). A lot of social movements and NGO promoting ethical consumption, such as Max Havelaar for fair trade, but also Biocoop for organic food, make that type of assumption: political power of consumers will come from the aggregative effects of their individual purchases, which will help more small producers in the South or support more small organic farmers in the North. Commercial of Max Havelaar tend to show this aggregative effect and defend its strategy to contract with large retailing companies with this argument.

So, consumption in the marketplace may definitely be a political involvement for both those who promote it by selling products (such as NGO, cooperatives or alternative producers and retailers, or even companies) and those who purchase these products. Why do market shares of ethical products do not show the level of awareness and involvement in political consumerism described by the data of the survey? Several theoretical reasons may be proposed. The first one is that, as shown by the survey, this awareness concerns mostly high income consumers, and economic constraints play a major role in the segmentation between convinced and reluctant consumers to shop for ethics. So, a large amount of people may answer positively, since they adopted the necessity of political consumerism as a social norm, but actually think they cannot afford it. But there is a second reason. In a recent study of consumers behaviour doing their grocery shopping, we analyzed this activity as a strongly equipped activity by a wide variety of prescriptions and devices, such as plan, dispositions and constraints coming from the consumer, trademarks, labels and packaging in formations coming from the product and prescriptions, commercials, disposals and sales coming from the market environment inside and outside the supermarket (Dubuisson-Quellier, 2006). This great variety of devices combined with the great variety of the supply, contributes to make purchases choices very changing and unstable. Prescriptions from the government, fair trade or organic food labels participate in this large diversity of devices, so they contribute to frame and unframe consumers' choices. Purchase choices are always a trade-off not only between

products but also between devices that are able to equip the choice. As other purchasing choices, consumption of ethical products in a mass consumption market cannot be anything else than unstable.

We presented earlier two avenues for political consumerism that are proposed in France to consumers: first, the prescriptions and guidelines from the government to change their consumption patterns regarding transportation, use of energy or water, home improvement or ordinary consumption; second, the ethical products supplied by NGO, cooperatives, alternative producers or retailers, food manufacturing or retailing companies. In the next part, we will present a third avenue for political involvement of consumers.

The involvement of consumers in social movements

Today, several groups intend to involve consumers within collective actions aimed at improving their awareness on ethical or environmental issues. We will present two of them. The first one is a social movement on political consumerism, deriving from the anti-globalization movement ATTAC and created at the ends of the 1990s. The group which has one hundred members, whom only a few of them are real activists, provides a large range of information to its members on the social, economic and environmental effects of consumption. The social movement is based on a very accurate ideology on the responsibility of consumers, which fills the gap between a vision in which this responsibility would be emphasized too much or exaggerated by governments which would consider that most of the damaged cause to environmental or social justice come from a fooling and egoistic behaviour of consumers; and a vision in which this responsibility is minimized, for example by some fair trade operators which consider that once consumers bought some fair trade products they are released of their duty. So, they position their prescriptions between what they call an over- and an under-responsibility of consumers and they intend instead to show accurate evidence of the effects of consumer's choices by describing the functioning of mass market and capitalism as it is usually portrayed by the anti-globalization arguments. Most of the members and activists of the groups are also involved in ecological social movements, anti-advertising or downsizing movements. The group also belongs to international networks which campaigns against environmental and social justice effects of capitalism (such as Adbusters, Public Citizens, anti-GMO movements), they promote fair trade products and organic food that are not sold in supermarket but in alternative retailing networks. Its main adversaries are large retailing companies or large food processing companies, but also the government, especially when the group considers the public regulations insufficient regarding environmental or social justice effects of consumption and production. But as shown by Kozinets and Handelman (Kozinets and Handelman, 2006) who studied similar groups in the United States, ordinary consumers are also adversaries for this social movement, especially when it denounces their fooling consumption behaviour.

This situation tends to establish members and activist involvement on the feeling of adherence to a social group of expert consumers, who share their knowledge on the capitalist and mass consumption system, and provide each other with accurate advice for their purchase choices. In a sense, they feel different from other consumers both on moral and ethical bases, but also on knowledge and awareness bases. This position may also provoke sometime a kind of radicalisation within the group, opposing on certain subject, the members who prone a radical shift in consumption behaviour (stop shopping in supermarkets, stop buying unnecessary goods, support alternative farming and producing, ride instead of driving) and those who rather promote step-by-step method. This radicalisation may also explain the turn over in the membership, some members finding that the group may be too elitist or demanding to consumers. Another reason comes also from the fact that consumption may represent a low

rewarding involvement. More precisely, as explained earlier, usually consumers' organizations intend to defend collectively the individual interests and rights of consumers. They are more advocacy technocracy than real social movements where activist could find a great reward of their involvement coming from the general interest dimension of it. The third explanation for the turn is related to the difficulty to mobilize by an involvement that cannot lead to a collective and visible action. Each activist of the movement may shift his (her) every day choice of consumption but this involvement stays ungrateful and invisible. A lot of members are asking for more collective action, and the group replied by joining national and international protesting campaigns such as "Don't buy anything day", "the campaign against the abuse of environmental arguments in advertising", the campaign against the ionisation of food" launched by Food and Water Watch or campaign against GMO, for example. But most of all, the group promotes the involvement of consumers within networks of local production and consumption of food, especially those which are built on the model of the American "Community Supported Agriculture" (CSA), which constitutes the second social movement on political consumerism we intend to describe.

The AMAP system (*Association pour le Maintien d'une Agriculture Paysanne*) was developed in South-East France at the end of the 1990s, in relation with both the anti-globalization movement, ATTAC, and the small farming union *Confédération Paysanne*. The system, inspired by the American CSA and the Japanese *Tekei*, is based on a contract between a small farmer and several consumers who agree to pay six months in advance for a weekly basket of fruits and vegetables (Lamine, 2005). Today, these groups of consumers, about 200 in France, may also contract with several farmers for the supply of other products, such as bread, milk, eggs, meat or cheese. Consumers, members of these groups are also involved in direct relationship with the farmer, to decide collectively of the biological variety which will be grown, but also to help the farmer and visit the farm two or three times the year. The main target of AMAP system is to support small-scale farming activities around cities (green belt). Most of the farmers produce organic food products but they also may choose, in agreement with their consumers, to not comply with the requirements of the certification. Similar to what we described earlier, this movement allows the diffusion within the groups of consumers of a learning process that progressively makes most of them relatively expert on ethical consumption. It also emphasizes the awareness, responsibility, and maybe morality of the AMAP consumers over the ordinary consumers. By the diffusion of information and advice, consumers learn from each other where and how to find products that comply with the ethics of sustainable development, how to improve the home or the use of energy and water, how to collectively organize for transportation or for care services. As in the former group, the AMAP groups have a high turnover: about 30% of consumers may exit the system each year, but because of long waiting lists, new consumers enter the group immediately. The two groups have also in common that they connect this strong involvement of consumers in ethical everyday consumption with their empowerment in local politics. The first group promotes for example the different involvement of citizens consumers in local decisions, such as the provisions of school meals by local farmers instead of large catering companies, the negotiation with public authorities for the allocation of land to small-scale farming instead of real estate development or the implantation of a farmer market downtown in the city. The AMAP system provides a useful frame for this empowerment of consumers because of learning processes and because of the connection between some of the members and other social movement networks (anti-GMO movement, ecological movement, anti-globalization movement) or other social groups (parenthood groups, citizen groups, sport associations). This political consumerism is then strongly connected not only with protest on the markets, through boycott and buycott practices, but also with political empowerment of citizens consumers in what could be called a food citizenship. This political consumerism seems, as

described earlier, very shifting but its specificity is to be connected to more conventional forms of collective and political actions: from campaigning and protesting, to lobbying, including voting

Conclusion

In this contribution we intend to stress the specificity of contemporary conditions of expression of political consumerism from the French case. As in many other countries where consumers' movements have been captured within an institutionalisation of their representations, they strongly contribute, by providing an expert and efficient advocacy of consumers' rights, to extend the functioning of a mass consumption system. The expression of a political involvement of consumers remains possible, in response to different institutional prescriptions and advices or market propositions by NGO, cooperatives or retailing companies. By their individual purchase acts, consumers may show their concern for general interest issues such as environmental protection or social justice. These individual choices will aggregate and then have a collective effect by showing the awareness of consumers on the importance of these issues. But some studies show that despite the high level of awareness of French consumers, their consumption habits remain very deceptive (Ozcaglar-Toulouse, Shiu and Shaw, 2006; Sanches, 2005). We propose to explain this paradoxical situation by demonstrating that the markets do not provide a sufficiently stable environment of choice to make deep and lasting shifts in consumers' behaviours. We propose to focus on another type of consumers' involvement provided by social movement which insists on the direct responsibility of consumers' choices. These movements, such as a group on political consumerism and the system of local production and consumption of food, provide consumers with direct propositions of alternative purchases, through a contract, or through a list of alternative shops and suppliers, but also with collective actions such as protests in national and international campaign, or involvement in local politics. Even with a turnover of their membership, these movements produce a stable shift in the consumption behaviour of their members, based on strong learning processes about consumption patterns and a large vision of the political responsibility of consumers.

This case shows what contemporary forms of political consumerism borrow from former ones. The idea of responsibility in the earlier consumers' movements was based on the idea of solidarity between several actors, such as between workers and consumers, or between consumers themselves. In the movements that we explored the solidarity between consumers and farmers, producers or workers from the South, or between consumers themselves is the core of the ideology. In the earliest consumers' movements, consumers were not only fighting for their rights as consumers but also as potential workers or as citizens. Indeed, in these contemporary consumers' movements, consumers fight for the rights of several other constituencies, such as future generations, biodiversity, citizens from the South which do not have the possibility to express themselves. Even the link between citizenship and consumption is strongly reactivated, since most of the prescriptions coming both from the government and social movements use the rhetoric of the idea of a disciplined consumer who must behave individually for the good of the community as a whole. Finally, earliest and contemporary political consumers' movements have in common to combine a wide variety of tactics, from market tactics such as boycott and buycott, to protest and collective action but also political empowerment. In the specific case of sustainable consumption paradigm, the French case shows the limits of market tactics to make shifts in patterns of consumption, and

the relative efficiency of an empowerment of consumers within political action. The question of whether the market remains the only and best way to change consumption patterns is worth asking.

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Buying welfare friendly food – a case of political consumerism?

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Abstract

Political consumerism has been characterised as a new and increasingly important form of political mobilisation and a voice in democratic terms. Farm animal welfare has emerged as one of the issues for consumer activism and protest, but also as moral claims for consumers to take responsibility. Using data from representative telephone surveys in seven European countries this paper will explore how animal welfare concerns contribute to consumer activism (or responsibility-taking). The findings indicate that while most people across Europe are concerned - farm animal welfare is definitely a good cause, involvement as consumers is much less widespread. But for those who are more critical and active as consumers, animal welfare is a mobilising issue. The significant national variations we observe may be linked to diverging market structures and consumer roles.

1 Introduction

This paper is about farm animal welfare as an issue of political mobilisation by consumer action. The market is not only an arena where problems and conflicts are generated but also a place for problem solving via his/her purchases (Gabriel and Lang 1995; Harrison et al. 2005; Micheletti et al. 2003). Citizens can use the market as an arena for politics in several ways; by refusing to buy products they find harmful to themselves or others or by deliberately choosing specific products to support the principles under which they have been produced (Micheletti 2003). Many contributions on 'political consumerism' have focussed on how people come to engage in particular issues, like fair trade or organic food or in particular actions, like boycotts of companies or countries of origin. Others have concentrated on how these types of action are part of processes of individualisation or social distinction. Yet others have interpreted the emergence of such actions within more rationalistic and/or economic frames, as expressions of changes in personal preferences among certain segments of consumers. These diverging approaches are strongly linked to the ways in which these actions are interpreted as part of broader processes of change.

Political consumers are understood as politically-concerned citizens who, for different reasons, use the market as an arena for politics. There are three forms of political consumerism; boycotts, boycotts, and discursive actions. This paper addresses the first two,

where people, as “buyers”, in their purchases have consideration of issues that are not directly associated with self-interest, that is with association to their role as citizens. Whether political, ethical, or responsible, these are all indicating a self-confident consumer, a ‘chooser’ prepared to contribute his or her share in solving social problems. The current focus on farm animal welfare, for example, is frequently categorised as ‘ethical choices’ (Barnett et al. 2005; Bennett 1997; Korthals 2004), often with an ideological (or moral) framing of individual rational choice. A more politicising approach is taken in studies which focus on ‘political consumerism’ as a new form of social mobilisation, expressed in boycotts and buycotts with reference to people’s ethical, political or environmental concerns. Political consumerism has been defined as “*consumers’ choice of producers and products based on political and/or ethical considerations*” (Stolle et al. 2005). So when consumer demands or responsibilities regarding farm animal welfare receive a lot of attention now, is that an indication that Europeans are becoming more “ethical”, “responsible”, or “critical” in their purchasing choices?

What has received less attention in these debates are institutional conditions for consumer activism, like the impact of specific interrelations that people are involved in – in the market and in the household (Terragni and Kjærnes 2005). By concentrating on the politics of the issues as such and/or characteristics of individual consumers, one may risk a misconception of the social and political role of consumers. The importance of such contextual factors is demonstrated by the large variation that is observed in consumer activism across countries, categories of products, and social issues.

The first analyses of the Welfare Quality population surveyⁱ showed widespread concern the welfare of animals in contemporary farming (Kjærnes and Lavik 2007). This paper will explore how concerns for animal welfare impact on consumer activism. In which social groups and regions of Europe do we find the strongest connections between animal welfare concern and political consumerism? To what degrees is involvement in political consumerism influenced by particular market and retailing structure? With the help of a logistic regression analysis, introducing sets of independent variables in a step-wise procedure, we explore the degrees to which political consumerism is influenced by country of residence, socio-demographic background factors, consumption practices and contexts, and opinions on animal welfare.

2 The politics of consumer choice

Food consumption has been used as a political tool for change throughout our entire modern history. A number of historical studies of consumption have demonstrated that even broader issues with reference to a social and political agenda are far from new, but have instead appeared more or less as part and parcel of the emergence of modern forms of consumption, i.e. at least since World War I (Gabriel and Lang 2005; Trentmann 2006; Cohen 2000; Daunton and Hilton 2000; Theien and Lange 2004). Consumption as a political issue has been on the agenda in many revolutions and social upheavals, and boycotting specifically has been used to gain civil rights by ethnical groups, women and organizations in the civil society (Micheletti 2003: 55; Tilly 1994; Tilly 1975; Argenbright 1993; Hilton 2004; Rosenberg 1994; Thompson 1971).

It has been suggested, however, that some aspects of contemporary political consumerism are new. In particular, political consumerism has been associated with the rise of new forms of

mobilisation (Melucci 1989; Beck 1994). A characteristic of this type of mobilisation is the emphasis on individual experience and the fact that it tends to arise around the problematic knots of modern life. Differing from forms of mobilisation related to the classical conflict capital/labour, which implied strong organisation and codified criteria of participation, new movements are instead open and loose, adapt to forms of participations that correspond with the fragmentation of modern life. Micheletti defines this type of mobilisation as “individualised collective action” (Micheletti, 2003), stressing the micro-macro link that characterises these forms of mobilisation. Moreover, contemporary consumer activism introduces new patterns to the traditional forms of political mobilisation. As suggested by Follesdal, *“traditionally, political participation has involved the relationship between citizens and their government, which in turn regulate the market. Political consumerism adds to this conception in that citizens turn directly to the market with a variety of political concerns”* (Follesdal 2004: 3).

This centrality of the market as an arena for political participation is being related to the deep restructuring process that have characterised most of the wealthy economies in Europe and in Northern America. Commercial products represent the tangible link between the unreachable producer and us, i.e. ordinary people in Western countries. As reaching “Mr NIKE” is impossible, it is through boycotting the products of this corporation that we can give voice to our protest for the use of child labour in mass production. Micheletti (2003) defined this phenomenon as political consumerism:

It is worth noticing that this definition focuses particularly on the “purchasing dynamics” - the role of consumers as shoppers. At the very core of political consumerism is the idea that conscious citizens, when acting as consumers, will make purchasing choices or refrain from purchasing choices according to their values and political orientation. This is a type of action that is assumed to replace or add to not only traditional forms of political voice. The emphasis on individual consumer choice also seems to replace more traditional forms of consumer protest, like rioting and looting. Studies analysing this phenomenon tend to focus on variables related to political participation, civic engagement, and values, particularly materialist (price, private health) and postmaterialist values (environment, animal welfare/rights, labor rights, global solidarity etc). Resembling classical liberalistic theories, consumers are perceived as voters who, through their purchasing power, prize or penalize specific producers or products.

There is a growing literature arguing that instead of representing individual acts of decision making in the market, consumption should rather be seen as sets of institutionally and normatively embedded practices (Warde 2005; Halkier 2001; Friedland and Alford 1991). Buying food is an activity that is strongly habitual and normatively regulated, framed by the expectations and structures of everyday life as well as institutional contexts represented by food provisioning systems, public discourse and state regulation. Food purchase should thus not be seen in isolation, but as an integrated part of a complex set of practices, including meal preparation and eating as well as other ways of procuring food than via shopping. These activities depend on a number of factors, regarding concern and care (Miller 1998), appropriateness (Bugge and Døving 2000) and specific food cultures and eating patterns (Kjærnes 2001). The configuration of food consumption is also shaped by the specific context formed by the food provisioning system (Harvey et al. 2003; Mintz 1985). This is, not the least, important for understanding consumers as actors, where the socially embedded role as buyers may form the foundation for various forms of voice, mobilisation and collective action, as well as influencing the reference to consumers in broader political alignments. The habitual and taken for granted character of everyday consumption as well as the organisation

of provisioning may help to explain why consumption practices usually change only slowly and in characteristic ways.

Yet, market dominance can be broken and new types of consumption do emerge. Noticeably, many relevant forms of “alternative” consumption have not emerged from shifting individual preferences or consumer experiences alone. In many cases, changing purchasing patterns have taken place in association with the action of organisations, grassroots groups and committed people who have contested particular types of production and even the establishment of alternative provision’s systems, as the examples of the fair trade and of the organic movement testify. Social movements are playing an important role in consciousness-raising, showing and developing alternative forms of consumption (including boycotts and ethical business). Actions taken by market actors may, at the same time, open up new possibilities for consumer action.

Contextualising political consumerism raises a series of questions from the perspective of consumption. The actual availability of ethical products and how they are distributed and marketed will influence consumption practices. “Corporate responsibility” and “ethical” products seem to be central to corporate policies in some countries, on some issues and for some product categories. In other countries and in other situations such products are absent or even considered with scepticism. Norms about how to solve societal problems and the social distribution of responsibility is crucial. Marketing “animal friendly” food products may for example be opposed because it implies market differentiation and that some farm animals are treated better than others. As such, political consumerism in the case of farm animal welfare may therefore be influenced by new forms of political mobilisation and regulation, but also by the interrelationship between households and people as consumers, on the one hand, and the structure of food provisioning, on the other.

3 Method of data collection

As part of the European project Welfare Quality, public opinion surveys were conducted in seven countries of Europe; Hungary, Italy, France, Great Britain, The Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden. The survey intended to explore responses to and involvement in animal welfare issues, as buyers as well as in their roles as eaters and citizens. Prior to the survey, reviews carried out in the seven countries indicate that the markets, regulations and social distribution of responsibility, as well as consumption practices are different (Roex and Miele 2005). We therefore expected the role of people as consumers and their interrelations with other actors to vary systematically across national settings.

Data was collected by TNS Global through Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) in the period 12- 27 September, 2005 (Lavik 2007). The survey is based on probability samples, 1500 in each country. The size of the samples is a combination of costs and the acceptability of statistical confidence intervals. The samples are weighted by age, region, gender and household size per country.ⁱⁱⁱⁱ The questionnaire was developed in a thorough process of communication between research teams in all study countries. It was piloted in all seven countries, and adjustments were made in line with feedback (focus on time efficiency, validity, question formulations and translations). After piloting, common instructions in all countries were developed. However, we are fully aware of the fact that the questionnaire is presented to people with different cultures and institutional expectations and experiences. On the one hand, this is precisely what we focus on in this study, and the questionnaire was

carefully constructed to meet this challenge. On the other hand, we can of course not preclude the possibility that some questions are interpreted differently across national and cultural settings. Methodology questions in relation to the survey procedures are further discussed in Lavik (2007).

The regression analysis presented in this paper is based on a data set compiling all the national samples. We have not weighted for variations in population size between the countries. This is done because otherwise opinions in the largest countries would be totally determinant for the results.

4 The empirical argument

Focus group interviews conducted as part of the Welfare Quality project showed that, in spite of widespread concerns about animal welfare across Europe, the links to own consumption activities varied considerably (Evans and Miele 2007). How people see themselves as consumers, how they mobilise, how they allocate responsibilities, are dimensions deeply interrelated with each other (Terragni and Torjusen 2007); 300. This forms a point of departure for our analyses. The questions are directed towards variations in the level of consumer food related activism (boycott/buycott) in various European countries. In a regression analysis we consider several types of explanatory factors for this variation. Micro level determinants like *background variables* and different *values* are combined with *institutional* and *national-level* factors to enable us to determine which are most important and how they all relate to each other.

First, we look at variables such as gender, age, income, working situation, education and religion, which earlier studies have show to be important for political consumerism in general. The impact of each of these variables of course point to highly diverse kinds of social processes, for example responsibilities linked to the gender division of labour in the household, experiences and expectations associated with different generations or life phases, animal welfare concerns in consumer activism as a matter of knowledge and/or social distinction, and links between live animals and food as influenced by religious conviction. What these types of variables have in common in this analysis, however, is that they all connect political consumerism directly to the social background of the respondent and to the social structure in the society in question. We expect that such factors influence consumer mobilisation directly, independently from institutional and discursive influences, as well as indirectly, by influencing how people deal with such contextual factors. As such, their influence will also have relevance at an aggregate level, related to national and regional variations in gender roles, religion, social structure, etc.^{iv}

Second, we want to explore how important caring about and acting to promote animal welfare is for consumption. There is a discussion about motivations for political consumerism, where it is claimed that contemporary political consumerism represents a shift from concerns associated with self-interest towards concerns for others (including the environment and the treatment of animals). We asked a number of questions where improved welfare were being associated with human benefits in terms of own health and economic improvements (termed 'self interest' here) as well as benefits for the animals as such (in this case the 'others'). Another distinction in the discourse on conditions for animal production is between a focus on animal welfare within the frames of continued production of meat for food, on the one hand, and general resistance towards animal production with reference to animal rights on the other.

It is assumed that more concerns for 'others' and (perhaps) more emphasis on animal rights produce consumer activism. These opinions are supplemented with a measurement of how important animal welfare is in general to consumers of food, giving us information of the extent of engagement.

Third, we focus on interrelations between consumers, producers and the state. It seems likely that apart from value related questions, mobilisation is promoted by recognition of problems that need to be resolved. Included here is a question about the respondents' assessment of the current development of animal welfare in their own country, whether the situation has improved or deteriorated. Can this assessment be a trigger to take individual responsibility by changing shopping habits? Moreover, as indicated in the introduction about political consumerism, information is important. Political consumerism of the contemporary kind is associated with provisioning system producing distance and complexity. Special information is therefore crucial for action and we have included a question demand for information on animal welfare. Apart from information, consumers must also rely on societal institutions in which they can act (if they want to). They need to trust these to find it meaningful to act within them. It is therefore interesting to investigate whether this presumption is applicable in the case with political consumers of food. There is a clear differentiation between actors regarding roles and expectations, and the questions on trust therefore differentiate between public, market and civil society actors.

Fourth, demands for "animal friendly" food products seem strongly associated with structural changes in the food market (Kjærnes 2007; Roe and Marsden 2007). While food distribution is dominated by large, quality oriented supermarkets in the UK and the Netherlands, discount supermarkets and Norway and Sweden, food markets and butchers play a much more significant role in the south of Europe. These different forms of retailing represent highly diverse types of products on offer (high quality processed, standard/low price, and fresh unprocessed, respectively); supply structures; and exchange with consumers (personal/impersonal). How much does it matter which type of market structure and which type of store you buy food, in relation to your personal context of values, beliefs, motivations and background? As for our specific focus on animal welfare, we also asked whether availability of relevant alternatives is a problem for turning to welfare friendly purchases. Some people may wish to act and they do, others may have the wish, but they lack the availability (considering the range of goods on offer in the vicinity, the price, quality, etc.).

Finally, survey based studies of political consumerism are sometimes criticized for being too narrowly focused on individual choice and giving too little attention to the context these choices. This analysis is not trying to see political consumerism from an aggregate level, but it does take into account the interdependent, dialectic relationship between consumer agency and structure. This is about more than how people are placed in terms of social structure and how they interact with a particular shop and supply. Not only are such conditions strongly influenced by the place (especially country) of residence. Other types of studies of political consumerism indicate that a number of additional conditions related to regulatory policies, the economy, food culture, political culture and mobilisation, etc. have an impact.

In the following, we will first discuss the findings regarding food related consumer activism in the various countries included in this study, followed by a presentation of public opinions on farm animal welfare. Next, we present a logistic regression analysis where opinions and contextual variables are included in a step-wise procedure to explain variations in consumer activism.

5 Food related activism

As can be seen from Table 1, there is considerable consumer activism related to food across the seven countries. The overall most important form of action is to make strategic purchases in order to support a certain producer or brand (buycotts). Next comes boycott, where the respondents have avoided certain products to protest against some food issue. Also, one in four has complained to a retailer or supplier. Fewer people have expressed their voice in other ways, like sending a petition or writing a newspaper article. Least common is involvement in organisations and more organised forms of collective action. Only four per cent on average have done that. This does of course reflect the degrees of effort put into their political actions related to food, where organised activities do require more effort and also gives more visibility. But it does also tell us about which arenas that are most important, and we can see that market oriented action is clearly dominant. Table 1 shows that these tendencies are found across all countries. But there are also variations in the relative proportions of consumer action. While complaining is most significant in Norway and boycotts in Sweden, the highest proportions of buycotting are found in France and Great Britain. Even though other types of action are much less prominent everywhere, the French are clearly most active in protesting, the Dutch in organised action.

Table 1 Food related consumer activism (per cent who participated, don't know excluded)^y

Form of action	HU	IT	FR	GB	NL	NO	SE	Total^{vi}
<i>Complaining</i>	23	22	28	27	16	36	29	26
<i>Boycott</i>	19	23	38	25	18	37	42	29
<i>Buycott</i>	45	32	52	50	32	47	44	43
<i>Protest</i>	6	11	15	10	4	10	8	9
<i>Collective action</i>	2	4	4	3	7	3	3	4
<i>Neither</i>	49	59	37	43	61	43	41	47
<i>Boycotted and/or buycotted</i>	51	41	63	57	39	57	59	53
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>N</i>	1455	1479	1495	1474	1484	1480	1487	10354

In the further exploration of the association between political consumerism and concerns for animal welfare, we will concentrate on boycotting and buycotting. These are the most significant activities and they are also the activities most consistent with the theoretical understanding of political consumerism. Based on these two questions we have therefore constructed an index for those who have either boycotted or buycotted or been involved both types of activities. Table 1 shows the proportions of respondents who have boycotted and/or buycotted in the various countries. As a measure of political consumerism within the area of food, we find that this is a highly significant phenomenon in all seven countries. But the table shows that the levels vary across the countries. There are relative high proportions in France, Great Britain, Norway and Sweden, while proportions are somewhat lower in Italy and the Netherlands. We must, however, expect some fluctuations in these types of actions, depending on events preceding the interviews within each national context.

6 Opinions on animal welfare^{vii}

We will in this section give a very brief description of opinions regarding animal welfare. We also discuss the questions addressing interrelational issues, such as trust and demand for information. The methodological points regarding recoding etc. are described in endnotes to the tables. The actual levels are important in our discussion of the significance of the various independent variables in explaining responses in terms of political consumerism. We are therefore showing the distribution across the seven countries.

Turning first to opinions on benefits, distinguishing between self-orientation and other-orientation, Table 2 shows generally very strong support to the human health benefits of better animal welfare, most strongly so in Italy and Hungary. We must remember here that the meaning of animal welfare may differ considerably. Many Hungarians are for example seeing animal welfare as more or less synonymous to animal health, while this is less the case in countries like Great Britain and the Netherlands. Fewer, but still significant proportions are concerned with economic aspects in terms of food prices. Here we find the highest proportions among Hungarian respondents, while Scandinavian respondents seem less optimistic in these respects. Interestingly, very high proportions in all countries also emphasise benefits for the animals, especially regarding the treatment of animals. There is some country variation, with most support to such questions in Italy, lowest in Norway. We find much more diversity across the countries on questions that we have associated with animal rights, like the acceptability of killing animals for food and thinking of meat as coming from live animals. Relatively few among the Scandinavian respondents find killing for food problematic or don't like to think of meat coming from live animals. Such problems appear to be much more prevalent among the Italians and the Dutch.

Taken together, the high proportions for supporting many of these statements, including those indicating self-orientation as well as other-orientation, indicate that there is no necessary opposition between the two. Instead we find that considerable proportions of respondents are concerned with human as well as animal benefits of improved welfare. This is also reflected in the overall high importance given to farm animal welfare in general, where as many as 70 per cent among the Italian respondents say that this is very important.

Table 2 furthermore shows that the assessments of the current animal welfare situation are relatively positive in four out of seven countries, with somewhat more scepticism about the development in France, the Netherlands and Italy. The distribution of answers (see Kjærnes and Lavik 2007) shows that most people in all countries think that conditions have neither improved nor deteriorated. We also asked more specifically about motivations for supporting or being sceptical to efforts to improve animal welfare. We here distinguish between 'production oriented' questions, what we have characterised as 'instrumental oriented' questions, like taste, health, production volumes and the reputation of the country, and 'consumer policy oriented' questions which relate to the consumer role, including the respondent's willingness to pay a higher price for better animal welfare and belief in that consumers have a voice. Compared to the questions in the former steps, there is relatively little country variation for the questions introduced in this step. We find relatively even distributions across the seven countries. Highest scores are found for the instrumental oriented questions, with particularly high rates in Hungary and Italy. Least support is given to production oriented questions.

Interest in more information is high across all countries, with the highest rates in Italy, lowest

in Norway and the Netherlands. But people distinguish clearly between types of actors when it comes to the source of information. Across all countries, trust in truth-telling is highest for public actors, lowest for market actors (for a further elaboration of the categorisation of institutional actors, see Kjærnes and Lavik, 2007). Overall, levels of trust in institutional actors appear to be lowest in Italy, highest in the Netherlands.

Table 3 shows variations in shopping routines for meat and availability of welfare friendly food products. Rather than being only a matter of personal preference, patterns of shopping are strongly dependent on the structure of retailing and of the supply chain in that particular region and country. We know from earlier studies that the retailing structure is highly variable across Europe and that this strongly affects the types of products offered, the types of interactions involved when shopping, and the marketing strategies involved (see also (Roe and Marsden 2007). In Hungary nearly all meat is bought in special shops or open markets (or provided outside the market), while a significant proportion is bought in large supermarkets or discount shops in the Netherlands. Discount supermarkets dominate in Scandinavia, while British shopping for meat more often takes place in a large supermarket/hypermarket. French shopping (and retailing structure) appears to be the most diverse, but diversity is also found in countries like Italy and the Netherlands.

Table 3 also shows that lack of availability is a problem for about half of the respondents, with the highest rates in Hungary and the lowest in the Netherlands. This may be related to the variable retailing structures as well as the types of items on offer. Other analyses carried out on the basis of the survey data as well as ‘market audit’ of the supply of relevant products characterised as welfare friendly show that, apart from eggs from free-range systems, the supply of particular welfare friendly products is limited mostly to a few retailer chains in the UK. But animal welfare is involved in brands with much wider references, often so-called quality labels (Roe and Marsden 2007). Moreover, people tend to have wide conceptions of what a welfare friendly purchase is. It can be meat from organic farming, a quality label in France, for Swedes it can be meat of Swedish origin, for Norwegian special species, like lamb or game.

Table 3 Market structure and availability across the countries

	HU	IT	FR	GB	NL	NO	SE	Total
<i>Lack of availability</i> ^{***}	66,7	55,2	52,1	50,2	43,2	53,6	53,9	53,4
STD	29,21	30,38	29,28	28,74	25,82	27,87	27,52	29,11
N	1299	1237	1475	1389	1393	1330	1412	9534
Types of retailers ^x								
%Large superstore	3	24	29	47	34	20	27	26
%Special shops	94	68	60	45	53	28	19	52
%Small/discounts	31	29	22	18	28	73	66	38
N	1214	1127	1263	1210	1168	1247	1243	8472

7 The regression analyses

We have carried out a logistic regression analysis in order to explain variations in political consumerism (boy-/boycott) as the dependent variable, a dummy variable. The explanatory variables presented above were introduced in five consecutive steps. The results for the full model are presented in Table 4. At the bottom of the table, we present the relative improvement of the model for each of the consecutive steps, allowing us to discuss how much each additional set of variables adds to the explanation of variation in information demand. Since we have more than 10.000 observations in the dataset we have chosen a significance

level at $p < .001$ in order to avoid Type I error.

The first step introduces socio-demographic variables. In accordance with findings from previous research, we find that women are more involved in food political consumerism of than men, even when controlled for indirect effects via other variables in the model. This supports a picture of women of being other-oriented and especially caring for animals' rights. But it is also in accordance with nearly all other social scientific studies of food, where women take greater interest in and responsibility for food and food related activities.

Higher education forms a foundation for engaging in food consumer activism, in accordance with earlier research. Political consumerism requires some knowledge about the products and issues that are subject to consumer activism. Boycotting, that is support to particular products or producers, will in many cases imply more expensive purchases. It is therefore not surprising that income affects the engagement in political consumerism.

Interestingly, we find significant effects of religion on political consumerism. Protestants as well as Catholics tend to be less involved in political consumerism, compared to people who do not belong to any particular religious group. Political consumerism within the area of food thus seems to be associated with secularism. The proportions belonging to various religious groups are highly variable across Europe. Rather than being interpreted as only a matter of personal conviction, these results must be interpreted within broader cultural settings, including even influences of religion on state structures, societal divisions of responsibilities, etc. We must also consider the special framing of this interview, addressing issues related to animals and animal welfare. Some religions upholding a symbolic and social separation between humans and animals may have affected even the question on consumer activism.

The urban/rural dimension involves proximity to farm animals as well as differences in availability and consumer cultures. We find no significant effects on political consumerism. This has been found in other surveys as well. But, again, we must remember that these effects are controlled for the influence of country of residence, and we know that consumer roles, market structures, and socio-cultural effects of place of residence are highly variable across Europe, opening for the possibility that we may find effects of place of residence in some countries, while not in others.

Considering all the variables introduced in this first step, we find that it is variables related to social status plus gender that directly affect variations in political consumerism, while variables which may be associated with the structure of the household and the organisation of everyday life do not have significant effects, like age, number of children, employment status and place of residence. These are results after all other variables have been controlled for, including the country of residence. More detailed analyses would probably reveal more variation as well as indirect effects; effects which disappear after other variables have been included in the model.

Turning now to *the second step* of the analysis, we find that concern with own health does not seem to influence political consumerism measured as boycotting and buycotting. Political consumerism is influenced negatively by economic consumer concerns, positively by concerns for the treatment of animals and animal rights. Overall, these values are influential for action through shopping. These results focussing on animal welfare seem to be in accordance with assumptions that political consumerism is associated with 'other-orientation', negatively with 'self-orientation'. This does not mean that concerns for 'others' replace

concern for own and the household's welfare. On the contrary, other research has indicated that political consumers want what other consumers want but that they also want more in the form of good environment, working conditions, and animal treatment.

In *step three* we introduced a series of questions of a more concrete nature, focussing on interrelations between the production side and the consumption side. The overall patterns are striking in that nearly all of these questions have an impact on political consumerism. Having your solidarity with the production actors, as indicated by the questions included in the 'production oriented' dimension, has a clear negative effect on buy-/boycotting. The result is the opposite for those who are "politically oriented". Preparedness to pay a higher price is associated with stronger tendencies of political consumerism, while instrumental issues, such as welfare being good for human health and for taste, do not seem to matter. This seems to be in accordance with the results from the second step, where it is concerns for animals that seem to be mobilising, not other (human) benefits of good animal welfare.

Some researchers are worried that political consumers will turn their back on established modes of political participation, assuming they are participating less often in traditional politics than others, and that they are distrustful towards political institutions. A Swedish study on this matter (Micheletti, 2003, 11) shows that political consumers have a critical attitude towards political institutions, but they are participating significantly more in traditional forms of participation than others. Looking at table 4, we see that in this study political consumers of food are not distrustful towards public food authorities. It is the market actors and civil society actors (animal protectionists and media) who are less trusted. These observed effects are not very strong but they are pointing in a different direction compared to earlier studies. The background for this inconsistency may be issue specific as well as country specific effects. But it may also be a matter of how questions about trust are presented and framed (Kjærnes et al. 2007).

We might conclude that caring for animal welfare is an important element of food related political consumerism - a question about doing "the right thing". The results may also suggest that concerns for animal welfare may mobilise people in their role as consumers. As table 4 shows, actually being interested in animal welfare issues, and therefore demanding more information about them, is important.

The *fourth step* introduced variables addressing availability and shopping patterns. We find that availability is not a condition – in any direction – for political consumerism. This is a bit surprising, as we know that availability of particularly labelled products is actually very limited. It may be that the answers reflect the very wide conceptions of welfare friendly food that we have observed in this study. This is emphasised also by the lack of effect of type of shop. Particularly labelled products are on offer mainly in big supermarkets offering quality food and which ethical issues as part of their corporate strategy (Roe and Marsden 2007). These types of shops play a much more significant role in some countries and regions than in others. When shopping via other types of retailing does not imply less political consumerism, the meaning of such activities must be very wide.

In the *fifth and last step*, we entered all the seven countries in the study as explanatory variables. We see that even after having controlled for such a large number of variables, there are still significant effects of the country of residence. Compared to Swedish respondents, the dynamics behind political consumerism are rather similar in Great Britain, Norway, Hungary, and France. When all other variables are controlled for, political consumerism is less

prevalent in the Netherlands and Italy. Recalling the varying national levels of political consumerism, we must expect different societal processes. And these processes are much wider than those captured by the variables included in this analysis. The structures of the supply chains, the role of regulation and public authorities, the organisation of household consumption and daily life, as well as public discourse all differ in significant and characteristic ways. It is when combining such types of information with public opinions as measured in a survey that we can understand more of the interrelations involved. Some of the countries have had serious food scares (a number of 'scandals', including mad cow disease, in Britain, the Swedish "kadavardebatt" in the 1980s, etc.). In certain cases, these scandals have led to policy change (see e.g. Halkier and Holm 2006). They have also been etched in the public mentality in one way or another. It is not surprising, for instance, that the animal rights' movement finds its origin in the UK in the 1970s.

Looking at the explanation provided by the variables included through the various steps, the Cox and Snell RSquare gives an indication of their respective explanatory powers. This must be done with some caution, as the order in which explanatory variables have been introduced will matter. Simply said, variables introduced early will tend to influence more than those introduced later in the analysis. Social background variables do provide some explanation. So do values of self- versus other-orientation. The third step, presenting what we have characterised as interrelational issues, have stronger effects than those in the first two steps. Interest in animal welfare, politically oriented rather than production oriented concerns, demand for information, and issues of trust, together seem to have the strongest impact on consumer activism in this model. Concrete conditions in the market do not seem to add much at all in terms of explanation, while the country of residence matters, even when introduced last in this big and complex model.

8 Concluding remarks

We have in this paper explored how concerns for animal welfare are involved in consumer activism related to shopping and market conditions (political consumerism). We find that boycotting and buycotting of food products are widespread across the seven European countries. Politically motivated shopping practices are, in the case of food, more common among women, the well-off and highly educated. These findings are all in accordance with previous studies. Religion does have an impact, first of all in that secular respondents are more active. The interpretation of this finding may point to dynamics linked to animals and meat rather than market oriented activism per se, where the more secular may have less problems with the association between live animals and meat.

We find that worries for farm animals and their welfare do influence the tendency to boycott and buycott. Concerns characterised as 'self-oriented' and as 'other-oriented' come out as oppositions, where it is concerns for animals is a mobilising issue. Interestingly, emphasis on animal rights has the opposite effect. Good animal welfare is good for animals and not necessarily for humans, but within a shared acceptance of animal based food production – and killing animal for food.

Judging contemporary conditions for farm animals as poor is a mobilising factor, but only in association with trust in public authorities. Perhaps the latter is a matter of trusting experts and public information, both giving a background for consumer action. It is not surprising that political consumers tend to distrust market actors, but distrust in civil society actors was less

evident. It may be that consumer activism in this case represents a clear alternative to the rather radical forms of activism of many animal rights NGO's. This is also in accordance with the observation of emphasis on animal rights being negatively associated with political consumerism. Animal rights organisations, for instance, would not advocate boycotts. They state clearly that people should become vegetarians or vegans. They mobilize supporters into political consumerism by offering them "cruelty-free" and non-animal "boycott" alternatives.

The observed distrust in civil society organisations may be associated with this distinction. Most people in Europe accept that animals are bred and killed for human consumption and may therefore not accept the agenda of animal rights organisations. For the majority who is not particularly interested in the topic (even though they are sympathetic to the idea of animal welfare), this scepticism may be their reference. They may be less acquainted with the work of animal welfare organisations and activists. Again, however, we must emphasise variations between countries, which is very evident when it comes to mobilisation and public discourse on animal welfare (Kjørstad 2005)

Turning to the overall patterns, we find that market oriented activism is associated with concern for farm animal welfare. Yet, interest and concern is more widespread than political consumerism. Animal welfare gains widespread support as a good cause, many also have intentions of involvement via purchasing practices, and relatively fewer put this into action.

9 References

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Table 2 Opinions across the countries (average scores)

	HU	IT	FR	GB	NL	NO	SE	Total
<i>Self-oriented: Health</i> ^x	93,2	95,3	87,3	80,2	84,5	74,3	85,0	85,2
STD	15,17	12,61	19,18	23,61	20,64	25,32	19,79	21,20
N	807	1034	1210	1084	1151	1196	1250	7732
<i>Self-oriented: Economic</i> ^{xi}	55,9	41,9	49,3	40,7	46,6	37,5	36,1	43,3
STD	32,40	31,99	32,44	33,30	32,80	30,57	28,42	32,22
N	778	1004	1209	1155	1168	1269	1292	7875
<i>Other-oriented: Treatment of animal</i> ^{xii}	69,2	79,8	71,0	70,1	68,0	56,7	69,8	68,7
STD	22,51	19,41	22,02	24,94	22,57	25,65	22,63	23,84
<i>Other-oriented: Animals rights</i> ^{xiii}	41,1	45,4	32,6	37,6	44,2	16,0	15,5	33,1
STD	24,20	24,8	23,6	25,7	23,3	20,3	20,3	26,0
N	1388	1399	1490	1401	1464	1435	1462	10040
<i>Animal welfare in general</i> ^{xiv}	17	10	19	23	34	27	27	23
% 4- 5 (very imp.)	66	77	46	50	35	57	56	55
N	1462	1478	1497	1490	1489	1493	1496	10405
<i>Assessments of AW conditions</i> ^{xv}	50,5	49,1	46,1	51,6	49,0	60,3	58,1	52,2
STD	20,54	25,46	22,47	22,31	21,18	19,62	18,48	21,99
N	1217	1139	1468	1280	1440	1450	1345	9338
Motivations for supporting political consumerist AW								
<i>Production oriented</i> ^{xvi}	39,7	37,3	35,6	38,0	35,0	40,8	41,6	38,2
STD	25,05	26,07	24,68	25,58	22,72	22,87	21,02	24,18
N	1259	1262	1467	1354	1320	1342	1244	9248
<i>Instrumental oriented</i> ^{xvii}	87,7	87,0	75,2	78,7	71,1	79,8	78,4	79,6
STD	16,62	16,42	21,02	21,41	19,03	18,45	18,95	19,74
N	1380	1313	1487	1365	1385	1410	1357	9696
<i>Consumer policy oriented</i> ^{xviii} Average score	40,4	50,4	53,4	51,5	51,3	54,2	55,0	51,0
STD	24,28	24,81	23,79	24,25	22,57	22,94	21,33	23,86
N	1414	1440	1499	1462	1477	1470	1472	10234
Interest								
<i>Demand for information</i> ^{xix}	74,7	86,8	84,4	68,1	55,2	51,7	64,1	69,4
STD	25,15	18,93	16,82	26,08	25,89	25,15	23,56	25,15
N	1354	1429	1486	1388	1436	1384	1407	1354
Trust (Truth-telling) ^{xx}								
<i>Market actors</i>	46,5	36,1	43,2	43,9	45,9	44,7	49,9	44,3
STD	20,75	22,91	20,56	22,37	22,05	20,96	20,37	21,78
N	1318	1368	1487	1409	1423	1411	1434	9850
<i>Public authorities</i>	77,2	66,2	63,3	64,1	79,7	76,4	70,3	71,0
STD	22,90	24,77	23,48	27,02	22,89	23,64	23,59	24,87
N	1339	1370	1488	1422	1443	1426	1424	9911
<i>Civil society actors</i>	65,2	59,1	60,2	47,8	61,9	61,9	54,6	58,6
STD	22,69	24,12	22,89	26,27	25,09	27,86	29,30	26,13
N	1353	1420	1493	1450	1465	1447	1453	10081

Table 4 Logistic regression. Dependent variable: boycott/buycott

Step	Variable		B	Wald	Sig	
Step 1	Background	Female = 1	0,186	15,940	0,000	
		Age (18-30 in ref.group)	Age 31-50	0,109	2,965	0,085
			Age 51-80	0,066	1,055	0,304
			Eurointeger (Income)	0,00005	12,563	0,000
		Religion (None in the ref.group)	High education	0,432	71,951	0,000
			Working = 1	0,090	3,197	0,074
			Protestant	-0,233	13,857	0,000
			Catholic	-0,291	19,624	0,000
			Other	-0,051	0,326	0,568
			Rural = 1	-0,065	1,888	0,169
	Number of children	0,051	3,708	0,054		
Step 2	Values	Self-oriented: Health	0,004	9,243	0,002	
		Self-oriented: Economic	-0,006	57,350	0,000	
		Other-oriented: Treatment of animal	0,006	16,218	0,000	
		Other-Oriented: Animals rights	-0,004	13,659	0,000	
		AW general	0,127	26,864	0,000	
Step 3	Assessments of AW Motivations for supporting political consumerist	AW conditions	-0,009	65,510	0,000	
		Production oriented	-0,008	68,093	0,000	
		Instrumental oriented	0,002	2,711	0,100	
		Consumer policy oriented	0,006	36,403	0,000	
		Interest				
		Demand for information	0,009	64,042	0,000	
		Trust				
		Market actors	-0,005	23,122	0,000	
		Public authorities	0,004	12,636	0,000	
		Civil Society actors	-0,003	13,698	0,000	
Step 4	Barriers & retailers	Lack of availability	-0,001	1,168	0,280	
		Retailers (large superstores in the ref.group)	Special shops	0,166	8,894	0,003
			Small/discounts	0,040	0,611	0,435
			Do not shop=1	0,004	0,002	0,969
Step 5	Countries (Sweden in ref.group)	Hungary	0,005	0,003	0,959	
		Italy	-0,736	43,102	0,000	
		France	0,053	0,283	0,595	
		The Netherlands	-0,646	42,953	0,000	
		Great Britain	0,020	0,048	0,826	
		Norway	0,028	0,105	0,746	
		Constant	-1,061	25,983	0,000	
	N	10507				
	Cox & Snell RSquare (%)					
	Step 1	4,6				
	2	8,8				
	3	13,1				
	4	13,3				
	5	14,6				

Sig p<.001 – bold

ⁱ The empirical data presented in this paper have been collected as part of the Welfare Quality research project which has been co-financed by the European Commission, with the 6th Framework Programme, contract No. FOOD-CT-2004-506508. The text represents the authorities' views and does not necessarily represent a position of the Commission who will not be liable for the use made of such information.

ⁱⁱ We can calculate a confidence interval with a 95% probability, a distribution of 50/50% and a sample of 1500: 50+-2,5%-points, there is a probability of 95% that the confidence interval of 47,5% - 52,5% may contain the true value.

ⁱⁱⁱ To our knowledge no big animal welfare scandals were on the agenda in this period in any of the participating countries. The bird flu from Asia reaching Europe occurred after this period of data collection.

^{iv} Political consumerism was not the main theme of this survey questionnaire. Some questions often focussed in studies of political consumerism were not included here (political ideology, membership in associations, voting preferences) have been important variables.

^v *Have you done any of the following during the last twelve months? (All respondents) – 'yes' or 'no':*

1. *Have you complained to a retailer (supermarket) about the food they sell in the last twelve months?*
2. *Have you boycotted any food types or brands in protest about food issues in the last twelve months?*
3. *Have you bought particular foods or brands in order to encourage or support their sale, like fair trade in the last twelve months?*
4. *Have you protested about food issues either in person, by phone, by letter or email in the last twelve months?*
5. *Have you been a member of a pressure group or organisation which works to improve food in the last twelve months?*

^{vi} Note that for all analyses in this chapter the total is the average of all 7 countries without any weighting procedure of country size. The seven countries are not to be looked at as one population (universe).

^{vii} For all indexes and variables there are some missing because of "don't know", no answers and/or respondent filtered out because the question is not relevant. To include as many respondents in the analysis as possible, all missing are included in the main indexes or variables coded as 0. Most of these are not interpretable and are given the connotation NA (questions not answered for different reasons). One exception is the variable if one shops or not, 'RetailerNOT' which may have a substantial meaning. In the regression analysis these variables will be omitted for the sake of clarity. However, "not answered variables" are presented in this overview, just to show how they are distributed. They are always been calculated by the total number of each country, 1500, showing the percent of the not-answered variables.

^{viii} 'Lack of availability' is an index built up by two questions: "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement, please use a scale of 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree? 1) I care about animal welfare, but it's too time consuming to look for welfare friendly products, 2) I care about animal welfare, but cannot find welfare friendly products where I shop for food". This index is additive, and standardized to vary between 0 and 100, the higher score the less availability AW-products are.

^{ix} 'Retailers' are divided into three types of market structure: Filter - if doing some food shopping: "I will now list different types of shops and I would like to know where you usually buy certain food products? 1) Large superstore/Supermarket, 2) Small supermarket/convenient store, 3) Discount store, 4) Butcher, 5) Other (includes mobile shop, door-to-door/home delivery, farm shop, organic shops, food markets and own production e.g. they have their own chickens). Alt. 'Do not buy the product'. "Where do you usually buy?" - Chicken, Eggs, Bacon and/or ham, Beef."

- 'Large superstore/supermarkets' are in the reference group: those who do all there shopping in these shops.
- 'Special shops': those who have bought at least one of the products at a Butcher or Other.
- 'Small/discounts': those who have bought at least one of the products at Small supermarket/convenient store or Discount store.

Some respondents may have bought products in both Special shops and Small/discounts and the sum of these variables therefore exceeds 100 percent.

^x 'Self-oriented health' is an index based on three questions: *Are the following factors very important, fairly important or not important to you? 1. Hens are not treated with antibiotics or hormones. 2. Freshness. 3. Now thinking specifically about beef... are the following factors very important, fairly important or not important to you? – Animal is not treated with antibiotics or hormones.* The index is additive, reversed and standardized to vary between 0 and 100, the higher score the more self-oriented health. The average score has to be interpreted like a kind of average "percentage" score.

^{xi} 'Self-oriented economic' value is an index based on two questions: 1, *Are the following factors very important, fairly important or not important to you? – Low price. 2. Now thinking specifically about beef... are the following factors very important, fairly important or not important to you? – Low price.* Procedure as above.

^{xii} 'Other-oriented treatment of animals' value is an index based on six questions: *Are the following factors very important, fairly important or not important to you? 1) Treatment of hens. Now thinking specifically about beef... are the following factors very important, fairly important or not important to you? 2) Slaughtering methods. 3) Raised outdoors. 4) Treatment of animals. 5) When you purchase meat or meat products, how often do you think about the welfare of the animals from which the meat has come from, on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is never and 5 is always?* This index is additive, questions 1 to 4 is reversed, and thereafter standardized to vary

between 0 and 100, the higher score the more positive one is to the treatment of animals.

^{xiii} 'Other-oriented animals rights' value is an index built up by three questions, asked to all respondents: *To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, 1) It is acceptable to kill farm animals for food, 2) It is acceptable to hunt game animals for food, 3) When eating, I don't like to think of meat as coming from live animals*". The index is additive, question 1 and 2 are reversed, and thereafter standardized to vary between 0 and 100, the higher score the more positive one is to animals rights.

^{xiv} "Thinking of farm animal welfare in general, how important is this issue for you on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is not at all important and 5 is very important?"

^{xv} AWconditions is an index of three questions: *"In your opinion, how well do you think the welfare conditions are for the following farm animals in [COUNTRY], on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is very poor and 5 is very good?"* The index is additive and standardized to vary between 0 and 100.

^{xvi} Production oriented is an index built up by two questions: *"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements, please use a scale of 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree? 1) Good animal welfare will cost more and put farmers out of business; 2) There is no difference between organic farms and factory farms when it comes to animal welfare"*. The index is additive and standardized to vary between 0 and 100.

^{xvii} Instrumental oriented is an index built up by four questions: *"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements, please use a scale of 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree? 1) Good animal welfare will improve the taste of the meat. 2) Good animal welfare will increase the volume of milk cows produce, 3) Good animal welfare will benefit the reputation of our country, 4) Good animal welfare will improve human health "*. The index is additive and standardized to vary between 0 and 100.

^{xviii} Political oriented is an index built up by two questions: *"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement, please use a scale of 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree? 1) To improve animal welfare, we must be willing to pay a higher price for food, 2) How much do you think your voice as a consumer counts, on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is very little and 5 is a great deal?"* The index is additive and standardized to vary between 0 and 100.

^{xix} Demand for information is an index built up by six questions: *"Thinking generally about food from farm animals (such as meat, eggs and dairy), is it very, fairly or nor important to include the following information on the label? 1) A simple welfare assurance mark, 2) A welfare grading systems like a different number of stars, 3) Information about where the animals are kept, 4) Information about what the animals eat, 5) Country of origin, 6) What farm they come from"*. This index is additive, reversed and standardized to vary between 0 and 100, the higher score the more demand for information.

^{xx} 'Trust' consists of three dimensions from the following questions: *"Imagine a scandal concerning the welfare of chickens in [COUNTRY]. Do you think that each of the following would tell you the whole truth, only tell you part of the truth or would give misleading information?"*

- *Market actors* is an index built up by three indicators: 1) The food processing industry, 2) Food retailers, 3) Farmer or farmers group.

- *Public authorities* is an index built up by two indicators: 1) Public food authorities, 2) Independent food experts.

- *Civil society actors* is an index built up by two indicators: 1) Press, television and radio, 2) Animal protectionists.

All three dimensions are additive indexes, standardised to vary between 0 and 100, and the indicators are reversed, so the higher score, the more the actors are trusted.

Three challenges for political consumerism

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Abstract

Political consumption looks very interesting. It complements or replaces citizen democratic agency, provides corporate ‘watchdogs’ on the demand side, shows that people increasingly aim to take an active role in the pursuit of environmental and social goals. Reproduction of inequalities and consumers’ capriciousness and manipulability are among its most frequently remarked flaws. The paper discusses three major challenges. First, joint behaviour is often indicated as a way to avoid capture by, and strengthen bite on, corporate and government agendas; yet this may entail for political consumerism to become indistinguishable from other forms of social movement action. Second, political consumerism is usually assumed to draw on an ‘ethics of responsibility’; yet it may rather be led to adopt an ‘ethics of principles’, with significant policy implications. Third, by following a straightforward logic of differentiation – opening up new markets, creating new types of consumers – political consumerism may undermine its very purposes, while by adopting a logic of de-differentiation – less markets, less consumptions – it may cut the ground under its own feet.

1. Introduction

Political consumerism has attracted a good deal of interest in the last years. It is a growing movement, or at least a noticeable social trend. It is the object of an increasing number of theoretical insights and empirical investigations. The issue is indeed multifaceted. For many reasons political consumerism looks a novel, promising social phenomenon. There are of course also reasons that suggest to moderate enthusiasms and expectations. In this paper¹ I focus on three issues. They can be put in terms of challenges to the received wisdom about political consumerism.

First, political consumerism is usually assumed to encompass both individual behaviour and organized collective action. The latter, moreover, is often indicated as a means to reduce the risk of manipulation and other possible drawbacks of individual behaviour, like self-referential assessments of the public good. The question, however, is whether there exists any type of joint action specific to political consumerism.

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Second, it is usually maintained that political consumerism entails a spread of responsibility for social choices. As a consequence it should entail a growing scope for an ‘ethics of responsibility’ public matters. Yet one may wonder if this is really true, or if political consumerism is more likely to draw on other types of ethical commitment and, if so, what are the related political implications.

Third, political consumerism is about ‘improving’ production and consumption. However, if it rests on the straightforward modern logic of social differentiation – doing more things, opening up new markets, creating new types of consumers – this may undermine its very social and environmental goals, while by adopting a logic of de-differentiation – less markets, less consumptions – as the ‘de-growth’ movement calls for, political consumerism may cut the ground under its own feet.

2. The promise of political consumerism

Political consumerism consists of ‘consumer choice of producers and products with the goal of changing objectionable institutional or market practices. It is based on attitudes and values regarding issues of justice, fairness, or non-economic issues that concern personal and family well-being and ethical or political assessment of business and government practice’ (Micheletti et al., 2004: xiv), including environmental protection, animal welfare and the like. Political consumers ‘differ from economic consumers who are just looking for a good buy, that is, a satisfactory relationship between material quality and economic costs. Political consumers also tend to differ from lifestyle consumers, who shop for products with the sole aim of helping to define and enhance their self-identity’ (Micheletti, 2003: x). Their typical actions are boycotts, ‘buycotts’ (that is selective shopping) and symbolic attacks to product images.

Political consumerism can be considered a kind of bottom-up, self-regulatory policy-making; a way to protect or improve public or common-pool goods by turning to private means. ‘Political consumerists argue that citizen concern for their private lives can be used in a beneficial way for society at large. [They argue that] privately oriented virtues have a public role to play’ (Micheletti, 2003: 160). It is important here to grasp the meaning of publicness (as opposed to privacy). John Dewey has probably provided its clearest definition. For him ‘a public consists of all those who are affected by the indirect consequences of transactions to such an extent that it is deemed necessary to have those consequences systematically cared for’ (1984: 245-6). Publicness thus entails the acknowledgement that someone is entitled to meddle in our own business, to have a say, to judge it. Transactions are private when their consequences are deemed to affect only those actors who are directly involved; they are public when participants (whoever they are and whatever they are doing) discuss and act (also) by considering external interests and viewpoints. As Ulrich Beck (1992) has argued, late modern society is characterized by the growing relevance of a ‘sub-politics’ of the *fait accompli*, with decisions of proper political relevance – that is provided with a constraining force on a polity² – taken in full autonomy, as part of their private matters, by corporations, scientists, bureaucracies, NGOs. In this sense political consumerism mirrors on the demand

² I follow here Max Weber’s (1978) classic definition of political power as characterized by a legitimate use of violence and David Easton’s (1965) equally classic definition of politics as the authoritative way to allocate values within a community.

side of the market what happens on the supply side, with private economic behaviours taking a public, and indeed political, relevance.

Political consumerism looks promising for a number of reasons. It can be seen as a welcome change in people's attitude: rather than relying on public authorities' and corporate good will, people increasingly take an active role in the pursuit of environmental and social goals. It can be regarded as creating social capital by involving people in new networks and institutions and by improving individual direct responsibility-taking (Micheletti, 2003: *passim*).

Moreover, given the relevance of economy in the global political order and the apparent 'downsizing' of state-related institutions, political consumption seems to play a major role for democracy, complementing or in some cases replacing traditional citizen agency. With political consumerism the market 'becomes a site for politics when people are dissociated from political life' (Micheletti et al., 2004: x): it offers people 'an inroad – venue – into policymaking that otherwise may be rather closed to grassroots citizen participation. It can create a venue because consumer behaviour is difficult to regulate and therefore generally unregulated' (Micheletti, 2003: 12). Political consumerism, moreover, 'can be regarded as supplementary to government action... [and] a stopgap measure until global structures are in place with sufficient enforcement power' (Føllesdal, 2004: 8).

Political consumerism looks also a means to improve environmental and social policies. In recent years command-and-control regulation has been increasingly complemented with market instruments (taxes, incentives etc.) and a third generation of tools based on voluntary and self-regulation. Command-and-control regulation has been blamed for its need of effective and costly monitoring and sanctioning arrangements. Yet this is to some extent true also for market and third generation instruments (Prakash, 2005). With political consumerism new policy approaches can rely on widespread corporate 'watchdogs'. Indeed the existence of political consumers – that is of people interested in the firms' environmental and social performance – is premised to many new regulatory instruments, from voluntary accountability schemes (EMAS, ISO14000; SA8000 etc.) to mandatory information disclosure (e.g. the US Toxic Release Inventory Program) that leaves firms free to self-regulate about their performance targets, on the grounds that it is in their own interest to look environmentally or socially 'sound' to their stakeholders.

It has been remarked, however, that political consumerism 'is highly dependent on the financial resources of the people involved' (Micheletti et al., 2004: xv). In other words, social inequalities may be reproduced and even worsened by political consumerism. There is indeed evidence that socio-demographic variables are significantly linked to political consumerism. Middle-upper social strata are over-represented (Stolle et al., 2005; Andretta, 2006), though especially in terms of education and occupation. Moreover 'consumers as political agents are unreliable and capricious. [...] Consumers drop their ethical concerns [...] when their private economy slumps, and when other preferences entice them in new directions' (Micheletti et al., 2004: xv). Political consumerists seem also highly exposed to manipulation: 'greenwash' can be easily taken as sincere commitment. According to some critics political consumerism 'is a quick fix for a sense of political urgency expressed by politically impatient people and just another public relations trick used by private industry to convince citizens to continue to buy "new" products' (Micheletti, 2003: 161). Lack of accountability of political consumerists' institutions is another issue often remarked.

Before adjudicating on the strengths and weaknesses of political consumerism a better understanding of its features is advisable. I propose here three analytical perspectives: social action, responsibility and social differentiation.

3. Political consumerism and social action

Political consumerism is often assumed to encompass both individual behaviour – ‘critical’ shopping – and organized collective action – protest activism and participation in groups and associations. Of course also in the first case the impact of individual action depends on its collective results. Yet, as Elster (1986) has argued, there is a noticeable difference between the ‘market’ and the ‘forum’ as ways to make collective choices. In the first case preferences are taken as they are and aggregated³. In the second case preferences are expressed and compared in order to reach a joint decision. In other words, individual behaviours can be connected either *ex post*, by means of some mechanism of aggregation, or *ex ante*, by means of some suitable, real or virtual, communicative arena.

The question – theoretical but, as we shall see, with significant empirical consequence – is whether and to what extent political consumerism includes its own specific forms of joint behaviour. According to some scholar, in the case of political consumerism one may talk of ‘individualized collective action’ (Micheletti, 2003: xi). Yet one may ask what is precisely the meaning of this expression. Is it another way to express the market mechanism of aggregation of individual behaviours? Or does it also refer to proper joint action? And in this case where does such action take place? In the private sphere or in the public sphere?

What is most interesting in political consumerism is that consumer behaviours gain political saliency without exiting from the economic sphere. Moreover, and crucially, this kind of de-differentiated behaviour takes place at a strictly private level (Holzer, 2005). Otherwise there would arise dramatic contradictions between the economic and political spheres, which at societal level remain wholly differentiated by using different communication codes – money vs. power (Luhmann, 1986) – and by drawing on different grounds of social legitimacy: civil rights of individual autonomy, i.e. *independence from* a political community, and political rights stemming from *belonging to* a political community – negative freedom and positive freedom, to borrow Isaiah Berlin’s terms (1969). Actually negative freedom represents a core value in the liberal tradition, to be protected against any undue invasion on the part of the community or the state. The ‘sovereignty’ of the consumer is a major instance of this value. According to Carl Schmitt (1922) sovereign is the one who calls himself outside social norms and ties, the one who decides on a state of exception creating and following his own norm. The consumer is sovereign precisely in this sense; the strength of political consumerism lies precisely here.

Aggregation, therefore, presupposes agents who behave independently of each other and whose agency depends on this separation. The consumers who aim at behaving ‘as citizens’, i.e. with public concerns in mind, do so by *individually deciding* what is the public good and how it can be pursued by means of their buying choices. In other words, the passage from the private to the public level takes place within the internal deliberative forum of the individual

³ In this sense shopping and voting are very close to each other, a similarity that has been developed by the economic theories of democracy (Beetham, 1993).

consumer's mind. The public, so to say, is reached by means of a gesture of empathy. It is the third party who comes to my mind when I make my buying choices.

Political consumerism, from this viewpoint, is an expression of what has been called the 'paradigm of immunization'. Such paradigm represents a dominant trait of modernity, being at the grounds not only of the contractual models of the social tie but also of the recent communitarian revivals (Gutmann, 1992), to the extent that the latter understand community in essentialist terms, as the sharing of a blood, a soil, a language, a tradition, a religion, a value system. Immunity becomes the real opposite of community only when the latter is understood as a relationship that bonds its members to a reciprocal commitment of donation never totally extinguishable, an absence rather than a presence, a deficiency rather than a good, an original gift that can never be fully reciprocated and threatens individual identity (Esposito, 2002; 2006).

Immune are those who have nothing in common, who have no obligations towards each other, who remain owners of themselves, identical to themselves. Immunization is the interiorization of exteriority. As I have argued elsewhere (Pellizzoni, forthcoming), this corresponds to the self-referential process that Luhmann (1993) calls 're-entry': a process by which an observation – the distinction of something from something else (an act of sovereignty in Schmitt's terms) – is reproduced within one of the poles of the distinction. In this way the external becomes a category of the internal, the recreation of otherness within the borders of the self. In our case this means that public interests become a distinction internal to the private pole of the distinction between private and public. What is public and what is private is privately established. Just as cost-benefit analyses or insurance programs re-enter the difference between monetary and non-monetary values by fixing a monetary value to the latter, as with the loss of a human life, and just as firms re-enter the distinction between profit and environmental protection or community development by assessing the profitability of ecological or development programs, so consumers re-enter the difference between tastes and ethical or political issues in their own buying behaviours, that is through their choices of taste.

This raises an empirical problem: in order to classify consumer behaviours as political consumerism one should know the actual motivation of consumers. One may choose fair trade or 'green' products because it is fashionable, less expensive or more fitting in with one's own tastes. Publicly-minded consumers may therefore be practically indistinguishable from privately-minded ones, i.e. 'economic' or 'lifestyle' consumers whose goals are to promote no more than their own interests. Indeed, the 'intense private concerns [of the latter] may cause them to exercise the exit, voice and loyalty choice alternative more intensely and fully than consumers of the public virtue orientation' (Micheletti, 2003: 20). Non-political consumer behaviour can thus even result more politically effective than truly political one! The consequence is a risk of overestimation of the actual import of political consumerism (Tosi, 2006). Such risk is actually inherent in the ambivalence of political consumerism, as an expression of the non-market logic of reciprocity and gift and at the same time of the market logic of individual interest. Moreover, research shows that, like many 'personal environmentalists' (Jamison, 2001), political consumers are more likely to be 'agenda takers' than 'agenda setters'. They are more ready to accept government, corporate or NGO issue-framings and insights (Tovey, 2005) just because they have little possibility to compare with each other their own information, beliefs and opinions.

Deliberation in proper forums and joint action are often indicated as a way to overcome these drawbacks – self-referential assessment of the public good, confusion between ‘normal’ and political consumerism, sensitivity to manipulation. Joint collective behaviour is actually the opposite of aggregation, to the extent that it presupposes an overcoming of the individual borders, a comparison and integration between each one’s own information, beliefs and opinions.

Joint action, unfortunately, does not by itself answer the problem of the difficult distinction between ‘normal’ and political consumerism. Both types of consumers may actually ‘realize that their private worries are shared by others [...] and engage in collective action in very concrete, problem-oriented local networks’ (Micheletti, 2003: 20). Yet there is some evidence (Forno, 2006) that political consumers are often involved in other forms of political participation (voting, protests, petitions, meetings etc.). This might provide a clue to a better discrimination between political and non-political consumerism. More research is required to this purpose, as well as in order to understand to what extent involvement in joint action actually fosters a shift from agenda taking to agenda setting.

However there is a more basic problem. When consumers engage in joint action it is doubtful that one may still talk of ‘individualized collective action’. Consumer groups and associations can be classified as ‘public interest groups’ beside, for example, environmental groups and associations. Joint behaviour, in other words, leads political consumerists to behave just like any other political group – meeting, discussing, planning and performing actions together. One may object that consumer groups’ action may stick to a private level, avoiding protest or any kind of public expression of concern and keeping in this way its specificity. An example may come from the joint shopping practised by some consumer groups. However a group that acts in a properly private way, a group whose action remains undisclosed to third party scrutiny, seems to raise the same problem of self-reference that affects individual consumers. Yet joint shopping has a symbolic value that easily exceeds its impact on the sales of particular producers or retailers (Hobson, 2002). It can be regarded as a kind of public discourse made by means of acts rather than words; a public discourse where exemplarity replaces argument. Therefore it is by means of its public impact that joint shopping could provide an original approach to collective political participation.

However the potentialities of joint shopping in this respect are still largely to be explored. Further research is mandatory. At least for the moment, it is the private individual behaviour that seems specific to political consumerism, with the drawbacks discussed above.

4. Political consumerism and responsibility

We have seen that one of the most interesting features of political consumerism is that it seems to mark a somewhat unexpected change in people’s attitude towards public matters. The growing intricacy and technicality of public policies have led many to foresee a decline in people’s involvement, with technocrats, interest groups and professional politicians filling most of the space available. A prediction supported by the generalized shrinking of electoral participation. Yet, as Beck (1992) has argued, things are more tricky. The decline of formal involvement in political arenas is complemented with the raise of sub-political ones, the market offering major cases in point. The good news of political consumerism, then, is that citizens show a renewed willingness to take part in public matters, to use the power the market gives them. Pretty much like what happens on the supply side, with corporate social

and environmental responsibility initiatives based on voluntary and self-regulation, political consumerism entails a growing responsibility-taking on the demand side.

This growth or spread of responsibility seems to support the case famously made by Hans Jonas (1979). Following a long tradition, according to which responsibility is a property of moral agents (i.e. agents capable of mindful and autonomous decisions), Jonas understands responsibility as a duty to fulfil the tasks for which sound moral motives can be found, to take care of the objects for which a course of action is expected. So, if technology extends the scope of human action, this implies also a broadening of the scope of human responsibility. Jonas is not alone in advancing this kind of argument. For many the relevance of responsibility in modern society increases with the pace of social differentiation, economic globalization and technological innovation (Strydom, 1999). Political consumerism is part of this trend. Yet what kind of responsibility does political consumerism entail?

Remember that the political impact of consumerism is achieved through the aggregate effect of shopping choices. Political impact, in other words, is produced at a collective, rather than individual, level. The traditional understanding of responsibility, however, conceives as moral agents only individuals. The 'liability model' (Young, 2006) of responsibility is especially concerned with a backward-looking notion of responsibility, focused on factual beliefs about the causal chains linking agents and events, with consequent blame or reward. Yet the application of negative sanctions is also 'to deter others from similar action in the future, or to identify weaknesses in an institutional system that allows or encourages such blameworthy actions, in order to reform institutions' (Young, 2006: 121). The opposite applies of course for positive sanctions. In this sense the liability model follows also a forward-looking notion of responsibility, focused on normative beliefs about 'carrying out activities in a morally appropriate way and aiming for certain outcomes' (Young, 2006: 119).

In current society collective actors gain increasing relevance, especially as organizations and networks, with major consequences for responsibility (Pellizzoni and Ylönen, 2007). Power asymmetries (particularly information ones) provide organized actors with many opportunities to escape liability. Organizations may influence legislation and get top level legal advice. Moreover, to prove liabilities is often difficult because the intricacy of organizational structures and processes prevents from singling out specific individual liabilities. Therefore an extension of the notion of responsibility to organizations is mandatory. Corporate strict liability in tort law is actually widespread nowadays, while juridical persons' liability in criminal law is present only in some legal systems. Efforts are made also to ground the notion of collective responsibility on a philosophical basis. According to Philip Pettit (2007), for example, organizations can be regarded as autonomous actors at least when their members act on the basis of shared goals and jointly contribute to build the circumstances that make an organizational event possible. Drawing on computing terminology he finds analogies between programming and groups and between implementation and individuals. Group agents represent higher level actors and programming higher level actions which individuals implement. Both higher level and lower level factors may serve as causal explanations for the outcomes of action.

Political consumerism, however, seems to involve another form of collective responsibility. It has not so much to do with organizations in themselves, as with the market structures that connect individual and organizational agents all over the world. A suitable 'social connection' model of responsibility has been proposed by Iris Marion Young. According to her the liability model provides an inadequate response to structural injustice, that is to

‘social processes [that] put persons under a systematic threat of domination or deprivation of the means to develop and exercise their capacities, at the same time as these processes enable other to dominate or have a wide range of opportunities for developing and exercising their capacities’ (Young, 2006: 114). Structural injustice is a consequence of chains of organisational and individual efforts to pursue one’s own goals in given institutional contexts. These actions are legal and accepted but cause blameworthy effects, often beyond the immediate purposes of the actors. Young regards all those persons who participate in the ongoing schemes of cooperation that constitute those structures as jointly responsible.

The most obvious case of structural connection is provided by markets. They connect people through chains that globalization and technological innovation have amazingly stretched. A major part of them remains undisclosed to each single actor, yet they are fully operative in their constraining force. The traditional philosophical understanding has regarded only members who live in a same political community as having reciprocal obligations. The social connection model broadens such obligations to include people who live outside a given political community, crossing the borders of nation states. Structural injustice deriving from trans-national market relationship is a basic target of political consumerists. They assume to share a responsibility for this structural injustice – they have a role in that, so they have to do something about that. Shopping choices can be regarded as positive or negative sanctions to an ascertained praiseworthy or blameworthy behaviour. So political consumerism includes a backward-looking type of responsibility. Yet, as Young remarks, the social connection model entails above all a forward-looking type of responsibility, since it basically aims at recognizing and modifying unjust institutional arrangements. In this sense, it gives special space to normative commitments, value judgements.

There is however a more compelling reason why normative commitments are likely to play a major role in political consumerism: uncertainty. Indeed already Jonas’s case for replacing the principle of hope with the principle of responsibility, based on a ‘heuristic of fear’, is based on a recognition of the novel implications of uncertainty: rather than leading policies, as usual in the past, to focus on the short-term, predictable consequences of action, the saliency of uncertainty entails that mere possibility becomes a driving element of decisions. In a proper sense uncertainty refers to situations where no reliable prediction of events can be made⁴, due to inadequate information – because missing though available (at a cost); because unavailable; because the relevant one cannot be picked out (Funtowicz and Ravetz, 1993; Wynne, 1992). For example political consumers may face complexity: the overall effects of shopping choices may be more than their linear aggregation, turning upside down an entire sector rather than merely affecting the balance between demand and supply – indeed markets often behave in a non-linear way (Mandelbrot and Hudson, 2004). Political consumers may also face indeterminacy, with causal chains related to unspecified or unpredictable intervening variables, thus truly open. An obvious case is the sudden emergence of some technological innovation that makes redundant or counterproductive a shopping strategy. Political consumers may often face ambiguity. For example, as Vogel (2006) has remarked, if developing countries applied the same restrictions to the employment of young workers as Western countries do, families living in developing countries would probably suffer more because of a substantial reduction in their income. On the other hand, preferences are context-dependent and respecting such preferences may protract social injustice. So what is the right choice for political consumers? To buy or to boycott firms using young workers? Less children work or more money for their families? Of course one may say that the goal is to

⁴ When probability estimates are possible one should talk of risk (cf. Knight 1921).

change the conditions producing such kind of alternative. Yet again it may be unclear which way is the most suitable. Better to raise first people's income or to strengthen their rights?

In short, the more intricate, cognitively opaque the causal chains – the less predictable the role of the individual contributions and their overall effects, the deeper the information asymmetries between consumers and their counterparts (which include the very promoters of boycotts and boycotts), and so on – the more the political consumers are bound to adopt a principled approach. This regards both backward-looking responsibility – where the apparent inconsistencies between corporate commitments and events falling within the scope of their action is likely to count more, for applying sanctions, than a detailed reconstruction of causal connections – and forward-looking responsibility, where by force consumer strategies cannot be based so much on calculation of effects as on statement of aims.

This type of ethical approach looks pretty much like what Max Weber (1958) has called the 'ethics of principles' (*Gesinnungsethik*), contrasting it with the 'ethics of responsibility' (*Verantwortungsethik*). According to the former one has to act by following a principle, regardless of the undesirable consequences that may stem from such behaviour. As Weber says, for persons acting according to an ethics of principles if the consequences of an action informed to a pure principle are bad, they do not regard themselves as responsible for them, but rather the world itself, the stupidity of other humans or God's will that made them so. According to an ethics of responsibility, on the contrary, persons regard themselves as answerable for the foreseeable consequences of their actions. The ethics of principles is based on value-rationality, that is on a mindful belief in the unconditioned value of a given behaviour as such. The ethics of responsibility is based on means-ends rationality, that is on expectations concerning the world or other humans taken as conditions or means for achieving some desired goal, the latter understood as a consequence of the former (Weber, 1917; 1978).

A proper ethics of principles seems therefore devoid of any reference to means-ends relationships. Weber (1958) actually stresses that the person who follows an ethics of principles performs actions that are totally irrational from the viewpoint of the possible results, their only meaning residing in their 'exemplary' value. Yet this cannot entail disregard for *any* connection between means and goals, otherwise value-rational action would be indistinguishable from irrational action (in Weber's terminology, either traditional or affective). Indeed, rationality means for Weber ability to control the world by means of processing of information (Schluchter, 1979). He describes value-rational action as purposeful elaboration of the ultimate reference points and consequent orientation of behaviour (Weber, 1978). So value-rational actors must have some reasons to believe in the exemplary value of their action; that is, they must have a rational view of the possible connection between the action and the end result they aim at⁵.

The core issue, thus, is the control of the consequences of action. Instrumental behaviour and ethics of responsibility presuppose it; principled behaviour and ethics of principles apparently

⁵ This thing has been seldom recognised, with the result of a latent contradiction in the interpretation of major commentators of Weber. Habermas (1986) for example stresses at the same time that the rationality of means is related to the chosen goals and the rationality of goals to the given preferences, consisting of or deriving from a system of values – which means a logical priority of value-rationality on means-ends rationality. Yet at the same time he maintains that the most complete form of action, from the viewpoint of its subjective meaning, is the means-ends one, because it entails a control of means, goals, values and consequences, while value-rational action would only entail a control of means, goals and values.

do not. Even exemplary behaviour can follow a means-ends rationality, if its unreflective imitation is sought. So real value-oriented actors look at exemplarity not by relying on some psychological mechanism (emotion, habit), but because of its value of testimony, because it shows what a sound application of the principle looks like. Yet either this choice is in its turn dominated by emotion or habit or it must entail the rational belief in a connection between behaviour and result – a connection that can be acknowledged by other people. Accordingly, either principled actors disregard the undesired consequences of their behaviour because so emotionally involved or stuck to their habits as to become wholly irrational, or they must have their own reasons to do so. Such reasons may only lie in the belief that the desired consequence, notwithstanding undesired effects, will derive from their principled behaviour, at least in the long run. In other words, the conviction of the principle is the conviction that the ‘good’ sooner or later will come as the ultimate effect of behaving according to the principle.

What is then the difference between the two forms of rationality and the two forms of ethics? The clue is offered by Weber himself, when he focuses on the predictability of consequences. While in the case of means-ends rationality and the ethics of responsibility the consequences are predictable according to the actors’ elaboration of the available information, in the case of value-rationality and the ethics of principles this is not the case, because deemed impossible⁶. The two forms of rationality and ethics, in other words, entail different levels of saliency of uncertainty. In other words again, in both cases the actors believe in a causal relationship between behaviour and desired results, yet in the second case such relationship is too tricky, complex, obscure, to be properly estimated. As Jonas (1979) remarks, the broader the scope of action, its time span and stakes, the lesser the possibility to carry out a proper estimate of the consequences of any course of action. So the lesser the possibility to follow an ethics of responsibility.

It is therefore true that value-rational actors are indifferent to the consequences of their behaviour, but only to the short-term ones – because they do not see any reliable connection between such consequences and the desired end results⁷. Uncertainty plays thus a different role in decisions according to its saliency. It may be deemed to be controllable: in this case one believes that what one knows is enough to take reliable decisions, to take risks in its proper sense. One believes that uncertainty does not affect expected results beyond a predictable and acceptable threshold. Uncertainty may however be deemed to be beyond control. In this case one believes that what is unknown prevents from making reliable predictions. Uncertainty may affect in unexpected ways the results of decisions. However, to avoid that decisions be based on pure bet, they have still to be grounded on something rational. A principle offers a clue to the world order. Acting according to such principle is thus exemplary not only in the sense that it shows how following the principle looks like, but also in the sense that it is believed to be isomorphic to the world order, and thus it may contribute to (re)establishing it. One may not know (enough of) the causal chain to which one’s action is connected, yet if such action is consistent with the world order the unknown

⁶ It can also be deemed *irrelevant*, just because contrasting with the assumed world order. Yet either this evaluation is irrational, i.e. based on affect or tradition, or it must be ultimately grounded on the belief that an actual prediction is not possible. If what I see or can predict is in contrast to what should be, either there is no world order – thus no place for reason at all – or the world order is too complex for me to grasp it by just looking at the surroundings of my own behaviour.

⁷ Indeed in the long run this is true also for means-ends rational actions: with reference to long-term consequences even the most ‘realist’ decision-maker cannot but rely on principles just because uncertainty is too deep.

shall operate, in the long run, according to such order rather than in contrast with it. So whenever the causal chains cannot be reliably reconstructed it makes sense to follow one's own principles.

In other words, acting according to an ethics of responsibility means believing that one's own action intermingles with the unknown in such a way that the latter is, so to say, bended to the former, becoming part of a mechanism driven by the actor. Acting according to an ethics of principles means believing that one's own action intermingles with the unknown in such a way that the former is bended to the latter, becoming part of a self-driven mechanism, i.e. a process led by forces extraneous to the actor. In this case it makes sense for the actors to attune their behaviour to what they believe to be a general 'shape' or order of the world, so that they may not know just *how* such action will contribute to the desired results but may be reasonably confident that it will definitely do it. At least, this is the only way to preserve a role to reason – the belief that the world is not totally chaotic, that reason somewhat corresponds to, or at least may grasp, its order.

To sum up social differentiation, technological innovation and economic globalization determine conditions of deepening uncertainty, so that political consumers are likely to have in a growing number of cases no other choice than to follow a principled way to address their perceived structural, shared responsibilities. In other words, if political consumerism entails a growth or spread of responsibility for social choices on the demand side of the market, this is likely to happen not so much in terms of an 'ethics of responsibility', based on the ascertainment or proper prediction of the causal connections between behaviours and events, as in terms of an 'ethics of principles', based on the loose predictions deriving from the assumed isomorphism between behaviours and events.

The growing saliency of uncertainty, therefore, seems to entail an increasing relevance of principles. This implies that the possibility to reach agreements on facts – states of affairs, related interests and backward-looking responsibilities – becomes feebler. In its turn this is likely to enhance the radicalization of positions and the intractability of conflicts⁸. A further cause of concern is that while current democratic political institutions provide forums which – adjusted and refined over centuries by trial and error – have proved to work reasonably well in handling conflicts, the markets offer no 'safety valves' of comparable sophistication. Markets consist of unaccountable, 'blind' mechanisms working as constraining factors on accountable yet 'crude' contractual relationships. The crudeness of the latter emerge, for example, from their inability to care for the equality of stance of the involved actors in such a refined way as typical of political forums, the asymmetry of power between the contracting parties being the rule rather than the exception.

A serious issue for investigation of political consumerism is therefore not only whether and to what extent it is able to replace or complement traditional political participation, but also what are the consequences of such role-taking for the course of social conflicts.

5. Political consumerism and social differentiation

⁸ Controversies are defined 'intractable' when they cannot be settled by appealing to agreeable 'facts', either because the parties in dispute focus on different evidences, or because they give them different interpretations (Schön and Rein, 1994; Hisschemöller and Hoppe, 1996).

Political consumerism is about ‘improving’ production and consumption, shifting them towards more socially or environmentally sound practices. This is possible thanks to the power exerted through consuming behaviours – making selective shopping, sometimes abstaining from consumption. The latter often consists of a temporary retreat. Sometimes it aims at axing some product or business. Yet even in this case the existence of an alternative consumption is premised to consumer choice, if anything because a sanctioning power, even a negative one, is different from the retreat from the field of application of such power. Consumer power can be exerted as a negative sanction only on the premise that it can be used as a positive sanction. It is because consumers buy differently, rather than giving up their consumptions, that their choice not to buy may exert a pressure. Another reason why abstention cannot correspond to a definitive withdrawal is that structural injustice is often connected with labour inequalities and flaws in production processes. Disadvantaged people and threatened environments suffer from low salaries, unhealthy work conditions and obsolete technologies. A sustained demand, though it may foster human and natural exploitation, is premised to any attempt to improve work conditions and environmental protection by means of market relationships.

Political consumerism, therefore, is basically about producing and consuming differently, not less; it is about opening up new markets, creating new types of products processes and businesses. It rests on the modern logic of social differentiation. Political consumers can be identified as such just because they differ from other types of consumers. It is then inevitable to compare political consumerism with another recent trend endeavouring to address the very same issues according to what however appears a different, even opposite, approach. It is the *de-growth* movement. Its basics have been formulated since the end of the 1960s by such scholars as Ivan Illich, André Gorz and Cornelius Castoriadis. Yet it is in the last years that the idea of de-growth has attracted a growing interest. Its major sources are placed at the cross-roads of political economy and ecology: one the one side the critical literature on development programmes; on the other side those readings of the environmental issue that focus on the exhaustion of the life space necessary to humans and ecosystems (Osti, 2007).

The de-growth approach aims at reducing the volume of economic activities. Three main aspects can be singled out (Osti, 2007), allegedly pointing to forms of material and symbolic de-differentiation: a) absolute and relative de-materialization, i.e. reduction in the overall and per unit amount of raw materials and energy used; b) corporate social and environmental responsibility, i.e. combination of profit with other socially valuable purposes like protection of the environment and improvement of the work conditions; c) conviviality, i.e. ‘slowing down’ the pace of individual performances and achievements, downplaying the role of work, production and consumption in favour of communal life and social relations.

Actually the expression de-growth, or un-growth, is a literal translation from the French *decroissance* or the Italian *decrescita*. Apparently the rendering of these terms in German or English is problematic (Latouche, 2006). In the English-speaking literature one can find *downshifting*, *counter-growth*, *shrinkage* and others. Linguistic difficulties convey the different possible interpretations of the notion. Downshifting, for example, is applied mostly in the USA, with reference to a movement towards simpler, less stressful lifestyles (working, producing, spending and consuming less). In France and Italy the focus is more on a critique of capitalist productivism and the mainstream economics of development. In Germany and the Scandinavian countries the focus is more on practical experiences (e.g. ecological districts) and measurement of material and energy flows (Osti, 2007).

Behind differences in emphasis about the various aspects of de-growth, however, there lies a constitutive ambivalence in its very understanding. I will describe it in ideal-typical terms – of course many nuances can be found in the literature that cannot be accounted for here. On the one side de-growth is interpreted as encompassing a range of approaches consistent with, even synonymous to, sustainable development. De-growth is seen as a way to realize sustainability; it essentially means a *different* growth or development (Daly, 1997; Comeliau, 2003; Attac, 2004; Caillé, 2005; Vivien, 2005). On the other side de-growth is interpreted as a radical critique and alternative to sustainability, an expression heavily criticised for its deceitfulness, its ability to be used for any purpose, above all its ability to convey the idea that to address major social and environmental problems what is needed is a simple adjustment of productivist economy, even its speeding up – more free trade, technological development, privatization of resources (Rist, 1996; Berthoud, 2005; Besset, 2005; Latouche, 2006; Panikkar, 2006). In this sense de-growth is often taken as an equivalent of ‘a-growth’ (in the same sense as ‘a-theism’) or ‘after-development’, that is a definitive exit from the ideology of development.

On the one side, therefore, de-growth is understood as a movement towards a suitable reform of economy – one that takes seriously problems of environmental exploitation and degradation and social deprivation and injustice. On the other side de-growth is understood as a radical departure from current socio-economic arrangements – even as an exit from economy, the domination of the economic sphere on social life (Latouche, 2006). From this viewpoint any attempt to reform economy cannot but reassert the primacy of economy. Contrasting evil by using its own tools means contributing to its perpetuation. Capitalist productivism has already shown a stunning resilience by diversifying commodity production, creating new markets, displacing social and ecological problems. Nor is it technological advancement a viable answer by itself, as testified by the well-known ‘rebound effect’: the increase in eco-efficiency very often corresponds to an increase in consumption, rather than the opposite. For example, the internet dematerializes access to information, yet this leads to use more paper; more efficient cars are produced, so people scrap their old cars and use more intensively new ones, with consequent increase in waste and pollution. Therefore if any ‘different growth’ means a further expansion of economy, then de-growth means slowing down, even stopping economic growth, reconsidering or even imposing moratoriums on technological developments, fighting against individualism and material welfare, promoting aspects of life focused on locality and communal relationships. Briefly, de-growth means a drastic de-differentiation of economy and society as a whole.

These contrasting interpretations of de-growth have remarkable implications. Of course what we can describe as the *conservative* and the *radical* wings of the de-growth movement have much in common: on both sides one can find a plea for policies focused on recycling, reusing, restructuring, redistributing, re-localizing and so on. Yet the understanding of such policies may be quite different. From a conservative reading of de-growth what counts most is a dematerialization of economy; a reduction of inequalities in the terms of exchange between North and South; an increase in the eco-efficiency of production, thus a sustained technological advancement and its transfer to less developed countries; a control of the population growth; the access of more people to the labour market and the strengthening of labour rights; better measurements of development, beyond traditional GNP and individual income or assets, to include indicators of natural capital and ‘real’ individual well-being, for example according to the capability approach of Sen and Nussbaum (1993). From a radical reading of de-growth what counts most is a sheer reduction in the use of resources; the ability to evaluate the purposes and implications of technologies rather than welcoming them as

such; the protection (and possibly the imitation) of the way of living of those peoples not yet wholly colonised by the individualist and productivist ideology; a spread of non-monetary forms of reciprocity (Coluccia, 2002); a drastic reduction in the work time; a promotion of low-range exchange of commodities and of self-production, according to principles of bio-regionalism and self-reliance⁹.

Perhaps it is by looking at the treatment of the issues of education and freedom of movement that one gets the best evidence of how interpretations of de-growth may differ dramatically. As for the first issue the conservative approach stresses the relevance of education as a means to acquire skills and professional qualifications, improve the ability to use and develop technologies and to take an active part in the public life. The radical approach considers school education as a major means of manipulation of minds, 'colonization of souls' (Latouche, 2006), on which the productivist ideology rests. A systematic delegitimation of the dominant values through counter-information and counter-education is therefore mandatory. As for the second issue the conservative approach stresses the role of 'real' welfare, a relevant aspect of which is people's freedom of movement with the related possibilities to enrich one's own culture, experiences, relationships. One may acknowledge that exotic fruits are not necessarily needed in any season, yet the possibility for people – including less affluent people – to move, go abroad for leisure, education or work should be promoted. The radical approach, on the contrary, focuses on the major impact the increase in people's movement has on the environment in terms of vehicle production, use and disposal, so that a drastic reduction is necessary. The low (monetary) cost of transport allows irrational trade arrangements, with production chains increasingly split all over the world, products locally producible carried to long distances and an exponential increase in leisure travels. Therefore the cost of movement should be boosted while people should understand that most of the time the place where they live offers anything they really need to spend a good, satisfying life.

I do not aim here to develop a proper critique of de-growth. My point is only to reflect of the kind of challenge coming from this perspective. What precedes suggests that this depends pretty much on which wing of the movement one takes in consideration. The conservative wing seems actually to address no serious challenges to political consumerism. The latter, entails a reflective, ethically-minded, sustainability-oriented approach to consumption that may fit in quite well with a conservative programme of de-growth which, in its turn, does not seem at odds with market economy. True, as we have seen, the idea of de-growth entails a shove towards de-differentiation, while the idea of political consumerism entails the opposite. Yet the distinction may be subtler than it appears at a first glance. On the one side such goals as dematerialization, corporate responsibility and conviviality are compatible with a 'sound' differentiation. Indeed dematerialization and eco-efficiency (recycling, reusing etc.) may require, or at least benefit from, technological advancement; corporate responsibility leads to new institutional arrangements for organizing, implementing and accounting environmentally and socially-oriented initiatives; conviviality means less pressures towards individual achievements but also more opportunities to meet and enjoy social relations – joint shopping can actually be seen as one way to put conviviality into practice. On the other side if political consumerists differ from other consumers, it is just because they carry out de-differentiated actions, blurring the distinction between economic and political behaviour, private virtues

⁹ In this sense an evident historical antecedent of the radical wing of the de-growth movement is eco-anarchism and anti-modernist ecologism. Actually Murray Bookchin is a frequently quoted author in the literature on de-growth.

and public virtues. In short, both conservative de-growth programmes and political consumerism entail a fine interplay between differentiation and de-differentiation.

The actual challenge for political consumerism comes from the radical wing of the de-growth movement. The latter expresses a deep scepticism over differentiation in its various respects. The critique starts from the baseline of modern differentiation, that is the separation between individual and community, private and public sphere, negative and positive freedom; a separation that both the conservative de-growth perspective and political consumerism take instead for granted. According to the radical perspective, then, the expectations of political consumerists are essentially misplaced – indeed they can be seen as a result of the manipulation of minds by the productivist ideology. There is no way to answer the problems of industrial production and market economy by using their same means. There is no way to address the drawbacks of modernity without rejecting its ideology of ‘progress’, of never ending social growth and individual achievements. The only result will be to promote a further expansion of production and consumption, a further exploitation of nature, a generalized worsening of the quality of life, an increasing colonization of the surviving non-individualist and productivist cultures. Using market tools to improve eco-efficiency is pointless if volumes of production and consumption increase, as the rebound effect shows. Using market tools to orient technology development is pointless as well, if the matter is to impose a moratorium on technological innovation, even to ban some technological options (GMOs are an obvious and often quoted case in point). Technology has to be regarded as guilty until proven innocent, not vice-versa. Fair-trade and ‘eco-tourism’ clash with the need to reduce commodity transport and people’s travels, to focus on regional and self-production and on the nurturing of social relationships within one’s own local community. Conviviality has nothing to do with consumerism since shopping represents a major expression of the modern individualist and productivist ideology. The market as a social institution is based on competition, that is conflict – it is indeed a symbolic, but no less bloody version, of war – thus it is the opposite of the pacific, harmonious, solidaristic society that represents the ultimate goal of de-growth¹⁰.

From the viewpoint of radical de-growth the dilemma for political consumerists seems therefore destructive: either sticking with sustained or even increased consumption, at the price of undermining their very social and environmental goals, or consuming less, at the price of giving up their only power, cutting the ground under their own feet.

The only way for political consumerism to face this challenge is to address first of all the flaws of radical de-growth. At least three points deserve attention. The first one is that the de-growth perspective raises the same problems of inequality as political consumerism. If the latter depends on people’s resources and favours middle and upper classes, there is no reason why this would not be the case also for de-growth. In other words it is utterly unrealistic to believe that any de-growth process would not favour the more resourceful social groups, enhancing rather than reducing inequalities. Therefore de-growth in itself does not provide a credible answer to this flaw of political consumerism. In some literature on de-growth there is indeed a certain naiveté about power relationships, a surprising underdevelopment of the issue. On the contrary political consumerism focuses precisely on power relationships, though it may overestimate the equalization capabilities of the market.

¹⁰ Latouche (2006, ch. 11) synthesises the point by contrasting communitarism and individualism, solidarity with rivalry, egalitarianism with competition, search for power with refusal of power.

An implicit reply to this critique is provided by supporters of a radical approach to de-growth by insisting on its utopian, revolutionary character (Besset, 2005; Berthoud, 2005; Latouche 2006; Panikkar, 2006). This raises, however, a second critical point. Major social changes as those suggested, particularly if they are to entail egalitarian effects, are unlikely to be realized without a strong steering power, just by relying on social mechanisms and the social actors' good will. There must be people – like the de-growth theorists and practitioners! – that show how things are to be done, what are the really valuable goals in life and society. There must be strong governments able to enforce strict regulations. Briefly, even though a plea for democracy is usually made, most of times in terms of downscaled polities, the flavour of the radical perspectives on de-growth is unmistakably centralistic, if not utterly authoritarian in its premises and implications¹¹. For political consumerism, on the contrary, the market represents not only a source of inequalities and constraining forces but also of individual empowerment – which, in front of the weakening of traditional political institutions, is arguably not a bad thing.

Finally, we have seen that de-growth, particularly in its radical incarnations, focuses on conviviality, solidarity, egalitarianism, communitarianism, refusal of power, and the like. From this viewpoint it looks hardly innovative. De-growth seems to represent the umpteenth reincarnation of a recurrent intellectual theme: the critique of the modern processes of differentiation, secularization and individualization. Against these processes a recovery of communal life is pleaded for, often by looking at social groups where such way of life is supposedly still present, though under attack. It is almost pointless to remark that this view of community is utterly mythical. Indeed it makes sense only within modern intellectual categories, which provide a perspective for appraising the 'non-modernity', the 'alterity' of other ways of living. This type of critique actually reproduces in itself what it endeavours to criticize¹². I have hinted above how the essentialist views of community presuppose the modern communitarian paradigm to which they pretend to offer an alternative. Not by chance the utopia of a pacified, harmonious society, with no residual contrasts and contradictions, conflicts and competitions, is at the grounds of the worst totalitarian nightmares modernity has produced so far (Agamben, 1998; Esposito, 2002). Against these nightmares political consumerism can oppose, at least, the inspirational model of an open society and indeed also the social value of agonistic competition and conflict (Mouffe, 2005).

This is the kind of arguments political consumerists may arguably develop in reply to the challenge of (radical) de-growth. Yet, with all the flaws of the latter, such challenge has to be taken seriously. Political consumerism, therefore, should endeavour to show that it is provided with concrete, convincing bases: that current economic arrangements have margins of substantial reform; that the market is a viable means to drive technology according to public interests; that the rebound effect can be contrasted; that the enhancement of the individual is not necessarily at odds with the pursuit of collective goals and may be paramount in any attempt to reduce social inequalities and injustices; that social differentiation is something to adjust and make use of, rather than discredit and fight against.

¹¹ Latouche (2006), for example, talks of 'everyone's aspiration to self-realization and democratic equality, which is totally legitimate yet a bit hypostatized since the appearance of Western modernity' (I quote from p. 83 of the Italian translation, *La scommessa della decrescita*, Milano: Feltrinelli, 2007).

¹² Living examples of 'non-modern' society are usually presented in almost idyllic terms, forgetting that the embrace of community often carries with it an oppressive social control and a rock-solid stratification based on inequalities and discriminations that the Western champions of community would most likely find hard to stomach. Their hypostatization of community mirrors the criticized hypostatization of the individual, which is no surprise since they represent different expressions of a same, deeply modern, ideological absolutism.

6. Conclusion

In this paper I have discussed three challenges, three critical viewpoints on political consumerism. The first one adopts a social action perspective, focusing on its reliance on individual behaviour and raising the question of the existence of a proper political consumerist joint action. The second adopts a responsibility perspective, focusing on the connection between political consumerism and ethics of principles and raising the question of the possible worsening of market-derived social conflicts. The third adopts a social differentiation perspective, focusing on the alternative represented by the de-growth movement and raising the question of the dilemma between self-defeating and self-censored consumer action.

Needless to say what I have presented here is just an outline of such challenges or critical points. Further, sustained theoretical elaboration and empirical investigation are required in order to get a better understanding of the reach and limits of political consumerism.

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From the White Label campaign to the No sweat initiatives. A journey at the roots of political consumerism¹.

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Abstract

In the last years there has been an increasing focus on consumers as political actors. As the attention towards this phenomenon grows, so does the need of a better understanding of this “new political subject”. How new is actually this phenomenon and when being a consumer became a key element for mobilisation, are the main questions discussed in this paper.

In order to answer to these questions, the paper offers a review of how consumers and consumption have been defined through history, with a particular focus on the nineteen and twentieth century in Europe. Middle class women, as described in the paper, play an important role in spreading this culture, as well as in being at the forefront of initiatives critical towards the negative consequences of capitalism. Some of these initiatives are described in this paper, flashing possible links current initiatives of political consumerism.

Forewords

“The responsibility for some of the worst evils from which producers suffer rests with the consumers, who seek the cheapest markets regardless of how cheapness is brought about. It is, therefore, the duty of consumers to find out under what conditions the articles they purchase are produced and distributed and to insist that these conditions shall be wholesome and consistent with a respectable existence on the part of the workers”

These are the words used by Josephine Shaw Lowell, head of the Consumers League of New York, while addressing the participants to a meeting of the League in the ‘30s (quoted in Storrs, 2000: p. 21). The idea of writing this paper developed after having read these words. Researchers on political consumption have consistently to face the question whether political consumption is a new phenomenon and in which sense, who are the actors that mobilise and why. The effort of answering this question inevitably led into a journey at the root of political consumerism and, ultimately, at the core of the debate of when consumers started to be defined –and define themselves- as social actors.

In this journey around the historical debate about the “making of the consumer”, particularly fruitful was to follow the women’s path. Issues related to consumers mobilisations and episodes related to women activism crossed in fact each other, indicating how the process of definition of both consumers and women as political subjects was deeply interwoven.

¹ Parts of the content of this paper have been presented at the EURSAFE Conference –Wien 13-15 September 2007.

1. At the origin of political consumerism: its gendered roots

The past decade has seen increasing research into political consumerism², defined as responsibility expressed through purchase of specific product or avoidance of others. According to Korthals, consumers are increasingly found to demand goods that are produced to certain ethical standards for safety, health, animal welfare, environmental impacts, wages and conditions, and 'fair trade' (Korthals, 2001). Micheletti, observes as well the increasing relevance of actions by people who make choices among producers and products with the goal of changing objectionable institutional or market practices (Micheletti, 2003; p.2) Political consumption is often framed as a new phenomenon, seen as the result of post-materialist values of wealthy societies (Inglehart, 1997), of the uncertainty related to live in a risk society (Beck, 1992) as a form for defining collective identities (Sassatelli, 2006) or as part of the development of new forms of political participation (Melucci, 1989, Inglehart and Catterberg, 2002,). But is political consumerism actually a new phenomenon?

A growing interest among historians on consumerism and to the process leading to the formation of consumers as social actors, actually indicates that political consumerism is not actually a new phenomenon and that it developed together with the development of a consumer society. (Trentmann, 2006; Cohen, 2003; Strasser, McGovern and Judt, 1998; D'Aunton and Hilton, 2001; Hilton, 2003; De Grazia, 1996).

The raise of the consumer as a subjects of politics became visible through initiatives ranging from the formation of the consumers leagues (Hilton, 2004) or of the consumers co-operatives (Scott, 1998), or of specific initiatives such as the "white list" (Vincent, 2006) or boycotts (Friedman, 1999).

Furthermore, the formation of the consumer as a social actor was related to the increasing focus of consumers as object of public policies (Trentmann and Taylor, 2006) or as a juridical subject (Everson, 2006) as well as by the development of institutions dealing specifically with consumption issues (Hegnes, 2006), Goldstein, 2006, Melby, 1989)

The analysis of this literature indicates that from its very beginning political consumerism tent to interweave both the dimension of expressing rights (i.e. right to protest, or right to choose among products) as well as a urge for responsibility taking (i.e. duty to think to the consequences of purchase as well as duty to cooperate with public policies).

This way of framing political consumerism pervades the current debate as well. The notion "citizen-consumer" widely used in the literature (Cohen, 2003; Thoresen, 2004; Hilton, 2005) reflects this duality. To be a "citizen-consumer" implies both the opportunity of voicing and organising protest as consumers as well as comply with different forms of "responsibility taking" related to purchasing practices as well as to appropriation and use of products.

A closer analysis of the literature upon the history of consumption indicates that women were particularly significant in the construction of the consumer role as a specific one, partially disembedded from other forms of social affiliations (De Grazia, 1996; Myrvang, Myklebust and Brenna, 2004). Lacking political citizenship – as was the case in most nations at least until the first decades of the 20th century – women found that consumption afforded them

² The term consumerism is here used to express consumers' activism, and not –as referred also in the literature– as an indication of widespread of a materialistic (and individualistic) culture. A description of the two meanings of consumerism can be found in Theien (2004).

with an opportunity to express expertise and identity and to establish relations that were both social and political.

This was particularly true for upper and middle class women. Contrary to working class ones, who could count on participation in trade unionism or socialist movement (Theien, 2005), upper and middle class women (typically non-workers) struggled more in defining autonomous identities and forms of social participation (Myrvang, 2004). For them, consumption represented an entrance into the public sphere as a recognisable collective subject.

The construction of a social identity based both on gender and on the consumer role was the result of several, often interrelated, factors. Particularly relevant in this process was the sharpening of the distinction between the spheres of production and consumption - the widespread of an economic relationship between married couples where women became housewives and their husband wage-earners (Melby, 1989)- but also the increase of physical structures specifically devoted to consumption (i.e. Shopping arcades, Brenna, 2002), and of goods to pick out (Myrvang, 2004).

The genderness of the consumer role was made even more explicitly in the context of public policy making. Policies aimed at protecting or enhancing national wealth or nationalistic values appealed to housewives and sought alliances with them. This tendency –particularly visible in times of crisis- is for instance described by Reagin in her study of interwar Germany (1998), in De Grazia's analysis of women under fascism in Italy (De Grazia, 1996), in Cohen analysis of women on the “home battle front during the second world war” (Cohen 2003) or Melby's history of the Norwegian housewives union (Melby, 1989).

All these initiatives constructed the women as the “expert consumers”, and – as we will see- women will utilise this expertise as a form of activism, social involvement and protest.

The development of a consumer society was not however the only cause of women activism. Although it is outside the aim of this paper to go through the topic of women and political involvement it is worth mentioning that widespread of women organisations which characterises the second half of the 19th century and upwards (Kish Sklar & al. 1998). Activism for full citizenship (i.e. right to vote) widespread, women were a visible presence in trade unions and socialist inspired organisations, but also moderate women found motives for an higher involvement in the civil life, as supported by Pope Leon XIII's encyclical of 1891 (*Rerum Novarum*) asking Catholics to take a more active role in the society (Chessel, 2006 or by other Christian initiatives aimed at civilising capitalism (Storrs, 2000; Vincent, 2006)

Thus, the emerging of a consumer role and the increase of women's participation to the public life cross somewhere during the last decades of the 19th century, generating a core of what we can define a long lasting tradition of political consumerism. But how initiatives of political consumerism were shaped, and for which causes triggered forms of political consumerism?

Literature investigating forms of consumers activism and protest (Friedman, 1999; Choen, 2003; Micheletti, 2003) tend to indicate the relevance of “boycotts” as a toll widely used in the early stages of consumerism. Labour boycotts as a support to the strikes were for instance not uncommon at the shift of the previous century (Fridman, 1999 p. 34-25), being women often at the forefront in the organisation of such initiatives (Tilly, 1989); economic protest against unmotivated increase of prices, particularly for important food staples, such for

instance meat or milk have also been reported (Friedman, 1999 p.34; Micheletti, 2003 p. 44). Here, as well, women have been at the forefront in promoting and carrying on these initiatives (Cohen, 2003; Theien, 2005)

Consumers (and women) activism did not limit to boycotts, including a wider range of initiatives. Among the ones in which women have played an important role, of particular interest is the “white list campaign” (which took place in different European countries and in USA between the end of 1800 and the first decades of 1900) aimed both at expressing protest about goods produced under questionable working conditions and at promoting products which, instead, were manufactured in accordance with legislation (Kish Sklar, 1988; Vincent, 2007; Chessel, 2006; Storrs, 2000). The next section examines this particular campaign in more detail.

2. A case of women-consumers activism: the white label campaign

The origins of the white list (or white label) campaign can be traced across the Atlantic as a result of cooperation between reformers in Europe and the USA. This experience, which had different impact across countries is generally associated with the activities of the Consumers’ Leagues. The First league was established in London in 1887 by a woman, Clementina Black (Vincent, 2007), followed shortly after by league established in New York in 1890 (a sign, this of the network among women reformers (Kish Sklar & alt. 1998). Besides New York, leagues were established in Philadelphia, Chicago and Boston, leading to a National Consumer League (NCL) in 1900 (Chessel, 2006, p.81). Similarly, leagues widespread in different European countries: in 1902 they were created in France and in the Netherlands, followed by Switzerland, Germany, Spain and Italy (Chessel, ib). The first international congress of the Consumers’ Leagues was held in Geneva in 1908 (Vincent, 2007).

The leagues differed sensibly from country to country and –with the exception of USA (Storrs, 2000) - never became properly mass organisations. Their influence, however, has not to be underestimated as they provided an agenda for political issues and a frame for discussing them. Particularly, the Consumers Leagues, rather moderate and often inspired by Christian values, represented an alternative to the consumers’ cooperatives or other forms of leftist organisations, appealing particularly to middle class women of “good family” (Chessel, 2006).

The Leagues promoted the assumption of responsibility by consumers for the conditions in which production takes place. Kish Sklar, in her study of the white label campaign in the USA, defines this as an *informed morality*, which implies a threefold responsibility on the part of consumers: to recognise the direct relationship with the producer, to learn about producers’ working class conditions and to limit purchases to goods produced under ethical conditions. (Kish Sklar, 1988 p. 27).

Describing the initiatives undertaken by the league in France, Chassel refers that the league “*encouraged its members to inform themselves about the working conditions of dress makers and shop-girls. Members were asked to choose correctly from a white list of good dressmakers, who were thought to treat their workers well and who promised not to make them work at nights or on Sundays*” (Chessel, 2006, p.83). Thus, women were asked to refuse to have deliveries late in the evening, to go shopping late in the afternoon or on Sundays. Furthermore, in order not to load shop girls they were asked to plan their purchase well in advance (i.e. early in December and not in the days immediately before Christmas).

Vincent describes a similar experience in England, promoted in this case by the Christian Social Union. CSU members promoted the use of labels by certain producers to indicate the compliance with manufacturing and safety standard (Vincent, 2007; p.39-40)

It was in the USA, however, that this initiative achieved the greatest relevance, in terms of the number involved as activists as well as of the factories or stores certified. According to Storrs, the first white label was affixed to cigar boxes in 1874 (Storrs, 2000 p. 20). However, the textile industry and department stores were more often the main target of the campaign (Storrs, 2000). In 1891, for instance, a “white list of department stores” was compiled in New York by Josephine Shaw Lowell and other members of the New York City Consumers League. White lists were periodically published on newspapers.

The white label campaign replaced the white list initiative when Florence Kelly was elected general secretary of the National Consumers League in 1899 (Kish Sklar, 1998, p. 19). As one of her first initiatives, she designed the Consumer White Label and launched the campaign on a national scale. The campaign focused mainly on “*women’s and children’s [machine] stitched white cotton underwear*”, including “*corsets and corset substitutes, skirt and stocking supporters, wrappers, petticoats, and flannelette garments*” (quoted in Kish Sklar, 1988, p. 24). Members of the League were granted the status of inspectors by the government. During their visits to factories and department stores, they controlled that federal legislation governing labour conditions and child labour was in place. At the height of its success, in 1904, the League had licensed sixty factories.

Although the White Label Campaign (as well the White Lists in Europe) faded before the Great War, the effort of “civilising capitalism” by consumers direct action was more long lasting. As shown by the quote at the beginning of this paper, the moral pressure encouraging consumers to make the right choice was still persistent in the ‘30s (Storrs, 2000) as well there was no doubt that women still represented the core of consumers’ activism (Storrs, 2000; Choen, 2003).

Evaluating the importance of the white label initiative (in USA), Kish Sklar noted that “*the campaign deserves a place as one of the most extensive expressions of women’s political activism before the passing of the nineteenth amendment in 1920. The campaign drew women into public life in ways that validated what might be called their social citizenship almost twenty years before the passage of the women’s suffrage amendment to the constitution*” (Kish Sklar, 1998, pp. 33-34). Through this initiative women utilised their expertise (of making choices, of evaluating products, of purchasing practice) for staking out their responsibility for social housekeeping, extending woman’s sphere from the family to the community (Storrs, 2000 pg15).

This initiative was as well important in terms of the definition of consumers as social and political actors, as it showed the kind of power that “informed consumers choices” could have. Moreover, this initiative provided consumers with an additional tool to the “black list” of organised boycotts: the referred to as “*buycott*”.

Finally, what makes the white list and white labels particularly interesting is the fact that it exemplify a case of early political consumerism facing issues very similar to the ones currently under discussion, as the working conditions laying back the products available in the shops (Klein, 2000; Micheletti, 2003) and the initiatives that consumers can carry on for

changing objectionable practices (Peretti, 2004). Hence a red thread seems ideally to connect the white list campaign of the beginning of the last century with the current “no-sweat” initiatives.

3. Conclusions: links between past and presents forms of political consumerism

Starting by asking the if political consumerism is actually a new phenomenon and which kind of initiatives could eventually be traced back in time, this article suggested that forms of political consumerism developed together with the development of a consumer society. Forms of protest carried on by citizens as consumers have emerged at least since the last two decades of the 19th century. As shown by the literature that has investigated the origin of the consumption society, women have been often at the forefront of such early initiatives, indicating that consumerism was deeply characterised by a gender dimension. Consumption appealed to women as users of new facilities as well as a main target of public policies. Furthermore, as we have seen, consumption gave women – particularly middle class ones – new opportunities for social and political participation. The “white list” initiative, which developed both in Europe and in the USA in the late 1800s and early 1900s, is an example of this activism. The white list or white label campaign can be regarded as one of the first examples of “political consumerism” as we tent to define it today (Micheletti, 2003), as it asked consumers to make choices of products and producers based on the way these products were manufactured. Violations of work regulations, use of child labour, and unhealthy working conditions were the core concerns of the white label activists, showing a remarkable parallelism with the current “sweatshop” campaigns (e.g., the Clean Clothes Campaign).

The similarities do not end here: now, as then, women tend to be most active in practising political consumerism. The growing literature on contemporary forms of political consumerism underlines in fact that women, more than men, tend to be involved in forms of political consumerism (Stolle & Micheletti, 2003; Micheletti, 2003 & 2004; Tobiasen, 2005), although with variation from country to country³. Women, particularly, tend to be more prone than men in purchasing goods defined as “ethical”, such as for instance fair trade or organic goods (Micheletti, 2003).

As the study of Halkier (1999) however shows, the boundaries between political concerns (of justice or sustainability) and more private ones (i.e. of care or health in relation to family) tend often to be blurred. This indicates that –now as then – it is difficult to make a sharp distinction between the private and public sphere of women as consumers and activists.

This link between the private and public dimension of political consumerism is taken into account as well by Micheletti, when she underlines the fact that “Considerations about family health also play a part in contemporary political consumerism (...)” (Micheletti, 2003; p.43). Similar findings emerged, further more, in the study of Miller (1998), who reflects on the “middle class bias” of political (or ethical) consumption. The relationship between middle class women and political/ethical consumerism – shown among other by the study of Tobias, 2005, 131-132) is discussed also by Dolan (2005, p.369). These considerations seem to suggest additional similarities between past and present forms of political consumerism. In fact, ss pointed out by Chessel, the white label campaign was and remained a middle class phenomenon. At the core, it was fundamentally paternalistic (or materialistic), and the gap

³ In countries such as Norway, for instance, it appears difficult to state that political consumerism is particularly a women phenomenon (Strømsnes, 2007; p.313) –if we consider survey data asking respondents about participation in “boycott” or boycott”.

between consumers (non-workers) and workers was a fundamental dimension of that experience. *The consumers' league did not seek to help workers but to educate men and women of the middle-class in to help workers* (Chessel, 2006, p. 85). The workers were never framed as consumers. A similar divide tends to characterise contemporary campaigns as well as they trace a distinction between consumers in the richer part of the world and producers in the poorest countries. The concept of "informed morality" used by Kish Sklar in describing the white label campaign may, to a large extent, aptly describe the current experience of political consumerism.

These considerations suggest the presence of relevant links between past and present forms of political consumerism. Further investigation on these topics is however needed.

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The political modernization of sustainable consumption policies.

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Summary

Over time, various policies have been designed and implemented to reduce the environmental impact of consumption. In this paper, I seek to characterize these developments by reference to the theory of political modernization and the concept of policy arrangements. It is argued that we can identify three ideal-typical policy arrangements in the field of sustainable consumption policy, each characterized by a particular combination of discourse, coalitions, rules of the game and distribution of power. The identification of these types not only enables cross-national comparison but also enables us to question future arrangements for sustainable consumption policy.

1. Introduction

One cannot dispute that consumption contributes to environmental problems, and there is little doubt that this contribution is indeed significant enough to discuss. For example, the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency's "Milieubalans 2006" states that the contribution of (direct and indirect) consumption is significant and increasing. Emission reductions achieved by increasing eco-efficiency are offset by the changes in consumption

patterns (MNP 2006). Similar arguments are voiced by, among others, the European Commission (Vliet 2002; 2004), the European Environmental Agency (2005) and the United Nations Environmental Program (2004).

From the 1970s onwards, the field of sustainable consumption policies has been developed to try to alter consumption levels and patterns, and their environmental impact. The exact form that such policies should take, as well as their effectiveness in mitigating environmental problems, continues to be subject of debate. Consequently, we can observe important changes in the nature of these policies over time. Between the 1970s and today, we have seen major changes in – among others - the processes of policy-making, the distribution of power between various political actors, the role of businesses and civil society, and the position that citizens and consumers occupy in policy discourses. For many researchers, these changes are exemplary of the shift from government – where nation-states were the dominant actor – to governance – where non-state actors come to play an important role in constructing policy-networks and facilitating and stimulating sustainable consumption.

It is not difficult to point at some general trends which might underlie these transformation. On one hand, such changes could be instigated by changing scientific insights when it comes to the question how consumption choices are made – and which means are suitable to influence such choices. For example, the notion that consumption choices are first and foremost to be explained by consumers' attitudes, dominant in the 1970s and 1980s, led researchers and policy-makers to believe that the emphasis should be on changing attitudes, through information campaign. On the other hand, changes in the nature of sustainable consumption policies are also the result of major changes in society at large. Thus, more

general developments such as internationalization, globalisation, post-Fordism, and new public management influence the nature of sustainable consumption policies.

In this paper, I discuss these transformations in the field of sustainable consumption policy by reference to the concepts political modernization and policy arrangements. The theory of political modernization postulates that the way that societies deal with environmental issues develops through various stages, “each characterized by specific discourses on governance and characteristic interrelationships between state, civil society, and market” (Tatenhove, Arts et al. 200). The specific assemblages of discourses and interrelationships are termed policy arrangements. Within a policy field such as sustainable consumption policy several arrangements can be found; policy arrangements are not mutually exclusive. The fact that various arrangements can exist next to each other does however not mean that there is no movement. We do see that new arrangements emerge, and gain dominance over pre-existing arrangements. It is this movement that we are particularly interested in, not only to understand the emergence of new arrangements but also to think about the future of sustainable consumption policy.

Much has been written about the transformations in environmental policy at large, writings in which notions of governance, political modernization and ‘reinventing’ government commonly reoccur. The question is, do we similar developments in the field of sustainable consumption policy and if so, what can this learn us about future directions in sustainable consumption policy. The current situation concerning sustainable consumption policies shows a rather peculiar picture. Nation-states have for a number of years shown little interest to develop sustainable consumption policies. Policies that are in place (if any) are not eagerly adapted to new societal developments and insights. At the same time, we see a enormous

number of corporate and NGO driven initiatives to link consumption with environmental and sustainable development issues. However, there are also some trends identifiable which suggest that there are changes coming up. The increased interest in environmental issues (the Al Gore effect) will be of influence, but more general we witness the emergence of new paradigms for social change (most notably the ideas on transition theory/management).

Given these developments, this paper aims to contribute to our thinking about sustainable consumption policy. The first objective is to analyse changes in sustainable consumption policy arrangements, and position them in the context of political modernization. The second objective is to discuss various contemporary developments and to question what new future arrangements for sustainable consumption policy might look like. The following research questions guide this paper:

- what kind of policy arrangements did/do we witness in the field of sustainable consumption policy?
- What shifts have taken place from one type of policy arrangement to others? And how can we explain those shifts?

To answer these questions, the paper takes the following steps. First, I draw upon established theories to develop a framework for characterizing sustainable consumption policies. To do this, I use the notion of policy arrangements. I apply these framework to sustainable consumption policies and argue that we have seen three distinct arrangements for sustainable consumption. I aim to analyse why these new arrangements emerged, and what drove their emergence. Empirically, the paper focuses predominantly on the Netherlands, although environmental policies in the Netherlands cannot be seen apart from the European context.

2. Political modernization and policy arrangements

2.1 Theoretical background

As pointed out by Arts and van Tatenhove (2006), the concept of political modernization has been used quite differently. Some use it as a normative concept which prescribes certain reforms in policies. Other use it as perspective to analyze of debates on governance, the changing relationships between state, market and civil society, and transformations in political practices. This is also the usage that I make of this concept.

As an analytical instrument, the theory of political modernization is firmly embedded in the debates on reflexive, or late-, modernity. In general, the notion ‘modernity’ refers to “modes of social life and organization which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence” (Giddens 1990). It is the result of cultural and structural processes which led to a specific constellation of the four dimensions of modernity; surveillance, capitalism, industrialism and military power (see Giddens 1990). Over the last decades, many social theorists have been concerned with pinpointing the changing character of modernity. Alternative terms to describe that we have moved beyond (simple) modernity include (among others) post-modernity, liquid modernity, reflexive modernity, and second modernity.

The theory of political modernization draws heavily on the work of (among others) Giddens, Beck and Held to discuss the transformations that took/take place in the political domain as societies moved from a first to a second phase of modernity. Influenced by these social theorists, political modernization as analytical instruments is concerned with discussing

changes in the locus of politics, the relationships between the various actors involved and shifting relations in structures of governance.

Empirical investigations into environmental politics have led Van Tatenhove et al (2000) to distinguish three phases of political modernization, “each characterized by specific discourses on governance and characteristic interrelationships between state, civil society, and market” (Tatenhove, Arts et al. 2000). The phase of *early political modernization* can be characterized by reference to the notions ‘manageable society’ and ‘rational policy making’. It was believed that societies were manageable and that politics could, through rational policy making, steer societies in the desired direction. In this phase, state, market and civil society were relatively autonomous entities and the state was considered the ‘power container’. In the late 1960s, the modernist view on politics was challenged. As social movements and academic began to emphasize the drawbacks of early political modernization, a new phase of *political anti-modernization* came into existence. This phase witnessed the development of policies directed at post-materialist issues, such as the environment, and the development of new policy arrangements characterized by participation, self-regulation and the involvement of new political actors – such as social movements. The emergence of a third phase of political modernization was driven by the processes globalization, individualization and reflexive modernization. Beck, Giddens et al have elaborated in detail about the changes that societies underwent, not only as a consequence of globalization but also because societies have been forced to deal with uncertainties and risks. Characteristic of the phase of *late political modernization* is that the idea of a manageable society loses ground. “Essential to the phase of late modernity is its plurality. The formation of new coalitions, the allocation of resources, the way actors construct identity, is perceived both within and outside the nation state model, and influenced by local-global interconnectedness” (Tatenhove, Arts et al. 2000).

These three phases of political modernization refer to general trends in policy-making. This paper uses the concept of political modernization for two reasons. First of all, I question whether similar developments have taken place in the field of sustainable consumption policy. Do the changes in sustainable consumption policy resemble these general trends? And what can we learn from other policy domains for sustainable consumption policies, and the other way round?

A second argument to use to theory of political modernization is that it enables one to pinpoint what are generally rather 'fluid' phases in environmental policy and governance. Methodologically, the theory of political modernization leads to a focus on policy arrangements as the more tangible 'representations' of these phases. In other words, each phase of political modernization is characterized by the emergence of certain ideal-typical policy arrangements. Focusing on policy arrangements enables us to give empirical answers to questions about discourses on governance and the interrelationship between state, market, civil society and consumers.

2.2 Constitutive elements of policy arrangements

To concept policy arrangements needs further operationalisation to be used as a tool for research. Arts et al (2000) and Liefferink (2006), van Tatenhove and Leroy operationalise policy arrangements into four dimensions: "an arrangement can be characterized by: (1) the nature of the policy coalitions involved (their number, quality, etc.); (2) the division of resources within and between coalitions and the allocation of political power; (3) the predominant policy discourses and the contents of the political debate; and (4) the nature of the rules of the political game" (Arts, Tatenhove et al. 2000). These four dimensions can be

‘translated’ into empirical questions to analyze policy arrangements. In what follows, I briefly describe these four elements and discuss how they can be used in research on sustainable consumption policy.

Policy discourses

A discourse is defined as “a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts and categorizations which are produced, reproduced and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social relations” (Hajer 1995). Discourses (implicitly or explicitly) refer to interpretative schemes by which meaning is given to environmental problems. They thus ‘define’ how we speak about environmental problems, their causes, possible solutions, and the responsibilities of various actors. Discourses can be detailed theories or programs, such as ecological modernization, or simply popular buzzwords, for example ‘pollution prevention pays’. Policy-making is influenced by discourses because they are influential in (re)defining environmental problems, both socially and politically. In this process of (re)defining, each discourse can be said to have certain biases and reductions; it reduces complexity by emphasizing certain aspects at the costs of others.

If we look at sustainable consumption policy, we can question what dominant discourses (have) exist(ed). Various aspects are of importance. One could analyze the general view on consumption and the environment; is it considered important to tackle consumption patterns? If a change in consumption patterns is deemed necessary, the question is what ‘image of consumer behavior is used as the basis for policy-measures. Are consumers depicted as a rational *homo economicus*, or as passive victims of fashion, as influential or powerless, etc.

Policy coalitions

The emergence of democratic institutions, the increasing political importance of civil society organizations, and the rise of sub-politics are some trends which make it more and more unlikely that one single actor sole handedly decides to impose certain policies. Nowadays, policies are made by coalitions, whether that are coalitions between politicians, civil society groups, corporate interest groups or any mix of those. A policy arrangement is characterized by the policy coalition that support and promotes it. “Each coalition consists of a number of players who share interpretations of a policy discourse or resources, in the context of the rules of the game. (...) These coalitions identify (more or less) similar policy goals, and engage in policy processes to achieve those goals” (Arts, Tatenhove et al. 2000). Such coalitions are traditionally thought of as combinations of state and non-state actors but this is no longer a prerequisite. Over the years, we witness a broadening of coalitions, also increasingly involving transnational actors.

In analyzing policy arrangements for sustainable consumption policy, one is thus also required to look at the coalitions that are in place. Questions to ponder are what actors, state or non-state, national or international, are involved in formulating sustainable consumption policies and what coalitions emerge. And do we witness important changes in the coalitions in place, as the concepts of governance and late political modernization suggest?

Resources and power

Policy arrangements are not only the result of discourses and coalitions, they are also the result of the distribution of resources and power among the actors concerned. At the same time policy arrangement impact the distribution of power between actors, they determine

which actors are given power, and which not. To analyze the complex concept of power, we need the following elaborations.

First, we need to recognize that the notion of power not only refers to actors' formal position in policy making processes but also to the relative influence that actors have (and take) on the policy-making process. There is thus a difference between the formal power structure and the influence of different actors on the policy processes; "these two aspects are of course related, but there is no one-to-one relationship in the sense that those who possess most resources will always most affect policy outcomes" (Keohane and Nye, 1989 in Arts 2000). This can occur if other actors have more capacity to form the right coalitions, to influence the rules of the game, etc. A particular situation occurs if the actor with the most formal power is not willing to use that power in setting and drafting policy arrangements. This means that the actor concerned has no power in creating policy arrangements but it does not mean that this actor is powerless per se (nor does it mean that other actors won't try to convince this actor to use its power). Secondly, we need to look at the question how the distribution of power influences policy arrangements, and vice versa. Policy arrangements are shaped by discourses, coalitions, power and rules of the game but once materialized, they come to exert power on their own. Policy arrangement can attribute responsibilities to particular actors, and/or empower these actors to make a difference.

To analyze how the distribution of resources affects, and is affected by, the arrangements in place, the following questions can be asked. Which actors have, and use their, resources to craft policy arrangements for sustainable consumption? Which actors are empowered through these policy-arrangements? And what are the changes in the distribution of power/resources as policy arrangements morph?

Rules of the game

A second characteristic of policy arrangements as identified by Arts et al. are the rules of the game: “the rules of the game encompass all modes of production and interpretation of meaningful and legitimate conduct in (environmental) policy arrangements, implying the self-conscious application of normative and interpretative schemes (discourses) by the actors involved, which are included in sanctioning procedures” (Arts, Tatenhove et al. 2000). The establishment of a policy arrangements means that the rules of the game are (temporarily) fixed. Formal and informal rules determine which actors are allowed to participate in the policy arena, and what kind of actions are considered legitimate.

However, policy arrangements not only create rules of the game, they are also the result of them. For that matter, it is helpful to make a distinction between (in)formal arena rules and the so-called meta rules – which co-determine how politics is signified and legitimized in the first place. As Arts et al argue, the processes of reflexive modernization appears to lead to more fluid and less formalized rules of the game (Arts, Tatenhove et al. 2000). The fact that many different actors are now involved in developing many different sustainable consumption policies illustrate that the rules to enter the arena of policy-making have become less restrictive. The field of sustainable consumption policy is no longer exclusive territory of state institutions as various non-state actors can get involved in crafting sustainable consumption policies. Such a weakening of the arena-rules should be analyzed in the context of changing meta-rules. These determine which actors (national, international, state, non-state, etc) are considered as legitimate actors in policy-making in general. Related to that, one can investigate what it exactly is that provides these actors with the legitimacy and authority to be involved.

To analyze the ‘rules of the game’ in sustainable consumption policy arrangements, the following questions are asked. Which actors are deemed legitimate and authoritative to enter the policy arena of sustainable consumption? And what provides these actors with the legitimacy/authority to be involved in making sustainable consumption policies?

2.3 Some cautionary notes on using policy arrangements as research tool

Before turning towards the empirical subject of this paper, sustainable consumption policies, it is good to make some cautionary remarks. First, the use of phases and arrangements might easily lead one to conclude that we are talking about successive steps, where arrangement A is replaced by B, then C, etc. As is also pointed out by Arts and van Tatenhove (2006), these are not simple, diachronic processes. They are largely rather to be seen as complex, synchronic processes. Consequently, any empirical study will find that elements of these phases of political modernization co-exist, just like there are different policy arrangements that co-exists.

A second consideration concerns the question how to research the four elements of policy arrangements. As stated by Liefferink (2006), “the four-dimensional analysis of policy arrangements also allows for four different analytical perspectives on one and the same policy arrangement, dependent on the research question”. In discussing the different policy arrangement on sustainable consumption, I start with discussing the discourse on (changing) consumption and the environment. From there, I identify which actors are ‘enrolled’ to participate in sustainable consumption governance, and discuss how this affects the distribution of resources (power) between these actors as well as the rules of the game in place.

3. **Arrangements in sustainable consumption policy**

3.1 Arrangement 1: social-psychological approaches and instruments

With the publication of *Our Common Future* (WCED 1987), consumption patterns were put on the agenda. It was argued that a future environmental crisis is unavoidable if developing countries are pressurized to follow in the footsteps of Western countries and develop comparable consumption and production patterns. Yet although the consumption patterns of Western consumers are recognized to be at the core of the problem, the report also states that economic growth and greater consumption are prerequisites for sustainable development. For this, it was also criticized. As Cohen (2001) argues, it “avoids having to confront squarely the initial questions that it raises regarding the ethical propriety of contemporary lifestyles in the advanced nations”.

The main actor in this period of time was clearly the nation-state. As – among others – a result of the publication of the Brundtland report, various nation-states took the initiative to develop policies to change consumption patterns. “Consumption policies in the Netherlands during the 1970s and 1980s were organized around information campaigns to educate people about topical environmental problems and their personal responsibilities in helping to ameliorate them.” (Martens and Spaargaren 2005). Examples of such campaigns include the so-called Postbus 51 campaigns, making of mass-media broadcasts, and, arguably the most well known campaign entitled *Zuinig Stoken/Zuinig Aan*.

The *Zuinig Stoken/Zuinig Aan* campaign sought to educate consumers about their energy consumption levels, not only in absolute terms but also compared to other households, and possibilities to save energy. To this end, households were encouraged to monitor domestic energy consumption weekly and compare it to the average energy consumption level in the Netherlands. Over time, the campaign *Zuinig Stoken/Zuinig Aan* has developed into a archetypical model of informing and educating consumers about individual consumption levels and their environmental impact. (for more information, see Chappells, Klintman et al. 2000; Vliet 2002)

The dominant theoretical perspective on consumption – which informed these initiatives – were social-psychological approaches to consumption. These approaches, known through the Attitude Behaviour model (Ajzen 1991), had a distinct perspective on how consumption patterns are shaped, and to be influenced. The rationale is that actual behaviour is the result of ones attitude, which in turn can be influenced by ‘increasing awareness’. Thus, individual consumption levels can be reduced by informing consumers on environmental problems, and their contribution. Up to this day, various initiatives are based on this rationale.¹ Notwithstanding these initiatives, the priority of the governments was to target producers. It is telling that although the consumer was recognised as an important actor in the 1970s, they were not taken on board as a separate target-group because of their diffuse character and the difficulty in targeting them.

If we reflect on this period, and the policies developed, we can identify the contours of a first policy arrangement on sustainable consumption. Individual consumption levels were deemed problematic, and the solution lay in informing and educating consumers. Consumers were made responsible for their own consumption levels. Nothing can illustrate this better than one of the catch-phrases used: “a better environment starts with yourself”.² Non-state actors were not involved in the process, it was then nation-state which developed policies and set the rules of the game.

Discourse	Consumers are responsible for their own consumption levels. Information and education can help in changing consumption patterns; “a better environment start with yourself”
Coalitions	The nation-state single handedly takes policy measures
Power	The nation-state is dominant in crafting policies. Policy arrangements empower consumers to change their own consumption levels.

¹ The Internet now of course plays a great role in collecting, processing and disseminating information. It offers new possibilities to, for example, visualize information, give feedback, let consumers learn from each other, et cetera.

² Another one stated that “the car can do a day without you”, also stressing the individual responsibility of consumers.

Rules of the game	Closed policy arena; consumption policies are exclusive territory of the nation-state
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3.2 Arrangement 2: the rational consumer, pricing and information

In the early 1990s, the debate on sustainable consumption policy received a new impetus. It was recognized that consumption patterns were important drivers for environmental deterioration and thus that the key to environmental protection lay – among others – in tackling consumption. The key event which placed consumption on the agenda was the 1992 Earth Summit and it is since then that “consumption has emerged as a significant environmental policy issue” (Murphy and Cohen 2001). With the recognition that consumption is one of the major causes of global environmental problems came the challenge to develop appropriate (global) policies. To meet this challenge, a great number of initiatives was set in motion. At the international level the UN Commission for Sustainable Development launched a research program to target this challenge and next to that the OECD launched its research program to tackle consumption. On top of that, national governments formulated new policy objectives. As Murphy and Cohen illustrate: “with bewildering speed a long list of learned societies, national governments and non-governmental organizations also rushed to articulate positions concerning the environmental effects of contemporary consumption practices” (Murphy and Cohen 2001). These developments meant a shift from the conventional practices of environmental policy-making where the emphasis clearly lied on targeting producers, the occasional information campaigns notwithstanding. From 1992 onwards however, consumption was framed as a legitimate and relevant domain for environmental policy-making.

This coincided with the increase in importance of the European Union as regulatory agency. Although the EU might originally be designed to bring peace and tranquility to Europe, it has been largely concerned with establishing and protecting the single European market. The European Union become involved in drafting regulations which sought to tackle consumption: “the EU began to experiment with consumption-focused environmental legislation in the early 1990s as consumption-related environmental problems became more acute – particularly the growing mountain of domestic solid waste.” (Murphy 2001). The EU attempts to design consumer-oriented policies were characterized by the recognition of the links between production and consumption. In response to for example the problem of domestic waste, the EU recognized that attempts to reduce the environmental impact of consumption would also need to involve producers. Thus, when in 1994, the EU developed the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive (PPW Directive), it was logical that notions such as extended producer responsibility were brought into European environmental law. The consequence was “that that key obligations in the Directive rest with the producers of packaging rather than consumers.” (Murphy 2001). As the example of fuel-efficiency regulation shows (Box 2), the consumer-oriented strategy - informing them about the (environmental) characteristics of products –should be seen as part of a larger integrated product policy approach.

A typical example that illustrates these rationales is the regulation on fuel efficiency. The regulatory framework consisted of three pillars: (1) a voluntary agreement with car producers which were asked to develop fuel efficient vehicles, (2) a labeling scheme which would provide consumers with information about the fuel efficiency of cars and (3) the legal opportunity for nation-states to use economic instruments. (Burg 2006)

This is not to say that consumption policies were solely focused on making producers responsible. Governments also sought for new policy-instruments to change consumer behaviour. This was partly motivated by the emergence of a new perspective on consumers and consumption. The social-psychological perspective gradually gave way to more rational

models of consumer behavior. Economic theories suggested that consumers should be seen as *homo economicus*, as rational beings who could be trusted to weigh different interests in making decisions. In this context, new policy instruments were implemented. For example, “the European Eco-labelling Scheme Regulation was agreed in 1992 and aims to promote the design, production, marketing and use of products that have a reduced environmental impact throughout the entire life cycle.” (Murphy 2001). By providing the right information consumers can make the ‘right’ decisions. In a similar vein, economic instruments gained popularity, either as tax or subsidy.

Discourse	Consumption and production are linked. To reduce the environmental impact of producers, one also needs to tackle producers. Consumers are rational decision-makers. To influence consumers, one needs to tackle the market, both by removing information barriers and by “getting the prices right”
Rules of the game	Internationalizing policy arena as international institutions and nation-states are both involved in formulating policies. Environmental care is to be embedded in the market, the prime jurisdiction of EU institutions.
Coalitions	Nation-states and supra-national institutions develop policies to target producers and consumers
Power	Policy arrangements target producers and consumers. empower consumers to change their own consumption levels.

3.3 Arrangement 3: less nation-state, more civil society

In the second half of the 1990s, various developments came together. The limitations of existing sustainable consumption policies were recognized by policy-makers and academics. These policies depart from a way too rational perspective on consumption, they did not acknowledge the difference in different consumption domains, and ignored important questions about the levels and quality of consumption. In the Netherlands, various research projects were instigated to deal with the complexities of consumption policy (for example Domeinverkenning, the project Perspectief, etc.) However, the political climate for sustainable consumption worsened, not only because the Minister of Environment saw little

benefit in targeting consumers. The general idea that the Netherlands were to be a fore-runner in environmental politics gave way to a pragmatic approach based on the argument that there was no need to run faster than necessary. The consequence was that the national government showed no willingness to develop sustainable consumption policies any further.

In the same period of time however, another movement was also visible. Civil society groups, academics, and (innovative) corporations recognized the potential that consumers have to change production-consumption systems through the market. Notions such as political consumerism or ethical consumerism gained ground as a new discourse on consumption developed. As for example argued by Micheletti, “politics is (...) entering the marketplace through the pocketbooks of consumers and the organization that serve them” (2003) and “this politicizes what we have traditionally conceived as private consumer choice and erases the division between the political and economic spheres” (2003). This changed the view on consumers; they were no longer seen as optimizing their own benefits but it was also realized that they could (be made to) take more general considerations into account.

The huge number of environmental and/or sustainability labels that exists nowadays illustrates the upsurge of political consumerism.³ We already saw that in the previous arrangement, government labels were used to inform ‘rational’ consumers about the objective product characteristics (most well-known are the labels on washing-machines etc). In the late 1990s, early 2000s we witnessed an increasing variety in labels. Existing state-endorsed labels continue to play a role but with varying success. Where the mandatory label on domestic appliances have proven rather successful (Rubik 2005), so-called Type 1 labels like the European Eco-label have had more difficulty gaining influence. This could be explained by

³ Of course quite a few labels existed already in the 1990s. However, the 2000s not only saw an increase in the number of labels and their market-share, but also a greater diversity in terms of their organizational background, message, etc.

the fact that some pre-existing labels, most notable on food, were stronger, both in terms of their institutionalization as in terms of consumer-recognition. In this period of time, most developments in terms of labeling were driven by the activities of non-state actors. Non-state organizations were developed, by civil society groups and/or corporations, to introduce and give legitimacy to new labels. Illustrative examples include the Forest Stewardship Council label for timber (Taylor 2005) and the Marine Stewardship Council label for fish (Oosterveer 2005). Next to that, we that corporations have developed their own labels to make self-declared claims on the environmental/sustainability performance of their products and production process.

Reflecting of these developments, a number of things come to mind. Most obvious is the change in discourse. Consumers are now attributed greater responsibility and power in realizing societal change and nothing illustrates this better than the now frequently found notions of the “citizen-consumer” and “political consumerism”. This builds upon the belief that in post-Fordist times, production-consumption chains are more and more driven by the authoritative consumer. (Keat, Whiteley et al. 1994). These trends have led civil society organizations and corporations to try to influence consumption choices by the provision of information. Consequently, sustainable consumption governance is now more pluralist than ever. These developments obviously stretch beyond the borders of nation-states, not only because the production-consumption chains are often global, also because many labels purposively seek to tackle labor and environmental conditions in other countries.

Does this all mean that the nation-state is rendered powerless? It is clear that the nation-state is no longer the only actor which targets consumers. To a certain extent, this is a deliberative choice of governments. This however not say that private, bottom-up initiatives for

sustainable consumption governance can develop without government interference. Sometimes, governments come to support private initiatives, and sometimes government-endorsed label come to compete with private initiatives.

Discourse	The citizen-consumer can have an influence on production-consumption chains through political consumerism. Sustainable consumption is equated with buying the right products
Coalitions	Civil society organizations and corporations developed their own strategies to support sustainable consumption, sometimes together. This can happen without nation-state interference.
Power	Various initiatives lead to diffused power structures, nation-states appear to move away from policy-making
Rules of the game	The authority of the consumers determines the rules of the game. Corporate and civil society actors justify their presence as protector of consumer-interests.

4. Analyzing the changes in sustainable consumption policy arrangements

The analysis of sustainable consumption policies has led to the identification of three main policy arrangements, each characterized by a combination of discourses, coalitions, distribution of resources and typical (meta-)rules of the game (see Table 4).

	1 st arrangement	2 nd arrangement	3 rd arrangement
Discourse	“een beter milieu begint bij jezelf”; “de auto kan best een dagje zonder u”	homo economicus, rational consumers, pricing and information	citizen-consumer, political consumerism
Coalitions	Nation-states take the initiative	nation-states and international institutions co-operate	pluralist policy-making
Resources/ Power	Dominance of the nation-state	dominance of the national and international state institutions	various initiatives lead to diffused power structures; nation-states move away
Rules	Nation-state as legitimate and authoritative		authority of the consumer

Table 4: Characterizing the three arrangements in sustainable consumption policy

Again, let me stress that these arrangements are not mutually exclusive and that we can still find (the remains of) all of them in current sustainable consumption policies. This is however

not to say that there are no shifts, and that new policies could take all different forms as easily. The changes in arrangements should be seen in the context of larger trends which make some arrangements simply more feasible than others. To analyze the trends that underlie the emergence of new policy arrangements for sustainable consumption policy, it is important to recognize to realize that the changes observed are in line with the wider changes in policy-making as identified by political modernization theorists. Typical tendencies, identified by Arts and van Tatenhove (2006) like the ‘ shift from government to governance’, the entrance of ‘new’ private and societal actors’ and the emergence of ‘multi-level’ governance can also be observed in the field of sustainable consumption policy. If we lie the above-described changes in policy arrangements next to the literature on political modernization, the following trends can be identified.

A decline in the power of the traditional ‘power container’ the nation-state, at the benefit of international government institutions and non-state actors. Various factors underlie this trend. Production and consumption chains have become more global than ever, and are thereby more difficult to regulate by nation-states. The Europeanization of environmental politics also decreased the influence in individual member-states. Furthermore, we see that the legitimacy of top-down policy-making has decreased in times of reflexive modernization or the Risk Society (Beck 1992).

The consequence is the *pluralisation of policy arrangements*, more and more actors are involved in making sustainable consumption policy. From a situation where the nation-state was the only actor that sought to influence consumers, we have moved to a situation in which civil society organizations, corporations and combinations of the two have developed instruments to change consumer behavior in a more sustainable direction.

This cannot be seen apart from *the changing perspective on the power of consumers and consumption*. The consumer is given a prominent position in the governing of production-consumption chains; through consumption choices they can exert political influence.

Related to that, we see *the changing insights in the science of consumption*. There are different theories on what consumers want, and how consumption choices are made. The idea that consumption choices are solely the result of individual attitudes or rational, economic choices has given way to a more nuanced view on consumption. This is not only driven by the recognition that consumption also takes place within social-technical infrastructures of consumption (Otnes 1988; Spaargaren 2000; Vliet, Chappells et al. 2005). What is also important is that various cases have shown that consumers are sometimes willing to take onboard environmental and/or social considerations.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have used political modernization theory and the concept of policy arrangement to characterize and discuss sustainable consumption policy over time and to think about future trends in sustainable consumption policy. The concepts of policy arrangements can be a useful tool to analyze such changes. It illustrates the interlinkages between discourses, coalitions, power relations and the rules of the game. In this paper I have used this concept not only to explain historical developments but also to think about future trends in sustainable consumption policy.

The historical developments in this particular policy-field show some similarities to the development in environmental policy at large, even though the phasing might be different.

We see the pluralisation of policy-making: more different actors are involved in policy-making. This trend is partly driven by a changing discourse on consumption and consumers, where (rational) consumers are no longer depicted as being at, figuratively speaking, the end of the chain. Consumers are not authoritative actors to whom companies and governments are accountable. Another important aspect is that the distribution of resources and power is no longer unequivocally state-oriented; many different actors now have the resources (such as knowledge, but also for example consumer trust) required to gain a prominent position in governing consumption and production chains. The pluralisation of policy-making is also undoubtedly informed by the fact that governments have always find it difficult (or not worth) targeting individual consumers.

Unfortunately, a discussion on policy arrangement, and historical changes, does not lead us to a definitive answer on the future shape of policy arrangement for sustainable consumption policy. Yet, the better we are able to typify current trends and developments, and see them in relation to debates in environmental governance at large, the better we are able to discuss the desired future of sustainable consumption policy, and question how that future can be brought about.

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Theme 15. Sustainable consumption

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European Forerunners of Sustainable Consumption and Production Programmes - Challenges and possibilities in an emerging policy field

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Abstract

Sustainable consumption and production (SCP) is a broad field of environmental governance that has emerged particularly after Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. Some forerunning countries such as Finland, Sweden and UK have already drawn up their national SCP programmes. This PhD research project looks at these three European pioneers and compares them. In addition, the case of Finland is analysed more in depth by using deliberative policy process analysis. According to the results got so far, the pioneering SCP programmes have many features in common. However, also clear differences exist as regards the themes, actors and policies: while Finland puts emphasis on research and technology, Sweden counts on consumers and UK believes in business. An important result of the analysis is also the marginal position of traditional legal steering in the pioneering SCP programmes and the prominence of informational devices and economic instruments.

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present the idea and some preliminary results of my PhD project. The topic of the project is sustainable consumption and production (SCP), a policy theme that has emerged particularly after the *Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development* in 2002. In Johannesburg, countries agreed to promote the development of a 10-year framework of programmes in support of regional and national SCP initiatives. The responsibility to take the lead was given to the developed countries.¹

Some forerunning countries have already drawn up their national SCP programmes. This research project focuses on three European pioneers, *Finland, Sweden and UK*. In this paper, the SCP programmes of the forerunning countries are compared by looking at their *themes, actors and policy tools*. In which ways the different countries have defined the emerging policy field? What kind of policy tools they consider most prominent? And who they think should bear the responsibility?

In addition, the case of Finland is analysed more in depth by using *deliberative policy process* analysis developed on the basis of the work of Maarten Hajer². The idea is to look at the possibilities and challenges there exist when the SCP agenda is negotiated by a broadly-based committee. Is the state of genuine, balanced dialogue easy to reach? How the expert hearings and long discussions among the group are experienced? Is there any chance for learning?

The structure of the paper is the following: In the next chapter 2, I introduce the policy field of sustainable consumption and production. In chapter 3, two different methods of analysis, deliberative policy process analysis and comparative perspective, are taken up. Meanwhile, chapter 4 describes the research material, the programmes and the interviews. An analysis of the materials is conducted in chapters 5 and 6 and the results are summarised in the chapter 7.

2. Sustainable consumption and production and the pioneering countries

2.1 *The concept and international process of sustainable consumption and production*

The concept of sustainable consumption and production has been on the international agenda since the early 1990s. However, practical tools and methods for implementation are only now evolving. The Rio Summit³ represented a watershed in the international community's way of thinking on environment and the focus of environmental policy was

¹ Johannesburg Plan of Implementation 2002, Chapter III, articles 14–19

² Hajer 2003 & 2005

³ The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development 1992

shifted from the mere production to consumption and production. In Johannesburg Summit, the development and promotion of a 10-year framework of programmes (10 YFP) was agreed. The actions outlined included the development of policy tools and measures, awareness-raising programmes, monitoring mechanisms and technology transfer.

Progress in developing the framework is taking place on international, regional and national levels. On national level, some countries such as Finland, Sweden and the UK have already drawn up their SCP programmes and also the European Union is going to present a first draft of its SCP action plan during the year 2007. Meanwhile, the international process is heading towards the 2010 and 2011 meetings of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development where a proposal for a 10YFP will be presented and reviewed.

2.2. Finland, Sweden and UK from the sustainability perspective

Finland, Sweden and UK are the case countries of this study. They are not only forerunners in making national sustainable consumption and production programmes but also countries with long tradition in strong stakeholder involvement and strategic thinking in ecologically sustainable development⁴. While Finland and Sweden have usually been categorised as Nordic welfare states where government involvement and planning traditionally play central roles, UK is said to have taken pride in “muddling through” environmental challenges⁵. Times have, however, been changing and for example Finland has during its years in EU⁶ changed its environmentally proactive policy style more toward pragmatic realism⁷.

If we look at some international environmental rankings they give a bit ambiguous picture about where Finland, Sweden and UK stand in terms of sustainability. In the Environmental Sustainability Index⁸, Finland has ranked first, while Sweden has been fourth and UK 65th. On the other hand, the Ecological Footprint estimates⁹ show Finland having the third biggest footprint in the world, while Sweden is 8th and UK holds the 14th position.

In this study, the reason for choosing Finland, Sweden and UK as the case countries is not only based on the interesting features of their country profiles but also on their active role in international SCP policies. Actually it was these three countries¹⁰ that were among the initiators of Johannesburg’s SCP provisions and they have also retained their active position in the UN by leading the international Task Forces on different themes central to SCP¹¹. The high profile in SCP policies means that the practices and policies these countries manage to develop on national level might be spread also to wider circles.

2.3 The SCP programmes of the pioneering countries

Finland: Getting more and better from less

In Finland, the working process for national programme to promote sustainable consumption and production began in November 2003 and it was concluded in June 2005. The task was to “prepare for the Council of State a proposal for a programme on ecologically, socially and economically sustainable manners of production and consumption”¹². The process was lead by the Ministry of the Environment (MoE) and the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI). A committee was set up to do the job.

The making of the programme was *broadly participative*. During the one and a half years of work, there were 38 persons who participated to the work either as Committee or Secretary members or as permanent experts. In addition, almost 50 specialists contributed to the work in the hearings or in the working groups. The members represented various ministries but also stakeholder groups such as business and industry, labour unions, environmental organizations and research institutes.¹³

⁴ Niestroy 2005, 105, 253, 257

⁵ According to Jordan & al. (2003a, 181) voluntarism, discretion and practicability were the words that were used to characterise British environmental policy particularly during the 1970s and 1980s.

⁶ From the year 1995 onwards

⁷ Sairinen 2003, 73–77

⁸ The Environmental Sustainability Index (ESI) aims to benchmark the ability of nations to protect the environment over the next several decades. It does so by integrating 76 data sets into 21 indicators of environmental sustainability. Esty et al. 2005

⁹ The Ecological Footprint measures humanity’s demand on the biosphere in terms of the area of biologically productive land and sea required to provide the resources we use and to absorb our waste. The Footprint is estimated per person and by country. Living Planet Report 2006, 14

¹⁰ Accompanied by Denmark, Honkasalo 11.10.2006

¹¹ 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production: The Marrakech Process 2006

¹² Ympäristöministeriö 2003

¹³ Kestävän kulutuksen ja tuotannon toimikunta (KULTU) 2005; Nikula 2006

The finalised paper “Getting more and better from less – Proposals for Finland’s national programme to promote sustainable consumption and production” was *unanimously accepted* in June 2005. It includes a vision until the year 2025 as well as goals and policy proposals for 11 fields that were considered important in promoting SCP. There are 73 action points introducing in total *93 proposals*. Some examples about the proposals are establishing a material efficiency service centre, defining long-term policy guidelines to reshape the taxation system and initiating material- and energy efficiency dialogues. Almost a year after the programme had been published the Government of Finland discussed its outcomes in one of its informal meeting and decided to start negotiations on financial support for a material efficiency service centre.¹⁴

Sweden: Think twice!

In Sweden there has been work going on for two separate parts of a national programme to promote sustainable consumption and production and a third, combined version of the two is just about to come out. The programme analysed here is about household consumption and it was published and presented to the Parliament of Sweden in the spring 2006. “Think twice! – An action plan for sustainable household consumption” was written by the Swedish Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Affairs. The preparation work was conducted by the *Ministry and an inter-departmental working group* that consisted of representatives from basically all ministries.

After a ministerial memorandum on the topic was finalised, it was sent for a stakeholder *consultation* for three months. Among the stakeholders were, for example, different official bodies, trade unions, NGOs, communities and regional authorities. After the consultation, the programme was re-written and sent to the Parliament for approval.

The approved SCP programme contains 55 points for action. However, only 17 of the proposals can be categorised as clearly new meanwhile 38 of them relate to policies that are already in process. The new provisions include deciding on regulation for the energy efficiency of housing, making an inquiry about individual recordings of hot running water and electricity, and hosting a recurring Forum on Sustainable Household Consumption.

It needs to be noted here that even though Sweden’s “Think twice!” is still in force - in principle - the programme might not be implemented due to the change of the Swedish government in the autumn 2006. There should be a new, broader version of the Swedish SCP programme coming out this autumn.¹⁵ However, due to the time limits for sending this paper, the analysis on the new version could not be incorporated into this paper.

UK: Changing Patterns & One Planet Economy

The SCP programme of UK consists of two parts. First there is “Changing Patterns – UK Government Framework for Sustainable Consumption and Production” that was co-published by Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in 2003. Changing Patterns is – as its name already reveals – a *framework*. It contains background text about the scientific, political and market context where the SCP policy takes place and informs the reader about Government’s SCP relevant action under way. The politically most important part of the paper is the Next Steps chapter where some 20 proposals for action are put forward.

The second part of UK’s SCP programme consists of the sustainable consumption and production *chapter* “One Planet Economy” of *the UK Sustainable Development Strategy (2005)*¹⁶. Meanwhile Changing Patterns is more like a report of the Government on SCP, the preparation process of the SDS included substantial input from different stakeholders. The consultation took place in 2004 and a wide range of consultation mechanisms were especially designed and used to engage with stakeholders at all levels¹⁷.

However, despite the emphasis on participative preparation process, the level of novel proposals in One Planet Economy is lower than in Changing Patterns. It makes some 12 commitments that on the basis of reading the strategy text can be interpreted as clearly new. Taken together, the new provisions of UK’s SCP programme include for example Sustainable Consumption and Production Business Task Force¹⁸, a new Sustainable Design Forum¹⁹, and a proposal to develop a Trade Union Sustainability Strategy.

3. Methods: deliberative policy process analysis and the comparative perspective

¹⁴ Valtioneuvoston Viikko 2006

¹⁵ Blomquist 2007

¹⁶ HM Government 2005

¹⁷ Government’s Sustainable Development Unit 2004

¹⁸ The Task Force will be resourced to develop ideas for practical action on key aspects of sustainable consumption and production.

¹⁹ The idea of Sustainable Design Forum is to champion and educate in eco-design, and promote best practice tools and approaches that can be adopted by designers.

3.1 Comparison of the SCP programmes

As regards the *SCP programmes* presented above, my aim has been to find some of their relevant provisions and to compare them. I have tried to find the special character of the programmes by analysing their important themes, actors and policy tools. The idea is that the provisions each country takes up in its SCP programme reveal something important about the way the topic is politically defined and approached.

The comparisons have been made by asking the following questions:

(i) What *themes, actors and responsibilities* each SCP programme emphasises? What things stand out from the tables of contents, titles, forewords, summaries and the programme texts? Who is expected to do what, when and with what resources?

(ii) What are the *policy tools* the programme takes up? Using the categories provided by Jordan & al. (eds) (2003), what are the shares of (1) regulatory tools, (2) market-based instruments (MBIs), (3) voluntary agreements (VAs), (4) informational devices, and (5) organisational arrangements?

In the future, the aim is to deepen the analysis of the SCP programmes by using expert and *stakeholder interviews*. In Finland and UK, the interviews have already been conducted during the winter and summer 2007. The idea is that the interviews will help in evaluating the programmes and also their implementation. However, the more thorough, discursively orientated analysis will be made only about Finland's SCP process. The deliberative policy process analysis used for the purpose will be described in the following sub-chapter.

3.2 Deliberative policy process analysis

Maarten Hajer²⁰ has stated that today's world is full of situations where decisions are made in networks marked by *unclear rules* on how to arrive to a legitimate decision. In the policy making process of Finland's SCP Committee, deliberation took place in a network of 38 stakeholders. My aim is to take a close look at this process and its context and – in that way – try to understand its dynamics.

Hajer²¹ has noted that the mere participation to a network often does not lead to authentic exchange of views. Thus, if we want to know what a policy process is all about we need to look closer at the practices, mediations and languages of the situations where participation takes place. Hajer suggests that particularly three dimensions of a policy process should be considered: *discourses, dramaturgy and deliberation*.

Discourses refer to markers, structures and patterns in a discussion. In other words, "(d)iscourse is an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categorizations through which meaning is allocated to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced in an identifiable set of practices"²². The concept of discourse and the methods for making discourse analysis are both well-established so they form a firm ground to rely on.

On the other hand, to be able to use the concepts of dramaturgy and deliberation I have tried to elaborate them a bit. Putting things as simple as possible, my understanding is that dramaturgy refers to the structures and players of a process at different times. As dramaturgy is the context where interaction takes place, discourses can be seen also as a part of it. Meanwhile, deliberation happens within these structures and among the players. Moreover, the concept of performance refers to the whole process as understood by the characters.

In the Figure 1, I have tried to visualize the *dimensions of dramaturgy* in a policy process. Setting is the physical situation and scripting refers to the characters that are brought to place to interact. Staging means the way the interaction is organized in different situations and over time. The field where the interactive performance takes place is discursive. Thus, the quality of deliberation is dependent on both the dimensions of dramaturgy and the understandings about the performance itself that – again – might affect the dramaturgy and produce new social realities.

²⁰ Hajer 2005

²¹ Ibid. 2003, 179 - 190

²² Ibid. 2005, 448

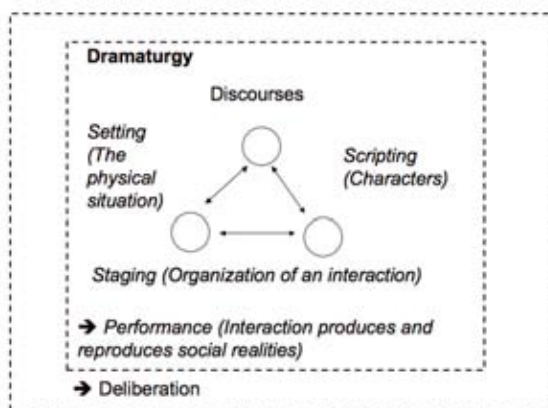


Figure 1: The dimensions of dramaturgy

With *deliberation*, Hajer²³ refers to the *democratic quality* of a discussion. According to him, deliberation can be analysed by focusing attention to several points of the process. I have grouped those concepts together and taken into the model also some new ones. Figure 2 visualizes the results, the four dimensions of deliberation. Although the dimensions of deliberation are pictured here as happening neatly one after the other, in reality they take place simultaneously.

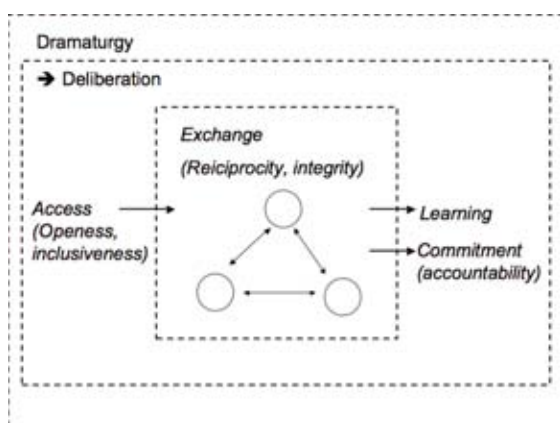


Figure 2: The dimensions of deliberation

When the democratic performance of deliberation is considered, access is the first aspect to be evaluated. Here, it is important to pay attention to the openness and inclusiveness of the process. That means seeing that there are no unnecessary barriers present and that everyone with a stake can have a say. In the actual exchange or dialogue, reciprocity and integrity are the aspects to be evaluated. This means that in the argumentative exchange, the arguments of all sides are heard and responded to. In this process, honesty is required. What the exchange might yield is learning and possibly committing to the process at hand.

4. Research materials: programme texts & focused interviews

In this research project, basically two kinds of research material have been used. First of all, I have studied the *national SCP programmes* that were already described above. They have been analysed qualitatively in terms of their themes and actors and quantitatively as regards the policy tools. Secondly, *focused interviews* have been used for finding material and criteria for analysing the programmes and for getting a picture about the SCP policy process of Finland.

When it comes to SCP programmes as research material in comparative analysis, one problem is clearly that the SCP programmes of Finland, Sweden and UK are *different as regards their scope and status*. As Finland's paper includes "proposals for national programme to promote sustainable consumption and production" Sweden has an "action plan for sustainable household consumption". Meanwhile, UK's programme consists of two parts, of a Government framework and a chapter of the national sustainable development strategy.

Also the sets of focused interviews conducted in Finland and UK so far are different both quantitatively and qualitatively. In UK, some 7 expert interviews were conducted with stakeholders central to the SCP policies in June 2007. The idea was to concentrate on the general situation as regards SCP policies in UK and the *evaluation of the national SCP programme*.

²³ Hajer 2005, 250

Meanwhile, in Finland I conducted 20 interviews with the members of the SCP Committee, its Secretariat and permanent experts in the beginning of the year 2007.²⁴ In these interviews, the aim was also to get a better picture about the *policy making process* that involved interesting deliberative parts. A decision as regards the interviews in Sweden will be made once the new version on the programme is published.

In both Finland and UK the majority of the interviews have been conducted during the year 2007 while the national SCP programmes were published in 2005. The interviews in Finland lasted on average one and a half hours but in UK they took only an hour. The choice of the interviewees was made in both cases by using the expertise of the ministry representative who had been leading the policy making process behind the SCP programme. In Finland, all the interviewees had participated to the preparation work of the programme. Meanwhile in UK, the interviewees were just experts who were or had been closely involved with the SCP policies or who knew the field well.

In both cases, the attempt was to get a balanced representation of the different stakeholders and genders to the group. In Finland this was easier as the group among which to choose was rather restricted and it was possible to use own personal knowledge about the field. In UK, where the my personal knowledge about the field was not that strong, the balance was sought by checking the list together with the interviewees and a couple of outsider experts. The plan is to make full transcriptions of the interviews and to analyse them. Until now, however, only a *preliminary analysis* has been made on the basis of the interview notes.

5. Comparing the pioneering SCP programmes

For the first sight, the SCP programmes of Finland, Sweden and UK resemble each other in many ways. One of the clearest similarities is the strong adoption of *common principles* such as life-cycle thinking, co-operation with the market, stakeholder participation and the use of different policy tools. In addition, the view that *mobility, housing and food* are the three biggest contributors to unsustainable patterns of consumption is widely shared in all the three programmes.

As regards the general notions, it can be stated that all compared programmes have their *innovative provisions*. On the other hand, they also seem to have many weaknesses in common. As regards social sustainability, Finland and Sweden are clearly more socially sensitive than UK but the angle remains rather weak in all the programmes. The most severe problem in common is, however, the *level of concreteness*. Particularly the programme of Finland lacks timetables and priorities and also the policy proposals of Sweden and UK fall short of funding and guidelines for implementation. This can be seen to be due to the fact that SCP is a new field. Still, more concrete programmes would have had better changes to be well implemented.

5.1 Focuses: research in Finland, consumers in Sweden, business in UK

Some of the clearest results of this study are the *differences of focus* in the compared SCP programmes. What was found out in the analysis was that whereas in Finland's SCP programme there is an emphasis on research and negotiation, Sweden's action plan relies on consumers' sustainable choices and on Government's support for them. Meanwhile, the programme of UK focuses on business. It speaks clear language about Government's leadership but in realising this task business stands as a close co-operation partner.

"Meeting the long-term challenges of sustainability is not possible with today's levels of technology. More progressive technologies are needed, together with new types of services and other innovations that increase energy- and material efficiency."

- Getting more and better from less (FIN), p. 18

Above, the example taken from Finland's programme is interesting as it says very clearly that SCP will not even be possible if technology is not developed further. Finland is the only country that has taken technology up to the level of chapter titles²⁵. Also the name of the programme "Getting more and better from less" can be seen to reflect the efficiency principle often associated with environmentally friendly technologies. In the same way, the name of Sweden's SCP strategy "Think twice!" emphasises consumers' role and responsibility. The Swedish viewpoint – one that seems to be a bit critical towards the reforms of technology and economy – can be read from the following quote:

"As for the utilisation of natural resources, e.g. to heat houses, technological development has brought with it several gains, including some with respect to energy consumption. - - The increased consumption space has to a large degree been used for increased unsustainable consumption, which counteracts sustainable development."

- Think twice! (SWE), p. 4

²⁴ As there were 38 persons who participated to the Committee's work, the sample is approximately half of the whole group.

²⁵ The chapter 11 of the Finnish programme is called Technology and innovation for sustainability.

5.2 Actors: responsibilities in policy process and implementation

As already the analysis above shows, different countries have interestingly brought forward various sectors or actors of society that they think should play an important role in solving SCP related problems. The concreteness of the Finnish SCP programme was extraordinary good as regards the definition of different actors that should bear responsibility in *implementing* the programme. The implementation was designed to be participative also for actors beyond the government: In a majority, 60 %, of the action points presented by Finland, there was at least one non-governmental actor mentioned as a party involved in implementation.

In UK and Sweden, implementation was not designed in the same way. In these countries, it seemed that the Governments still wanted to show they were in a leading position:

“The UK government is determined to take a lead in tackling these damaging impacts. Our actions, at home and abroad, must strengthen the synergies between our economic, environmental and social agendas.”

- Changing Patterns (UK), p. 3

The role of *business* in SCP programmes varied a bit from one country to another, but it clearly had the biggest role in the programme of UK and the smallest one in Sweden. Actually the style of UK’s programme texts – with serious looking graphs, proposal for an SCP Business Task Force, and a four page long attachment about the Role of Business in Sustainable Development – made the whole package look as if it would be especially made to inspire business.

When the programmes dealt with the responsibilities of implementing SCP programmes, one of the most interesting aspects was the role given to *citizens and consumers*. In Sweden, the task to understand consumption was taken seriously. The following quote clarifies the Swedish standpoint that includes also a broad socioeconomic analysis:

“Our consumption patterns are integrated with, and develop in accordance with, the infrastructural, technical, cultural, historical, geographical and socioeconomic conditions that apply in the society in which we live.”

- Think twice! (SWE), p. 6–7

On contrary to Finland and also to some extent UK, Sweden’s attitude towards SCP seems to be that we already know enough - now it’s time to take action. This was shown for example by the 38 action points presented in the programme that were already being implemented. Still, none of the SCP programmes could be labelled as a really radical one. Rather, the programmes analysed here reflect the fact that the SCP process is still in its beginning. A summary of the themes and actors in the SCP programmes is presented in the Table 1 below.

Table 1: A summary of the analysis of the SCP programme texts: The main focuses and most important actors in the programmes of Finland, Sweden and UK.

Countries	<i>The main focus</i> of the programme	The most important actors in <i>making</i> the programme	The most important actors in <i>implementing</i> the programme
Finland	Research and technology; cooperation	The preparation committee with members from ministries and stakeholder groups	Different ministries but also a wide range of stakeholders
Sweden	Consumption	Government	Government and consumers
UK	Economy and business	Government but also widely consulted stakeholders	Government and business

5.3 Policy tools: Informational devices top the ranking, regulation at the bottom

The variety and shares of different policy tools proposed in each SCP programme were found out by categorising them. Here, I used the fivefold typology of Jordan & al. (eds.) (2003) that includes (1) regulatory instruments, (2) market-based instruments (MBIs), (3) voluntary agreements (VAs), (4) informational devices and (5) institutional arrangements. It is important to notice that in my categorization a policy proposal may belong to more than one category. For example, proposals for studies on ecological tax reform have been categorised both as MBIs and as informational devices.

In general, the most important categories of the analysis are MBIs, VAs and informational devices. The category of MBIs comprises all the political promotion of SCP by using market mechanism as a tool. It includes a broad scale of instruments

from congestion charges to public procurement of clean technologies. Meanwhile, as VAs have been categorized tools that use voluntary schemes and cooperation as the means to make difference. Some examples about this category include recommendations for environmental standards at workplace and promotion of regional co-operation in planning. Moreover, informational devices refer to production and delivery of information as means to make change. Under this category belong R&D projects, promotion of ecological labelling and standards as well as environmental education.

As research material served the proposals for new SCP related action provided in each programme. The quantities of these action points were the following²⁶: Finland 93, Sweden 17, UK 32 (20 in Changing Patterns, 12 in One Planet Economy). A summary of the results of the policy tools' analysis is presented in the Table 2.

Table 2: A summary of the results of the policy tools' analysis: The total number of new proposals in each SCP programme and the quantitative and percentage shares of different policy tool categories.

Country	Total no. proposals	Regulation	MBIs	VAs	Informational devices	Institutional arrangements	Other/No tools
Finland	%	0	25	17	47	2	25
	93	0	23	16	44	2	23
Sweden	%	6	12	0	65	6	12
	17	1	2	0	11	1	2
UK	%	6	22	9	16	9	38
	32	2	7	3	5	3	12

MBIs = market-based instruments; VAs=voluntary agreements

When analysing the policy tools, it soon became clear that *informational devices* were the most popular ones of the different tools suggested. In the programme of Finland, 44 proposals, that means nearly a half, contained at least one reference to informational devices. In the case of Sweden and UK, the percentage shares were 65 % and 16 % respectively.

The results above can be interpreted as telling that the pioneering SCP programmes define the lack of information and communication as one of the biggest problems in the field. Following this logic, the next important things would be getting the markets work for sustainability and making voluntary schemes within and between different sectors a high priority. For example, in the Finnish SCP programme *market-based instruments* were mentioned at least 23 times. This means that more than a quarter of the proposals had something to do with using market as a tool. To compare, Finland has far more emphasis on market than Sweden that suggests MBIs in 12 % of the proposals. In UK's programme, market related instruments are almost as popular as in Finland and the share of them is as big as 22 %.

One of the most surprising results of the analysis is, however, that among Finland's 93 SCP policy proposals, there is not even one proposal for traditional *governmental regulation*. In the cases of Sweden and UK, the situation is not much different. Although it is difficult to find clear answer to the absence of regulation from the programmes, the following quote might explain the general ambient:

" - although Government regulation has a clear and vital role to play in ensuring that markets operate efficiently excessive and unnecessary regulation can obstruct efficient functioning of the market."
 - Changing Patterns (UK), p. 24

Later on in this research project, an analysis will be made on how SCP policies have been implemented. Then, the SCP programmes of Finland, Sweden and UK will be evaluated by a more in-depth manner and also their socially constructed dimension will be taken better into account. In practise, making of the evaluation includes analysing interviews with SCP experts and stakeholders and getting familiar with the follow-up material provided by the responsible authorities of each country. Some important questions to be answered include the following: What policy proposals and tools have been well implemented? Which actors have done their share? In which fields the implementation has been effective and which fields are lagging behind?

6. Deliberative policy process analysis and Finland's SCP programme

²⁶ The number of proposals that were categorised could not be directly seen from the programmes as among the 55 action points presented by Sweden the majority was already in process and therefore ineligible for the analysis. Meanwhile in the case of Finland, 93 proposals for new action could be found from the list of 73 action points.

In order to gain more understanding about the challenges of political negotiation on SCP, the making of Finland's SCP programme is analysed more in detail. The working of the SCP Committee has been studied by interviewing the Committee members, its Secretariat and permanent experts. As a framework, I have used deliberative policy process analysis where the theoretical angles of discourse, dramaturgy and deliberation play central roles.

6.1 Dimensions of dramaturgy

Deliberative policy process analysis encourages us to look at the strategic games on the micro level of policy making. In this case, it is challenging as the material got about the process is to a large extent interviews conducted one and a half years after the process ended. In the theory chapter above, I developed a model for analysing the dimensions of dramaturgy in a policy making process. Among the dimensions mentioned are: scripting, staging, setting and discourses. Of these dimensions, scripting and staging will be dealt more in detail in the following.

Staging: organization of the interaction

With staging, Hajer²⁷ refers to the "deliberate *organization of an interaction*, drawing on existing symbols and the invention of new ones, as well as to the distinction between active players and (presumably passive) audience". From this perspective, there were basically two things that awoke discussion in the interviews: the meaningfulness of the expert presentations and the character of the discussions among the Committee.

Finland's SCP Committee assembled 23 times. The meetings took usually place in the Ministry of the Environment but there were also some special sessions organized outside the ordinary venues. There were at least 37 expert presentations given during the working of the Committee. The majority of them were given during the first year of the working of the SCP Committee when the meetings usually began with hearings.

While it was a very widely shared opinion that the *beginning* of the SCP policy-making process was somehow "slow", the attitude towards expert presentations varied. While some felt that they had learned from the presentations, others were sceptical and doubted the balance of the experts. Some also thought that the expert inputs were not connected to the general discussions and that there would have been the need to change the hearings to more dialogical settings. What was clear, as well, was that the staging in expert hearings made the Committee members an audience and some of the members experienced this as an odd situation.

If discussions were thought by some to be the best part of the process many also criticized them. Even though it was viewed positively that everybody had the chance to get his or her voice heard many were frustrated about the old *polarized discussions* that took place in the meetings. Many felt that everybody just said what they were expected to say in their position. New information, good arguments and the methods of deliberation used were not able to move the frontiers.

If we try to sum up the important features of Finland's SCP process from the perspective of staging, *intensive, demanding, time-consuming but rewarding* were the adjectives commonly used to describe the process. The process was intensified particularly towards the end, as the Chair was not willing to postpone the deadline given to the Committee. In addition, several actors - The Finnish Association for Nature Conservation at the forefront - were considering leaving dissenting opinions to the programme text. However, the Chair appealed to the Committee and negotiated with the members and the dissenting opinions were withdrawn. Still, one and a half years after the end of the process there were still some interviewees who would have preferred that dissenting opinions would have been left in.

Scripting: characters and cues for appropriate behaviour

Hajer²⁸ defines scripting as "those efforts to create a setting by determining the *characters in the play* - - and to provide cues for *appropriate behaviour*". In the SCP Process, the characters of the play were chosen when the leading Ministries MoE and MTI were contacting the participating organizations and asked them to name their representatives. The Committee members, its Secretariat and permanent experts formed a group of 38 people. Approximately 40 % of them came from and 60 % beyond the Government. There were 8 representatives from the organizations of business, industry and farming, 5 from the environmental and consumer non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and 3 people representing research institutes.

In the interviews, the *broadly-based structure* of the Committee was perceived both as a weakness and as a strength. Its strength was the ability to reflect various viewpoints and to bring more input into the process. At the same time, among its weaknesses were the heterogeneity of opinions and contradicting viewpoints that made it difficult for the Committee to take any bigger steps.

²⁷ Hajer 2005, 449

²⁸ Hajer 2005, 449

How were the dynamics of working in the SCP Committee? In the process, the task taken particularly by the environmental NGOs was to try to make *progress* in the field of sustainable consumption and production. Meanwhile, the role business and industry had taken for themselves – and this was also explicitly told in the interviews – was to *hinder radical changes*. Thus, this tension between progressive and conservative forces was a central part of the dynamics in the Committee. Of the actors, the Ministry of Finance was the one that was commonly seen as having *most power*. As it was also a part of the more conservative forces, the chances of the progressive ones were rather limited.

When scripting a political performance, the *role of the chair* is an important one. Also in the SCP Process, the positively perceived role taken by the Chancellor of the University of Helsinki, Kari Raivio, was often spontaneously mentioned in the interviews. It was seen as a good thing that the Chair came from outside the SCP circles and from a high position. His approach was described as balanced, neutral, precise and progressive. He spurred the Committee to negotiate, find compromises and reach consensus. His character was seen as eminent which made the Committee members involved try to find better arguments and ways to negotiate a commonly acceptable paper.

6.2 Dimensions of deliberation in the SCP Process

According to Hajer²⁹, deliberation refers to the “*democratic quality of a discussion*” and the point of a proper deliberation is to allow people to transform pre-given opinions into new preferences in a collective exchange. In this chapter, I will take a look at the deliberation by using four angles sketched previously in this paper. These dimensions of deliberation are: (1) access, (2) exchange, (3) learning and (4) commitment.

Inclusive and open access

With inclusiveness, Hajer³⁰ means that in debates it is required that *stakeholders are made part* of the argumentative exchange. Meanwhile, with openness it is emphasized that the way in which the debate is staged and conducted must *avoid unnecessary barriers*. With the term access, I have referred to the both of these qualities.

As regards access in the SCP Committee, the story most commonly told in the interviews regarded its work as *inclusive and open*. However, the members with affiliations to the *social sector* saw that their branch was poorly present. While there were three representatives from environmental NGOs, there was not a single representative from e.g. welfare or health organizations.

Although the distribution of power varied among the members, everybody had their chance to speak out. According to the interviewees, there were no unnecessary barriers related e.g. to knowledge or language that would have hindered the participation. Different thing was, however, what kind of consequences the speak acts of different players had. As was mentioned when the scripting of the process was analyzed, it was generally assumed that the comments of some of the members such as those of the Ministry of Finance had *more weight* than those of some others. Therefore the mere balanced access should not be regarded as the balance of power.

Weak reciprocity of exchange

While inclusiveness and openness were generally perceived qualities of the SCP Process, reciprocity was not seen to be at that high level. Reciprocity means that discussions must be conducted through an argumentative exchange, *hearing both sides*, and responding to one another’s arguments. To assess the quality of deliberation, Hajer emphasizes also the meaning of integrity. Integrity underlines the importance of honesty and *avoidance of double play* in a debate.³¹ Both reciprocity and integrity can be seen as qualities of exchange.

The problem related to reciprocity that many saw in the SCP process was already taken up in the context of staging: Too often discussions in the Committee involved performative repetitions where different *players remained behind the old front lines*. As many of the Committee members had worked with the questions related to sustainable development for years or even tens of years, they were familiar with the people and arguments of different organizations. In addition, they also knew the basics of the sustainability debate. Therefore, it was easy for them to shut their ears and concentrate on defending their position.

However, the interviews also revealed that at some points the opinions of many players were surprisingly close to each other. For example, the global challenge of sustainable consumption and production as well as many of the principles such as eco-efficiency were perceived in rather consistent ways. When talking about these *less-politicized* themes, it seemed that the people also got encouraged to speak about their own thoughts and worries that necessarily were not things they

²⁹ Hajer 2005, 450

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

were bringing up in official discussions. Even if these personal opinions were heterogenic, too, they also revealed new chances for finding common ground.

Learning through dialogue

Hajer writes about learning that it should happen through an iterative process in which *knowledge is mobilized and enriched through confrontation* with a variety of stakeholders and experts. When the interviewees were asked about learning, the answers varied to some extent. Many thought that *they had learned at least something*, usually something from outside their own core expertise. For many it was, however, difficult to remember or point out what it was they had exactly learned. When specified, the learned thing could be related to many aspects of the SCP Committee's working. For some, the learning experiences were related to the process while others felt they had learned most about the participating organizations or about the SCP topic itself.

A difficult question here is what should be the *value given to learning* in the work of the SCP Committee. How big importance should be attached merely to it? As in many interviews the value of the Process was emphasized more than its result, what would have happened even without the outcome, the SCP programme? And if learning should be seen as one of the main results, how it could be enhanced? To take a step further from the current setting: Would it be more honest to invite the participants to learn and not to make a programme if that is not the point? And would the participants be motivated for a mere educative process?

Making commitments

Hajer³² defines accountability in a policy processes by stating that "those involved are *accountable to political bodies and to the public* at large, also with regard to the degree to which the rules as laid out have been guaranteed". In the focused interviews, I asked about making commitments and that is also the concept used in the framework for analysis developed above. In both cases – in making commitments and being accountable – the question is about taking responsibilities in a policy process.

Most of the interviewees reacted positively to the question on whether they and their organization *can be committed* to the SCP programme. What some of them added a bit surprisingly was that they could easily be committed to it because "it was not very dangerous". This can be interpreted to reflect the fact that as such the programme was not seen to take many things further and that the real work to make things happen was still ahead. In addition, it gives strength to the earlier notion that some of the actors had actually joined the process with the aim of slowing it down. Therefore, committing to the programme *did not mean taking too big responsibilities*.

In Finland's SCP programme, the responsibilities for implementation were not only given to Governmental agencies but also to organizations outside the Government. However, many actors *did not recall* the responsibilities they were given. In addition, many saw that in the implementation their role would mainly be to participate - should the Government initiate something. In this sense, the perception about their role in implementation was *not very pro-active* but rather one of a watchdog.

7. Summary and conclusions

7.1 Comparisons of the SCP programmes of Finland, Sweden and UK

Some of the most important findings as regards the pioneering SCP programmes were the differences and similarities in the ways sustainable consumption and production has been approached in Finland, Sweden and UK. According to the analysis, the programmes have many characters in common such as the reference to life-cycle analysis, stakeholder participation and the use of a wide range of policy instruments. However, also clear differences exist between the current SCP forerunners.

In Finland's SCP programme, the emphasis is put on research and technology. Meanwhile, Sweden counts on consumers and UK believes in business. As regards the policy tools, *informational devices* were by far the most popular ones in all the SCP programmes. Also other 'new' environmental policy instruments such as market-based instruments (MBIs) and voluntary agreements (VAs) were proposed particularly in Finland and UK. Meanwhile, *regulation* was highly unpopular in all the SCP programmes analysed.

The results should not be seen as a *whole* picture about different countries' SCP relevant ideas and policies. Instead, they should be seen to reflect the ways these pioneering countries have now tried to interpret and bring into practice the ideas of

³² Hajer 2005, 450

SCP in their own political contexts. As the case countries are forerunners in the field, their examples are most probably going to be followed also in other industrial countries and within the EU³³.

7.2 Deliberative policy process analysis of Finland's SCP programme

Of the processes behind the three pioneering programmes, the case of Finland was chosen as the one to be looked at more in detail. In this paper, Finland's SCP process was analysed particularly from the point of view of dramaturgy and deliberation. The results reveal that the process was staged in a way that in many meetings the Committee members were made an audience to experts. After that, the intensive and sometimes polarized discussions began. The polarizations were partly due to the fact that the Committee had been scripted as a broadly-based one where the progressive and conservative forces of the SCP field met. Here, the role of the Chair – who came from outside the SCP field - was seen as important and constructive. A summary of the dimensions of deliberation in the SCP process can be found from the Table 3 below.

Table 3: Summary of the results as regards the dimensions of deliberation

Dimensions of deliberation	Assessment on the basis of the interviews
Access	Open and inclusive access apart from the social sector
Exchange	Reciprocity low due to the old polarizations.
Learning	Learning important part of the process. Questions remain whether learning is the most important outcome of the process.
Commitment	Commitments made partly because the programme is not thought to have effects. Many did not recall the tasks given to them in the programme. Stakeholders are making own projects loosely connected to the theme. Government seen as the agency to implement the programme.

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Natural resource consumption caused by Finnish households

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Abstract

The article is based on the results of the first phase of a research project on the natural resource consumption of households. The MIPS concept (material input per service unit) was chosen to assess the relevance of different activities and products of private households. The study covers the most common foods and drinks, ways of constructing houses, modes of transport, forms of sports, tourism and other leisure activities, as well as goods and appliances owned by households. The natural resource consumption caused by an average Finnish household is assessed for different activities and products. Food, transport and construction form relevant areas of the material input (MI) caused by private households. With sports, tourism and leisure activities, the contribution of transport, especially of private car traffic, in the resource consumption is appreciable. The most relevant goods in terms of household consumption are electronic appliances and jewellery.

1. Introduction

Household consumption has grown and changed its form in the past few decades. Income is growing from year to year alongside the GDP over the whole of Europe, and we have more and more to consume. Household consumption expenditure in the EU-15 increased by almost one third per person between 1990 and 2002. At the same time households are becoming smaller and are tending to use more energy and water, in addition to generating more waste per person (EEA, 2005).

If sustainability is to become a reality, a tremendous increase in resource efficiency is required. One target for sustainable production and consumption has been the reduction of material flows in the industrialised countries by a factor of 10 up to the middle of this century. This would allow a worldwide cut in material flows by half, while doubling worldwide prosperity, i.e. it would lead to an increase in worldwide resource productivity by a factor of four (Schmidt-Bleek, 1993; Schmidt-Bleek, 1998; von Weizsäcker, Lovins & Lovins, 1997). Meadows et al. (2003) propose, amongst other means, an increase in eco-efficiency by 4 % p.a. in order to achieve sustainability. This corresponds to a factor 8 increase in resource productivity.

Household consumption has an appreciable impact on the environment. According to a calculation on the Finnish national TMR (Total Material Requirement), approximately 20% of the Finnish

TMR is directly attributable to private households (Mäenpää, 2004). The indirect impact of household consumption in the TMR is much greater as almost all of the consumption can be indirectly connected to private consumption.

In order to steer household consumption patterns towards sustainability, it is crucial to measure the magnitude of consumption and to identify the most relevant consumption.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Background and system boundaries

The Finnish Association for Nature Conservation is conducting a research project called FIN-MIPS Household – Promoting Sustainable Consumption in 2006-2008. The purpose of the project is to test the application of the MIPS concept for increasing the sustainability of private households. In the first stage of the research, material input data relevant to households has been gathered and new data generated. In the second stage, the material input data produced will be applied to approximately 30 Finnish households to develop options for the dematerialisation of household activities. This article presents some key findings of the first stage of the research.

According to the OECD definition, household consumption is the consumption of goods and services by households. It includes the selection, purchase, use, maintenance, repair and disposal of any product or service, but it does not include consumption by the public sector or intermediate consumption of products and services in the productive sector (OECD, 2002). However, the consumption by the public sector can still be indirectly appended to household consumption.

2.2. The application of the MIPS indicator in this study

The promotion of sustainability requires appropriate indicators. Changes in production and consumption patterns must be measurable, e.g. in relation to the Factor 10 target. In 1992, the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Energy and Environment proposed the amount of natural resources used to provide a certain benefit (Material Input Per Service unit, MIPS or MI/S) as a basic measure for assessing and comparing the ecological pressure caused by products and services. MIPS constitutes a tool for assessing and systematically reducing the resource consumption of products or activities. The basis of the MIPS values are the ecological rucksacks calculated for different goods or commodities. The ecological rucksack is the sum of natural resources moved away from their original place in the ecosphere during the entire life cycle of a certain raw material, product or activity, including indirect resource use as well. (Ritthoff et al., 2002.)

The MIPS approach concentrates on the material input of products and activities. It differs from a life cycle assessment (LCA) in not providing detailed results on certain emissions and other output factors. However, the use of the MIPS concept is less time and cost intensive than the use of, for instance, LCA. In addition, the MIPS concept can easily be communicated to a non-expert. Kilograms and tonnes of resources are understandable concepts for guiding consumer decisions, as well as product development and macro-economic considerations. The wide potential for the application of the MIPS concept (product, service, household, company, municipality, region, national and global economy) promotes the understanding of the links between local activities and global sustainability.

The service unit of MIPS must be defined separately in every study. By choosing the same service unit it is possible to compare different products or consumption areas with each other. In this study, the service unit is the consumption of one person in one year. Another choice would have been counting the MI values not just for one consumer but for the whole household. This would, however, complicate the comparison between consumers living in households of different sizes.

The MIPS concept divides the natural resources used into five different categories, i.e. abiotic resources, biotic resources, water, air, and soil movement in agriculture and forestry (mainly erosion). In this paper, the term natural resources refers to the sum of abiotic and biotic raw materials as well as to top soil lost because of erosion. The consumption of water and air is beyond the focus of this paper.

The study is based on MI and MIPS data gathered and produced in the FIN-MIPS Household project. A lot of existing MIPS data from different countries was gathered in a pre-study on existing material input and MIPS data (Lähteenoja et al., 2007). The project is producing six master's theses on the material input of different consumption sectors. The material for the calculations presented in the paper is based on these studies.

3. Natural resource consumption of an average Finnish consumer

This study focuses on the average Finnish consumer. The natural resource consumption is measured for one person for one year. The profile of the average household or consumer is mainly based on official statistics by Statistics Finland (2006). The average household size in Finland is 2.1 persons. Thus, the subject of the calculations in this study is a couple without children. The natural resource consumption of the apartment and its goods and appliances is divided by two in order to calculate the consumption of one person.

The resource consumption of a household is divided into six fields: housing, eating and drinking, transport, leisure time activities, tourism, and household goods and devices. Each category will be presented before comparing and summarising them. The division of the total household consumption is based on previous studies concerning the importance of difference consumption fields (e.g. Michaelis & Lorek, 2004).

3.1. Housing

The consumption area of housing includes construction, renovations and energy consumption by houses. The construction and use of the house are studied separately. Construction also includes built yard areas. The MI calculations of construction were conducted with a bottom-up method that gives minimum values of the resource consumption, although every small construction part is not included (Nässén et al., 2007). By calculating MI-values for different construction parts such as foundations, different wall and roof materials, etc., it is possible to model the most typical building types and variants of them. The useful life of the buildings has been assumed to be 50 years. Natural resource consumption for renovation is out of focus because the renovation materials, such as paint or window frames, during a life span of 50 years were not considered especially relevant in terms of total natural resource consumption.

The average Finnish consumer lives in a block of flats built before the 1970s. The block is made of concrete and located in a town. The average living space per person is 38 m². The average yearly

electricity consumption of the household is 2,000 kWh. The apartment is heated by district heating, which consumes 210 kWh per square metre per year on average (Motiva, 2007).

The average water consumption is 155 litres per person per day. This is roughly divisible as follows:

- 39 % (60 l) personal hygiene
- 26 % (40 l) toilet flushing
- 13 % (20 l) laundry
- 22% (35 l) kitchen

Approximately 45 % of the water consumed is warm. Thus, heating the water requires approximately 1500 kWh per person p.a. The average resource consumption of housing is shown in figure 1.

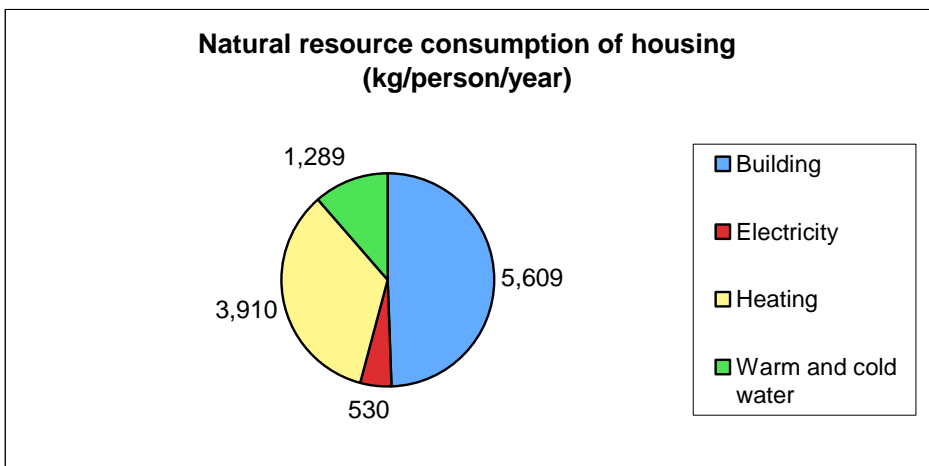


Figure 1. Natural resource consumption of an average flat (per person per year)

3.2. Food and drinks

Finnish people eat considerable amounts of meat (Statistics Finland, 2006). The average direct use of food products per person in 2005 is shown in figure 2.

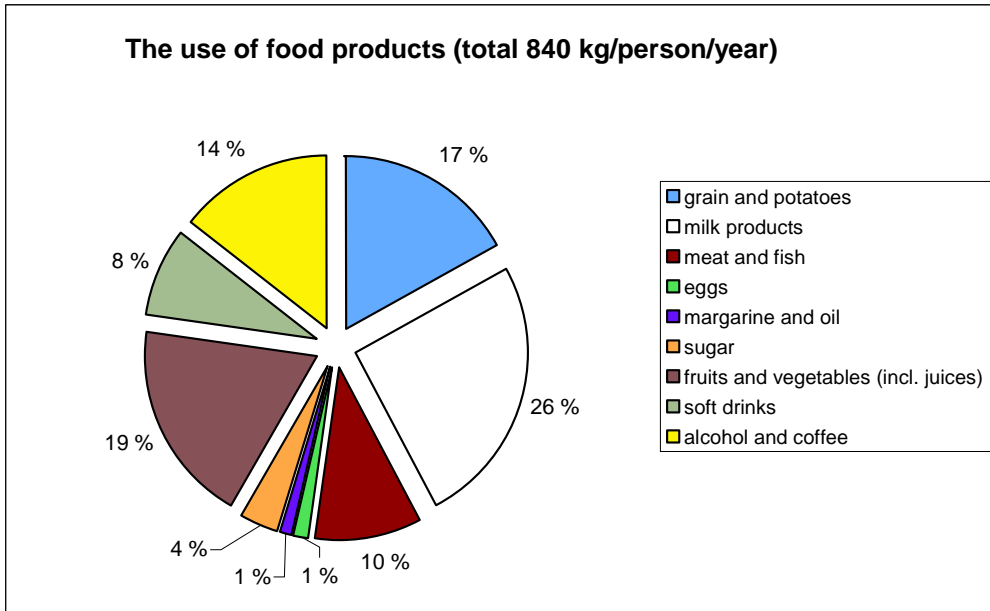


Fig. 2. Food consumption in Finland in 2005 (Statistics Finland, 2006).

In this study, only data for foodstuffs grown in Finland has been used for the calculation of the material input of foodstuff. The calculation of MI values for foodstuffs grown abroad was not possible within the resources of the FIN-MIPS Household project. In addition, the focus is on a general level as MI-calculations were conducted only on groups of food and drink products such as milk products. Based on these calculations and assumptions, the distribution of the material input of different foodstuff groups is given in Fig. 3.

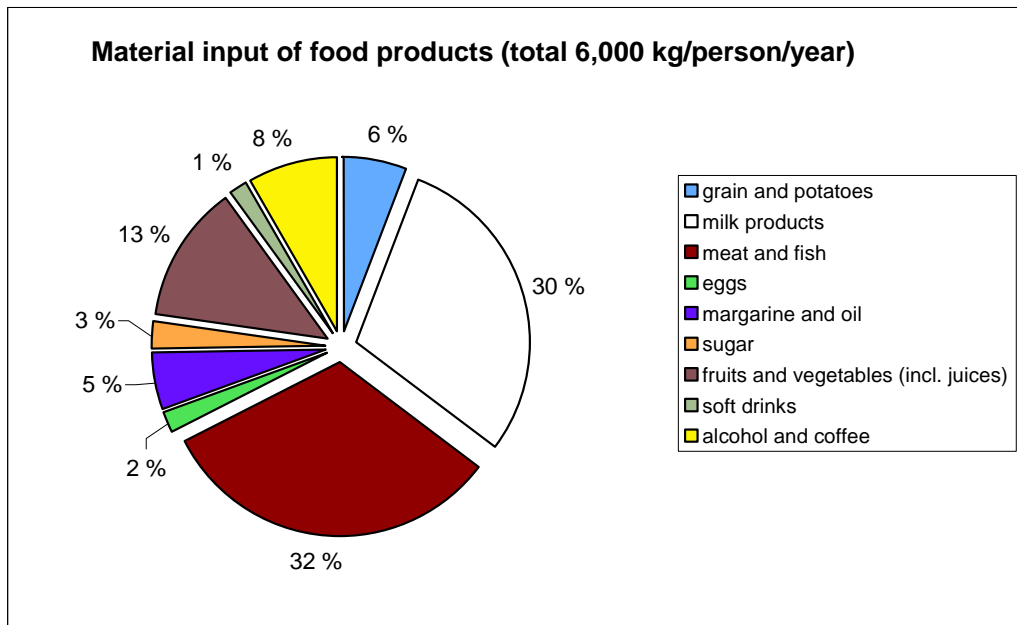


Fig. 3. Distribution of the natural resource consumption of foodstuffs consumed in Finland.

When comparing the distribution of the food products consumed (fig. 2) to the distribution of the material input of the food products consumed (fig. 3), the relevance of animal-based food, especially meat, is obvious. Animal-based foodstuffs in general (incl. milk) make up 36 % of the foodstuffs consumed, but their share of resource consumption is 51 %. Only 8 % of the foodstuffs consumed comprise meat, whereas the share of meat in the resource consumption of foodstuffs is 32 %. Animal-based food, especially meat, thus dominates the resource consumption caused by the average nutrition in Finland.

3.3. Transport

The National Travel Survey provides an overall picture of Finnish passenger mobility and its background, as well as demographic, geographic and temporal variations in mobility (NTS, 2007). According to the survey, the total domestic travel distance per day is 42 km, out of which 4 km are business trips and thus allocated to work, whereas the rest is allocated to the household as private trips. The average travel distance of a domestic trip is 15 km. Most of the trips are made by car. Buses are the most common form of public transport. Holiday trips abroad are not included in the National Travel Survey. Due to calculations based on national statistics (Statistics Finland, 2006), their average distance per person is approximately 2,000 kilometres a year, which equals 5.5 km per day.

The average Finn consumes 17 tonnes of natural resources in domestic transport. Travelling by car consumes five times more natural resources than travelling the same distance by bus. The share of different transport modes in total consumption is shown in fig. 4.

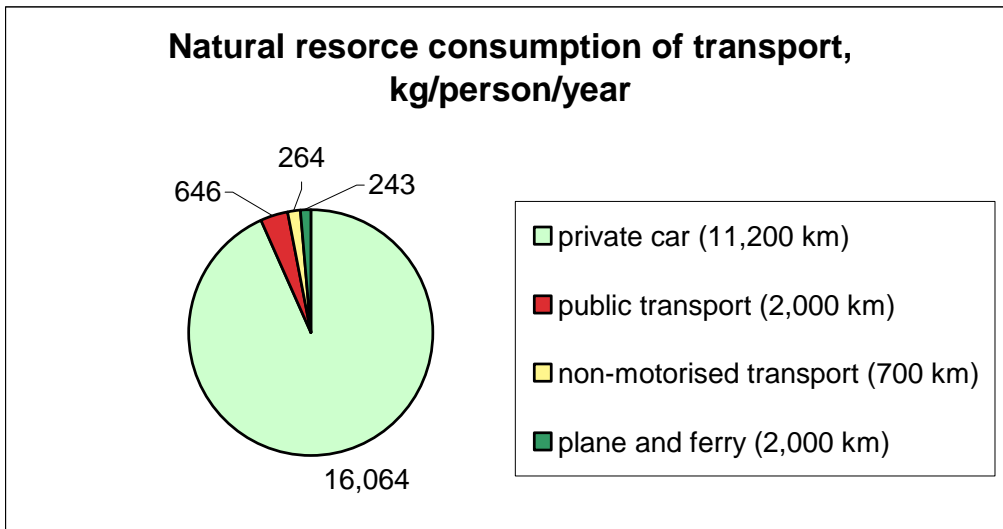


Fig 4. Average natural resource consumption per person per year, by different transport modes.

3.4. Leisure time

An average Finn has 6.5 hours of leisure time every day. The real amount of leisure time and the use of it differs a lot. According to Liikanen et al. (2005), for example, television is watched 3 hours per day on average. Reading and listening to the radio are also very popular. Thus, daily leisure time could be divided up as follows:

- 3 hours per day for watching television
- 0.5 hour per day for sports or other activities outside the home
- 2.5 hours per day for daily routines, reading and listening to the radio.

The natural resource consumption of different activities has been calculated with the service unit of one hour of activity. This was done because otherwise comparing different activities would have been very difficult. As assumed and seen in table X, there are great differences between activities. With the assumptions presented above, the average person consumes approximately 2 tonnes of natural resources per year in leisure time activities. Transport and tourism is excluded from this estimation.

Table 1. The natural resource consumption of some leisure time activities (kg/ person/ hour).

Hobby	kg/hour
Jogging on a jogging track	1
Roller skating	1
Swimming in a swimming hall	11
Ice hockey (indoor)	7
Going to a health club	6
Soccer on artificial grass (not heated)	6
Playing piano	4
Theatre visit	13
Boat rowing from a natural shore	0,7
Boating with a motorised aluminium deck boat from a harbour	70
Watching TV at home	1
Average transport to hobbies	kg/trip
15 km by private car	22
15 km by bus	5

3.5. Goods and appliances

In every household there are thousands of different goods and appliances. There have been only a few publications on the amount of goods in households. For the FIN-MIPS Household project, the 6,186 objects in a one-room flat listed by Liusvaara (1996) were used for a preliminary estimation of the material input and relevance of different product groups.

For this paper, the material input per year of appr. 1700 objects in a two-room flat of average size was calculated. The calculations included the product groups that had turned out most relevant in the FIN-MIPS Household study on goods and appliances. The product groups included are electric and electronic appliances, clothes and other textiles, furniture, jewellery, and books, as well as newspapers, magazines and similar paper products. Product groups excluded were, e.g., dishes, cutlery and tools because of their high durability leading to a low resource consumption per year.

The production of the 1,700 objects mentioned above consumes approximately 3,000 kilogrammes of natural resources per person per year. In addition, an appreciable part of the electric power consumed by the household (see section 3.1) is consumed when the objects mentioned are used. Figure 5 shows the distribution of the yearly resource consumption caused by the 1,700 goods and appliances, including also the power consumption of electric and electronic appliances. The production of electric and electronic appliances consumes more natural resources than their use.

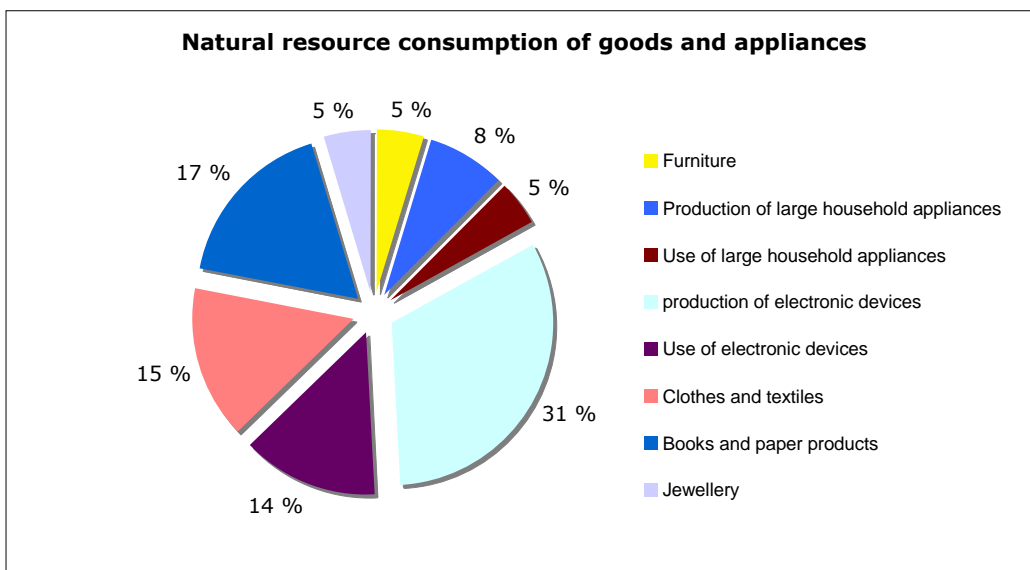


Fig. 5. The relevance of different product groups in the yearly natural resource consumption of 1,700 objects in a two-room flat.

3.6. Tourism

In 2006, the 5.2 million Finnish inhabitants altogether undertook 30.2 million leisure trips outside their daily living environment. 20.2 million of the 25 million domestic trips were made to one's own summer cottage or to visiting other people and only 4.9 million trips featured commercial accommodation. Out of the 5.2 million trips to destinations abroad, 0.6 million lasted only one day, 1.5 million comprised overnight ferry cruises and 3.1 included at least one night in the destination country. The most popular destinations for the overnight trips were Estonia, Spain (incl. the Canarian Islands), Sweden, Russia and Greece. With 90,000 trips and a growth rate of 70 % from the previous year, Thailand was the most popular of the intercontinental destinations. (Statistics Finland, 2006)

Approximately one tonne of natural resources is consumed in tourism per person every year. This figure includes commercial accommodation and private summer cottages, but no transport, as

transport is included in the figures for traffic (see section 3.3). Approximately half of these natural resources are accounted for in private summer cottages and the rest in accommodation in hotels and rental cottages.

More than half of the Finnish population spends time in summer cottages. On average, 72 days per year are spent in cottages (Nieminen, 2004). An average cottage has 47 m² of living space. The following table compares two different kinds of cottages. Both cottages are made of wood. The one is small and simple with only a little electric power used during the year. This is a traditional type of summer cottage, still representing most of the Finnish cottages, but with a declining trend. The second one is as big and well equipped as new detached houses for single families. The number of summer houses of the second kind is increasing rapidly. (Statistics Finland, 2005.)

On average, two people stay at the cottage at the same time. The natural resource consumption of cottage use is calculated for one person in one year, which means that the MI figures of a cottage are divided by two.

Table 2. Natural resource consumption (kg/person/year) of two types of holiday apartments, each of them used by two persons.

	Simple cottage (29 m ²)	Well-equipped cottage (140 m ²)
Building	1,902	4,944
Electricity	411	2,380
Firewood	963	963
Furniture and devices	341	501
Other	48	141
Total	3,666	8,929

The average distance to the holiday apartment is 214 km (total for both ways). When travelling this distance by private car, the natural resource consumption per person per year is 2,600 kg, and by bus 822 kg.

4. Total natural resource consumption of an average consumer

4.1. The relevance of different consumption areas

With the system boundaries used in this study, the ecological rucksack of an average Finn is 40 tonnes every year. This corresponds to a full trailer lorry of natural resources consumed every year by each inhabitant. The following figure presents the distribution of the natural resource use in different consumption areas.

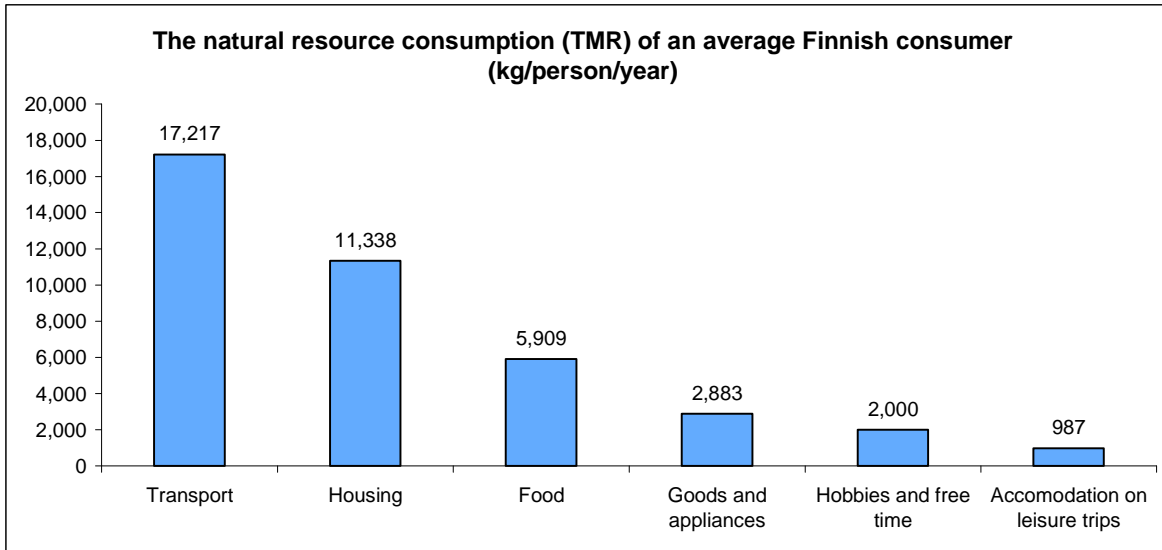


Fig 6. The importance of different consumption areas in the total natural resource consumption of an average Finnish consumer.

Personal transport contributes the biggest share in the natural resource consumption of an average Finnish household. Housing and nutrition are the following fields of relevance. Transport and housing also contain resources that are linked to the other fields of consumption.

Part of the resource consumption of transport could also be shifted to the fields of food (purchasing trips), leisure and tourism. However, transport is treated in this paper as a field of consumption in its own right because the decisions of consumers and policy-makers tend to influence the choice of the amount and mode of transport independently from the purpose and overall motivation of the trips.

Similarly, most of the natural resources consumed by electric power in the household are related to the use of appliances and the storage and preparation of food. In the case of electric power, decisions on the quality or origin of electricity are not related to the appliances using power. In contrast to this, decisions on energy efficiency, i.e. the amount of electricity consumed, are linked to the amount and performance of the devices using power. In this paper, power consumption in the household is completely calculated in the field of housing. This also prevents double counting of power consumption under two different areas.

4.2. Comparison to other studies

The table below compares the amount and distribution of natural resource consumption between different consumption areas according to three different studies. In addition to the FIN-MIPS Household study, the results of two different studies by Mäenpää are presented. Mäenpää et al. (2000) compared the relevance of different household consumption areas on the basis of household consumption expenditure. Mäenpää's (2004) results are based on physical input-output tables for various sectors of the economy. To allow their presentation in the same table 3, the consumption sectors of Mäenpää's studies were related to the consumption sectors used in this study in the most appropriate way. Despite this, they do not entirely correspond to the consumption sectors presented in this paper.

Table 3: Comparison of the TMR of different household consumption areas according to three different studies.

	TMR FIN-MIPS Household		TMR Mäenpää et al. 2000		TMR Mäenpää et al. 2004	
Building	5,609	14 %	2,167	14 %	3,695	27 %
Energy consumption	5,729	14 %	2,554	17 %	2,171	16 %
Transport	17,217	43 %	1,166	8 %	1,774	13 %
Nutrition	5,909	15 %	5,377	36 %	2,234	16 %
Goods and appliances	2,883	7 %	1,709	11 %	1,506	11 %
Leisure time activities	2,000	5 %	1,132	7 %	1,500	11 %
Tourism: accomodation	987	2 %	986	7 %	710	5 %
Sum	40,335	100 %	15,090	100 %	13,590	100 %
Excluded: "miscellaneous goods and services"			578		5,593	

The total resource consumption in Mäenpää's studies is less than half in comparison to the FIN-MIPS Household study, even if the category "miscellaneous goods and services", not defined in detail in Mäenpää (2004), were to be included in the sum. The fields of transport, housing and nutrition are the ones contributing the biggest share of natural resource consumption in all three studies (except transport in Mäenpää et al. 2000), but they differ visibly from each other in terms of absolute values, relative share and order.

One basic reason for the huge difference in total resource consumption is that transport infrastructure is excluded from Mäenpää's studies. According to Lähteenoja et al. (2006), 92 % of the abiotic material input of the Finnish transport system is attributable to infrastructure like roads, railways and airports. Thus, the results of Mäenpää's studies might be roughly doubled and transport become the most important field of consumption in all three studies, if transport infrastructure were to be included in the figures.

Housing is an important field of consumption in all three studies. The absolute value for the resource consumption of housing in the FIN-MIPS Household study is about twice as high as in Mäenpää's studies. One reason for this is that in micro or bottom-up approaches like FIN-MIPS Household more factors and aspects are covered than in aggregated MFA studies on a national or sectoral level.

Nutrition plays an important role in all three studies, but its relevance and absolute values vary among the studies. The absolute amounts of resources consumed for foodstuff production are quite close to each other in FIN-MIPS Household and Mäenpää et al. (2000), whereas they are only half of these values according to Mäenpää (2004). One reason for this is that in the approach adopted by Mäenpää (2004) biotic resource consumption is not completely covered in the food category.

For the fields of household goods and appliances, leisure time activities and tourism, there are some similarities between the studies in terms of relevance, absolute values and/or share in total consumption. However, these areas contain clear differences concerning the items included in each field of consumption. For instance, the area of telecommunication in Mäenpää's studies is wholly included in the field of household goods and appliances of Table 3 although it may contain infrastructure outside households that is not included in the FIN-MIPS Household study.

In general, one can state that the more detailed and also otherwise differing focus and approach in the FIN-MIPS Household study is a main reason for the differences in the results of the studies compared in Table 3. Despite this, there are also similarities in the results of the three studies.

4.3. How to decrease natural resource consumption of households?

By measuring the MI values of a household it is possible to obtain a realistic picture of what is relevant and what is not. This is needed when considering ways of dematerialising households.

Transport seems to be the most material-intensive activity of an average household. This may partly occur because the material intensity of transport has been studied much more intensively than food, for example. This would only mean that the material input of food is higher than in this study. In any case, the high share of constructed infrastructure in the values of transport and also housing (construction) increases their resource consumption in comparison to foodstuffs, as the built infrastructure is highly material-intensive in terms of abiotic natural resources.

The transport of an average Finnish inhabitant consumes approximately 17 tonnes of natural resources. Part of this consumption could also be allocated to other consumption areas such as hobbies, tourism and also food and drinks. In terms of the total material requirement of leisure activities and tourism, transport plays an important role. For the most popular Finnish leisure and sport activities, transport easily corresponds to more than one half of the resource consumption. In the case of tourism transport is important, too, but the material consumption of hotels can in certain cases exceed the transport-related material input.

For this paper, a mix of options for visibly decreasing the natural resource consumption of households was applied to the resource consumption of an average Finnish inhabitant. The results are given in Table 4.

Table 4: Options for and effect of decreasing natural resource consumption of an average Finn

Option	Change in resource consumption, p.cap. p.a.
Living space from 38 to 25 square metres p. cap.	– 1,900 kg
Decrease of average room temperature by 2 degrees	– 1,850 kg
Decrease of warm water consumption by 20 % (14 l)	– 205 kg
Purchasing second hand furniture	– 160 kg
Switching to vegetarian diet	– 1,600 kg
Trips to work by bus instead of private car	– 3,000 kg
Shopping and similar trips by bike instead of car	– 2,200 kg
Combination of all options	– 10,915 kg
Relative change in total resource consumption	– 27 %

With transport, housing and food being the most relevant fields of natural resource consumption by households, the options for reducing resource consumption are also the most promising in these fields. In the transport sector, the most relevant option for decreasing resource consumption is to reduce the amount of kilometres travelled every day and every year, especially by private car. This applies also to the fields of leisure activities and tourism.

Energy consumption during the use phase is about equal to construction in terms of resource consumption from housing, but may be the easier or quicker way to achieve changes. With regard to construction, the most material-intensive aspects of houses are footings and foundations, the outer walls, and yard ditching and green areas. Cellars increase the resource consumption of houses. Wooden house construction saves resources in terms of wall structures, as well as by allowing lighter foundations and footings to be used.

In the food and drinks sector, the contribution of animal-based food to the total material consumption is appreciable. Thus, the best option for reducing natural resource use is to reduce the consumption of animal-based foodstuffs, especially meat. In addition, transport distances, as well as appropriate growing conditions, areas and seasons may be of relevance. Packaging is usually of minor importance.

With the goods and appliances owned by households, the material input during the production phase is usually more relevant than the material input for the energy consumption during the use phase. This applies to electric and electronic equipment, as well as to textiles, but may be a typical Finnish feature because of the relatively low material-intensity of average Finnish electricity. Although its use does not consume additional resources, jewellery plays a visible role in terms of abiotic material input due to the high resource intensity of gold and silver.

By realising the options mentioned in Table 4, one can reduce the average natural resource consumption by more than a quarter. This constitutes a considerable reduction. However, for achieving targets like factor 10 (see section 1.1), changes are required that go beyond the decision-making options of the consumers themselves. This means that changes must also be envisaged in social structures and the supply structures consumers are facing.

5. Discussion and conclusions

5.1. Total natural resource consumption - a new aspect for the sustainability discussion

Households are one of the major actors when striving for sustainability: it is the consumers who make the final choice of the goods and services consumed, although this choice is influenced by many external factors.

Applying the MIPS methodology to consumer politics brings a new perspective to the discussion on the environmental impacts and sustainability of private consumption. In particular the TMR (Total Material Requirement, i.e. abiotic and biotic resources, as well as erosion) aspect enlarges the traditional environmental viewpoint by bringing out, for instance, the relevance of construction. Another strongpoint of the MIPS method is its simplicity: products and services differing from each other can be made comparable on the basis of kilograms of resources.

The MIPS concept also broadens the more traditional focus on production and products towards structural aspects like infrastructure, housing space and car use. If eco-efficient solutions covering

these structural aspects were found, the influence on promoting sustainability could be expected to be much broader than with traditional approaches. In this respect, the consideration of natural resource use in terms of sustainable consumption seems worthwhile.

Sufficiency and moderation are other aspects arising when considering resource use within the framework of sustainable consumption. These aspects look even more challenging in terms of business, but if they were developed, the solutions might turn out to be even more effective. Furthermore, eco-efficiency on the basis of the MIPS concept can question the presently used concepts of efficiency, which often concentrate on increasing the role of infrastructure and technology.

5.2. Method for households to measure their own consumption

One aim of the research is to allow any household to calculate its own natural resource consumption.

In order to form an idea of the differences in household consumption, as well as to test the attitudes towards the new aspect on sustainability, 27 households will monitor their consumption with the material conducted in the research project. The households participating vary in terms of age, size and living environment. When the consumption has been monitored, the natural resource consumption or "ecological rucksacks" of participating households will be measured. By comparing the results of the participating households to each other and to the average Finnish consumer, the households will have a clue to their consumption level. The results will be further analysed together with the households in order to discuss and process their ideas of the possibilities for decreasing natural resource consumption.

On the basis of these discussions and the results, a handbook on measuring and dematerialising household consumption, and possibly a web tool for this, will be developed.

5.3. From science to politics

The options for dematerialising household consumption presented in table 4 show that even a 25 % reduction in natural resource use by private households would require measures only strongly committed households might undertake, at least so far.

In order to achieve dematerialisation on a broad basis, efforts have to be made on different levels and by different actors, viz. consumers, infrastructure and municipal planners, infrastructure administration, producers of equipment, providers of services, and last but not least local and national political decision-makers.

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Sustainable consumption and lifestyles: contributions to the Marrakech process

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The changes towards sustainable consumption and production should ultimately lead towards more sustainable lifestyles of citizens around the world. It is therefore vital to understand what a sustainable lifestyle is and what changes need to be made in the current systems of consumption and production to reach them. If lifestyles based on material over-consumption is a response to an excessive desire among people to acquire more goods, than the solution lies in changing people's mindset and priorities. If it is a consequence of overproduction in a system based on maximising profits in an ever-expanding economy, then solutions must be found within and beyond the contemporary economic structures and regulatory frameworks. If current lifestyles are locked-in the unsustainable infrastructures or shaped by lack of infrastructures in the first place, then large scale improvements in the societal hardware should take place. In all cases, the issue of lifestyles is a complex one, and therefore, solutions should be system-based, acknowledging the roles of a number of stakeholders in changing societal software (values, institutions, culture) and hardware (infrastructure, technology, products).

The Task Force on Sustainable Lifestyles was created and led by Sweden with the goal of contributing to the Marrakech process and supporting the implementation of activities on sustainable consumption and production. Specific focus of the Task Force is on consumption behaviour, information and education, and marketing and it is supported by a number of demonstration projects in different countries. This paper aims to evaluate ongoing demonstration projects supported by the Task Force on Sustainable Lifestyles, analyse how they contribute to promoting sustainable lifestyles and provide recommendations for future work.

This work has been supported by the Task Force on Sustainable Lifestyles, Sweden and UNEP, whose financial and information support and participation is gratefully acknowledged and appreciated.

1 Lifestyles and consumption patterns

Lifestyles are based on past and current consumption and production patterns and are intricately interwoven with everyday choices of people. Therefore, changes in consumption and production lead to changes in lifestyles. Throughout the world, people's aspirations and desires are quite similar – we all want to lead lives of dignity and care, be healthy and happy, provide for our children and develop ourselves. However, the material intensity of reaching these goals differ dramatically within and among countries with developing and developed economies (MEA 2005).

In many countries the number of cars on the roads is increasing, leisure and business trips are becoming longer in distance and shorter in time, the ownership of household appliances is growing, and the size of housing per person is also increasing (WWI 2004). Consumption of electricity from space and water heating is on the rise, as well as paper consumption and waste generation (EEA 2005). The levels of meat and dairy consumption are also mounting not only in developed economies, but globally: in 40 years, global food consumption and production increased 2,5 times (MEA 2005). From 1960 to 2000 water use increased 2 times and wood consumption – 3 times (MEA 2005). The supply of

goods from exotic locations is increasing, including fruits, wood and pets (Schor 2005). The overall distances food travels is increasing, as well as the consumption of processed food and meat (EEA 2005).

This trend is accompanied by the rising amount and diversity of products on the market and by shortening of products' life span.¹ Life cycle of each product is associated with extraction and processing of large amount of resources.² Some products, such as white goods, are becoming larger, thereby using more resources per unit of product.³ Consumers own multiple versions of products, such as TVs, computers and cars. For products with relatively long life span repair services are often either unavailable or prohibitively expensive, especially in developed economies with high labour costs.

A lifestyle and culture that became common in affluent societies is going global through products and services, media, the globalisation trend and trade policies. Western brands of clothing and other products, restaurants and cafes are almost as common in Asia and Latin America as they are in Europe and USA. The global consumer class is reaching 1,7 billion people and nearly half of it come from developing economies (WWI 2004). Many products, e.g. mobile phones, audio-video equipment and cars previously seen as luxuries are now becoming necessities in developed and developing economies.

In total and for most countries, recent changes in consumption patterns and levels have led to considerable benefits. For others changes in consumption patterns have been to the worst. For example, an average African household consumes 25% less now than it did 25 years ago. Clearly, the price for these improvements is paid in the form of increasing disparities between people and degradation of many ecosystem services. Out of 4 billion people in the south, nearly 60% lack basic sanitation, almost 30% have not access to clean water and 25% do not have adequate housing (UN 2006). 14% of the world population goes hungry every day and malnutrition claims 10 million lives annually (FAO 2003). Thirty percent of the world's population continues to lack regular access to essential drugs, with over 50% living in Africa and Asia (WHO 2007). Climate change is now killing 150,000 people a year (Retallack, Lawrence et al. 2007) and hitting harder population in poor countries.

There is a growing concern about mounting inequities and disparities between those who benefit from the achieved economic growth and those who have been excluded from the growing prosperity or who are even being harmed by it: consumer economies (1 bio people), and emerging economies (1 bio people) and bottom of the pyramid economies (4 bio people living on 1-2\$ a day). Indeed, the world's 20% richest people consume nearly 75% of natural resources (WWI 2004). The wealth of the world's 225 richest individuals equals the annual income of the poorest 47% of the world's population, or 2.5 billion people (UNDP 1998). On the other side of the spectrum, there are globally 20 million people in slave labour, 250 million in child labour and 2 million work related deaths per year (Shone 2003). The state of affairs on consumption levels and patterns reveals that in relation to the environment "poor people's environmentalism, centred on survival and basic needs, coexists with rich people's eco-capitalism, which focuses on post-materialistic values" (García-Guadilla 2005).

Together with increasing levels of material consumption and growing materialistic values across the globe, other aspirations and norms are emerging. In economically advanced countries there is a growing awareness of population about health and environmental impacts of products, resulting in the growing demand for organic and local food. In some countries a small, but growing percent of well-off population reveals post-materialistic values and is searching for ways to brake free from the adverse consequences of the consumer economies: increasing pace of life, stress created by the treadmill of "work and spend" cycle, overflow of information and abundance of commodities, and lack

¹ 99% of the material content of goods become waste within 6 weeks and 80% of all products are one-way products Allenby, B. and D. J. Richards (1994). *The Greening of Industrial Ecosystems*. Washington DC, National Academy of Engineering.

² For example, in order to produce a 4 gram golden ring 2 000 kg of various resources need to be extracted and processed (Wuppertal Institute 2000).

³ According to Wired magazine, under the period 1980-2000, 7-Eleven soda increased in size from 32 ounces to 64 ounces, McDonald's French fries - from 4 ounces to 7 ounces; refrigerators - from 19.6 inches to 28.6 inches. In 1985-2000, cruise lines have increased in size from 46,052 tons to 88,500 tons. From 1974 to 2000 even average weight of NFL players increased from 255 pounds to 322 pounds Wired (2002). December issue on the homepage, Wired Magazine.

of time to actually enjoy life. Studies also show that resource intensive lifestyles fail to demonstrate improvement in subjective well-being of people. Often people in economically rich countries are poor in time and social ties, while people from poor economies have much better social networks and relatively high levels of satisfaction with life. This is because well-being is shaped not only by material capitals (natural, physical, and financial resources), but also by social and human capitals (social networks, family ties, norms and morals).

These concerns lead to increasing amount of questions on how to feed the poor and satisfy peoples' needs in various types of societies: with various cultures, diverse economic conditions and different institutional frameworks. These questions are asked within the recent political process that is described in the next section.

2 Marrakech Process towards Sustainable Consumption and Production

The on-going debate on sustainable consumption and production is based on the realisation that eco-efficiency improvements undertaken in many countries thus far are not sufficient and they are not able to provide the same level of material prosperity to all humans or to reduce associated environmental impacts to the levels within the assimilating capacity of the earth. The issue is whether it is feasible and necessary – to provide the same level of material intensity of life - makes the problem more complex on the one hand, but also gives some signs of hope on the other hand. While improving eco-efficiency of production and products – the supply side, the demand side of the equation needs to be taken into consideration – lifestyles, quality of life and well-being. In the effort to bring to political agenda consumption patterns and levels, the Marrakech process was initiated with the goal of developing a ten-year Framework of Programmes for Sustainable Consumption and Production, which would support on-going regional and national initiatives. The process is driven by UNEP and UNDESA. In addition to the on-going initiatives, informal task forces on various pressing issues in the sustainable consumption and production agenda are being established. Currently, there are 8 task forces run by 8 European countries with participation of many nations from around the globe. UNEP is currently in the process of setting up a clearinghouse for national programmes on SCP, which will provide a useful platform for countries to share experiences in developing, implementing and monitoring their SCP programmes.

In order to contribute to the Marrakech process and make progress in the development of a 10-year Framework of Programs for Sustainable Consumption and Production, Sweden has taken leadership by establishing an international Task Force on Sustainable Lifestyles. Besides Sweden the following countries are participating in the Task Force: United Kingdom, Argentina and Costa Rica, Italy, Brazil. The mission of the Task Force is to make progress within the area of sustainable consumption, to strengthen the Marrakech process and to support the implementation of sustainable consumption policies and projects. The focus is on sustainable lifestyles, e.g. consumption related to lifestyles and behaviour, the information/education, the role of marketing and engagement in changing behaviours, including the role of young people. The Task Force considers means for changing lifestyles and behaviour – at home, at work, in school, in their leisure time, on holiday etc. The ambition is also to evaluate administrative, economic and information instruments that can contribute to sustainable consumption. Another direction of activities is to address specific issues such as energy, water, resource consumption and waste production (linked to lifestyle and behaviour), health (linked to chemicals in products and household products), food (linked to international life cycle chains of food and waste from food), travel (linked to leisure and household activity), and procurement (linked to procurement at public schools and public/company workplaces and the way it affects the pupils' and workers' behaviour at home).

The role of the Task Force is to engage, exemplify, enable and encourage relevant stakeholders in the Marrakech process to work on sustainable lifestyles by assembling results and good examples from ongoing work on sustainable consumption, as well as to support for the implementation of projects at the regional and/or sub-regional and national level. The lessons learnt can then be applied and tested, in other countries, other regions, and developed to suit different infrastructures, cultures and communities.

3 The projects of the Taskforce for Sustainable Lifestyles

3.1 *Inter-cultural “Sister Classrooms” Teaching*

This is a 1-year pilot project involving schools in rural and urban Mexico, urban Costa Rica, rural Maine and urban Massachusetts focused on teaching students (grades 6-8) in the topic of life cycle-based sustainable consumption and global citizenship through participatory process. The project's approach in teaching of sustainable consumption is based on the combination of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's empowerment-focused methods, which have catalyzed worldwide educational programs, and the protection-motivation theory to improve the likelihood of self-protective behavior. Besides the material developed within the project for raising teachers awareness, in addition to the “Get Global” guide to Freirian-based teaching of Global Citizenship, project also develops, tests and refines web-based systems to motivate participants' efforts and to share their findings with one another internationally. The international participatory process is designed to enable teachers and their students to achieve deeper and broader learning, to empower students in relation to sustainable consumption and to sustain support in the school host communities.

3.2 *Training sessions for public authorities, NGOs, and consumer associations*

The aim of the project is to organize tailor-made training sessions in developing countries to assist governments, local authorities as well as NGOs and consumer associations in the development of communication strategies and awareness campaigns related to specific priority themes for different regions, initially in Asia and Latin America. The training sessions are prepared based on a joint UNEP and Futerra publication “Communicating Sustainability – How to produce effective public campaigns” (UNEP and Futerra Sustainability Communications 2005). The pilot project started in two pilot countries, Brazil and China. In Brazil, three training sessions were conducted: one – on tourism and two others on climate change. In both countries the original publication was translated to local languages. Partners in the projects include primarily the representatives from local governments who have already worked with UNEP and Futerra on sustainable consumption and production issues and who are involved in the Marrakech process. In terms of the results, this project provides capacity building to various stakeholders in efficient communication strategies and related campaigns to raise awareness, change attitudes or behaviour among the public on sustainability issues.

3.3 *Project “Creative Communities for Sustainable Lifestyles”*

This project is based on the experience of the Emerging User Demands for Sustainable Solutions (EMUDE) Research Project funded by the European Commission. The project's goal is to enlarge and adapt the notions of creative communities and promising cases for new models of sustainable lifestyles at a world-wide scale, i.e. to use the results generated by the EMUDE project, in other regions of the world, particularly in the emerging urban societies of the South and the far East. The project is being undertaken in Brazil, India, China, Italy and Belgium.

The project's approach is based on organising series of workshops with local NGOs as main targeted groups with the aim of exploring and adapting the creative communities concept to non-European contexts. It intends to stimulate local NGOs to consider the possibilities of creative communities; to start a world-wide exploration of the potential for bottom-up social innovation and creativity in different parts of the world; and to initiate a large network involving the interested observers and creative communities both from the Northern and Southern parts of the world.

3.4 *Higher Education Toolkit on Sustainability Communications*

The project has global nature with geographical focus on OECD countries. The goal of the project is to allow future marketing and communications professionals to become fully aware of their key role in responding to consumers' new demands for sustainability, by informing them about green products and services; to provide professors and students with practical tools to develop effective marketing strategies and communication campaigns for sustainable goods and services; and to demonstrate - through recognised theories and case studies - the business case of sustainability marketing and communications and the long term advantages for companies to communicate on their

sustainable development strategy. The development and dissemination of the toolkit in English and French, which would collect resources and case studies from around the world, is planned within the project.

3.5 Youthxchange in the Philippines, Bicycle tour

Project objectives are to test the effectiveness of the pedagogic and action oriented approach proposed by the youth organisation “Young Artists Fellowship for the Environment” as a dissemination method for youthxchange tool kit and as an original awareness rising method that reaches various villages and involves people in fun activities in the community (dance, paintings, theatre, etc.). The approach consists in a “Door to Door” bicycle tour in schools and on the streets of several municipalities where young activist teach the public about sustainable consumption and promote discussions through the use of arts and drawing. The Youthxchange guide in English will be distributed during the bicycle tour to collect first reactions by teachers and later will be translated and adapted in Philippino for a wide distribution in schools.

The Bicycle tour gave people a chance to discuss their life and the environment for the first time. The typhoons gave occasions to the project leaders to speak about climate change and lifestyles. In addition, since there are many sweatshops in the Philippines, it is not surprising that people discuss the poor working conditions and the fact that there are “victims” of unsustainable lifestyles patterns elsewhere in the world. The project prompted students of a tourism school to think about the environment as a natural resource that needs to be preserved for the prosperity of their “industry”. This tour made clear that there is a certain interest for environment and social justice but hat is considered a sustainable lifestyle in the Philippines is very different than in Europe. The bicycle tour touched about 1600 people in 20 municipalities.

4 Evaluation of activities

The evaluation of the presented above projects is based on the information supplied by project coordinators through a questionnaire template. In order to evaluate the projects that are currently being undertaken under auspices of the Swedish Task Force for Sustainable Lifestyles, two approaches are used.

Firstly, the projects are evaluated according to the goals and intended outcomes of the Task Force. The goal is not to evaluate the individual projects, but rather how well they fulfil the goals and intentions of the Task Force.

Secondly, the range of projects will be evaluated in accordance with the 5E model for behaviour-change policy developed from the 4E framework by DEFRA. The undertaken projects will be mapped out with regard to the four dimensions of the model:

- Enable, for example, by providing information and advice; removing barriers, providing facilities and viable alternatives, building capacity and education and training
- Engage, for example, through campaigns and community action; co-production and deliberative fora, personal contacts, media campaigns and opinion formers and using networks
- Exemplify, through government’s own action and by achieving consistency in policies, leading by examples
- Encourage, for example, through tax system, grants and other reward schemes, social pressure and enforcement action
- Envision, through the development of future scenarios, strategic planning and projections.

After that, gaps in the addressed dimensions and techniques employed in the project will be identified. Based on the evaluation and mapping analysis recommendations to the Task Force will be provided.

4.1 Evaluation against the goals

Currently, five projects are being run under the auspices of the International Task Force on Sustainable Lifestyles. Three of the projects are of educative character, one is on education and communication combined with bicycle tour

and the fifth comprises workshops and discussions about creative communities with the goal of establishing a network of local organisations for developing and promoting more sustainable lifestyles.

Geographically, the projects are run in the following countries and regions: Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico, USA, OECD countries, Philippines and Europe (Italy and Belgium), India and China. Clearly, the north-south perspective is taken into consideration. However, a wider engagement of countries in the work on sustainable lifestyles is desirable due to the differences in the level of economic development, political climate, cultural norms and social values.

The aforementioned projects do contribute to the overarching goal of the Task Force - to make progress within the area of sustainable consumption and to contribute to the Marrakech process. Through these projects the Task Force supports the implementation of several pilot projects. However, so far no direct support to the development and implementation of sustainable consumption policies can be seen. Partial explanation is of course lack of policies that specifically address sustainable consumption.

In the mission, the Task Force states that the focus is on consumption related to lifestyles and behaviour and all the projects address consumption related activities and choices. The project on Sustainable Communities initiates a dialogue on alternative ways of creating sustainable lifestyles, while the rest of the projects involves various stakeholders as audiences of information and education. In addition to the undertaken initiatives, and to contribute to the fulfilment of the aforementioned task, it is important to initiate and/or support activities with marketing experts and advertising industry, furthering and building up on the initiatives of UNEP with representatives of advertising industry.

The original intention of the Task Force is to explore how more sustainable lifestyles options can be found in different places where everyday life takes place: at home, at work, in school, in their leisure time, on holiday etc. So far, the ongoing projects primarily focus on behaviour and choices at home and in a community. This is not to say that education does not provide advice and alternatives to how more sustainable lifestyles choices can be made on holidays and at work. However, in order to solidify work in this direction, pilot projects are needed that would illustrate specific and real life solutions to unsustainable patterns of behaviour at work, at home, on holidays and in school. The concept paper of the Task Force describes many ongoing projects that illustrate such choices.

So far, all the projects and the Task Force itself are of voluntary nature. It is however clear that a mixture of policy instruments including regulatory, economic and information instruments is needed to initiate changes towards more sustainable lifestyles. It is also important to identify examples of successful economic and regulatory measures that brought about positive changes in environmental and social parameters of lifestyles and to consider possibilities for their multiplication in other regions. A number of European Union funded projects are currently being carried out, which results can be used to support the work on sustainable lifestyles. Other relevant national and regional initiatives need to be identified that can provide rich and useful information on economic and regulatory instruments that can be used in various economic and cultural contexts. Information and lessons from these measures should be provided for the next Marrakech meeting in 2009.

The mission of the Task Force also stated the ambition to concentrate on specific environmental parameters of lifestyles including energy access and use, water and resource consumption and waste production, health, food, travel, and procurement. This is a very ambitious list of areas of concern, and synergies should be found with other Task Forces of the Marrakech process that work on similar issues, for example, the Swiss-led Task Force on Procurement or France-led Task Force on Tourism – in relation to travel. The Task Force intended to also focus on linking sustainable consumption with poverty reduction strategies and health aspects. So far the pilot projects mostly focus on raising awareness of youth and the aforementioned issues are not their primary focus. Collaboration with the Germany-led Task Force on collaboration with Africa could perhaps be fruitful in this regard.

The Task Force aimed to take into consideration all the three dimensions of sustainable consumption including economic, environmental and social. The individual projects do address the three dimensions of sustainability, however the nature of the projects makes it difficult to truly consider the economic sustainability of lifestyles. Educational projects have naturally more focus and capacity to address environmental and social sustainability of lifestyles, or economic dimension of it at individual level. Macro-level economic changes that are needed for stimulating more sustainable lifestyles are very important. For that engagement of primary economic actors, including companies, various types of businesses, advertisers, governments, insurers, and financial institutions is needed.

4.2 5E evaluation

The role of the Task Force has been identified as to engage, exemplify, enable and encourage relevant stakeholders in the Marrakech process to work on sustainable lifestyles by assembling results and good examples from ongoing work on sustainable consumption, as well as to support for the implementation of projects at the regional and/or sub-regional and national level.

The potential of involving various stakeholders in the work on changing sustainable lifestyles has not yet been fully utilised in the projects of the Task Force, although in the project on Sustainable Communities, dialogues are initiated with a number of stakeholders. In addition to the projects on education and communication that largely affect the youth, initiatives are needed that would explore the potential of governmental actions and business contributions to developing conditions for the shift towards more sustainable lifestyles. These actors have the power to change the conditions within which individuals make decisions, including creating clear guidance for more sustainable lifestyles, developing incentives for various stakeholders to make more sustainable consumption choices, develop and market products and services that shape consumer behaviour into more sustainable direction. Governments and business are the major actors for **enabling** more sustainable lifestyles and sustainable consumption choices. Through regulatory and economic instruments governments can and in some countries do provide incentives and remove barriers to more sustainable lifestyles. However, more examples and lessons are needed from various regions of the world that would demonstrate how policy development can shape more sustainable lifestyles and create conditions and rewards for more sustainable consumption choices. Enabling is also very closely linked to capacity building, education and training and therefore, the role of formal education system, but also of NGOs who may educate consumers, communities or workers at specific working places is very important. In addition to the on-going projects, some initiatives may be undertaken to collect good examples of how companies engage in educating their employees in more sustainable practices at work, which may also have a spill-over effect to practices at individual and household levels. Important is also to engage companies into the work on sustainable consumption and creating visions of more sustainable lifestyles, as well as in the work on developing products, services and infrastructures that enable consumers to make more sustainable choices.

Enabling by governmental and business actions is closely linked to **encouraging** more sustainable lifestyles and includes various economic instruments, such as tax system, grants and subsidies or lack of thereof, which send signals to organisational and private actors as to which actions are preferable. Many examples of such instruments can already be found in Europe and other regions. The challenge is to collect the most successful and promising examples and evaluate their potential for replication in other regions. Also important is to collect examples from other regions of the world and to find useful solutions for various economic and cultural contexts. Not least important is the social pressure towards more sustainable consumption, and in this respect the role of media and marketing and advertising is again invaluable. Pilot projects run under auspices of the Task Force provide solid ground for raising awareness among young people who can in the future initiate and participate in social actions that demand more sustainable consumption options. It is however also important to identify initiatives that increase awareness of overall population that can exert pressure and initiate and support actions towards more sustainable lifestyles.

Exemplifying more sustainable consumption choices through government's own action is an important way of engaging society into the dialogue and action. Many governments are already involved in green purchasing activities and the Swiss-led Task Force can greatly help with the identification and dissemination of such examples. However, governmental actions towards sustainable consumption go well beyond greening their purchasing activities, and may include improving in-house activities – consumption of electricity, paper, and water – and initiatives for outside the house, as for examples eco-driving lessons.

Promoting sustainable lifestyles can be assisted by **engagement** of people at various levels and in different roles. The most obvious way of engagement is through campaigns and community actions. The project on Creative communities exemplifies this approach. Other ways of engaging is through projects on greening campus activities, involving citizens in the decision-making processes at community level, by initiating open discussion or dialogue on specific issue with workers, students or households. The concept paper of the Task Force provides a number of such examples. Involvement of role models and opinion formers into the dialogue on sustainable lifestyles can make the shift to sustainable lifestyles a modern, cool and desirable alternative. Examples of fashion and movie stars who are

involved in environmental work and who make more sustainable consumption choices are available and could be used to strengthen the message to people around the globe.

Envisioning is an important exercise if more sustainable futures are to become a reality one day. Envisioning should aim at creating shared pictures of preferred states of the world and embedding them into institutional, regulatory and economic realities. The challenge really is to design a vision that is both desirable for people from different societies with different level of economic development and that is environmentally and socially just and sustainable in the short and long run. Without knowing where we want to go it is impossible to get there. In addition, the challenge is to balance our desires with what we have at hand – all the resources and natural capital that the earth can offer us, and make sure that we do not undermine the very basis of our society – the natural ecosystems. The goals of the shared vision, according to Meadows, (1996) should be crystal clear, while path should be as flexible as possible. The vision itself should be evolving and therefore the process of creating shared visions is at least as important as the visions themselves (Costanza 2000). *“Probably the most challenging task facing humanity today is the creation of a shared vision of a sustainable and desirable society, one that can provide permanent prosperity within the biophysical constraints of the real world in a way that is fair and equitable to all of humanity, to other species, and to future generations. This vision does not now exist, although the seeds are there”* (Costanza 2000). It is therefore paramount to start building up on these seeds at all levels: individual, community, regions and nations, and bring these visions into a coherent picture of a more sustainable future. Participation of various stakeholders, but especially businesses, governments and citizens is needed so that visions are created in close dialogue and mutual understanding. The potential projects and activities of the Task Force are of great value and importance for initiating the envisioning exercise in different parts of the world.

5 Recommendations to the work on Sustainable Lifestyles

Based on the goals and expected outcomes of the Task Force and on the evaluation of the on-going projects, the following recommendations can be made:

- Increase the impact of the educational and awareness raising initiatives by developing virtual training through on-line platforms available and accessible by many more users, as e.g. the UNEP and Futerra's project on Communicating Sustainability. Existing sites can also be used more broadly and tailor-made courses and materials can be developed for different regions. On-line “train the trainers” format can also be explored to a larger degree for greater dissemination of sustainability ideas. Although focus on youth is very important in developing and promoting more sustainable lifestyles, it is also vital to reach out and raise awareness of people after they have finished school or university, people who are working in different places and levels in society and make decisions that affect not only lifestyles of their families, but also their colleagues and employees. Who educates the population in general, pensioners, workers, farmers? How do they know what their role is in defining and shifting towards sustainable lifestyles? How to engage the largest part of population in the process so that they feel the ownership of it and instead of being passive consumers become active citizens - proud of what they are doing for their grandchildren and earth? Education of population is not only the task of schools and NGOs. Campaigns and communication material and methodologies need to be developed that would be used by public authorities, businesses and consumer associations to influence behaviour towards more sustainable lifestyles.
- Diversify the focus of initiatives from educational and awareness raising to projects that introduce changes in real life, that enable and instigate changes in lifestyles, or in specific aspects of lifestyles, e.g. household energy and water use, amount of waste generated and similar. The specific issues have to be prioritised depending on the needs of each region or can focus on specific sector and see how more sustainable solutions are being developed and implemented. Focusing on specific issues makes the project outcome measurable and manageable. Many NGOs are involved in such projects and have a developed methodology for how behavioural changes of households can be initiated and sustained, e.g. Global Action Plan International. This will allow collecting and disseminating information on how changes are being made. Since it is important to understand how future lifestyles can look like, a dialogue can be initiated in various regions and perhaps can be combined with on-going educational activities and workshops (e.g. project on Training

workshops, Sister classrooms, Higher education toolkit and in Creative communities) on developing such visions of more sustainable lifestyles.

- Include other stakeholders, since sustainable lifestyles is the task for the entire society and many changes can be made if more sustainable lifestyles choice are enabled and encouraged by businesses and governments. These stakeholders need to be educated about sustainable consumption and sustainable lifestyles and options for their contribution to the process need to be identified and information about on-going efforts needs to be collected. For example, governmental involvement can include initiatives on stimulating innovation in business that lead to greening the markets or support to grass-root initiatives at community level through governmental policies and economic measures, or better infrastructure enabling more sustainable lifestyles. It is also important to exemplify how efforts of the main actors can be combined in common projects, where for example governments, businesses and NGOs are involved, and how together they can initiate changes in people behaviour. Cooperation between stakeholders may stimulate more profound changes in society.

6 Conclusions

This paper briefly evaluated the on-going efforts of the international Task Force on Sustainable Lifestyles lead by Sweden. The evaluation demonstrated that the majority of the projects aim at increasing awareness and information provision to various stakeholders in the society. This is undoubtedly very important task in the overall development towards sustainability. However, since the task at hand is so challenging and important, it is vital to stimulate a broad dialogue in the society on sustainable development and more sustainable lifestyles. Such dialogue needs to include discussion across countries and regions and investigate what representations of lifestyles (traditional and “imported” from other parts of the world) people in developed and developing economies have and how images of more sustainable lifestyles can be created, considering cultural, historical, natural and social heritage in different countries. Besides political will, it is important that various stakeholders realise the potential impact more sustainable lifestyles may have on their business and take a more proactive role in developing their activities that are much more suited for sustainable lifestyles and more sustainable future.

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Could the Household Budget Survey serve as a yardstick of sustainable consumption?

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Abstract

This article describes the possibilities the recently finalised Household Budget Survey 2006 offers for analysing the consumption of Finnish residents from the viewpoint of sustainable development and eco-efficiency. The main focus is on the recycling of waste. The use of flea markets, the effect of the energy label on purchase decisions and motoring are also described. As goods and commodities "flow" through households' purchasing, using and discarding processes, an insightful analysis requires different frameworks and concepts according to which part of the process is being examined. These concepts are introduced briefly. Empirical results describe Finnish households' recycling of waste as well as certain other information on consumption. This information is used to assess the Household Budget Survey's potential of contributing to the permanent monitoring of sustainable consumption.

1. Steps towards sustainable consumption statistics

Sustainable consumption and statistics have a link to eco-efficiency which aims at making more out of less in a way that at least maintains the current level of well-being while simultaneously decreasing the amount of environmental hazards. We might call this the dematerialisation of the economy. The initial target is set at efficiency factor 4 and the long-term target is set at factor 10. The assessment of eco-efficiency requires many kinds of indicators, consumption included. (Hoffrén 2007, Takase et al. 2005)

Monitoring sustainable consumption is not yet a part of consumption statistics. The topic surfaced concretely in discussions in 2005 when the Finland's national programme to promote sustainable consumption and production (KULTU Committee "Getting more and better from less") was finalised. Statistics Finland made the following statement on it: "Statistics Finland considers it important that (a) the starting levels of natural resources or consumption are established, (b) the potential for more efficiency, which serves as a roadmap for measures, is located and (c) the effects of the measures are monitored in a systematic manner in different fields. At Statistics Finland the contents of the KULTU programme are linked to consumption statistics and the related social statistics as well as environment and energy statistics. For many of the measures it would seem reasonable to try and locate the target groups whose activities have the highest potential for increasing efficiency and rationalisation. Statistics Finland has long time series on consumption, leisure time and time use at its disposal. They can be used to examine the effects of structural factors and changes in consumption or behaviour. Large scale surveys offer good opportunities for clarifying how Finnish residents behave in reality and what their attitudes are like" (Statistics Finland 2005).

Household Budget Survey data have been utilised e.g. in the household energy consumption studies in the 1980s and 1990s (Nurmela 1996 and Melasniemi-Uutela 2000). Household

Budget Survey data from 2001 have been used in the "Kulmakunta" project (Perreels et al. 2006). Jukka Hoffrén has studied eco-efficiency on the basis of other Statistics Finland data (Hoffrén 2001).

So far, however, the viewpoint of sustainable consumption has not been present as a point of interest on its own right in the definition of the data contents of consumption statistics. A first step in that direction are questions on e.g. recycling, the effect of the energy label and the number of kilometres driven with a car annually in the data collection of the Household Budget Survey 2006. Their usability is tested in the empirical module.

2. Frameworks for examining consumption and recycling

Consumption can be examined from various viewpoints, as is shown by this publication. This article looks at the household as a single consumption unit. It forms a small community which decides, often amid conflicting interests, on e.g. what commodities are purchased and how and what is recycled. From the viewpoint of sustainable development and ecological footprints, the purchasing of commodities and their use are parts of a long process (See e.g. Schmidt-Bleek 2000).

The compilation of statistics on sustainable development is a new area which still lacks an established form. Various viewpoints are on offer. Sustainable development can be analysed at different stages of the consumption process which include the preparation of the consumption decision, the actual purchase, the use or consumption, and finally the recycling or disposing of the used goods. Below some concepts and frameworks are presented which are useful for the examination of consumption and recycling especially if the question is on how to bring about change. They could be a suitable tool for interpreting the data of the Household Budget Survey when examining sustainable consumption.

2.1 Everyday small-scale environment policy and structure of society

According to Massa and Ahonen, consumers' purchases and actions can be seen as "belonging to everyday environment policy, where the focus is on the examination of ways of life. When examining ways of life from the environmental viewpoint, interesting topics include the ecological burden caused by consumption and way of life (the "ecological footprint") as well as the cultural interpretations of the way of life which we call environmental stories. Different structures create the setting for individuals' behaviour and mould the everyday way of life". Massa and Ahonen's view is that practical environmental policy needs to be supplemented by everyday (small-scale) environment policy which takes into account the viewpoints of the experiences and silent knowledge of regular people, their way of life and cultural change. They regard them as prerequisites of a culture which is more sustainable than our current one. (Massa ja Ahonen 2006, pp.6-9)

Eräranta and Moisander offer the following analysis of the rhetoric on consumers and sustainable development "[...] the logic which emphasises individual responsibility characterises also more generally the environmental policy rhetoric aimed at consumers as well as stereotypical views of a green consumer. The consumer's role in striving for sustainable development is first and foremost to make the correct moral choices [...] Promises are often made that the supply at stores will change when the group of environmentally aware consumers becomes sufficiently big."

(Eräranta and Moisander 2006, p. 26) They doubt, however, that the consumers' readiness and possibilities of influencing are easily overestimated and ask whether consumers can continue to believe that their choices are making a difference if other knowledge gives out conflicting signals? Is green consumerism possible in the prevailing structure of society? (Eräranta and Moisander 2006, s. 28). As regards the sorting of waste and recycling of goods, this viewpoint which takes into account the structure of society and the infrastructure is essential. The point is the organisation of waste collection, as sorting done by households is only the first stage in a chain of events which aims at delivering sorted waste to the correct places. In the sorting of waste the consumer really is king with sovereign power to decide on whether to sort or not.

2.2 The concept of guilt - a tool for understanding the transition towards sustainable consumption?

According to Massa, people can grow tired and bored with the education on sustainable consumption because it forgets about structures and culture. Massa states that sociological and psychological concepts like guilt and shame are needed to understand and deal with the discrepancies. They could offer viewpoints with which e.g. the deliberation concerning the sorting of waste, the choices and the actions of households could be understood. Massa summarises the thoughts of psychologists June Price Tugney and Ronda L. Dearing on the links of feelings of shame and guilt with behaviour in the following way: "The feeling of shame stems from the negative evaluations an individual makes of his/her own person and behaviour. An individual suffering from shame is unable to defuse negative feelings by changing his/her behaviour. Instead, if he/she is in an emotional trap built by shame, he/she may convert the feeling into anger and bitterness directed at others. It is hard to become liberated from the feeling, since it is difficult to change oneself. *Guilt, then again, is a constructive feeling which seems to guide people towards morally and socially responsible behaviour and can turn into empathy with other people (italics by Nurmela).* The feeling of guilt often arises in situations when an individual feels he/she has done something against the norms of his/her culture or community. The feeling of guilt is linked with an individual's behaviour and not him/herself, which is why a change in behaviour can liberate the individual from guilt." (Massa 2006, p. 120).

The interpretation of guilt as a feeling guiding towards a change of behaviour put forward by the researches cited by Massa may be a useful tool. From that viewpoint the method of realising separate collection of waste from consumers or households may be significant in changing the feeling of guilt into positive action, i.e. sorting and recycling. The ease and credibility of the recycling system at any rate influence the changing of everyday routines. Finland's good Geographical Information System could facilitate the combining of the data from the collection system and the Household Budget Survey. This would enable an indirect examination of whether easy liberation from feelings of guilt has a link to the realised sorting and separate collection.

2.3 The role of goods in households

"The material nature of consumer goods is especially evident when they are not used and when they are in the way because they do not fit together with other goods in the context of use. It can also be stated more generally that the coveting for newness characteristic of the consumption culture cannot be understood if its connection with the changing use relationships of goods all the way until recycling or disposal is seen." (Lehtonen 2006, p. 314)

What is normal?

”According to the British consumption sociologist Elizabeth Shove, our consumption is guided to a significant degree by our understanding of cleanliness, comfort and pleasantness. The environmental burden caused by the way of life is influenced e.g. by how quickly clothes end up in the wash, how many pairs of sports shoes are needed for different sports or how often we move into a bigger dwelling or redecorate our current one. Consumption is also regulated by the understanding of what kind of consumption is generally acceptable. Shove proposes that in stead of looking at choices, the Household Budget Survey should examine the limits of what is normal. In this way we could find out what kind of freedom of movement and what kinds of barriers exist for green consumption in the society.” (Ahonen 2006, p. 79–80) Statistical time series are good indicators of normality. This viewpoint of normality is essential when looking at the sorting of waste. In a sense it is self-service comparable to online banking. Online banking has become a norm which provides both monetary gain and ease of managing ones’ finances. The sorting and recycling of waste also provide gain, albeit indirectly, both as low waste handling fees and over the long term as environmental benefits to all. Still, sorting and recycling do not entail the element of ease, so the behavioural norm promoting recycling probably consists to a significant degree of unselfish motives.

What is waste?

Lehtonen states that ”goods are not only purchased and lived with but they are also cast away and destroyed - out of habit, nearly without noticing and in bulk. How do we determine what is waste and what is not?” Waste is defined as waste via many overlapping systems such as hygiene, economic thinking, the moral system and in the recent years also via the practices of recycling. As objects become waste, attempts are no longer made to utilise them within the household. One fundamental structural characteristic of daily and durable consumer goods is the packaging. ”Paper and cardboard packaging intended only for destruction, and not reuse, became common in the early 1990s. Disposability was associated with the assumed cleanliness of foodstuffs on shop shelves. These days packaging is a part of nearly all consumer goods.” (Lehtonen 2006, p. 315)

From commodity into waste

”With the exception of household waste, goods are disposed of quickly only in exceptional cases. Consumer goods are mostly everything but disposable and as objects with mass they create storage problems in homes. They require continuous classification by frequency of use [...] The cycle of production, consumption and disposal is rarely a direct line. In addition, different things, foodstuffs, clothing, electric appliances and pieces of furniture each have their own ways of becoming waste [...] Disposal often happens in two stages. Before an object is found not worth keeping and “buried” completely, it is put somewhere to wait for the emotional attachment to become less strong.” (Lehtonen 2006, p. 315) Lehtonen’s viewpoints on the life span of goods offer many ideas for the Household Budget Survey. (See also Cooper 2005)

2.4 A framework of prerequisites of and barriers to change

Research explaining the activities of households requires a framework with which the activities and the interpretation describing their change can be analysed. Sustainable development and sustainable consumption are concepts with broad contents. In order to understand them, a consumer should have varied knowledge starting from the life span of materials as understood in natural sciences and ending with an understanding of the

structures of society. Secondly, the striving for sustainable consumption should feel significant in order for behaviour to change. In addition, the everyday operational environment should make the new kind of behaviour possible (Tanskanen 1995). The everyday life of households is also often a struggle from one day to the next in which conscious activities take second place even if readiness to change is strong at the level of attitudes. (Nurmela 1996, p. 65).

The empirical module utilises the concepts introduced above in trying out the possibilities of measuring sustainable consumption statistically.

3. New perspectives on consumption

When planning the Household Budget Survey 2006 in Finland and designing the questions for it several instances were consulted about information needs on sustainable development and consumption. On the basis of the consultations the Household Budget Survey came to include questions on e.g. the following topics:

- sorting of waste and recycling at home, who burns recyclable materials
- sorting and recycling of waste and burning waste at free-time residences
- flea market purchases and sales
- competitive procurement of electricity
- users of eco-electricity - effect of the energy label on purchases of domestic appliances
- recycling of old domestic appliances, age of refrigeration devices
- ways of heating, additional heating, use of wood
- is the free-time residence fit for winter habitation, use of a car to travel to the free-time residence
- kilometres driven with a car.

By linking this data to other data on consumption, new perspectives can be opened to households' consumption and consumption styles can perhaps be defined from the viewpoint of eco-efficiency. Some of these issues are looked at in the following chapter.

3.1 Empirical experiments

Some of the survey questions on sustainable consumption are analysed in this chapter. The examinations consist of simple cross-tabulations. They provide basic information e.g. on the extent of recycling in Finnish households and also offer researchers examples of new perspectives on the analysis of consumption. The results presented are based on the interview data of the Household Budget Survey 2006 (4,007 interviews). The results have been calculated with a combined non-response and weight coefficient which means that the results give a good picture of the activities of Finnish households as regards the questions under examination.

As background variables the tables have (a) household size, (b) degree of urbanisation of the municipality of residence, (c) dwelling type, and (d) in some cases the age of the head of household. These variables allow for an analysis - albeit at a rough level - of the stages in the household's life span, the structure of the society and the idea of spreading innovation. Recycling and sorting may well be interpreted as innovations whose proliferation can be examined with the framework of spreading innovations (diffusion theory). The type of dwelling is a useful factor illustrating functional structure.

This empirical part is therefore the first test of the description of present small-scale environmental policy as defined by Massa. It describes i.a. what is the final result of the guilt experienced by Finnish residents with regard to sorting of waste and recycling when the requirements and barriers of sorting in the operational environment, which includes tight cleanliness and hygiene norms, are taken into account. After all, these factors define the transition from material to waste in many ways. The author hopes that the described frameworks and the empirical results together can offer the readers ideas when they consider how to move forward towards a more in-depth analysis of sustainable consumption with the help of the data of the Household Budget Survey. The compatibility of Finnish residents' environmental attitudes and actions can be analysed with the interview survey commissioned by the Climate Change Communications Programme.(Climate Change Communications Programme 2007)

3.2 Recycling of waste

All households generate waste. Waste may consist of packaging, peels and crusts of foodstuffs, perished foodstuffs, broken or unnecessary goods, appliances, machinery or materials as well as vegetable waste from the yard or garden. Some of the waste can be composted, some burnt in the fireplaces in dwellings, some sorted and deposited in the separate collection bins in private yards or a common separate collection station or perhaps taken to the flea market. In addition, many unnecessary commodities are stored to await further action.

Volume of mixed waste

We begin our examination from the most everyday factor, i.e. the volume of mixed waste. This was probed with the question *“How many garbage bags of mixed waste does your household take to the waste collection bins per week?”*

Table 1. Average number of weekly garbage bags by size of household and level of urbanisation of municipality of residence in 2006

Size of household	Level of urbanisation of municipality of residence			
	Urban	Semi-urban	Rural	Total
1	2.1	2.0	1.6	2.0
2	3.4	3.2	2.6	3.2
3	5.2	4.5	3.3	4.8
4	5.9	5.1	4.9	5.5
5+	6.5	5.8	5.1	5.9
Total	3.4	3.3	2.8	3.3

The number of garbage bags increased with household size but not linearly. Fewer garbage bags were filled per person in families than in small households. We did not inquire about the size of the garbage bags. The higher the housing density the more waste was taken to mixed waste collection bins, regardless of size of household. Even when measured with the median, the number of weekly garbage bags was lower in rural municipalities than in other types of municipalities. This difference with urban living may be the result of many factors: less waste is generated and waste is recycled or burnt more often in rural than in urban areas. Relatively speaking the highest volume of mixed waste is generated in small households living in urban environments. In one-person households the highest number of garbage bags was filled by the households of 50 to 69-year-olds and the lowest in the households of over

70-year-olds and under 30-year-olds regardless of whether they lived in detached houses or blocks of flats. It would seem that the volume of mixed waste could be developed into an indirect indicator of sustainable consumption. It could describe the realisation of sustainable consumption according to the stage in the household's life span.

Treatment of organic waste

Households generate organic waste in the kitchen and in the yard or garden. The volume of organic waste generated in the kitchen may vary considerably by size of household and method of preparing food as well as by when foodstuffs are considered inedible. Households can be divided into three main types according to the available methods of treating organic waste: (a) separate sorting of organic waste does not make sense as it is not collected and composting is not possible, (b) separate sorting of organic waste makes sense as separate collection works, (c) separate sorting of organic waste make sense as composting is possible. The realisation of the guilt argument put forth by Massa could be studied in the separate sorting of organic waste, at least in theory, for options b and c. According to the Climate Change Communications Programme, 38 per cent of Finnish residents were very willing to compost organic waste in 2004, and the corresponding percentage was 47 in 2007. (Climate Change Communications Programme 2006, p.12)

The interviews included the following questions on the treatment of organic waste:

Is household leftover food and other organic waste collected in a separate container always, sometimes or never?

Is leftover food taken to an organic waste container or composted or neither?

If the household lived in a detached, semi-detached or terraced house, they were asked

How much of the (a) leftover food and (b) yard or garden waste is composted? Nearly all, roughly one-half, less than one-half, none.

Table 2. Proportion of households who always sort leftover food or other organic waste into a separate container by size of household and level of urbanisation in 2006, per cent

Size of household	Level of urbanisation			
	Urban	Semi-urban	Rural	Total
1	52	47	42	49
2	50	47	49	50
3	47	37	42	44
4	42	39	43	42
5+	46	41	51	47
Total	50	44	45	48

Nearly one household in two (48%) always sorts their leftover food into a separate container. In addition, seven per cent sometimes sort leftover food in a separate container. It appears that the recovery of leftover food is not as common in family households as in small households. The proportion of households which recover organic kitchen waste is somewhat smaller in rural municipalities than in urban municipalities. This may have been influenced somewhat by the fact that some respondents living in detached houses may have interpreted the question "*Is household leftover food and other organic waste collected in a separate container?*" as referring to municipal collection of waste and not a container in the kitchen. It would appear that the strong readiness at the level of attitude expressed in the interview survey of the communication programme has been realised especially well for separate collection of organic kitchen waste. (Climate Change Communications Programme 2006, p.12)

Another approach to assessing if the collection of household leftover food is at a good level would require information on how large a proportion of all households can participate in separate collection of organic waste or composting. On the basis of data on the collection of waste in Finnish municipalities it can be assessed that roughly 90 per cent of households living in blocks of flats have the opportunity to participate in the separate collection of organic waste (Kuntaliitto 2006). This assumption leads to the result that at least two-thirds of households living in blocks of flats which have the opportunity to participate in separate collection of leftover food actually participate in it. The more rural the municipality is, the higher the share of households that collect organic kitchen waste separately regardless of type of dwelling. Proximity of dwelling to nature may thus have an effect on experienced responsibility or the experience of guilt even at the level of actions.

Table 3. Further processing of separately collected leftover food by level or urbanisation of those who collect organic kitchen waste in 2006, per cent

Further processing	Level of urbanisation of municipality of residence			
	Urban	Semi-urban	Rural	Total
Collection container	82	52	36	69
Composting	16	43	57	27
Neither	2	5	7	4
Total	100	100	100	100

Of the 1.3 million households which collected leftover food separately, roughly 70 per cent can take it to the municipal waste management's collection container and a good one-fourth compost it. Four per cent deposited it at a refuse heap or gave it to domestic animals etc. In urban municipalities the separate collection of organic waste is the most common choice, whereas rural municipalities prefer composting. Twenty per cent of households living in detached houses and roughly one-half of households living in semi-detached houses take their waste to separate collection. Nearly all households living in terraced houses of blocks of flats do so.

Composting of leftover food has the following link to the type of dwelling: 35 per cent of households living in detached houses, 17 per cent of those living in semi-detached houses, and 7 per cent of those living in terraced houses compost at least one-half of their leftover food.

As least one-half of the yard and garden waste is composted by 73 per cent of households living in detached houses, by 44 per cent of those living in semi-detached houses, and by 35 per cent of those living in terraced houses. The composting of leftover food might be easy to promote among households that already compost yard and garden waste. However, the cold Finnish winter is not favourable to the composting of leftover food by individual real estate.

As one-half of the Finnish households have adopted the recycling of organic waste as their norm, it can be viewed as an indirect indicator of a favourable attitude towards sustainable consumption. The critical factor is the recycling system provided by the society; the ease of the post-sorting recycling system provided to households. A time series would enable the monitoring of the effect of the recycling system on households' actions. The following step in examining the prerequisites of sustainable consumption would be to investigate, with the

interviews of the Household Budget Survey, for example, how suitable the kitchen set-up is for separate collection of different kinds of waste.

How common is the separate collection of other kinds of waste?

In addition to leftover food, households generate many other kinds of waste, whose sorting and recycling was examined in the interviews. The recovery of waste is more effortless to households in semi-urban areas than in sparsely populated areas, as real estate in semi-urban areas have their own recycling stations or such stations are otherwise near by. As regards burnable waste, burning is an alternative to recycling in detached houses.

Finland has a long tradition of collecting old newspapers and magazines as well as deposit bottles. As late as in the 1960s and 1970s joint collections were used to finance e.g. purchases of televisions to schools. Co-ordinated rag collections were also organised until the 1970s, but they disappeared as the manufacture of roofing felt decreased. 4-H clubs continue to collect plastic waste from farms. In Finland this culture of scarcity has become a mode of action which exists even today and in which sorting is appreciated and is the norm. Previously it often generated immediate financial gain. These days, immediate financial gain is available only from deposit bottles and cans. In the interviews of the Climate Change Communications Programme, 64 per cent of Finnish residents were very willing to sort and recycle waste and 27 per cent were fairly willing. According to the survey, the willingness has grown clearly from the year 2004 (Climate Change Communications Programme 2007, p.12).

The recycling of different kinds of waste was examined with the following questions:

Does your household recycle the following wastes regularly, occasionally, not at all, or there is no such waste?

- *newspapers and magazines*
- *packaging cardboard*
- *glass containers (excl. deposit bottles)*
- *metal containers and other metal waste (excl. deposit cans)*
- *milk, juice etc. cartons*
- *hazardous waste to a specific collection station*

Table 4. The proportion of households regularly recycling some kinds of waste by level or urbanisation in 2006 of those who generate the type of waste in question, per cent

Waste type	Level of urbanisation of municipality of residence			
	Urban	Semi-urban	Rural	Total
Newspapers and magazines	93	84	76	89
Packaging cardboard	71	51	37	61
Glass containers*	70	75	74	72
Metal containers*	52	62	62	56
Milk etc. cartons	45	26	15	36
Hazardous waste	82	87	87	84

* Excluding deposit bottles and cans

According to Table 4, the readiness of Finnish residents at the level of attitude to collect different types of waste separately has been realised quite well. The rate of recovery of waste seems to be linked to the accessibility of collection containers or collection stations. The recycling of newspapers and magazines was very common. There is still room for improvement at least in the recycling of milk etc. cartons. The real estate specific collection

of cardboard and cartons launched in 2006 should gradually increase recycling of these materials. Recycling of packaging cardboard is already fairly common in urban areas. As regards milk and juice cartons, the hygiene norms of the households and effort required may form barriers to recycling. Collected cartons may cause odour nuisance if they are not rinsed and dried. A smaller share of households recycled glass containers and metal waste in urban municipalities than in semi-urban or rural municipalities even though the accessibility of collection containers should be better in cities than elsewhere. The level of recycling of hazardous wastes can be regarded as good.

An examination by type of dwelling revealed that households living in blocks of flats (and terraced houses) recycle the wastes which are collected separately by the real estate more often than others. As many as 95 per cent of households living in blocks of flats regularly take newspapers and magazines to recycling. Households living in detached houses are more active than others in recycling glass and metal as well as hazardous waste. A further study could look into whether the difference is explained by different attitudes towards recycling or the better storage spaces for slowly accumulating waste in detached houses than elsewhere. The recycling level of burnable waste in detached houses is probably lowered by the burning of waste.

The examination by size of household showed that a systematically larger share of the 1–2 person households recycled wastes listed in Table 4 than of the family households. This result is interesting, as family households are pioneers in adopting e.g. new information or communication technology when compared with smaller households. This difference would open up many possibilities of interesting further study into the how and if various activities become more widespread. Separate collection of waste seems to increase in small households as the head of household grows older, even if dwelling type is standardised. Young households are roughly as active as older households only in the recycling of packaging cardboard and cartons. Perhaps such a new procedure is adopted more readily in young households than in older households which already have established recycling routines. Corresponding results on the strength of routines have been seen in examinations of e.g. the adoption of new mobile phones (Nurmela 2001).

Burning as a waste processing method in households

Households make decisions on burning waste in a contradictory situation. On the one hand burning generates heat (and less waste), but on the other it generates PAH compounds and other compounds detrimental to health, which pose a risk to the health of the members of the household as well as the neighbours. The dangerousness is increased by impurities in the burnable waste and low burning temperatures.

Roughly 30 per cent of households in Finland (740,000) have a fireplace in their dwelling either as the primary source of heating or as a supplementary source of heating. These households were asked about the burning of waste. *Which of the following categories applies to the burning of waste in your oven or in another fireplace in your dwelling? Nearly all, roughly one-half, less than one-half, none.*

- newspapers and magazines
- packaging and wrapping paper
- milk and other cartons
- wood waste (construction debris, branches etc.)
- plastics.

Roughly a quarter did not burn any type of waste, even if the dwelling had a fireplace in use. The majority of newspapers and magazines was burnt only by every fourth household (with a fireplace). Only one in ten household burnt a significant amount of plastic, whereas the burning of cartons and waste wood was common. Burning waste in the fireplace of the dwelling was clearly more common in rural than in urban areas. One key factor explaining this difference is probably that the fireplace is more often the *primary source of heating* in rural than in urban areas. The accessibility of collection stations may also be a contributing factor. The disadvantage to neighbours caused by the burning of waste is probably smaller in rural areas than in cities. All in all the burning of waste by Finnish households seems to be quite a rational alternative to separate collection of waste also from the viewpoint of environmental effects. This is proven by e.g. the small volumes of plastic waste burned. Combined variables were constructed for the recycling and burning of newspapers and cartons. According to them, as much as 92 per cent of all newspapers and 51 per cent of milk etc. cartons were recycled or burnt.

Table 5. The proportion of households burning at least one-half of certain types of waste by level of urbanisation in 2006 of households with a fireplace, per cent

Waste type	Level of urbanisation of municipality of residence			
	Urban	Semi-urban	Rural	Total
Newspapers and magazines	13	25	30	23
Packaging and wrapping paper	40	59	66	56
Milk etc. cartons	51	64	76	64
Waste wood	61	68	76	69
Plastics	6	13	19	12

3.3 Unnecessary to necessary, recycling goods at flea markets

Goods end up at flea markets when they have outlived their usefulness to the owner or when the owner donates them to charity. Trading goods at flea markets is an established method of recycling goods. Goods are sold on the owners own account, or often also for charitable purposes on the account of a school class, sports team etc. Especially in the early 1990s also (semi)professional permanent flea markets where goods were left to be sold were established. Magazines specialising in flea market trade were also a phenomenon of the 1990s, as were the sale and auction sites on the Internet. It can be stated that flea markets have received the status of an established form of trade, and their selection of goods has become more varied at the same time. A further indication of this is that according to the survey of the Climate Change Communications Programme, 36 per cent of Finnish residents think that the statement “I recycle unnecessary goods” describes them very well and 31 per cent think the statement describes them fairly well (Climate Change Communications Programme 2006, p. 18).

The interview included the following questions on flea markets:

- (a) *Have you sold used goods or clothing at flea markets, to second hand shops or directly to other households during the past 3 months?*
- (b) *How much money in total did you earn in exchange for the goods and clothing you sold?*
- (c) *Did you use the Internet flea market sites to sell goods?*
- (d) *Have you bought second hand goods or clothing during the past 3 months?*
- (e) *How much money in total did you spend on second hand goods?*
- (f) *Did you buy second hand goods on the Internet?*

Flea markets are fairly popular. In 2006 during the three months preceding the interview, 8 per cent of the households (roughly 200,000) had sold goods at flea markets and 24 per cent (roughly 600,000) households had bought goods at flea markets. There were also three households buying at flea markets per each household selling at flea markets. Both buying and selling increased clearly as the household grew in size. As children grow, clothing, toys and other children's articles move quickly to the category of unnecessary goods and can be sold at e.g. flea markets. From the buyer's viewpoint precisely children's clothing are probably a suitable object to buy, as they become too small before they are worn out and so are often nearly as good as new.

Table 6. Proportion of households that sold or bought at flea markets during the three month period in 2006, per cent

Size of household			Level of urbanisation of municipality of residence					
			Total		Urban		Semi-urban	
	sold	bought	sold	bought	sold	bought	sold	bought
1	4	21	4	22	4	20	2	15
2	9	24	9	24	9	28	7	20
3	11	34	14	35	9	30	8	31
4	17	38	16	38	18	33	16	44
5+	13	40	15	35	13	42	10	45
Total	8	26	9	26	9	27	6	25

Going to the flea market showed only minor differences by the level of urbanisation of the municipality of residence, but Table 6 can be used to build a research hypothesis according to which flea markets in cities and population centres offer better trading possibilities also for one or two person households than flea markets in rural areas. The younger one- or two-person households sold goods at flea markets more often than the older ones, but slightly unexpectedly the younger than 30-year olds and the 60–69-year olds living in one-person households bought goods at flea markets more often than the middle-aged persons. Buying at flea markets became less common for two-person households as they got older.

The average sales income of persons who sold goods at flea markets during the last three months was approximately EUR 145. As the share of such households was 8 per cent, we can evaluate that the households received during the three months roughly EUR 29 million of sales income, which means a good EUR 115 million per year. On the basis of the responses we cannot know if the sums were given as gross sums, without deducting the rent for the table etc expenses, or as net sums. Still, taking the character of flea market selling into account, the responses are more likely to be net than gross sums.

Correspondingly, the average estimate of those who bought at flea markets of the sum spent on purchases over the three month period was roughly EUR 68. When every fourth household had bought goods from flea markets, the total spending of households on flea market purchases over three months was EUR 43 million, which means roughly EUR 173 million per year. The difference in households' flea market purchases and sales income amounts to EUR 60 million annually. This also gives a rough picture of the profit the organisers of flea markets make from table rents and the income from voluntary work flea market sales.

The data of the Household Budget Survey allows also for a significantly more accurate description of the users of flea markets by e.g. the income of the household, stage of life or use of information technology, or for the combining of the visits to flea markets to other consumption or the sorting of waste.

3.4. Households' purchases of refrigerators and washing machines and the recycling of old machines

The energy label has been in use for roughly 10 years. It first appeared in refrigeration equipment and then spread into washing machines, electric lamps, stoves etc. The label has had a fairly long time to become well known. The energy efficiency of the equipment makes a significant difference to a household's annual electricity consumption. Therefore the purchase decision is an important one and has long-term effects. As energy efficiency, as a rule, makes the equipment more expensive, the decision to invest in one requires careful consideration of all relevant points. Households were asked if the energy label or energy efficiency in general influenced their decision to invest in refrigeration equipment or washing machines. According to the interviews of the Climate Change Communications Programme, 18 per cent of households thought the statement "I choose products with an environment label or an eco label (energy efficient, class A in the energy label)" described them very well and 26 per cent thought the statement described them fairly well. Thirty-six per cent of Finnish residents stated that they were very prepared to change their domestic appliances to equipment which consume less and 38 per cent stated they were fairly prepared to do so. This opinion has strengthened significantly from the year 2004. (Climate Change Communications Programme 2007, p.12 and 18)

Table 7. The significance of an appliance's energy label, or energy efficiency, in the selection process by strength of influence in purchase situation in 2006, per cent

Significance	refrigerator	refrigerator -freezer	freezer	washing machine	dishwasher	Total
strong	37	32	32	34	42	35
somewhat	34	33	31	28	30	31
no significance	29	32	34	35	27	32
don't know	0	4	2	2	1	2
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

According to Table 7, the attitudes and the estimated significance of the energy label when buying an appliance correspond quite well. Energy efficiency had been significant in 66 percent of all purchases, on average. For some reason the energy label was most significant in the purchases of dishwashers. An explanation might be that a notable share of these purchases was made up of first purchases (Table 8). It may be that when replacing an old appliance with a new one the consideration is not as thorough as with the first purchase. In addition, buyers may often be in a rush to find a replacement for an old and broken appliance e.g. a freezer.

Households which stated that energy efficiency had a strong significance in their decision to buy appliances had paid, on average, clearly more (roughly 20 to 40 per cent) for their appliance than households which stated it had no significance. This applies to all the appliances listed in Table 7. The differences in average prices ranged from EUR 70 to EUR 200, depending on the appliance. This is, then, a significant and conscious financial choice concerning energy savings, or alternatively the energy efficient appliances fulfilled the

buyers' design wishes better than the models that are less energy efficient. The households that reckoned energy efficiency to have been fairly significant in their selection of appliance also paid nearly as much as the former group. The energy label would seem to have succeeded in converting the readiness to save energy into concrete action.

Table 8 describes the various features of product life spans. Roughly 20 per cent of refrigerators and freezers remain in use either at home, at the free-time residence or in another household. Over one-half of used appliances end up in the store that sold the appliance or at a recycling station.

Table 8. Recycling of the appliance to be replaced in households which had bought a new refrigeration appliance or washing machine by appliance in 2006, per cent

What was done with the old appliance	refrigerator	refrigerator-freezer	freezer	washing machine	dishwasher	all
no previous appliance	13	11	29	25	39	25
store which sold the appliance took in the old one	20	36	20	28	16	25
remained in use in own household	11	5	8	2	0	4
was taken to the free-time residence or into another household	12	9	12	12	10	11
remained in own household without use	14	6	8	6	6	7
was taken to recycling station	17	23	16	16	22	19
something else	13	8	5	8	7	8
don't know	1	2	2	2	0	2
total %	100	100	100	100	100	100

3.5. Households' use of eco-electricity

The use of eco-electricity requires a willingness to pay more than usual for electricity. Such willingness is dependent on attitudes, which in turn are influenced by many factors - from the consequences of global warming to opposing nuclear power or images of less favourable living conditions for one's own children. According to the interviews of the Climate Change Communications Programme, roughly 15 per cent of Finnish residents would be very willing to buy eco-electricity (Climate Change Communications Programme 2007, p. 13). Unlike many of the attitudes discussed earlier, this attitude has not yet translated into practice, since only 2.5 per cent, or 60,000, of households use eco-electricity. Only a minute share of Finnish households has decided to use environmentally friendly electricity. Perhaps the delay caused by routine is strong especially for such bulk products. In addition, the use of eco-electricity means an increase in the annual electricity bill, whereas the buyer of an energy efficient appliance can safely look forward to a decrease in the electricity bill. The environmentally positive attitudes of the users of eco-electricity for also other activities would be an interesting topic for further research. At least they had notably often purchased energy efficient appliances.

3.6 Motoring

A car is a necessary mode of transport for many, but it is also a status symbol which belongs to the “must haves” of certain stages in life (Nurmela 1996, pp. 159–173). Motoring enables the scattering of the structure of society which increases both the infrastructure expenditure and costs of transport (Perrels et al. 2006). The data of the Household Budget Survey are a good context for an examination of the basic characteristics of motoring. According to the Climate Change Communications Programme research, the environmental hazards of motoring are acknowledged and people are very ready to make changes in their own lives (Climate Change Communications Programme 2007, pp. 11–13).

Table 10. Access to a car (at least one)* by size of household and level of urbanisation of municipality of residence in 2006, per cent

Size of household	Level of urbanisation of municipality of residence			
	Total	Urban municipality	Semi-urban municipality	Rural municipality
1	45	40	59	54
2	86	82	92	92
3	90	85	98	98
4	97	95	98	99
5	98	98	99	99
Total	72	66	83	80

* passenger car, van or mobile home

Roughly 70 per cent of households had at least one car. Currently a significant proportion of only one-person households reckon they can manage without a car. Women living alone have few cars. Every third two-person household with access to a car has at least two cars. Households with four or more persons already come close to an average of two cars. Level of urbanisation has a clear effect on the access to a car. More households manage without a car more often in urban municipalities than in other types of municipalities.

Table 11. Average kilometres driven with the cars a household has access to during 12 months by size of household and level of urbanisation in 2006

Size of household	total	Level of urbanisation		
		Urban municipality	Semi-urban municipality	Rural municipality
1	14,300	13,300	15,000	16,500
2	19,700	17,900	20,900	23,900
3	25,300	22,900	29,500	27,900
4	27,100	24,300	34,400	28,100
5	30,200	23,400	37,100	36,900
Total	21,000	18,700	24,000	24,800

As the share of households that use a car has grown in households of all sizes, the average number kilometres a household drives per year has fallen by roughly one-fifth from 1990 to 2007 (Nurmela 1990, p. 47). The annual estimated kilometres driven by a household (Table 11) describe how family households living in the municipalities surrounding cities drive the most. This is most probably explained by commuting. A family living in a spacious detached house and commuting to work over long distances is the direct opposite of a retired man living alone in Punavuori (in central Helsinki), at least when measuring the ecological

footprint left by transport and housing (Nurmela 1996). The guilt effect of sustainable consumption has not reached motoring nearly as comprehensively as the sorting and recycling of waste. One reason for this are probably the cultural meanings attached to motoring especially by men. Secondly, the modern scattering of the structure of the society requires the use of a car (Perrels et al 2006). If motoring is to be reduced, the effect of the society's environmental policy on a household's alternative modes of action should probably be relatively much stronger for motoring than recycling of waste.

4. Conclusions

Limited empirical analyses preceding the interview questions of the Finnish Household Budget Survey 2006 have shown that the data of the Household Budget Survey can answer the need for monitoring the development of sustainable consumption. The data can be used to locate potential for savings and rationalisation even at a relatively accurate level, at least for the sorting of waste. Possibilities also seem to exist for assessing the effects of measures. Repeating the same questions in the interviews of following surveys would enable the assessment of the effects of possible measures taken and the associated changes in behaviour from the viewpoint of sustainable consumption.

The concepts of guilt and product life spans and packaging introduced in the description of the frameworks applied open up new ways of looking at and understanding consumption. An awareness of the consequences of one's actions is essential when striving to achieve change. This purpose is served by various certificates such as the fair trade labels which function as prompters for making a conscious choice. Different indicators of eco-efficiency have a similar effect (Schmidt-Bleek 2000, Hoffrén 2007 and 2001). New technology opens up possibilities of getting information and so reduces the guilt burden by making conscious choices. The "Consumer Gadget" project, for example, utilises the barcode as a link to various kinds of background information on the Internet. "The Consumer Gadget is a browser application that allows consumers to check the ethical background of any consumer product. Consumer Gadget can fetch the ethical information via EAN barcodes". (Consumer Gadget 2007)

Putting the focus on ecologically sustainable consumption and eco-efficiency implies a fundamental change of viewpoint. The research will then concentrate on material and energy flows. In such an examination, households' and peoples consumption and the related material flows are just one part of the process from raw materials to discarded waste (Hukkinen 1994, Takase et al. 2005). Short-term benefits of consumption become secondary when compared with the total effects over the long term. Seen from this viewpoint, the present day consumer can not be the king, but is instead more like a soldier serving a greater purpose.

On the basis of this examination it can be stated that the Household Budget Survey might serve as an indicator of sustainable consumption as regards the final outcomes of households' actions. The Household Budget Survey includes also much other information which can be used for this purpose. It is the only regular data collection in which the whole chain of consumption is measured. Converting euros into units of material would give extra input into the analysis of sustainable consumption (Cf. Nurmela 1996, Tukker 2005).

The empirical analysis confirmed for its part the results of studies conducted since the 1980s on environmental attitudes etc. (e.g. Uusitalo 1986). Finnish residents are not indifferent

about the environmental effects of their actions. Attitudes and actions in 2006 are concordant for many of the phenomena examined. The preconditions for environmentally friendly behaviour have also improved at least as regards the recycling and sorting of waste. Still, progress has not been made towards sustainable consumption in all of the actions a household engages in, as illustrated by the analyses of motoring and eco-electricity. The challenge of environmental policy is to identify new means of supporting the conversion of households' positive attitudes more often to action in more numerous sectors of consumption.

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Sustainable Consumption as negotiation of sign-value

Abstract

In this article the meaning of consuming products and services within consumption patterns that can be characterized as sustainable to different degrees, are described. The results show that reflection on the relation between consumption and quality of life as well as income is related to more sustainable consumption patterns. High consumption consumers do not question the relation between consumption and quality of life. For them consumption becomes a process of differentiation. The sign values of consumption objects communicated by market actors are enacted on, and reproduced. For low consumption consumers on the other hand consumption is an activity of comfort, need and experiences. As these consumers consume less than the norm the relation between consumption and quality of life is subject to reflection. The sign values of consumption objects communicated by market actors are negotiated and redefined as the fashion system is questioned.

Introduction

The study of sustainable consumption within the dominant social constructivist paradigm (Connolly and Prothero, 2003; Jackson, 2006a) is a promising avenue towards an understanding of why current consumption patterns in the Western world prevail despite a growing awareness of climate change and planet degradation. A social constructivist perspective on sustainable consumption acknowledge the inherent paradox between the idea of a sustainable consumer society on the one hand and the function/meaning of consumption as an activity on the other. This social constructivist view have far reaching implications for how to change in order to consume in a more sustainable manner. Consumption as an inherently social and cultural phenomenon imply that we need to describe the meaning of consumption (Connolly and Prothero, 2003; Jackson, 2006a). Only then can we aspire to redefine commodity discourse in a sustainable direction and “devising some other, more successful and less ecologically damaging strategy for creating and maintaining personal and cultural meaning” (Jackson, 2006a. page 20). In this article the meaning, of consuming certain (environmentally relevant) products and services, perceived by members of households representing high and moderate levels of consumption, is described. The focus is on describing the meaning of consuming objects within social contexts that represent different

ways of consuming, i.e. consumption patterns that can be characterized as sustainable to different degrees.

Sustainable consumption as meaning

The concept of meaning in relation to consumption is well established within social-constructivist consumer research. The symbolic properties of consumption objects are well described within numerous disciplines (Baudrillard, 1968; Baudrillard, 1970; Bourdieu 1979; Douglas and Isherwood, 1979; Belk, 1988; Featherstone 1991, Giddens 1991). Our way, as consumers, to use consumption in creating and reproducing personal, social and cultural meaning takes on different shapes according to different scientific interpretative frameworks.

One central application of this meaning-based paradigm is consumption as the postmodern base for identity quest and construction (Brownlie, Saren et al.1999; Giddens, 1991; Belk, 1988; Baumann, 1998, Miller, 2001). Thus, what we consume is closely linked to the image we wish to have, the group we wish to belong to and who we identify with. Another central tenet of the meaning-based consumption paradigm is consumption as communication (Baudrillard, 1968; Baudrillard, 1970; Bourdieu 1979; Douglas and Isherwood, 1979). Both areas of research imply the social uses and shared meanings of consumption. In the case of consumption as identity status seeking and existentialism is emphasised whereas the communicative aspects of consumption imply codes (Baudrillard, 1968) and symbolic markers (Douglas and Isherwood, 1979). A third avenue of the meaning-based paradigm, here labelled as consumption as hope, displaced meaning according to McCracken (1990) or idealized meaning according to Cambell (1984) investigates the purely existential aspects of consuming (Bauman, 2001). A fourth application of how the meaning of material goods is used is consumption as fun (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Gabriel and Lang, 2006).

The socially constructed interpretative frameworks used by researchers have implications for the study of sustainable consumption. Studying sustainable consumption as identification and communication imply descriptions of sign-value and consumption codes with the aim of uncovering enacted meanings that could be changed in a sustainable direction (Connolly and Prothero, 2003). The research interest of sustainable consumption as hope focus on alternative, immaterial, paths to self-identification and social belonging (Heiskanen and Pantzar, 1997; Jackson, 2006b). Studying sustainable consumption as fun is concerned with shopping, experiences of events and associated meanings.

Unfortunately there are a few empirical studies of sustainable consumption within the social constructivist paradigm (Heiskanen and Pantzar, 1997; Connolly and Prothero, 2003). This shortage might result in an over-emphasis of the intention of messages as stated in Campbell's (1997) "A critique of the consumption as communication thesis". He argues that this thesis is built on three assumptions linked to each other that can be regarded as doubtful each on their own terms:

"These assumptions are first, because people generally find an individual's appearance 'meaningful' it is presumed to have a meaning. Second, since it is generally assumed that people choose to wear what they wear, it is assumed that this 'singular' meaning' is intended. Third, since clothing is usually displayed, in the sense of being worn in public, it is assumed that individuals must be 'making a statement', or 'conveying a message' to those in a position to observe them."

Campbell's critique can be used as an argument for the instant need of empirical studies of the meaning of sustainable consumption. How are material goods used in creating and maintaining meaning? Even more important from a sustainable point of view are questions

concerning the power and control of sign-value (Jackson, 2006b). In this article the results of a study based on phenomenological interviews with 28 consumers in 15 households representing high and moderate consumption neighbourhoods in Sweden are presented. The results indicate that sign-value of consumption objects are reflected on, and negotiated, as a consequence of limited financial resources. The implications for the study of sustainable consumption as meaning are discussed.

Describing consumption codes from a sustainable perspective

The initial aim of this study was to describe the meaning of consumption as code, a “system of communication and exchange, as code for signs constantly expressed, received and reinvented” (Baudrillard, 1970, page 141). This theoretical framework is particularly tempting as it offers insights to our insatiability as consumers. The language metaphor partly explains why most consumers are concerned about environmental problems but seldom or never change their consumption/buying habits for environmental reasons (Solér, 1997). Consumption as code imply that products are no longer defined by their use but by what they signify, and because what they signify is defined by their relationship to the entire system of products, the system offers an infinite range of differences. According to Baudrillard (1988, page 48) “ if we acknowledge that a need is not a need for a particular object as much as it is a need for difference (the desire for social meaning), only then will we understand that satisfaction can never be fulfilled...” . Thus people are never satisfied with what they have. Consumption is an activity of differentiating, and people never get tired of self-identification.

In this study, the description of consumption codes from a sustainable perspective guided the criteria for the selection of households and the consumption objects included. As the language metaphor is based on the social uses of consumption the social and communicative context of the selected households was particularly important. The interviews took place in two Swedish neighbourhoods representing consumption patterns that was characterized as sustainable to different degrees. Thus, representatives for the selected households within the two neighbourhoods were to some extent familiar with each other. The neighbourhoods were selected in order to cover both an area of detached houses and one consisting of apartments. One particular street (in the detached house community) and one entrance/staircase (in the apartment house) were selected.

The sustainable aspect of household selection was based on a prior definition of high/moderate consumption in terms of car ownership, travel frequency and home renovation activities. High consumption households included in this study have two cars per household, they go on charter trips every year and they invest in house renovation activities on a regular basis. Moderate consumption households have one/no car and they neither go on charter trips nor do they engage in home renovation activities on a regular basis. Prior to the final selection of households a questionnaire mapping car ownership, travel frequency and home renovation activities were posted to inhabitants in the selected street/entrance. The final selection of households was based on the questionnaire in order to ensure that representatives for the two neighbourhoods represented consumption patterns sustainable to different degrees in accordance with the definition described above. Two people in each selected household were interviewed in all but single households in order to cover differences due to age and sex. 11 out of 28 interviewees were male and 5 out of 28 were children under eighteen years old.

The sustainable perspective had implications for which products/services to include in the study. The products/services studied were;

- 1) Environmentally relevant, i.e. the products/service influence the environment negatively through the input of resources in the production, use or disposal phase and,
- 2) Fulfilling a central function in maintaining personal and social meaning.

According to the stipulated criteria the following product groups/phenomenon were objects of study: means of local/domestic transportation (cars, bikes, bus rides etc), travels, clothing (including footwear), household equipment (appliances used for cooking/storing food, washing and cleaning), home repairs and renovation and hobby-, play- and sport products. Arguments for the environmental relevance of these product groups/phenomenon are found both in energy use, in the emissions of CO₂ and in the assumed turnover of products. According to Carlsson-Kanyama et al. (Carlsson-Kanyama, Karlsson et al. 2002) food, housing, clothing, footwear and recreation are the most important expenditure categories related to indirect energy use in Swedish households. Goedkoop et al. (Goedkoop, Madsen et al. 2002) similarly shows that food, recreation and working expenditures are important environmental impact categories. In Goedkoop's calculations car transports dominate the recreation and working expenditure categories. Munksgaard et al. (Munksgaard, Wier et al. 2002) look at CO₂ emissions and according to their calculation "food", "recreation and entertainment", "transports" and "household appliances" are the aggregated commodity groups that contribute most with CO₂. Mortensen (2006) refers to the European Environment Agency's identification of four main consumption categories (as part of the total consumption expenditure) whose environmental effects are important or rapidly increasing. These categories are food and drink, housing, personal travel and mobility, and tourism.

The second criteria for choosing the objects of study (fulfilling a central function in maintaining personal and social meaning) excludes areas of consumption as food/eating as it is classified as consumption more in the private than in the public domain (and thus having less impact on identity construction). The products/phenomena listed above are considered as important ingredients in the self-identification process. Visible consumption objects as cars, clothes and sport products obviously act as social markers (Douglas and Isherwood 1978) whereas products and phenomena related to the home also can be characterized as a mode of self expression (Miller 2001).

Phenomenological interviewing

This study has a strong phenomenological element. The suitability of the phenomenological perspective when studying consumption is described by Douglas and Isherwood (1978), Thompson et al (1990) and Elliott (1999). Elliott describes phenomenology as "a way forward to understanding consumption experience from the consumer's experience" (page 119). This methodology is advocated as particularly useful within the field of sustainable consumption (Heiskanen and Pantzar, 1997; Connolly and Prothero, 2003). Philosophically, the structural approach proposed by Baudrillard fits well with the phenomenographical method since both to some degree imply that we are condemned to meaning in our relation to the world. By "condemned to meaning" I mean that objects take on specific meanings, not just some meaning as the metaphor of choice implies.

A phenomenographic or phenomenological interview method was used in this study. The phenomenographic or phenomenological research interview takes the respondent's lived experience, as the point of departure (Apel, 1972; Sandberg, 1994; Thompson et al, 1990; van

Manen, 1990). The interviews conducted within this study were conducted in the homes of the respondents. In the case where two persons in the same household were interviewed, interviews took place one after the other. The topic of the interview, the meaning of consuming certain products (specified as above) was introduced in a letter prior to the interviews. Each interview lasted approximately one hour with the exception of the interviews with children under eighteen years old, which were shorter. Each product group/phenomenon of study were introduced by asking questions related to the interview persons lived experience of cars, bus rides, clothes, vacations, house renovation etc. For example the subject of personal transportation was introduced by asking "How do you and your family go to work and school in the morning?". The subject of clothing was introduced with the question "Can you describe how and when you buy clothes". The following dialogue was based on the interview persons lived experience of the product/phenomenon in question. Efforts were taken to ensure a focus, all along the interview, on the interview person's reflections concerning their experiences. For that reason what and how questions were used as probes until a point in time when the researcher presented her interpretation of the interview person's descriptions. Based on the agreement on this interpretation further probing was necessary concerning the product/phenomenon in question or the interview continued. All interviews were taped and transcribed. The interview technique is similar to Thomson et al (1989) and described in Sandberg (1994) and Solér (2007).

The shortcomings of this research methodology mainly concerns generalizability, as the life-world descriptions of individuals change according to social and cultural discourse. However, it is exactly this double-hermeneutic enactment that makes phenomenology a useful tool for the study of sustainable consumption. In this study a relatively large number of interviews have been conducted and analysed. Compared to Connolly and Prothero (2003) who interviewed six consumers, the twenty-eight phenomenological interviews in this study could be argued to enhance the trustworthiness of the results. Without any doubt, greater numbers of interviews facilitate the interpretation of the verbatim transcripts as analytical categories more easily are discerned.

Consumption, well-being or differentiation?

In the analytic phase two different ways, or perspectives, of perceiving the consumption of the selected products/services emerged. Perspective is here used to denote a way of understanding a certain part of reality. The phenomenographic analysis is described in detail by Sandberg (1994). The interpretation of the interview transcripts can be characterised as an iterative process guided by phenomenological concepts as bracketing, the direction and content of meaning concerning statements and relations among statements, and focus.

The metaphor of spectacles is useful when describing perspectives on reality. The perspective has a focus just like a pair of spectacles. The focus makes certain aspects of reality appear clear and central to one's perception of the world. Thus depending on which perspective and focus consumers have on their consumption, different aspects of consumption become central to them. Thus consumption takes on different meaning depending on the perspective. In the process of analysing the interviews it became clear that for all but two consumers the same perspective applied to all products under study. This result was not expected prior to the study, rather a multi-perspective on behalf of individual consumers was expected.

The first perspective focused on well-being and the second perspective focused on differentiation. The representation of the two perspectives within the two selected

neighbourhoods is presented in figure 1 where IE denotes interviewee. In the high consumption neighbourhood 9 out of 14 interviewees represented a perspective on consumption that focus on differentiation. In the low consumption neighbourhood 10 out of 13 represented a perspective on consumption that focuses on well-being. In two interviews both perspectives could be distinguished.

Neighbourhood – high consumption	Neighbourhood – low consumption
IE 1. Focus on differentiation	IE 1. Focus on well-being
IE 2. Focus on differentiation	IE 2. Focus on well-being
IE 3. Focus on differentiation	IE 3. Focus on well-being
IE 4. Focus on differentiation	IE 4. Focus on well-being
IE 5. Focus on differentiation	IE 5. Focus on well-being/differentiation
IE 6. Focus on differentiation	IE 6. Focus on differentiation
IE 7. Focus on well-being/differentiation	IE 7. Focus on well-being
IE 8. Focus on well-being	IE 8. Focus on well-being
IE 9. Focus on differentiation	IE 9. Focus on well-being
IE 10. Focus on well-being	IE 10. Focus on well-being
IE 11. Focus on well-being	IE 11. Focus on well-being
IE 12. Focus on wellbeing	IE 12. Focus on well-being
IE 13. Focus on differentiation	IE 13. Focus on differentiation
IE 14. Focus on differentiation	

Perspective 1 – Focus on differentiation

Consumers focusing on differentiation perceive consumption as a way to distinguish themselves from other people. Their consumption makes them feel secure as they feel they belong to a certain group or to a certain context or. Consumption becomes a tool in the stylization of themselves. In the interviews the focus on differentiation appears most clearly when talking about clothes and home decoration. The financial resources available are central to when consumption is regarded as a means for differentiation and what consuming objects are perceived as vehicles for differentiation. Thus the selected products appear as vehicles for differentiation to differing degrees depending on the financial situation of the household. However, the common nominator for consumers representing this perspective is the social importance and social use of products and services. This explains why consumers in the high consumption neighbourhood were more sensitive to perceived consumption norms and commercial messages than their low consumption counterparts.

Transportation

All consumers focusing on differentiation, except two, lived in households with two cars. The owning of two cars allows members of these households to have places of work far away from home without neglecting the care of children and their transportation to various activities. The car is a necessary ingredient in the lives of these families. These consumers invest in a second car when the financial situation makes it possible.

R -“You have two cars?”

IE “Two cars.”

R” Have you had two cars for a long time?”

IE” No, we haven’t, it was a bit tricky before we bought the second one, we got it when our youngest was 18 months old...., and before that it was tricky. My husband was at home at the time, he took the bus when I needed the car and we had to do a lot of planning. Before she was born I worked at XX which is close so I took the bike.

When I started my new job which is 20 kilometres away it was impossible to bike. There is a direct bus and I do not need to change but the bus takes 50 minutes and when you come home you must fetch the children and..... it will take me about two hours each way....it is not easy”

R “Do you consider getting a second car?”

IE “Well... not exactly now, but when we’ll have a baby we will buy a second car....but now when we invest in renovating first. We just got married and we bought house the same year so our budget is constrained”

Vacation

Consumers focusing on differentiation go abroad on holiday at least once a year. Their perception of a good holiday is connected to sun, sea and relaxation. All these consumers define holiday destinations as a subject of great interest among their colleagues. Different charter destinations are discussed among colleagues and these consumers sometimes get inspiration to go there themselves.

R ” To go abroad on vacation, does it mean anything special, or could you as well stay and relax in Bohuslän (Sweden)?”

IE “ As a matter of fact, no..... in some way you (need to) leave Sweden....”

R “ Do your colleagues and your close friends talk a lot about where to go on holiday, where they’ve been?”

IE “Yes, very much”

Clothes and shoes

For clothes and shoes the focus on differentiation appears as fashion. Consumers having this perspective buy clothes and shoes frequently. All these consumers, except two, are fashion conscious to a high degree. Brands are important when consumers focusing on differentiation buy clothes.

R” Do you talk about clothes with you class mates?”

IE “Yes, we talk quite a lot about clothes..., many of my friends also think clothes are rather important...they are interested in clothes”

R” Do they like the same clothes as you do?

IE “ Yes”

R “ Do you dress in the same way or do you differ a little?”

IE “ Some differ, some always wear shirts... ”

R “ If you don’t mind me asking....do you feel a pressure to dress in a certain way or would you consider it an interest in clothes..... ”

IE “.... I do not know, it could as well be but you are not aware of it”

R” Clothes for the children, do you buy them because of a need or because of fashion?”

IE” When there is a need I would say, but I notice of course that the girls are getting more and more into fashion”

R “ They can inherit clothes?”

IE “ Well no, there is a five-year difference and there is not much she can wear...their styles are so different...when she was little you bought tights, they are not in fashion any more so she will not wear them”

R” Do you find clothes important? To feel properly dressed?”

IE “ Yes”

R “ In what way is it important to you?”

IE “Because I...you feel more secure in ones role I believe, but I like clothes so we clear out a lot”

R “ What do you mean by clear out?”

IE “ Well, clear out...I won’t wear this and this, and we give away clothes.”

R” Okay, you give away clothes you no longer use? So you can fill up with things that are more....?”

IE “ Yes, but I do not want a lot of clothes, I prefer to change often”

R “ When you say change?”

IE “ I mean throw them away... ”

R” I understand, how often do you clear out?

IE " Well, not the entire wardrobe!"
 R " Of course not, but do you clear out one pullover or half the wardrobe?"
 IE " Well yes, pullovers and shirts get ugly"
 R " Of course"
 IE " This one will not last long"
 R " Do you clear out...."
 IE " I throw this away and I buy a new one"
 R " So you change a part of....."
 IE " ..the wardrobe"

Interior decoration

Consumers focusing on differentiation are frequently involved in decorating or renovating the interior of their homes. For these consumers the home is an essential arena for showing who they are – therefore it is important to have the inside of their homes as they like it to be. In practice this means that the interior is redecorated to get the right colour or material.

R" Do you have any decoration projects planned?"
 IE "No, as a matter of fact we don't. We have nice and fresh bathrooms, maybe if we would do something with the kitchen...we have talked about changing the cupboard doors..."
 R" Okay, what do they look like now?"
 IE" Well guess they are okay but slightly worn down
 R " I'm interested in what makes people change kitchen cupboard doors.....Do you want something better looking or is it simply because they are worn down?"
 IE" Well partly because they are worn down....all cupboard doors have lists on them.... and we do not like it like that. In the other house we took the listings away and made spar instead... we like that better..
 R " You like it better this way"
 IE " Yes"
 R " What about the colour?"
 IE " It's okay, it's white..... but with the lists it is hard to clean , to get rid of the dirt..."
 R" So you might as well repaint the walls as well?"
 IE" No that we did when we moved in..."
 R" Did you paint the walls or did you put up wall-coverings?"
 IE" We painted."
 R" Did you repaint because you didn't like the previous colour or were the walls simply worn down?"
 IE " I do not know..... yes we moved a wall to get a bigger kitchen and then we had to fix the ceiling. We painted the ceiling and then we painted the walls too in the same colour."
 ...

IE" ...we repainted... no they (the lists) could not be repainted..., we repainted the stairs and the lists in the ceiling but we changed the other lists. When we looked at the house it was extraordinary fresh, it gave a very nice impression but once you have moved in you notice other people lived in this house and you want to.. well to redecorate makes the house feel more fresh, you make it your own home, and you make it look you way..."

R" What does that mean to you – do you feel more at home?"
 IE" Yes, it feels like home and I think that the home tells a lot about you as a person, just like the clothes you wear. I find it important to be able to identify with my home, it's my home. I could never just move in and adjust..."

Household appliances

No great differences were found between perspectives regarding ownership of household appliances, except for dishwashers. In contrast to consumers focusing on well-being, consumers focusing on differentiation all had dishwashers. The dishwasher is perceived as a standard kitchen appliance. Within this perspective household appliances were perceived as fun to a greater extent

R" Would you say you have enough household machines?
 IE" Well there are always new products so...wow I would want one like that!"
 R " Do you miss anything?
 IE" No, nothing particular but there is a new popcorn machine on TV-ads, it looks handy..."

Perspective 2 – Focus on well-being

Consumers focusing on well-being perceive consumption as a means to live a good life and to feel at ease. The social importance and social use of their consumption is limited, rather consumption objects reflect their perceived functional need. For these consumers the relevance of their need for products and services is subject to reflection. The scarcity of financial resources makes reflection and prioritization regarding consumption necessary. Financial restraints make consumers in the low consumption neighbourhood less sensitive to consumption norms and commercial messages.

Transportation

All consumers focusing on well-being, except one, lived in households with one car. More than one car is not possible from a financial point of view or is not perceived as a relevant need of the household. Consumers in these households to a higher degree work close to their home, they can easily bike or walk to their office. This means that the life of families with children who need to be driven to activities can be administrated with one car. The car is to a higher degree perceived as a holiday guarantee. These consumers do not frequently go on charter trips, instead they go on holiday with the car.

IE “ We would need a bigger car, there are so many of us. But... the only time we need a bigger car is when we go to Smallcity, may be twice a year.... But this car is economic and I borrowed a bigger car at the office....., this summer I borrowed it for three weeks”

IE” I don’t need a car but it is comfortable.... I could as well take the bus”

R “ Have you had two cars?”

IE” Yes....five years ago.”

R “ How come....”

IE “..we choose only to have one?”

R “ Yes”

IE “ because we didn’t need more than one car.... The other one just stood there and I found it wasteful.”

Vacation

All consumers focusing on well-being, except three, rarely go abroad on vacation. Their perception of a good holiday is connected to relaxation, enjoying the company of family and friends and experiences of nature and new places. Even though colleagues might discuss different holiday destinations abroad, these consumers are happy with staying in the country.

R “ Am I correct if I say that you enjoy do what you do and that you are not influenced by this big charter boom....?”

IE “ Well, my sister goes to Thailand every year at Christmas with her family, she is married and they are well off.... I’m a single mother.... I can’t.., you cannot keep comparing yourself with other people, and in that case you will end up feeling bad...actually I’m fine with this situation...

R “ Can you describe a good holiday?”

IE “ A good holiday.... Well, to be off duty, to be healthy.... no problems occurring like the car is broken into.... not too much rain..”

IE “A good holiday, it is to be outside, to take a walk in the countryside”

R “ What do you spend you holidays?”

IE “ We usually go to Smallcity to visit grandmother,... we’ve been in the North once and in Denmark a couple of times but we stay in the country,. we think we ought to see Sweden first before experiencing the world....

Clothes and shoes

For clothes and shoes the focus on well-being appears as comfort and need. Consumers having this perspective buy clothes and shoes to a limited extent and they are not fashion conscious. These consumers buy shoes and clothes when there is a real (functional) need and the most important choice criteria is comfort.

R " Can you describe the buying of clothes and shoes in your family?"

IE " Yes, sparsely... we get a lot from my brothers' children.... So we buy if we need anything, no one is running around buying branded clothes..."

R" I would like to ask you about clothes and shoes, how and when do you buy clothes and shoes?"

IE" When there is a need..."

R" This need is it related to function or fashion?"

IE " Function only... but then you want it to fit and feel alright, but it is not about fashion"

Interior decoration

Consumers focusing on well-being rarely redecorate inside their homes. To some extent this is due to ownership structure. These consumers rent their apartments and do not own their homes. Regarding interior decoration, having a focus on well-being means that consumers do not feel motivation to redecorate unless the interior is worn down. They want their homes to be clean, light and in a nice colour.

R" ...if you get new wall-coverings, what does it mean to you?"

IE " Not much."

R " Does it mean anything?"

IE " No as a matter of fact no – I like it they way it is."

R " But it must mean something (IE stated earlier that she wants new wall-coverings)... Is it about feeling well or about making the apartment smarter?"

.....

IE" well yes, those who lived here before me they had a dog too, a big dog, and there are scratch marks from the dogs, you probably don't notice that, but they get on my nerves when I clean and I see what it looks like"

R" How do you want it to look inside?"

IE" Well, it should be clean....and since we rent our home we do not have the same freedom as if we would have had a house

R " Does colour and the way the wall-covering look matter to you? It is a great difference between tidy a clean and having a special wall-covering from a special store..."

IE " ...well we chose these well-coverings, we chose a light one, but the rest is of absolutely no importance"

R " okay, you are a clean and light person , so to speak..."

IE " That is correct

R" For some people it is important to have new colours, to follow the trends..."

IE" I cannot justify that2

R " What do you mean?"

IE" Well, the way we live.... People are at the centre of our hearts, if you have a place where you can meet you are not motivated to invest in something that is in fashion....but at some point yellow walls were in fashion.... But we never, we have never been motivated to invest in that...you can spend that money on something else...helping people or... I mean if you have a place that is working, it is enough."

Household appliances

No great differences were found between perspectives regarding ownership of household appliances, except for dishwashers. Consumers focusing on well-being to lesser extent have dishwashers. The dishwasher is not perceived as a need but rather a facilitator of daily life. Five out of the eight households interviewed do not have a dishwasher.

R" Do you have a dishwasher?"

IE “ No, no, never”

R” Why?”

IE” I do not find it necessary!”

R” You don’t need one?”

IE” It’s like therapy to wash the dishes, you rinse you thoughts too!”

IE” We never.... We got a small dishwasher from a friend, we liked it, it was handy but it broke down....then I felt it’s pretty relaxing to wash the dishes...but when now you feel, having three children....you might let a machine do the job”

Sustainable consumption is related to income and reflection about quality of life

High consumption –use of commercially mediated sign-value

The results clearly show that reflection regarding the relation between consumption and quality of life is a central dimension when understanding the level of individual household consumption. One central aspect of quality of life, for households with high consumption in this study, is consumption dreams come true. As most consumers in these high consumption households focus on differentiation they dream about and plan for consumption in the future. These findings are in line with Baudrillard’s (1988) theory of the insatiability of consumers. Consumption is an activity of identification and differentiating, and people never get tired of self-identification. In this study consumers focusing on differentiation will invest in interior decoration, household appliances, and holiday trips when their budget allow for additional consumption. The kind of additional consumption planned for depend on fashion and supply. The focus on differentiation makes consumers sensitive to new consumption objects on the market and to consumption of others (consumption norms). To have the same consumption standard as others in groups that you identify with becomes important from this consumption perspective. Fashion is a tool used by these consumers in the constant process of showing who they are. This applies to children as well. The children interviewed in these households want to wear clothes that are in fashion. The way high consumption interview persons reproduce consumption meanings can be analysed in terms of sign-value and transfer of meaning. The importance of fashion can be characterized as a manifestation of transfer of meaning via commercial messages and media (McCracken, 1988). Thus, the sign-value of goods and services orchestrated in a commercial setting are internalised by the interview persons representing high consumption households in this study. In other words, the sign-value of goods and services are used for differentiation purposes in the manner intended by the sender of commercial messages. For these consumers consumption can be regarded as a code of commercially orchestrated meanings of products and services.

Financial resources /income become a key when understanding the consumption level of consumers focusing on differentiation. This is supported by Holt (1995). In his study of how possessions are used by consumers a materialist consumption style is “when consumers perceive the value inheres in consumption objects rather than in experiences or in other people”. Holt states “materialists’ desires for more possessions are constrained only by their financial limits” (p. 13).

Moderate consumption – negotiation and individualization of sign-value

For consumers in moderate consumption households, quality of life is to a lesser degree related to consumption. Their budget does not allow them to be fashion conscious and the

results indicate a low interest in consumption concerning the selected products. All consumers, except two, in the low consumption households have a perspective on consumption that focus on well-being. In practice this means that consumption objects are not used as a vehicle for identification or differentiation as Baudrillard (1988) indicate. Neither do the results support Living in the present consumption oriented Swedish society without enough resources to consume according to fashion and in line with commercial messages, these consumers continuously reflect on the relation between consumption and quality of life. The results clearly show that they have come to the conclusion that they are happy given their level of consumption. In the case of children in these households, consumption is discussed with the children as resources are scarce. The children interviewed in moderate consumption households care less for branded clothes and holiday trips than children in high consumption households. In terms of sign-value and transfer of meaning, the reflective element in the moderate consumption meanings described in this study, indicate that commercially mediated sign-value of products and services are negotiated and redefined on an individual basis. Thus, commercial meanings promoted by fashion and technical development are not used for identification purposes (as evidently, they are meant to be, the commercial tenet of fashion is existential). Instead, the sign-value of products and services transferred via advertising and commercial practices is subject to reflection. The individualization of negotiated sign-value indicates that consumption cannot be regarded as a code within the moderate consumption household studied.

This perspective on consumption can be described as nonmaterialistic consumption by Holt (1995) where consumption objects are treated as "resources to be leveraged rather than terminal sources of value"

Reflective consumption – a key to sustainability?

The results of this study empirically validate consumer preferences as being an adaptation to given levels of income as argued by Schor (2005). She proposes a "wanting what they get" model to replace the neoclassical "getting what they want" model (Schor, 2005, page 46). In this study no empirical evidence can be found to weaken the proposition that moderate consumption interview persons are as satisfied with their consumption as their high consumption counterparts. This is well in line with results of numerous studies indicating that the correlation between income and well-being is only found at low income levels (see Jackson, 2006a).

In this study reflection on the relation between consumption and quality of life, as well as income, is related to sustainable consumption. The research implications for the study of sustainable consumption are mainly linked to reflective practices, time and the social construction of consumption as identity enactment pitfall. In a world of social science and marketing practice where the cultural meanings of consumption are constructed as personal identification, consumers are considered to be more or less bound to the "social pathology" of the Western consumer society (Jackson, 2006, Durning, 1992). The results of this study describe how individual consumers reflect on and redefine the socially constructed meanings (sign-value) of products and services. Further, the results indicate a relation between negotiation of sign-value and low income. Such a relation to some extent posits time as an important resource in a future sustainable consumer society. Reflection requires access to human mental capacities which no doubt are needed in the reconstruction of consumption symbols to functional meaning. Such a social reconstruction of the consumer condition no

doubt requires Western cultures to find other arenas and institutions for the pursuit of human belonging (Durning, 1992; Heiskanen and Pantzar, 1997; Jackson, 2006b).

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References

Using Price Instruments to Affect Probabilities of Purchasing Healthy Labelled Breakfast Cereals

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Abstract

Breakfast is often said to be the most important meal of the day and it has been shown that the quality of the breakfast affects both the overall daily dietary quality and performance. A large share of Swedish breakfasts consists, fully or partly, of breakfast cereals combined with dairy products. In this paper, we analyze preferences for different types of breakfast cereals, over various categories of households. We also simulate the impact of VAT reforms on choice probabilities and market shares of breakfast cereals. Our results imply that families with children generally experience a higher utility from more unhealthy types (sweet) cereals, as do households where the person in charge of breakfast purchases has a lower education. Price has an effect on choice probabilities, even though price sensitivity of breakfast cereals seems to be relatively low. Breakfast cereal choices also contain a strong element of habit formation.

1. Introduction

The modern diet contributes to a number of serious medical conditions, such as several types of cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, dental caries and, together with a more sedentary life-style, also overweight and obesity. For example, poor nutrition is estimated to cause one third of deaths caused by cancer and one third of cardiovascular diseases in Europe, where cancer and cardiovascular diseases account for two thirds of the total disease burden (WHO, 2004). Overweight and obesity, in turn, further increases the risk of many of these diseases, underlining the urgency of reversing the trend of rising numbers in obesity and overweight in the Western world, as well as in many transition economies. For example, the number of obese and overweight persons have doubled in Sweden over the last twenty years; today more than half of men and more than a third of women of age 16 to 64 are overweight or obese (Socialstyrelsen, 2005). Taken together, in the European Union, poor nutrition is estimated to account for 4.6 percent of total losses of years of healthy lives, and obesity and overweight accounts for another 3.7 percent (National Institute of Public Health, 1997).

Due to the negative impact on public health and health care costs from the developments of diet related medical conditions, pressure has been heavy on politicians to take measures that direct food consumption to healthier levels. Policy measures often suggested and debated are taxes on particularly unhealthy food or subsidies of particularly healthy food.

Breakfast is often said to be the most important meal of the day. Breakfast might not be the meal of the day contributing the most to the daily energy intake, but breakfast habits influence food consumption during the rest of the day and it has been shown that a healthy breakfast contributes to a healthy overall diet (Rampersaud et al., 2005). Studies have also shown that children and adolescents significantly improve their overall dietary pattern by eating a healthy breakfast, where a daily breakfast that includes high-fibre products, fruit and skimmed milk products is recommended (Matthys et al., 2007, Rampersaud et al., 2005). The effect of breakfast habits on performance, especially in children and adolescent, has also been studied and research point to breakfast habits having an impact on cognitive functions related to memory, grades on tests and also school attendance (Rampersaud et al., 2005). Results are likely to be similar for adults. The importance of breakfast habits in determining both health

and performance of all household members makes the choice of breakfast an important decision for those in charge of household purchases. Encouraging families with children to improve their diets might be particularly important, not least if we believe that food consumption patterns might be established at an early age and perhaps even associated with habit formation.

In this study, we will analyze preferences of different household types for one of the most important part of the Swedish breakfast diet; breakfast cereals, and how preferences and market shares can be affected by economic policy. In Sweden, XX percent of breakfasts consumed partly or fully consists of breakfast cereals combined with dairy products.

Nordström and Thunström (2007) estimate a Quadratic Almost Ideal Demand System (QAIDS) and simulate the impact on the average household of tax reforms designed to encourage diets in line with nutrition recommendations. However, they also show that households with more than one child per adult have a lower consumption of healthy bread and breakfast cereals than single households. Encouraging families with children to improve their diets is important, not least if we think that food consumption patterns might be established at an early age and perhaps even associated with habit formation.

This study extends Nordström and Thunström (2007a,b), who estimate a Quadratic Almost Ideal Demand System (QAIDS) and simulate the impact on the average household of tax reforms designed to encourage diets in line with nutrition recommendations (2007a), as well as effects on different household types (2007b). In this study, we have a richer set of household types, though (we add levels of education and income), as well as use panel data in the analysis, which allows for exploring possible habit formation. The advantage of the logit model here, over the QAIDS, is also that it better captures the impact differentiated VAT schemes might have on probabilities of starting to purchase healthy, for those who do not at present. It also extends Thunström (2007), who estimate the Swedish average consumer's marginal willingness to pay for characteristics in breakfast cereals, as well as hard bread and potato products.

Most of the theoretical literature on the impact of economic policy instruments on the dietary quality or health is focused on improving the diet of a representative individual with or without self-control problems (see e.g. O'Donoghue and Rabin, 2003, and Aronsson and

Thunström, 2006). As for the empirical literature, most studies have been performed by estimating almost ideal demand systems (see, for instance, Chouinard et al., 2007, Dejgaard Jensen and Smed, 2007, and Nordström and Thunström, 2007).

Logit models have been used to analyze food behaviour, such as for instance the marginal willingness to pay for different types of eggs (Andersen, 2006) and preferences for different types of ketchup (Rehnhoff, 2004), beef (Alfnes, 2002) and frozen foods (Mojduszka et al., 2001). Nevo (2001) estimates a mixed logit model on breakfast cereal data, with the purpose of deriving differentiated products demand. Closest related to this paper might be a study by Chidmi and Lopez (2007), who estimate a mixed logit model on breakfast cereal scanner data, to analyze consumer choice and retail competition. Their results imply that consumers generally are price sensitive with regard to the cereal chosen, but that taste parameters vary over consumers and that there is a strong brand loyalty. The data used by Chidmi and Lopez differs from the data used here in two important ways; the scanner data used by Chidmi and Lopez contain information on supermarkets and can hence test for supermarket effects, but does not contain household characteristics. They obtain crude household characteristics by matching city level household characteristic data with their scanner data on breakfast cereals.

The structure of this paper is as follows. Section 2 provides a brief overview of the random utility model, Section 3 presents the data. Section 4 describes the empirical method and Section 5 provides the estimation results. Section 6 concludes.

2. The data

The data used in this study consists of household panel data on breakfast cereal consumption, for year 2003, from the market research institute GfK Sweden. One member of each household in the panel is assigned the responsibility of reporting food purchases on a detailed level. Product characteristics of the breakfast cereals included in the sample are price, date of purchase, brand, package size and number of packages bought. The number of breakfast cereal products in the sample amounts to 181. The detail at which purchases are registered allows us to match every product with its product content, by using the nutrition database kept by the Swedish National Food Administration (SLV). We match each product with its content of fat, saturated fat, fibre, salt, sugar and added sugar, measured in grams per 100 gram product.

In order to facilitate the analysis of choice determinants of different types of breakfast cereals, these products were grouped into 5 categories of breakfast cereals, based on their product content; *flakes*, *Keyhole labelled breakfast cereals*, *müsli*, *sweet breakfast cereals* and *others*. For breakfast cereals, the main variety of characteristics is found in sugar and fibre contents. These product attributes will therefore be included in the analysis performed here. Table 1 shows summary statistics (min, mean and max values) of the product characteristics for the products in each category. Mean values are reported in bold, whereas the min and max values are reported over and under the mean value. For example; the cheapest product purchased (of all households) in 2003 in the product category Keyhole labelled cereals cost 1.77 SEK per 100 gram, whereas the most expensive product in the same category cost 5.93 SEK per 100 gram. The mean price over the year for Keyhole labelled cereals was 3.52 SEK. Worth noting is also that Table 1 shows that the average fibre content is higher in the müsli category than in Keyhole labelled breakfast cereals. However, the fibre rich products in the müsli category did not meet the Keyhole label criteria for fat, salt and sugar content.¹ Note also that the product content is not used in the analysis. This is due to too little variation in the fibre and sugar content within the five groups of cereals.

Household characteristics in the sample consist of education, occupation and sex of the household member mainly responsible for reporting, as well as household income, number of household members and number of children at the age 16 or younger. In 2003, 1336 households were in the GfK panel for the full year. Of these, XXXX purchased breakfast cereals. The frequency of reported breakfast cereal purchases over the year ranges between 4 to 124 times. To eliminate outliers in the sample, we have only included households with purchases ranging between 10 and 100 in the analysis, though. The number of households used in the analysis is YYYY. The panel used in this study consists of 10,987 observations and is unbalanced, due to all households not having purchased breakfast cereals at all choice occasions (days of year 2003).

¹ Breakfast cereals fulfilling the following criteria are certified by the SLV with the Keyhole label; fat content: max 7g/100g, sugar content: max 13g/100g, sodium content: max 500mg/100g and fibre: min 1,9g/100 kcal.

Table 1. Breakfast cereal characteristics

Characteristic	BREAKFAST CEREAL TYPE				
	Flakes	Keyhole labelled	Müsli	Sweet cereals	Others
Price in SEK per 100 gram	4.17	1.77	2.69	4.56	3.84
	4.74	3.52	3.49	5.26	5.27
	5.21	5.93	3.89	6.23	11.29
Grams of fibre per 100 gram	1.8	9.7	6.8	1.2	0.8
	4.4	9.8	10.7	2.6	5.8
	14.7	10.5	14.7	4.0	7.7
Grams of saccaros per 100 gram	5.0	1.3	11.7	8.2	0.3
	10.0	1.6	15.1	29.1	19.1
	35.5	2.9	16.5	35.5	35.5

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics of the share made by different household groups of total breakfast cereal purchases during 2003 (column 2) and how purchases made by each household group are divided between the different types of breakfast cereals (columns 3-7).

Households are divided by income group, based on income per adult head in the household. Households with average yearly income per adult head ranging between 25,000 to 137,500 belong to income group 1, whereas households in income group 2, 3 and 4 have a yearly average income per adult head of 140,000-160,000, 175,000-200,000 and 225,000-600,000 respectively.

As shown by Table 2, 38 percent of all breakfast cereal purchases in 2003 was made by the highest income group, whereas the next lowest income group purchased the least of breakfast cereals. Columns 3-7 reveal that the lowest income group shows the highest percentage of Keyhole labelled purchases (5 percent), as part of total breakfast cereal purchases during the year. However, differences in relative shares purchased by the income groups seem to be fairly small.

Table 2. Relative shares of breakfast cereal purchases by different household types

	BREAKFAST CEREAL TYPE					
	All breakfast cereals	Flakes	Keyhole labelled	Müsli	Sweet cereals	Others
Households divided by income per adult head						
Income group 1	0.24	0.37	0.05	0.36	0.15	0.06
Income group 2	0.17	0.40	0.02	0.40	0.16	0.03
Income group 3	0.21	0.37	0.03	0.40	0.17	0.04
Income group 4	0.38	0.38	0.04	0.41	0.13	0.05
<i>All income groups</i>	<i>1.00</i>					
Households divided by household type						
Single adult, no children	0.18	0.36	0.07	0.46	0.06	0.04
Single adult with children	0.04	0.19	0.04	0.37	0.35	0.05
Two adults, no children	0.30	0.44	0.04	0.43	0.06	0.04
Two adults with one child	0.07	0.32	0.02	0.43	0.19	0.06
Two adults with two or more children	0.19	0.37	0.02	0.31	0.24	0.06
Three or more adults	0.23	0.37	0.02	0.36	0.20	0.05
<i>All household types</i>	<i>1.00</i>					

3. Random utility and the logit model

Below, we give a brief description of the random utility model, based on Train (2002) and Nevo (2000). To start off, we will provide the essence of the logit models by deriving the choice probabilities for the conventional multinomial logit. We will thereafter discuss how these results will be changed as the model becomes more complex.

Household behaviour is assumed to be captured by a random utility model and preferences are assumed to be weakly separable, such that we can analyze utility of breakfast cereals alone, without having to be concerned with other types of consumption.

Assume that household n chooses among J alternatives of breakfast cereals ($j = 1, \dots, J$) and that the utility from alternative j at a given point in time, t , can be written:

$$U_{njt} = \beta' x_{jt} + \varepsilon_{jnt} \quad (1)$$

where x_{jt} is a vector of attributes that affects utility of the alternative (price, product content, household characteristics, such as income and number of children). The vector x_{jt} is observable to the researcher. β is a vector of parameters. ε_{jnt} is a random variable that captures the unobserved factors affecting the utility household n derives from alternative j at time t .

Assuming utility maximizing households, at time t , household n will choose the alternative that yields the highest utility, given household specific preferences and budget constraints, such that household n chooses alternative i over alternative j if:

$$\begin{aligned} U_{nit} &> U_{njt} \\ \beta' x_{it} + \varepsilon_{nit} &> \beta' x_{jt} + \varepsilon_{njt} \end{aligned}$$

In our case, we observe choices made by households, not individuals. Household choices might be influenced by a negotiation process, and hence the relative power of the household members when negotiating over breakfast cereal choices. Here, we simplify by assuming that the choice made (after negotiations) coincides with the choice that yields the highest joint utility for all household members. Note also that the utility functions may differ over alternatives, such that the factors influencing utility of alternative i differ from those influencing alternative j .

Denote the observable part of utility $V_{nit} = \beta' x_{it}$. The probability of household n choosing alternative i over j can then be written:

$$\begin{aligned} P_{ni} &= \Pr(U_{nit} > U_{njt}) = \Pr(V_{nit} + \varepsilon_{nit} > V_{njt} + \varepsilon_{njt}) = \\ &\Pr(\varepsilon_{njt} < V_{nit} - V_{njt} + \varepsilon_{nit}), \forall j \neq i \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

If ε_{jnt} would be given, P_{ni} would hence be equal to the cumulative distribution of each ε_{jnt} , evaluated at $V_{nit} - V_{njt} + \varepsilon_{nit}$. Following McFadden (1974) and Train (2002), we derive the logit choice probabilities. The unobserved part of utility, ε_{jnt} , is assumed to be independent and identically distributed (iid) extreme value, meaning that the density of each ε_{jnt} is:

$$f(\varepsilon_{njt}) = e^{-\varepsilon_{njt}} e^{-e^{-\varepsilon_{njt}}} \quad (3)$$

and the corresponding cumulative distribution for each ε_{jn} is:

$$F(\varepsilon_{njt}) = e^{-e^{-\varepsilon_{njt}}} = e^{-e^{-(V_{nit} - V_{njt} + \varepsilon_{nit})}} \quad (4)$$

Since ε_{njt} is independent of ε_{nit} , the cumulative distribution over all $j \neq i$ is the product of the individual cumulative distributions. Had ε_{nit} been given, this product of cumulative distributions would have been the choice probability of alternative i . However, since ε_{nit} is random, and iid extreme value, the choice probability is obtained by integrating the product of cumulative distributions over all values of ε_{nit} , weighting the expression by the density of ε_{nit} . The logit choice probability is hence:

$$P_{ni} = \int \left(\prod_{j \neq i} e^{-e^{-(V_{nit} - V_{njt} + \varepsilon_{nit})}} \right) e^{-\varepsilon_{nit}} e^{-e^{-\varepsilon_{nit}}} d\varepsilon_{nit} \quad (5)$$

It can be shown that the integral in equation (5) has a closed form solution, i.e. can be solved numerically, equal to (see Train, 2002, for derivations):

$$P_{ni} = \frac{e^{V_{nit}}}{\sum_j e^{V_{njt}}} = \frac{e^{\beta' x_{nit}}}{\sum_j e^{\beta' x_{njt}}} \quad (6)$$

where the latter equality holds if representative utility is linear in parameters.

The iid extreme value assumption means no correlation between error terms over alternatives, i.e. it is assumed that there is no unobserved parts of utility simultaneously affecting utility of several alternatives, and no correlation of unobserved factors affecting utility over time. The assumption of iid error terms, in turn, gives rise to the property Independence of Irrelevant Alternatives (IIA). The IIA property means that the ratio of probabilities of any two alternatives in the model will remain unchanged, regardless of if new alternatives are introduced or existing alternatives are excluded from the model.

The multinomial logit model (MNL) is based on the assumption of iid extreme value distributed error terms. In this paper, we will use the MNL to analyze what affects probability to purchase healthier breakfast cereals.²

Now, assume that households are facing a sequence of repeated choices over time (note that in the MNL model, choice probabilities are assumed to be independent over time). Instead of containing just one logit formula, the logit choice probability will then contain the product of the individual logit formulas from each choice occasion. Equation (6) is revised accordingly and we have the following expression, which is the logit choice probability when analysing repeated choices over time periods $t=1, \dots, T$, i.e. panel data:

$$P_{ni} = \prod_{t=1}^T \left(\frac{e^{\beta' x_{nit}}}{\sum_j e^{\beta' x_{njt}}} \right) \quad (8)$$

An appealing feature of the logit model is also that lagged independent variables can enter the model without the estimation procedure having to be revised, since error terms, ε_{jnt} , in the logit model are iid extreme value distributed, i.e. independent over time. A lagged

² When analyzing panel data, as we are here, there are other models that are likely to be well suited for the analysis. Mixed logit models, which are more flexible, in that they allow for error terms to be correlated both over alternatives and over time, would be one candidate. A mixed logit model is appealing in that it allows for preference heterogeneity and correlations of error terms over time and choice alternatives. A number of mixed logit model specifications have been tried out, though, but for technical reasons (non-convergence) are not used here. In addition, the MNL seems to provide stable results, standard deviations of parameters are fairly small (implying little heterogeneity in preferences) as is shown later, and preferences are likely to be stable over time, since we are concerned with a panel that stretches over only one year. In the literature (see e.g. Brownstone and Train, 1999, and Revelt and Train, 1998), it has been found that estimated parameters from a mixed logit model are generally larger than those from a multinomial logit model. For the rationale behind this phenomenon, see Brownstone and Train (1999).

independent variable in the utility function will therefore be uncorrelated with the error terms ε_{jnt} at time t and the logit choice probabilities remain as stated in equation (8).

4. The estimated model and method

Utility of each choice alternative (*flakes, Keyhole labelled breakfast cereals, müsli, sweet breakfast cereals and others*) is assumed to be affected by the price of the product and habits (which is represented by dummy variables for the purchase in the previous period; PP). Preferences for breakfast cereals, and hence the choice probabilities, could also be affected by household characteristics; both income, education and number of children. We therefore control for income per adult head (represented by dummy variables for the different income groups; Ig2, Ig3 and Ig4 – Ig1 is left out of the model estimated and therefore a characteristic of the reference household), level of education of the person in the household mainly responsible for food purchases (represented by dummy variables for education level; Education2 and Education3 – the lowest level of education, Education1, is left out of the model estimated and thus characterises the reference household) and dummy variables representing if the household consists of a single adult with children (Single w C), two adults without children (2 Adults), two adults with one child (2 Adults, 1 C), two adults with one or more children (2 Adults, 2 C) or three or more adults (3 Adults), where the latter household type could consist of 2 adults and one or more children above the age of 16. Here, the household type consisting of a single adult without children defines the reference household.

See Table 3 for definitions of the variables included in the model.

Table 3. Variable definitions

Variable name	Definitions
Price	Price per 100 gram product, in SEK
PP	1 if the breakfast cereal was purchased on the last consecutive choice occasion, zero otherwise
2 Adults	1 for households consisting of two adults without children, zero otherwise
Single w C	1 for households consisting of a single adult with one or more children
2 Adults, 1 C	1 for households consisting of two adults with one child

2 Adults, 2 C	1 for households consisting of two adults and two or more children
3 Adults	1 for households consisting of three or more adults
Work	1 for households where at least one household member works, zero otherwise
Education2	1 for households where the person mainly responsible for food purchases has intermediate education, zero otherwise
Education3	1 for households where the person mainly responsible for food purchases has higher education, zero otherwise
Education,na	1 if household has not reported the level of education, zero otherwise
Ig2	1 for households with average yearly income per adults head of 140,000-160,000 SEK, zero otherwise
Ig3	1 for households with average yearly income per adults head of 175,000-200,000 SEK, zero otherwise
Ig4	1 for households with average yearly income per adults head of 225,000-600,000 SEK, zero otherwise

Due to the logit formula being homogeneous of degree zero in the attributes, variables that are invariant over and within alternatives (as is the case of both alternative specific constants and household characteristics here) will fall out of probabilities and the model will not be estimable, should these be included in all utility functions. However, variation across alternatives can be created (and hence these variables can be included in the model), if these variables are included in the utility function for all but one alternative (Henscher et al., 2003). We therefore include dummies for household characteristics for all alternatives but *others*. The utility function for the breakfast cereal group *others* will hence only contain the price of the product and results on this group will not be reported here.

We define every day of the year as a choice occasion. However, on each choice occasion, consumers face prices both of the alternative purchased and the remaining choice alternatives. We therefore need to capture the non-observed prices of the choice alternatives. Not all products have been purchased all days during the year. Therefore, average prices are calculated for each week, and used instead of actual prices. Note also that the average weekly

price is used in the utility also of the alternative purchased. This procedure is likely to smoothen the variability in prices over the year.³

Extreme observations were removed from the sample; the MNL was estimated based on households who have made more than 10, and less than 100, purchases of breakfast cereals during the year 2003. The sum of the product of households and their number of choice occasions results in a total of 10,987 observations.

Wald-tests revealed that the hypothesis of the effect of price or household types on utility varying over alternatives could be rejected, at the 95 percent confidence level. We therefore specify the price parameter and household types to be generic over all alternatives. However, Wald-tests revealed that the effect on utility of habit formation seem to differ over alternatives, as do the effect of household characteristics. Therefore, we estimate alternative specific parameters for the effect of purchases in the pervious period, as well as for household characteristics, keeping in mind that none of the dummy variables are included in the utility of the alternative *others*. We therefore estimate the following model:

$$U_i = \beta_i \mathbf{X} + \gamma \mathbf{P} \quad (9)$$

where U_i is the utility of alternative i (and $i =$ flakes, Keyhole labelled breakfast cereals, musli or sweet cereals), α_i is the alternative specific constant (ASC) for alternative i , \mathbf{P} is a vector of prices of products included in alternative i , and for which parameter is assumed to be generic over alternatives. \mathbf{X} is a set of alternative invariant dummy variables of household characteristics for which the effect is assumed to vary over alternatives (2 Adults, Single w C, 2 Adults, 1C, 2 Adults, 2C, 3 Adults, Work, Education2, Education3, Education,na Ig2, Ig3, and Ig4) as well as the dummy variable for previous purchases (PP).

Maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) is used to estimate the MNL. Note also that our data consists of an unbalanced panel. However, this can be dealt with by LIMDEP, which is the program used for the estimations, by specifying the number of choice occasions for each household.

³ We have estimated models with actual prices of the product purchased, and average weekly price of alternatives, though, and results remain very similar to those reported below.

An LL ratio-test is performed to determine the overall statistical significance of the model, where the LL function of the estimated model is compared to the LL function of a base model with alternative specific constants only (i.e. a model providing estimates of the average utility of all alternatives).

5. Results

The estimation results are shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Multinomial logit model, results

Variable	Coefficient	Std deviation	t-value	P-value
Flakes				
Price	-0.10	0.003	-3.633	0.000
2 Adults	1.45	0.118	12.222	0.000
Single w C	0.50	0.291	1.734	0.083
2 Adults, 1 C	1.70	0.307	5.550	0.000
2 Adults, 2 C	1.82	0.203	8.970	0.000
3 Adults	1.96	0.212	9.273	0.000
Work	0.36	0.144	2.477	0.013
Education2	-0.12	0.116	-1.030	0.303
Education3	-0.18	0.132	-1.379	0.168
Education,na	-0.25	0.751	-0.332	0.740
Ig2	1.68	0.207	8.126	0.000
Ig3	0.54	0.161	3.320	0.001
Ig4	0.78	0.155	5.064	0.000
PP	1.07	0.005	23.159	0.000
Keyhole labelled				
Price	-0.10	0.003	-3.633	0.000
2 Adults	1.12	0.117	9.633	0.000
Single w C	0.65	0.280	2.308	0.021
2 Adults, 1 C	1.56	0.304	5.111	0.000
2 Adults, 2 C	1.36	0.202	6.743	0.000
3 Adults	1.58	0.210	7.511	0.000
Work	0.43	0.142	2.997	0.003
Education2	0.10	0.114	0.915	0.360
Education3	0.10	0.130	0.756	0.450
Education,na	0.05	0.747	0.070	0.944
Ig2	1.50	0.206	7.288	0.000
Ig3	0.47	0.160	2.955	0.003
Ig4	0.61	0.154	3.963	0.000
PP	1.21	0.005	26.045	0.000
Musli				

Price	-0.10	0.003	-3.633	0.000
2 Adults	0.43	0.142	3.043	0.002
Single w C	1.66	0.287	5.783	0.000
2 Adults, 1 C	2.17	0.320	6.794	0.000
2 Adults, 2 C	2.36	0.216	10.914	0.000
3 Adults	2.03	0.226	8.969	0.000
Work	0.12	0.164	0.733	0.463
Education2	-0.32	0.127	-2.522	0.012
Education3	-0.56	0.146	-3.821	0.000
Education,na	-0.69	0.785	-0.878	0.380
Ig2	1.26	0.216	5.846	0.000
Ig3	0.27	0.175	1.575	0.115
Ig4	0.21	0.171	1.208	0.227
PP	1.35	0.007	20.440	0.000
Sweet cereals				
Price	-0.10	0.003	-3.633	0.000
2 Adults	0.46	0.153	3.033	0.002
Single w C	0.72	0.348	2.062	0.039
2 Adults, 1 C	1.63	0.349	4.652	0.000
2 Adults, 2 C	1.73	0.236	7.308	0.000
3 Adults	1.43	0.249	5.738	0.000
Work	0.02	0.184	0.084	0.933
Education2	-0.65	0.147	-4.438	0.000
Education3	-0.46	0.163	-2.845	0.004
Education,na	-0.79	0.932	-0.852	0.394
Ig2	0.54	0.248	2.166	0.030
Ig3	-0.24	0.205	-1.147	0.251
Ig4	0.12	0.192	0.617	0.538
PP	1.29	0.116	11.176	0.000
Pseudo R2-adjusted				0.13
Iterations completed				7

The model generates a pseudo-R2 adjusted value of 0.14. Note that the choice model is non-linear and therefore the pseudo-R2 statistic differs from that of a linear regression model. It has been shown (Henscher et al, 2003) that, at this level, the pseudo R2 adjusted value would be equivalent to around a three times as high R2 adjusted value in a linear regression model (in this case 0.42).

The reference household in the model consists of a single adult without children, with the lowest level of education (Education1), in the lowest income group (Ig1) that does not work. As shown by Table 4, the estimated *price* parameter has the expected negative sign and is highly statistically significant. Also, our results imply that utility for all breakfast types is positively affected by purchases of the same products on the previous choice occasion, as

indicated by the positive sign, and statistical significance, of the estimated parameters for *PPf*, *PPk*, *PPm* and *PPs*.

Table 4 shows that all dummy variables for household type have a statistically significant effect on utility for all breakfast cereals, at the 5 percent level (except for Single w C, which has a statistically significant effect at the 10 percent level on utility of *flakes*). As expected, preferences for all breakfast cereals shift upward as more household members, adults or children, are added to the household (compared to the reference household). Comparing the effect of 2 Adults and Single w C on the utility of the different types of breakfast cereals, noteworthy might be that the increase in utility of from adding an adult to the reference household is higher than the increase in utility from adding children when it comes to *Keyhole labelled* breakfast cereals, whereas it is the other way around for *sweet cereals*.

Our results also imply that the dummy variable for *Work* shifts preferences upward for *flakes* and *Keyhole labelled* cereals, but not for *musli* or *sweet cereals*, for which the effect on utility is not statistically significant.

Higher income seems to have a positive effect on utility of *flakes* and *Keyhole labelled* cereals, as indicated by positive and statistically significant effects of all dummy variables representing higher income groups. The evidence on the effect of income on utility of *musli* and *sweet cereals* is more mixed, though. For the latter two types of breakfast cereals, *Ig2* has a statistically significant effect on utility, whereas no such effect can be statistically confirmed for the higher income groups.

Finally, our results imply that the level of education has no effect on preferences for *flakes* or *Keyhole labelled* cereals. However, a higher level of education shifts preferences for *musli* upwards, as indicated by the parameters estimated for *Education2* and *Education3*, whereas higher levels of education seem to shift preferences for sweet breakfast cereals downward.

Computations of choice probabilities and simulation results are left out of this version of the paper!

6. Discussion

The choice we make concerning the quality of our breakfast has an impact both on what we eat during the rest of the day and how we perform during the day. More than XX percent of the population consumes breakfast cereals for breakfast, and their choice of breakfast cereals will have an impact both on their overall energy intake and their performance at work or at school.

In this study, we analyze the effects on utility of a price, different household characteristics and habits on particularly healthy breakfast cereals (*Keyhole labelled*, where the Keyhole is a healthy label certified by the Swedish National Food Administration), *flakes*, *musli* and, from a nutritional perspective, the particularly unhealthy *sweet cereals*. We simulate the results over different consumer groups of economic policy reforms designed to improve the quality of breakfast cereals consumed [**this is left out of this version of the paper!**].

Our results imply that price affects breakfast cereal choices, although the effect is relatively small. However, it could be that at different price levels, i.e. a higher price level, the effect of a price changes would differ from the one captured here. Breakfast cereals are relatively cheap, compared to other types of food, which could be part of the explanation for the price insensitivity of consumers regarding this good.

Also, our results imply that one of the most important determinants of breakfast cereal choices is habits. There seems to be a strong element of habit formation in breakfast cereal choices for all breakfast cereal types. If wanting to improve the nutritional status of breakfast cereals, the pattern of habit formation needs to be broken.

Household characteristics also seem to have an important impact on utility of different types of breakfast cereals. As might be expected, the more members of the household, adults or children, the higher the utility of all breakfast cereals. However, it seems that utility of the *sweet cereals* increases by more if a child is added to the household than it does if adults are added to the household, whereas the relationship is the reversed for healthier types of cereals. A higher income seems to have a positive effect on utility from *flakes* and *Keyhole labelled* cereals, but has mixed effects on the utility from *musli* and the more unhealthy *sweet cereals*. a working household also seems to experience higher utility from *flakes* and *Keyhole labelled*

cereals than do non-working households. Our results also imply that higher levels of education has a negative impact on the utility from *sweet cereals*, whereas it has a positive impact on the utility of *musli*.

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The motivational roots of norms for environmentally responsible behaviour

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Abstract

This paper investigates whether norms guiding environmentally desirable behaviour are genuinely internalized and integrated into the person's cognitive and goal structures or just shallowly "introjected" social norms. Internet-based questionnaires were administered to a stratified sample of Danish consumers (N = 206). Each questionnaire contained standard items measuring subjective social and personal norms for the purchase of organic food, self-reported buying behaviour, and a "hard laddering" instrument probing reasons and motives for doing so. As expected, participants' means-end associations to the studied behaviour differ significantly depending on the strength of their norms and the two types of norms differ in their embeddedness in the person's cognitive structures. The behavioural influence of subjective social norms and expressed reasons and motives is mediated through personal norms. The results are consistent with the analyzed behaviour being guided by truly internalized and integrated (personal) norms.

1 Introduction

We live in an era where the level and composition of human activity poses serious threats to the natural environment and thereby to the basis of human wellbeing, perhaps even our very existence (e.g., Gore, 2006; Lovelock, 2006; N. Stern, 2007). Further, whereas in a not so distant past, resource extraction and industrial production were responsible for practically all noteworthy human impact on the environment, now a large and increasing share of this impact stems directly from private consumption (e.g., Durning, 1992). As a consequence, there is an increasing pressure to also involve consumers in solving important environmental problems (e.g., Hansen & Schrader, 1997; OECD, 2002; Sitarz, 1994). Some of the approaches to doing so emphasize the need to support and empower consumers, that is, increase their opportunities and/or abilities to reduce the negative environmental impacts of their activities (for a recent overview, see Thøgersen, 2005) while others are less subtle in emphasizing the individual consumer's responsibility. For example, the current Danish administration launched a "Green Responsibility" campaign in 2005 with the specific objective to strengthen consumers' feeling of personal responsibility for avoiding or cleaning up environmental impacts of consumption.¹ Another example is

¹ See www.mim.dk/ministeren/fokus/groentansvar.htm and www.groentansvar.dk.

the European Commission's current (2007) "You Control Climate Change" campaign.² Although such blunt approaches have obvious pitfalls (Thøgersen, 2007a) and may in extreme cases be directly counterproductive (Reich & Robertson, 1979) they are not without theoretical backing either. Notably, the importance of social norms for environmentally responsible behaviour is thoroughly documented in the literature (for a recent review, see Biel & Thøgersen, 2007). However, in order to avoid the pitfalls and get the most out of campaigns aimed at making environmentally responsible behaviour the norm, campaigners need a clear understanding of how norms are formed and how they influence behaviour.

Norms are shared beliefs about how we ought to act which are enforced by the threat of sanctions or the promise of rewards (e.g., Schwartz & Howard, 1982). Psychological norm theory, such as Schwartz's (1977) norm-activation theory, suggests that social norms can be more or less internalized (see also Thøgersen, 2006). Individual's beliefs about the norms of society or groups they belong to are called perceived or subjective social norms and internalized norms personal norms (e.g., Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein, 1967; Schwartz, 1970; Schwartz, 1977). Schwartz (1977) defines personal norms as self-expectations of specific action in a particular situation, experienced as a feeling of moral obligation. This definition is widely accepted in psychological norm research (e.g., Ajzen, 1991; Manstead, 2000). Individuals are assumed to adhere to subjective social norms because of the (real or imagined) social pressure (Ajzen, 1988), and to personal norms for internal reasons, that is, because they feel it is the (morally) right thing to do (Schwartz & Howard, 1982, 1984).

Extant research contains plenty of evidence linking variations in environmentally responsible behaviour to the strength of individuals' norms for such behaviour (e.g., Biel, Borgstede, & Dahlstrand, 1999; Gill, Crosby, & Taylor, 1986; Kallgren, Reno, & Cialdini, 2000; Reno, Cialdini, & Kallgren, 1993) and especially to the strength of personal norms (e.g., Black, Stern, & Elworth, 1985; Bratt, 1999; Guagnano, Stern, & Dietz, 1995; Harland, Staats, & Wilke, 1999; Heberlein, 1972; Hopper & Nielsen, 1991; P. C. Stern, Dietz, Abel, Guagnano, & Kalof, 1999; Thøgersen, 1999). When both subjective social and personal norms are included in the analysis, environmentally responsible behaviour is usually accounted for by the latter rather than the former of these two norm constructs (e.g., Bratt, 1999; Harland, Staats, & Wilke, 1999; Thøgersen, 1999). Why is that?

Personal norms are sometimes referred to as internalized social norms, other times as the product of reasoning about a behaviour's moral consequences. These are not necessarily mutually exclusive mechanisms, however. For instance, Schwartz (1970, 1977) seems to assume that both may contribute to the formation of a personal norm. However, there is a lack of empirical research investigating the relative importance of these two sources. This is unfortunate because it may have implications for the strength of the norm whether it was formed through one or the other mechanism. For instance, research on attitude change suggests that elaborate reasoning and reflection lead to stronger evaluative constructs (norms in this case) that are more predictive of behaviour (e.g., Chaiken, 1980; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

² See www.climatechange.eu.com.

Elaborate reasoning may lead to stronger evaluative constructs (read: norms) because they become more integrated into the individual's cognitive structure and better aligned with his/her important beliefs and goals. In the field of motivation research, Deci and Ryan (1985) and others speak about this in terms of depth of internalization and integration into the self and they thoroughly document that the degree of internalization and integration of motivation is important for goal striving as well as for wellbeing (cf. also Ryan & Deci, 2000). In Deci and Ryan's terminology, environmentally friendly behaviour is probably always extrinsically motivated in the sense that it is performed "in order to attain some separable outcome" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 71). However, as they argue, extrinsic motives may be more or less internalized and integrated into the self, which can make a big difference (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Notably, greater internalization appears to lead to more behavioural effectiveness and greater volitional persistence (Ryan & Deci, 2000) as well as stronger resistance against persuasion attempts (Koestner, Houliort, Paquet, & Knight, 2001). Also, a person's motivation to perform an environment-friendly behaviour will most likely be less ambivalent the more internalized and integrated the motives are, which in itself can increase its behavioural impact (Thompson, Zanna, & Griffin, 1995).

Viewed in this perspective, it seems likely that norms that are not or only superficially internalized are more frail and have less behavioural impacts than norms that have been thoroughly and broadly anchored in the individual's cognitive structure through reflections about the behaviour's consequences and its relation to the person's own goals (cf., Eagly & Kulesa, 1997; Koestner, Houliort, Paquet, & Knight, 2001). This quality – depth of internalization and integration into the individual's cognitive structures – may explain why, in general, personal norms have stronger behavioural impacts than subjective social norms .

In this paper we will take a closer look at the character of the norm-regulation of environmentally desirable behaviour and investigate whether the strength of personal norms relative to subjective social norms for such behaviour reflect a corresponding deeper level of internalization and integration of the norm into the person's own cognitive (including goal) structures. If this is the case, we may conclude that personal norms reflect a more autonomous form of motivation (cf., Deci & Ryan, 1985) than subjective social norms.

The level of internalization and integration of norms regarding environmentally relevant behaviours is explored by means of in-depth interviews, more specifically by employing the laddering technique, which has been proposed as an effective method for analysing individuals' belief and goal structures (e.g., Bagozzi & Dabholkar, 1994; Grunert & Grunert, 1995; Pieters, Baumgartner, & Allen, 1995). In accordance with the proposition that personal norms reflect a deeper level of internalization and integration of the norm into the person's cognitive structures, we should expect that the cognitive (including goal) structures of individuals with strong personal norms regarding environmentally desirable behaviour differ considerably from that of individuals with weaker personal norms. The cognitive structures of individuals with strong personal norms is expected to be richer, containing a higher number and stronger associations, than for individuals with weak personal norms, and especially to include a higher number and stronger associations to abstract concepts (often referred to as "self-knowledge," cf., Grunert & Grunert, 1995). In contrast, we expect

little (or less) difference in the goal structures of individuals with strong and weak (non-internalized) subjective social norms for this type of behaviour. We should also expect differences in the content of associations linked to the norm. The cognitive structure of an individual with a strong personal norm for a specific behaviour should have a relatively high prevalence of associations to meaningful and positive outcomes as well as positive images of the self whereas the cognitive structure of an individual with a strong subjective social norm should have a relatively high prevalence of associations to social acceptance/rejection and negative emotions (guilt, shame).

A caveat is needed here. Like other events occurring to a person, social norms can initiate more or less reflection, which may implicate the self to a higher or lower extent. At one extreme are social customs that are followed just because “that’s how we do it here.” At the other extreme are cases where perceived social expectations initiate elaborate reflections about their rationale and coherence with the person’s own core beliefs and goals. Somewhere in between are cases where perceived social expectations lead to reflections only about the punishment/rewards entailed by complying/not complying. Whereas the first and last of these three cases are likely to lead to no or only shallow internalization of the norm, the middle one may result in a deeply internalized and integrated personal norm. This illustrates that subjective social and personal norms may be aligned to a higher or lower extent, which can make it difficult to empirically disentangle which of the two norm constructs is responsible for associations to the person’s wider cognitive structure.

In the empirical part of the paper, these issues are studied with regard to Danish consumers’ purchase of organic food. An Internet-based questionnaire was administered to a representative sample of adult consumers. The questionnaire contained norm and behaviour items as well as a “hard laddering” (Grunert & Grunert, 1995) instrument where respondents who intended to do so were asked to formulate, in their own words, the reasons why they buy organic food. For each reason given, respondents were asked why this was important to them, and for each answer provided they were again asked why this was important.

This discussion of the relationship between norms and environmentally friendly behaviour can be summarized in the following propositions, specified to consumer purchases of organic food:

P1. Being an environmentally responsible behaviour, buying organic food is to a high extent guided by personal norms.

P2. Both subjective social norms and personal norms are positively correlated with buying organic food, but the behavioural influence of subjective social norms is mediated through personal norms.

P3. A number of different reasons and motives are antecedents of and therefore correlated with buying organic food, but their behavioural influence is mediated through personal norms.

P4. Compared to subjective social norms, strong personal norms for buying organic food are to a higher extent embedded in the person’s cognitive structure as reflected in a higher number of reasons for performing the behaviour being correlated with the

latter than the former norm construct and the latter to a higher extent than the former reflecting the totality of the consumer's reasons and motives for buying organic food.

P4a. Compared to subjective social norms, strong personal norms for buying organic food are related more to the person's "self-knowledge," that is, to abstract self-related reasons (psycho-social consequences and values), as reflected in a higher number of abstract self-related motives for performing the behaviour being correlated with the latter than the former norm construct.

P5. Compared to subjective social norms, personal norms for buying organic food are to a higher extent correlated with positive outcomes and positive images of the self and less with social acceptance/rejection and negative emotions (guilt, shame).

P6. Due to personal norms being at least partly internalized subjective social norms, the two constructs are positively correlated, but due to elaborate reflections about the behaviour's consequences and its relation to the person's own goals, personally meaningful reasons and motives for buying organic food explain a larger share of the variation in personal norms than does subjective social norms.

2 Method

Data were collected in Denmark in October 2006 via TNS Gallup's Internet panel, G@llupForum. The questionnaire contained norm questions embedded in a larger battery of evaluative items. If the respondent expressed an intention to buy organic food in the next month, the battery was followed by a series of open-ended questions, first asking for the respondent's reasons for buying organic food (max three), then following up by a two-step "hard laddering" procedure asking: "why is this important to you?" for each of the elicited reasons and then repeating the question for each of max three reasons given (for a detailed description of the method, see Walker & Olson, 1991). Then the respondent was asked to report his or her buying frequency for organic food. Questions about background characteristics concluded the interview.

2.1 Subjects

A stratified sample (in terms of gender, age, income, education) was drawn from members of the G@llupForum panel (n = 206) and interviewed by means of a web-based questionnaire. The mean age was 43 years (S.D.: 12.5), 54 percent were females and 46 percent males, 53 percent were college graduates, 79 percent lived with at least one other person, and 34 percent had children under the age of 18.

2.2 Variables

Behavior was measured by a single item: "From the following alternatives, please choose the one that best describes your shopping habits as regards organic food: (1) I have never bought, nor considered buying organic food, (2) I have not yet bought, but I have considered buying organic food, (3) I buy organic foods few times a year, (4) I buy organic foods one or a couple of times a month, (5) I buy organic foods weekly, (6) I buy organic foods always when possible." An additional response alternative, "I have bought organic foods, but will not any more" was coded as (2) in order to achieve a monotonic scale.

Perceived social norms regarding choosing organic instead of conventional food products was measured with two injunctive norm items: “Most people who are important to me think that (“I should not buy” to “I should buy”) organic food instead of conventional,” and “Most of my acquaintances expect from me that I buy organic food instead of conventional as far as possible” (response categories ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”). The two-item scale has a construct reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) of .60. The average of the two items are used to represent subjective social norms in the following.

Personal norms regarding choosing organic instead of conventional food products was measured with two items as well: “I feel an obligation to choose organic food,” and “I feel I should choose organic instead of conventional food products” (response categories ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”). The two-item scale has a construct reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) of .86. The average of the two items are used to represent personal norms in the following. A 7-point scale for all norm items.

3 Results

The output of the open-ended questions was content analyzed and recoded and statistical analyses of the coded output and responses to norm and behaviour items were made by means of SPSS 11. Bivariate correlation analysis is used to identify which reasons and motives for buying organic food, as revealed by the open-ended questions, are related to norms and behaviour. Stepwise regression analysis is used to reduce redundancies and identify which reasons and motives are directly related to norm constructs and behaviour when controlling for the whole set of expressed reasons and motives. Finally, multiple regression analysis is used to determine the antecedents of personal norms and behaviour and the extent to which norm constructs mediate the influence of reasons and motives on personal norms and behaviour.

3.1 Content analysis of the laddering interviews

Responses to the open-ended questions from the laddering instrument were categorized into attributes, consequences and values (ACV) and coded into a more parsimonious taxonomy by two independent coders (Walker & Olson, 1991). The inter-coder agreement for abstraction level was 84 percent and for category 89 percent. Disagreements were settled by discussion. The resulting taxonomy is summarized in Table 1.

Based on the taxonomy, the open-ended questions were then coded as nominal or dummy variables, one for each construct in the taxonomy. Each dummy variable was coded as 1 if the respondent had mentioned (a reason or motive that was categorized as) the specific construct and 0 otherwise. The first column of Table 2 shows how large a share of the participants mentioned each of the constructs in the taxonomy. It appears that the diversity of the responses could be captured by 12 attribute-level constructs, 22 consequences and seven values, among which four attributes (healthy and wholesome, no additives or poisonous chemicals, taste, quality), eight consequences (better for nature and the environment, avoids chemicals, better conditions for farm animals, avoids health threats, live a healthy life, more taste, better for the family, more enjoyment of food), and four values (a long and healthy life, shared responsibility, family’s wellbeing, responsibility for nature and the environment) were mentioned by more than 10 percent of the sample.

Table 1: Taxonomy of reasons and motives for buying organic food (n = 206)

Attributes	A1. No additives or poisonous chemicals A2. Price A3. Too expensive A4. Organic A5. Healthy and wholesome A6. Freshness	A7. Taste A8. Quality A9. Look A10. Natural produce A11. Selection / coincidence A12. Longevity
Consequences	C1. Live a healthy life C2. Avoids health threats C3. Avoids chemicals C4. Better for the family C5. Better for nature and the environment C6. Better conditions for farm animals C7. Support for organic production C8. More taste C9. More enjoyment of food C10. Cannot afford C11. Economy	C12. Mistrust C13. Wholesome and healthy food C14. Avoids pollution C15. Secure the future C16. Available / convenient C17. Easier to prepare C18. More control C19. Morally / ethical correct C20. Wellbeing and surplus C21. Self-projection (social image) C22. Conscience
Values	V1. Responsibility for nature and the environment V2. A long and healthy life V3. Happiness, inner harmony, quality of life V4. Shared responsibility	V5. Better conditions and conscience for farm animals V6. Family's wellbeing V7. Critical responsibility

Note: Inter-coder reliability: Abstraction level: 84%, category: 89%

Notice that these self-reports about reasons and motives for buying organic food contain few traces of concerns about social acceptance/rejection (only C21, mentioned by three percent of the respondents) or negative emotions (the only code which partly reflect negative emotions is C22, mentioned by 8 percent of the respondents). Hence, from this content analysis of the open-ended interviews it seems that such concerns and emotions are of minor importance for respondents' decisions to buy organic food products.

3.2 Correlation analysis

The correlation analysis (Table 2) shows that the two norm constructs are strongly and positively correlated and both of them are strongly and positively correlated with behaviour as well. The correlations between norm constructs and behaviour are quite uneven, however, personal norms being more strongly correlated with behaviour than subjective social norms. This is consistent with the content analysis finding few traces of social expectations among the stated reasons and motives for buying organic food.

Table 2: Share of sample mentioning each ACV-construct and correlations between these constructs, subjective norms, personal norms and behaviour (n = 206)

	Bivariate Pearson correlations ¹			
	Mean	Subjective norm	Personal norm	Behavior
A5 ²	0.34	0.22	0.23	0.23
A1	0.23	0.15	0.13	0.16
A7	0.21	0.13	0.09	0.15
A8	0.12	0.06	0.04	0.07
A10	0.07	0.15	0.16	0.13
A2	0.04	-0.01	-0.04	-0.02
A3	0.03	-0.11	-0.12	-0.07
A9	0.03	-0.09	-0.08	-0.01
A11	0.03	-0.13	-0.10	-0.09
A6	0.02	-0.08	-0.09	-0.03
A4	0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01
A12	0.01	-0.07	-0.09	-0.02
C5	0.43	0.25	0.40	0.39
C3	0.21	0.24	0.17	0.22
C6	0.21	0.29	0.29	0.28
C2	0.17	0.14	0.29	0.25
C1	0.16	0.17	0.17	0.19
C8	0.14	0.16	0.13	0.15
C4	0.12	0.01	0.09	0.11
C9	0.11	-0.02	-0.04	0.07
C14	0.08	0.15	0.19	0.13
C19	0.08	-0.06	0.22	0.16
C22	0.08	0.06	0.20	0.18
C11	0.06	-0.14	-0.16	-0.14
C15	0.06	0.20	0.16	0.14
C7	0.05	0.06	0.24	0.21
C16	0.05	-0.18	-0.18	-0.10
C20	0.05	0.15	0.04	0.15
C10	0.04	0.01	0.05	0.04
C13	0.04	0.06	0.11	0.13
C21	0.03	-0.02	0.09	0.08
C12	0.02	-0.09	-0.14	-0.12
C18	0.02	-0.01	0.00	-0.08
C17	0.01	-0.07	0.02	0.02
V2	0.17	0.05	0.20	0.19
V4	0.15	0.14	0.22	0.22
V6	0.15	0.07	0.29	0.24
V1	0.11	0.08	0.17	0.15

V5	0.05	0.19	0.13	0.11
V3	0.03	0.10	0.07	0.10
V7	0.03	0.00	0.12	0.08
Subjective norm	3.22	1.00	0.55	0.45
Personal norm	3.58	0.55	1.00	0.70
Behaviour	4.20	0.45	0.70	1.00

¹ Correlations > .13 are significant, $p < .05$.

² For the taxonomy of attributes, consequences and values: see Table 1.

A number of different reasons and motives are related to norms and/or behaviour and there is substantial overlap between both norm constructs and behaviour in terms of their bivariate correlations with reasons and motives. For example, four (three) of the five reasons and motives most strongly correlated with behaviour are also among the five reasons and motives most strongly correlated with personal norms (subjective norms). However, the differences are more informative than the overlaps.

Two propositions (P4 and P4a) expressed expectations about differences between the two norm constructs in terms of correlations with reasons and motives. Table 2 shows that whereas only one of the expressed reasons for buying organic food (C20) is significantly correlated with subjective norms, but not with personal norms, five reasons and motives (C7, C19, C22, V2, and V6), two of which are at the values level, are significantly correlated with personal norms, but not with subjective norms. This is consistent with propositions P4 and P4a.

A comparison of the patterns of correlations with reasons and motives between behaviour and the two norm constructs shows a larger overlap between personal norms and behaviour than between subjective social norms and behaviour. Two expressed reasons (A7, C20) are significantly correlated with behaviour, but not with personal norms, and no reasons or motives are significantly correlated with personal norms, but not with behaviour. On the other hand, six reasons and motives (C7, C19, C22, V1, V2, and V6) are significantly correlated with behaviour, but not with subjective norms, and one expressed motive (V5) is significantly correlated with subjective norms, but not with behaviour.

The overlap in the pattern of correlations between the two norm constructs is consistent with the theoretical proposition that they are related (specifically that personal norms are at least partly the product of internalizing social expectations) and with the empirical finding that they are significantly correlated (Table 2). Further, the finding that personal norms is correlated with a larger number of reasons and motives than is subjective norms is consistent with the proposition that personal norms are more internalized and integrated than subjective norms in the individual's cognitive structure. In addition, it suggests that there is more to personal norms than internalized subjective norms (i.e., that personal norms are at least partly the product of more elaborate reasoning and reflection). The final observation, that there are reasons and motives that are correlated with behaviour, but not with any of the norm constructs, suggests that normative reasons – as captured by the two norm constructs – alone do not explain all of the variation in the analysed behaviour. The two reasons correlated with behaviour, but not with personal norms – taste (A7) and wellbeing and

surplus (C20) – are both selfish (in contrast to social or altruistic) reasons for buying organic food.

3.3 Stepwise regression analyses

The stepwise regression analyses reported in Table 3 reinforce the inferences based on the bivariate correlation analyses.

Table 3: Reasons and motives as predictors of subjective norm, personal norms and behaviour. Stepwise dummy variable regression analysis, standardized solution, n = 206.

	Subjective norms			Personal norms			Behavior		
	Beta	t	Sig.	Beta	t	Sig.	Beta	t	Sig.
C6	0.23	3.509	0.001	0.20	3.244	0.001	0.20	3.172	0.002
A5	0.19	3.061	0.003						
A10	0.17	2.798	0.006	0.13	2.159	0.032			
C3	0.16	2.409	0.017						
C15	0.18	2.757	0.006						
C16	-0.14	-2.240	0.026						
C19	-0.14	-2.152	0.033						
C17	-0.14	-2.109	0.036						
C5				0.22	3.497	0.001	0.27	4.172	0.000
C2				0.19	3.087	0.002	0.17	2.586	0.010
V2				0.15	2.514	0.013	0.14	2.303	0.022
C7				0.13	2.206	0.029	0.13	2.055	0.041
C22				0.15	2.544	0.012			
C14				0.14	2.359	0.019			
C10				0.16	2.638	0.009			
C11				-0.12	-2.009	0.046			
R ² -adj.	0.22			0.33			0.24		

Not unexpected, the exploratory multiple regression analyses reveal redundancies in the amount of variance in norm constructs and behaviour accounted for by the expressed reasons and motives. Hence, a smaller number of significant associations is identified by the multivariate than by the bivariate analyses. Still, the stepwise regression analyses confirm that personal norms are more strongly linked to expressed reasons and motives, both in terms of the number of significant associations and the amount of explained variance, than subjective social norms. This is consistent with personal norms being the most internalized of the two constructs.

Notice also that reasons and motives are apparently more strongly linked to personal norms than to behaviour. This may be due to behaviour being only partly determined by the individual's motivation. In addition, the purchase of organic food may be influenced by consumers' opportunities (i.e., the availability of organic food products) and abilities (e.g., income, habits) (Thøgersen, 2007b; Thøgersen & Ölander, 2006). The pattern is also consistent with P3, suggesting that the behavioural influence of reasons and motives is mediated through personal norms.

3.4 Mediation analyses

In the next step, it is analyzed to which extent norm constructs mediate the influence of reasons and motives on behaviour (P3) and to which extent personal norms mediate the influence of subjective social norms on behaviour (P2). In addition, the relative contribution of subjective social norms and expressed reasons and motives to variation in personal norms is analysed.

Table 4 shows that, when personal norms are controlled, subjective social norms and four of the five expressed reasons and motives that were significant predictors of behaviour in Table 3 are no longer significant. Hence, the influence of subjective social norms and these four reasons and motives are fully mediated through personal norms (for a thorough introduction to mediation analysis, see Baron & Kenny, 1986; Judd, Kenny, & McClelland, 2001). The influence of the fifth expressed reason (C5: Better for nature and the environment) is also significantly attenuated when controlling for personal norms (Sobel test: 3.396, $p < .001$), but a small direct effect on behaviour remains. Hence, the influence of this factor is only partially mediated through personal norms. In sum, the results confirm P2 and partly confirm P3.

Table 4: Reasons and motives, subjective norm, and personal norms as predictors of behaviour. Multiple regression analysis, standardized solution, $n = 206$. R^2 -adj. = .50

	Beta	t	Sig.
Personal norm	0.55	8.186	0.000
Subjective norm	0.10	1.618	0.107
C5	0.11	2.069	0.040
C2	0.04	0.809	0.420
C6	0.06	1.066	0.288
C7	0.05	0.958	0.339
V2	0.06	1.206	0.229

Although Table 3 suggests that most of the effects of reasoning about consequences and values on personal norms is direct rather than mediated through subjective norms, some mediation cannot be ruled out. Hence, a mediation analysis was also made in this case (Table 5).

Table 5 shows that, when subjective norms are controlled, four of the ten expressed reasons and motives that were significant predictors of personal norms in Table 3 are no longer significant (at the 5-percent level). Hence, the influence on personal norms of A10 (natural produce), C6 (better conditions for farm animals), C11 (economy), and C14 (avoids pollution) is mediated through subjective norms.³ Notice that none of these reasons and motives for buying organic food refer to the fear (or hope) of sanctioning by others or by an “internal controller.” Rather, they seem to reflect individuals’ reasoning about *why* others would expect them to buy organic food, thus suggesting that perceptions about social expectations have initiated more elaborate reflections in this case.

³ That this was the case for the last two is surprising given that they were not significant predictors of subjective norms in Table 4. However, as seen in Table 3 they both correlated bivariate with subjective norms and in neither of the cases was much attenuation needed to make them insignificant.

Table 5: Reasons and motives and subjective norm as predictors of personal norms. Multiple regression analysis, standardized solution, n = 206. R²-adj. = .46

	Beta	t	Sig.
Subjective norms	0.394	6.980	0.000
A10	0.062	1.155	0.250
C2	0.152	2.805	0.006
C5	0.164	2.886	0.004
C6	0.095	1.672	0.096
C7	0.147	2.748	0.007
C10	0.120	2.234	0.027
C11	-0.071	-1.304	0.194
C14	0.103	1.927	0.055
C22	0.148	2.799	0.006
V2	0.142	2.708	0.007

Table 5 further shows that subjective norms account for about a third of explained variance in personal norms. By means of hierarchical regression, one can calculate that the inclusion of subjective norms in addition to expressed reasons and motives led to an increase in adjusted R² from .33 to .46 (F-change = 48.727, p < .001).

4 Discussion

The point of departure of this study was that campaigners wanting to make consumers take more responsibility for the environmental consequences of their behaviour and adopt more responsible consumption norms need a deeper insight into the nature and formation of norms than is available from extant research. Specifically, they need to understand the difference between subjective social norms and personal norms, both in terms of behavioural implications and motivational foundation. Previous research has thoroughly demonstrated that personal norms usually have stronger and more reliable behavioural implications than subjective social norms. Hence, everything else being equal, the objectives of environmental campaigners would benefit most if their campaigns succeeded in creating or strengthening favourable personal norms rather than (only) perceptions about relevant social norms. A basic prerequisite for succeeding in this respect is a clear understanding of what a personal norm is and how it is formed.

It is assumed in theory that personal norms are somehow internalized by the individual, but what does this mean? Extant research is equivocal about whether personal norms are relatively shallowly internalized social norms and, hence, have a motivational backing which is rather similar to subjective social norms, or they are more deeply and thoroughly internalized and integrated into the individual's cognitive structures. This may, of course, differ between individuals and across behavioural situations and domains. However, there is a lack of empirical studies attempting to clarify this issue in any context.

In order to explore the motivational backing of norms, as perceived by individuals, this study uses a combination of a traditional survey approach, used to measure norms

and behaviour, and open-ended probing into the respondent's cognitive structures by means of a web-based variant of the in-depth "laddering" interview technique. This is a new method and this paper presents a first attempt to apply it in the environmental domain. The studied case is the purchase of organic food products by Danish consumers, a behaviour which has previously been shown to be guided by personal norms (e.g., Thøgersen & Ölander, 2006).

In line with previous research (e.g., Thøgersen & Ölander, 2006), it is found that the behavioural implications of subjective norms are mediated through personal norms for this particular behaviour. In addition, it is found that personal norms, relative to subjective social norms, are more broadly and more strongly embedded in the consumer's cognitive structures and that personal norms mediate practically all behavioural effects of reported reasons and motives for buying organic food products. Further, it is found that, although subjective social norms contribute to predicting personal norms, which is consistent with the latter being partly the result of internalizing the former, personal norms are much more. Reasons and motives not mediated through subjective social norms, but reflecting beliefs about personally meaningful outcomes and goals, account for more than twice as much variation in personal norms as subjective social norms. In addition, the impact of subjective social norms on personal norms seems partly to be due to elaborate reflections on the rationale of the social expectations, rather than just thoughtless introjection of an external pressure. Hence, at least in this particular case, personal norms are something qualitatively different from subjective social norms.

This is the first of its kind of studies and it is limited in scope. Future research will show – and should investigate – whether the results can be generalized to other behaviours and/or contexts.

The findings have important policy implications. First, it suggests that the communication of social expectations may at least sometimes have a positive impact on personal norms as well. However, alone the impact seems to be rather limited. The results suggest that it is prudent to at least also include measures aimed at stimulating reflections in the individual receiver about the rationale of the social expectation and about personally meaningful outcomes of the desired behaviour in order to facilitate the internalization and integration of the norm. These outcomes need not be personal advantages, at least not alone. Also advantages to ones family, the wider society and the environment can be personally meaningful outcomes, according to this study. The study found that personal norms are also connected to important self-beliefs. Connections such as these can probably not be created directly by outside agents, but should be seen as an indirect effect, produced by the individual's own reflections.

The results also suggest that direct responsibility appeals are not necessary for making consumers form personal norms. Actually, in the specific case studied here there have been no campaigns from governmental or official bodies suggesting individual consumer responsibility, neither for the pollution from conventional agriculture nor for buying organic food. Organic food has primarily been promoted by private companies, supported by NGOs, and the message of the communication has usually been limited to stressing the benefits of organic food for the environment and for animal welfare. It is well known among the consumers in this context that organic agriculture is supported financially by the government and the promotion of organic food is supported by a state-controlled organic label. These measures undoubtedly

increase consumer trust in organic food products and in the claims made by producers and it signals that the government wants you to buy organic food. However, it has been left to the individual consumer to infer social expectations and a personal responsibility from these messages and regulations.

As mentioned in the introduction, campaigners in some countries have recently begun to use direct appeals to individual consumer responsibility to solve environmental problems. Future research should investigate the effectiveness of such appeals in terms of behaviour change, but also in terms of generating or strengthening personal norms. It is an obvious risk that consumers will perceive messages such as these as overly pressing and respond by avoiding the campaign messages, counterarguments or even psychological reactance (Reich & Robertson, 1979).

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Governance of change of Sustainable Consumption and Production – An Evidence Based View

Based on a SCORE! Policy Brief distributed at the Third International Expert Meeting of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP), Stockholm, Sweden, 26-29 June 2007

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Summary

This contribution is an edited version of a policy brief summarizing the key findings from the first half of the Sustainable Consumption Research Exchange network (SCORE!) for the policy programs in the field of Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP). We would recommend a framework for action to change to SCP that mentions as key domains food, mobility, and energy use/housing (the last two clearly related to urban development). It should use a systemic perspective on the SCP challenge and differentiate between developed, fast developing, and base of the pyramid economies. SCORE! focuses mainly on developed economies, and here we propose to differentiate between:

- measures that fit with mainstream beliefs and paradigms. Here, governments could make operational agreements on implementation of instruments like green public procurement, stimulating ecodesign, etc.
- problems where a rough agreement on goals exists, but where change is radical, or means are uncertain, and hence planning difficult. Here, governments could foster visioning, experimentation, and support e.g. international collaboration in leapfrogging programs.
- problems that outright clash with mainstream beliefs and paradigms. Here, governments could foster informed deliberation on the more fundamental issues related to markets, governance and growth

Key words: Sustainable consumption and production, governance, radical change, sustainability, system innovation

1. Introduction

This paper is a result of work of Sustainable Consumption Research Exchanges (SCORE!). This EU supported network project under the 6th Framework Program has by now engaged a few hundred professionals interested in SCP in Europe and beyond. A key goal of the network is to enhance understanding how radical reductions of environmental impacts and at global level a more equitable growth can be realized. Since October 2005, it organized 2 major workshops and one conference, resulting in over 2000 pages of proceedings, in which over 250 contributors presented some 160 conceptual and case-related papers on how to foster change to SCP. In this Note from the Field, based on a Policy Brief, presented during the Third International Expert Meeting of the 10-Year Framework

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of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP), Stockholm, Sweden, 26-29 June 2007, the SCORE! team wants to condense the insights gained into recommendations for how to set up the 10 Year Framework of Programs on SCP. The Note is based on a book in production at Greenleaf Publishing Ltd., called 'System Innovation for Sustainability – Governance of radical change to sustainable consumption and production'. It will be available in Fall 2007 [1].

Our recommendations are based on the following insights:

2. Not all economies are equal

Economies of the different countries in the world differ markedly. Hence, a one size fits all SCP policy cannot work. [2,3]

It is well known that the developed economies, that house just 20% of the world population, are responsible for almost 80% of the life cycle impacts of consumption [4, 5, cf 6] The challenge for developed economies is hence to do more with less: they must reduce their ecological footprint and end overshoot [7, 8, cf. 9]. A key problem is often 'lock-in': existing infrastructures, habits, and other sunk costs, that make it difficult to change [10-13].

Fast developing economies face a totally different challenge. Their societies are in flux, and will build in the next decades 80% or more of their future infrastructures [14]. This gives in theory unique opportunities to leapfrog: forgoing the problematic structures in the West, and jumping directly to novel sustainable structures of production and consumption [2,3].

And in base of the pyramid economies, the challenge is again different. Here the prime goal is to lay a basis for sustainable, equitable growth, and to eradicate poverty [15, 16]. 'Base of the pyramid' or 'Human Development through the Market' (HDtM) approaches could be strategies to be pursued [17, 18].

3. Food, housing/energy use, and mobility have the most environmental impact

All economic activity, and hence the related environmental impacts, finally is driven by consumption. In the last years, a large number of studies was done to analyze what final consumption activities drive most impacts. Despite an immense variety of approaches, data sources, and indicators used, all studies agree on the main priorities [19-27]. Mobility (car and air transport, including for holidays), food (meat and dairy followed by the other types of food) and energy use in and around the home (heating, cooling and energy using products) plus house building and demolition cause, on most environmental impact categories, together 70 to 80% of life cycle environmental impacts in society [28-30]. Note that concepts like 'sustainable cities' cover these priorities to a large extent.

4. The SCP challenge has a systemic nature

The development of an SCP policy agenda has been slow. Rather concrete ideas were already present in the Rio Declaration of 1992 [31], but since then the many meetings and workshops did not lead to much implementation [32-34]; indeed, in the view of some the more recent policy declarations are weaker than the original Rio text [cf 35]. This is probably no coincidence. We don't talk about diminishing an emission here, or re-designing a product there. Production, markets and consumption form a regime of an interdependent and co-evolving set of technologies, symbolic meanings, services, consumer practices, rules, interests, financial relations and expectations [10,12,13; 36, 37]. It is difficult to change one part without the rest. Further, this regime is embedded in a 'landscape' context consisting of meta-trends, meta-values, meta-structures, and meta-shocks. Such 'meta' factors usually can't be influenced directly by actors in the regime on short term. New SCP practices or policies that deviate radically from this regime and landscape normally hence cannot be pushed through heads on. Usually, they stay for a significant period in niches (if they don't die out there), until a window of opportunity arises for breakthrough [13, 38-40].

Growth versus downshifting

One of the tense debates in the sustainable consumption arena is the question if we can continue to base our economy on the growth paradigm, or that we should in fact reduce consumption (at least in the West) [9, 41]. Organisations like the Slow Food movement and the Centre for a New American Dream provide inspiring examples how a high quality of life can be realized with a strong reduction in material consumption [42,43]. Yet, it is also obvious that the application of such inspiring examples cannot (yet) be enforced top-down. That would go counter e.g. the principle that humans should be free to shape their lives in the way they want, the idea of consumer sovereignty, and the concept of free markets. Any policy maker proposing e.g. a 'cap' on consumption levels probably won't last long. A better strategy is to foster experiments with such alternative organizations of the economic system, gather evidence of their merits, and start bending existing beliefs and paradigms from there.

5. Green consumers and businesses, plus policymakers, should create the triangle of change.

Green consumers and green businesses can do a lot to foster changes to SCP [e.g. 44, 45, 46]. And markets to some extent will start to reflect scarcity of resources and other sustainability problems providing incentives for some change [47]. But all evidence shows that since actors are trapped in systemic interdependencies, such routes for change have limits [10-13, 36-38, 48]. Bottom-up and market based action can only result in lasting fundamental change if backed up by top-down support and framework change [49-51]. Policy makers hence can't 'outsource politics' [52] but must do their bit, and collaborate with business and consumers to make things work, creating what the UK Sustainable Consumption Roundtable calls a 'triangle of change' [53].

The role – and limits- of business and consumers in change to SCP

Business is probably best placed to respond positively to sustainability challenges via radical innovative products and services and related new business models. Their drive for efficiency gives them a natural role in making production and products more resource efficient, and the history of e.g. the Marine Stewardship Council, Responsible Care, and similar schemes shows that business is well capable of promoting sustainability values in their supply- and downstream chains. Yet, the competitive market system also rewards companies that make people dependent via the promotion of greed, fear, and addictions, that externalize costs, and draw hitherto freely available non-market goods into a market context [51, 54].

Consumers in theory can exercise sustainable choice. This can be stimulated via informative instruments and campaigns. However, consumers are for a large part 'locked in' in infrastructures, social norms, and habits that limit consumer choice in practice severely. Consumer behavior change is only likely if three components are addressed simultaneously: motivation/intent, ability and opportunity [55]. The alternative opportunity should at least be as attractive as the existing way of doing things – not only in terms of functionality, but also in terms of immaterial features such as symbolic meaning, identity creation, and expression of dreams, hopes and expectations [56]. Relying on e.g. informative instruments only is hence utterly insufficient [55].

6. Consumption is a key in change

Fundamentally, the goal of reducing environmental pressure by consumption can be reached via three routes: greening production and products, shifting demand to low-impact consumption categories, and lowering material demands [28, 30, 57, 58]. Since society is adverse to interfere directly with consumer choice and markets, it is not surprising that government plans for SCP often narrow down to the first point under banners like 'dematerialization' and 'resource productivity' [32, 52, cf 59]. But history has shown that this strategy alone fails, due to what has been loosely termed the 'rebound effect': the growth of material consumption [60,61]. Yet, there are plenty of options to influence consumption patterns indirectly, without loss – or even improvement – of quality of life. And it is not difficult to see why. Important parts of the financial and time expenditures of consumers are on 'duties' such as commuting, business travel, etc., or compensate for a low local quality of (social) environment. That changing such patterns can yield a double dividend is rather likely – above a certain threshold, improved quality of life, a higher degree of happiness, etc., is not related anymore to material consumption or GDP [62-66].

Car transport – essential to be happy?

Megacities in e.g. Thailand, Indonesia and China are infamous for their gridlocked traffic and air pollution. In Curitiba, a major city in the South of Brazil, some bright city planners created a different history. They took the strategic decision to base further city development on principles like minimizing urban sprawl, keeping the historic district intact, and to use an cost-effective express bus system as the back bone for mass transit. The approach was so successful, that now 60% of the travel in the city takes place via the public bus system [4]. The city itself is one of the most livable in Brazil. Hong Kong and Singapore reached similar success in ensuring that public rather than private transport takes on the brunt of the modal split. A good example of influencing consumption patterns indirectly.

7. Short term measures can build upon mainstream beliefs and paradigms

On the short term, many SCP solutions can already be implemented that make positive use of the systemic ‘meta’ factors listed before: basic principles that friend and foe by and large agree upon [cf. 67-69]. Sure, they will need a leadership that makes a difference, if only to counter rearguard fights by dinosaurs setting traps like asking for ‘evidence beyond reasonable doubt’ before action can be taken [cf. 70,71]. But the now widely held values that markets should be transparent and fair, consumers should be sovereign, and that sustainability needs action, gives legitimacy to measures like [47,72,73]:

- Creating a level playing field for greening production and products
- Abolishing perverse subsidies and internalizing external costs
- Promoting transparency about environmental and social performance, and countering oligo- and monopolistic markets that reduce consumer choice.

‘Making darkness visible’ (showing who benefits from unsustainability) and articulating meta-values and –trends positive for sustainability are another tactic to pursue [74]. And even radical SCP options can be tried out on short term. These sow often seeds for change, and front runners often can do their thing very well in smartly chosen niches that are not too much affected by forces at landscape and regime level [10,12,13]. On the long term, such novel practices can be important factors in changing meta-views and – paradigms.

The Global Compact

Around 2000, the UN launched the Millennium Goals [15], and later embarked via the Global Compact [75] a strategic discussion with industry on how to realize them. The Global Compact articulates four sets of core values in doing businesses, covering sustainability and social standards, and managed to enlist 2900 (mostly large) businesses supporting it. Though implementation is complex, it sets direction and a stage for discussing how to do it, and to question deviating behavior. A perfect move that helped to position a powerful actor (business) as a support to a change to a better world.

8. Problems where only a rough agreement on goal and approach exists need experimenting

Sometimes there is agreement on the desired direction of change, but the road to it is utterly uncertain (e.g. due to the radical nature of changes) [cf. 76]. In such cases, approaches have been proposed using terms like ‘roadmapping’ [53], ‘indicative planning’ or ‘learning’ [cf. 77], ‘reflexive governance’ [78], and ‘transition management’ [10,13,79]. While such concepts have different roots, they all acknowledge that the road to sustainability requires a joint search process that entails a process of mutual enforcing actions for change via the following lines:

1. Radical change usually takes a long period and ‘command and control’ approaches usually will not work. Indicative planning and developing ‘strategic intent’ with a process of learning by doing along the way is likely to be much more successful [10,13,71,77].
2. A process of ‘visioning’ and experimentation, particularly when it is not totally clear into which direction the change has to go, is essential [77,80,81].
3. ‘Flagship’ (niche) experiments with new practices and systems should ideally be stepping stones for potential future new socio-technical constellations [82, cf.83].

Indicative planning and leapfrogging – Dongtan Ecocity

The Curitiba story is one example of adaptive management. Another exciting example is Dongtan Ecocity in China. Acknowledging that millions of peasants will become city dwellers in the next decades, the Chinese developed the vision that the new cities to house them should be as sustainable as possible – probably the only way to avoid that their economic growth will be stopped due to resource scarcity and pollution. The cities are planned to be ecologically friendly, with zero-greenhouse-emission transit and complete self-sufficiency in water and energy, together with the use of zero energy building principles. This initiative forms a massive learning by doing exercise, guided by principles like energy-neutrality and self-sufficiency [84,85]

9. Problems that question mainstream beliefs and paradigms require informed deliberation

These are the more difficult issues to tackle, and that really require discussion of widely held beliefs and paradigms in society. [86-88] It concerns informed deliberation on issues such as [53,54]

- a. the underlying growth engine in our markets [89];
- b. how and if markets contribute to fairness and equity [cf. 90];
- c. how consumption supportive to sustainability can be discerned from consumption that is destructive for institutions and non-market goods providing quality of life[91];
- d. how to develop novel and dematerialized ways of realising social aspirations [cf. 41,66], and how this relates to novel business models [57,92];
- e. how to maintain a fair power balance in the triangle of business, government and consumer (e.g. by questioning the role of advertising and media) [cf. 93].

All these issues pose fundamental questions about the way how our market based economic system works and about the institutions that have been developed to support it. Gathering credible evidence of how consumption and production systems can be organized more efficiently in providing quality of life [62,63], showing inspiring examples of alternative ways of doing things [42,43, 94], are tactics to be pursued.

The Happy Planet Index: challenging the paradigm that all growth brings well-being

The Happy Planet Index (HPI) 'measures the ecological efficiency with which, country by country, people achieve long and happy lives. In doing so, it strips our view of the economy back to its absolute basics: what goes in (natural resources), and what comes out (human lives of different length and happiness).' The HPI suggests strongly that above a threshold, high footprints (related to high consumption per capita and high GDPs) are no precondition for a high quality of life. One could even go that far that having a very high GDP (and hence footprint) per capita is no sign of progress, but rather a sign of inefficiency in providing what truly matters: countries with equal quality of life and life years may differ up to a factor 4 in footprint. Once the factor determining this difference are better understood – and shared – this will give important guidance of how to structure patterns of consumption and production [62].

Source: www.neweconomics.org

10. Conclusion

Based on the findings above, we would recommend a structure of a 10 Year Framework of Programs that is reflected in Figure 1 [54]. It should mention as key domains food, mobility, and energy use/housing (the last two clearly related to urban development) [19-20,95]. It should use a systemic perspective on the SCP challenge [96] and differentiate between developed, fast developing, and base of the pyramid economies [2,3,17,18]. SCORE! focuses mainly on developed economies, and here we propose to differentiate between:

- measures that fit with mainstream beliefs and paradigms. Here, governments could make operational agreements on implementation of instruments like green public procurement, stimulating ecodesign, etc.
- problems where a rough agreement on goals exists, but where change is radical, or means are uncertain, and hence planning difficult. Here, governments could foster visioning, experimentation, and support e.g. international collaboration in leapfrogging programs.
- problems that outright clash with mainstream beliefs and paradigms. Here, governments could foster informed deliberation on the more fundamental issues related to markets, governance and growth.

Figure 1: A framework for policy and action for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) [54]

<p>Landscape (factors out of reach for actors in the regime)</p>	<p>Meta-structures: infrastructure, geopolitical facts, etc. Meta-values: Individual sovereignty, democracy, free markets & trade, growth, fairness Meta-trends: individualisation, internationalisation, intensification, informatisation Meta-shocks: wars, crises, natural disasters</p>			
<p>Regime (ways of doing things in a domain, e.g. mobility)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"> </p>			
<p><u>Time horizon of impact</u></p>	<p><u>Actions and leading actor</u></p>			<p><u>Dominant leverage point</u></p>
<p>Short term impact Goals and direction: agreement Means: fairly clear Main problem: overcoming opposition of ‘laggards’.</p>	<p><i>Business</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply cleaner production, ecodesign, etc. Manage supply and downstream chains; see the examples of CSR, FSC, MSC, etc. Apply choice editing Promote industry self-regulation on the above Use ‘meta’ factors as inspiration for new sustainable products, business models (e.g. product-services), and other strategic innovations, e.g. via experience design <p><i>Government</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide level playing field supporting the above (covenants, regulations, standards) Foster greening innovation systems and support sustainable (niche) entrepreneurs Articulate and encourage sustainable meta-values 	<p><i>Government</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internalizing externalities Abolish perverse subsidies Counter mono- and oligopolies and promote consumer power and choice Promote transparency on social and environmental issues related to products Set basic advertising norms: fair, not promoting damaging offerings, and not directed to vulnerable groups 	<p><i>Consumers/citizens/NGOs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercise sustainable choice Set steps towards Lifestyles Of Health And Sustainability (LOHAS) As citizen and worker: articulate and encourage sustainable meta-values <p><i>Government (combine the below for effect!)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GPP (focus on visible examples with ripple effects; e.g. providing high quality school meals) Provide infrastructure for sustainable choice of similar quality; create no-need contexts Motivate via appealing engagement and leadership, and repetitive feedback (e.g. smart meters) <p><i>Business</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote sustainable consumer feedback (e.g. smart meters, green credit cards) Apply sustainability marketing and demand side management 	<p>Technical and incentive change</p>
<p>Medium term impact Goals and direction: agreement, at least on the sense of urgency for change Means: not clear Main problem: focusing direction and learning about best means</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government (as initiator, in conjunction with business and NGOs): start processes of product roadmapping / indicative planning / transition management / other learning and visioning approaches to overcome lock-ins and stimulate a sustainability focus for long term change Business: develop ‘competing for the future’ capabilities All: develop and test alternatives in niches (‘life boats’) All (emphasis on citizens and government): stimulating small group management via e.g. fostering locality and the creation of local feedbacks. 			<p>Enhancing self-organising capacity and learning</p>
<p>Long term impact Goals and direction: controversial No insight in means-ends relations Main problem: ‘managing’ a mental revolution – in a nice way</p>	<p>All: Foster deliberation on the more fundamental issues related to markets, governance and growth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beyond the consumer economy – how does the sustainable growth engine look like? Inequity – how to promote markets that foster a fair level of (in)equity? Consuming less or less material – when does it help to reach a high quality of life? Social aspirations and status – how to reach this in an immaterial way, or damp this race altogether? Power balances – how to restore them in the triangle of business, government and citizens? 			<p>Adapting goals and paradigms</p>

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Holiday consumption and sustainable development - the cases of foreign holiday trips and Norwegian cabin life

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Abstract

The paper draws on an empirical material collected from in-depth interviews in 12 Norwegian families. It describes the families' holiday travelling and use of second homes and analyses the contemporary leisure consumption in light of the historical development of air travels and cabin life and consequences for consumption and the environment. One focus is how holiday travels and cabin life are affected by changes in social norms and domestic practices on the one hand, and by developments within the socio-technical system or system of provisions within aviation and tourism on the other. The paper also discuss implications for policy making, which until now to a great extent has been occupied with regulating behaviour on an individual level, rather than viewing consumption in a broader social and political context. The paper concludes with pointing at the important function of the holiday as a social space where the family gathers and experience things together, thus it plays an important role in creating a family identity. It is important to take these observations into consideration when analysing the environmental and political implications of leisure consumption.

1. Introduction

Within the social sciences there has been a growing research on the ordinary consumption of everyday life. This research has placed itself in opposition to social theorists that mainly have viewed consumption as an individual lifestyle project. In contrast, the ordinary consumption approach emphasizes that consumption is mainly an outcome of collective and routinised behaviour. Environmental issues such as consumption of green products, waste separation and domestic energy use have been studied within this perspective. However, less attention has been paid to the leisure time activities. The leisure time has over the years increased its importance in terms of the time, money and resources that are used on these activities. Thus, from an environmental viewpoint leisure consumption is an increasing problem. Based on the perspective of ordinary consumption we will discuss holiday consumption in relation to sustainable development. The paper also discusses implications for policy making, which until now to a great extent has been occupied with regulating behaviour on an individual level, rather than viewing consumption in a broader social and political context.

The main aim of this paper is to study the relationship between everyday life and leisure time in order to investigate to what degree consumers behave less environmental friendly in their leisure time compared with their everyday consumption. Is it true that the holiday represent an escape from environmentally responsible consumption in everyday life?

The background for raising this question was the findings from two recent research projects. A European study found that consumers to a greater extent looked for environmental information when buying household equipment such as tissue paper and washing machines than when booking holiday accommodation. More than 70% of the respondents in the Norwegian part of the study stated that they were considering environmental information on tissue paper and washing machines, while just 14% did the same on holiday accommodation (Stø et al.2002). Results from another Norwegian study on housing consumption, showed that so called 'Green Families' travelled more, took longer air flights and used more energy than the average household in the study (Holden & Norland 2004). These findings raised the questions on the possible relationships between an environmentally conscious and normatively regulated everyday life and a leisure time detached from these normative regulations.

The paper draws on an empirical material collected from in-depth interviews in 12 Norwegian families. The aim of the interviews was to explore a wide range of leisure activities that are related to everyday life, weekends and holidays. The subjects treated in the interviews were among others: Leisure time activities, weekend activities, holiday travelling and the use of holiday home.

2. Theoretical perspectives

Theory of practice is one approach that has been used in studies of environmental behaviour in everyday life. These studies have emphasised that consumption is embedded within routine and normative practices of everyday life (Halkier 2001, Southerton et al. 2004, Vittersø 2003, Warde 2005). Shove (2003) underlines that much environmentally significant consumption is bound up with routine and habit and with the '... use as much as the acquisition of tools, appliances and household infrastructures' (Shove 2003, p 395). Thus, focusing on 'individual choice' and the self-reflexive individual restricts the understanding of complex consumption practices (Southerton et al. 2004).

While these contributions have focused on the consumption practices, Miller (1998, 2001) has shown that it is important to study the social relations between family members in order to explain consumption behaviour. Miller suggests that everyday practices like shopping is about the creation and maintenance of relationships within the family; between the partners and between the parents and the children (Miller 2001). Miller state that increased individualisation has made the home and domestic relationships highly significant for most people. Klepp (1993) share this observation and state that the family has gained social significance as a result of the weakening of other collective, local institutions related to work, religious activity etc. Miller also suggests that the parent-child relation is becoming increasingly important in modern families.

In spite of the focus on everyday life these theories have relevance in studies of leisure time consumption as well. In this section we will discuss the relationship between everyday life and leisure time drawing on studies within anthropology and sociology that more directly have discussed the relationship between daily life and leisure time. Some authors make an absolute distinction between everyday life and leisure time, while others point at the close relations between these spheres (Hegnes 2003). The historical festival was a space where to consume, spend and waste time (Featherstone 1983), but even though the motivations for taking a time off and going on holiday are changed over the years, the essential break from everyday life is still a main motivation. However, a too strong differentiation between everyday life and leisure leave out the fact that not all practices changes when going on holiday. The fundamental activities such as sleeping, getting up, washing and eating, have to take place even on holiday. However, the contexts where these activities are taking place are changed, and thus are the practices. The strict routines associated with these everyday practices are changed. Typically one stays up later in the night, sleep longer and alter the meal routines when on holiday. I will underline that leisure time contain both the extraordinary and ordinary consumption, thus it is important to focus not only on the conspicuous leisure activities, but picture the whole leisure context in the analyses. In the following section I will use examples from two different Norwegian studies on how contemporary holiday activities are normatively regulated in quite different ways, which also shows the necessity of analysing leisure consumption within its specific context.

In Norwegian culture there is a sharp contrast between work and leisure, which means that work has priority during weekdays, whereas pleasurable activities belong to the weekends (Døving, 2003). The word '*koselig*' ('*cosy*') is considered as the central Norwegian term for social interaction and it is associated with the private sphere and leisure time (Gullestad, 1989, Brusdal, 2006). Leisure time is by no means free in the sense that one may do as one likes regardless of social norms. On the contrary, leisure time is strongly regulated by social norms, not least related to what it means to have a good time or '*kose seg*'. In Norway this has taken different and special forms in relation to tourism and recreational activities. When spending the holiday abroad, for example on a charter trip to mainland Spain or the Canary Islands, it is a norm to make use of and enjoy as much as possible of what the tourist resorts offer. In the context of holiday trips, the term '*koselig*' may include sunbathing on the beach, socializing over a couple of drinks or partying late into the night. One should not worry about daily matters such as work, politics or everyday routines (Døving, 2005).

The normative regulations of family vacations at Norwegian cabins stand in sharp contrast to the more 'hedonistic' nature of the charter trip. In the Norwegian context, and especially in the middle classes, the holiday-home or cabin life has traditionally been associated with "back

to the nature” primitiveness and outdoor recreation, where the enjoyment of nature is a fundamental part (Grimstad & Lyngø, 1993).

Following Shove (2003) everyday consumption related to hygiene and energy use is regulated by social norms of cleanliness and comfort, but on the other hand consumption in these areas is also framed by a socio-technical system. By combining the theory of practice approach with Millers’ emphasis on family relationships and Shoves’ understanding of consumption as co-evolving systems of domestic practices and sociotechnical changes, this paper will analyse the relation between holiday consumption and sustainability.

3. Methodology

This study is based on a qualitative research design and it is used in-depth interviews as the main method of data collection. The qualitative approach makes it possible to explore a phenomenon in a broader context and to grasp the complexity of relations between practices and social norms on a collective level. One of the aims with the study was to analyse the reasoning behind household decisions about holiday consumption. The qualitative approach makes it possible to explore different leisure-time practices and how these are organised and negotiated among different household members.

We conducted in-depth interviews in twelve households. The interviews took place in late autumn 2005. They were conducted in a semi-structured fashion following an interview guide. The data were collected as part of a larger project with the aim of exploring the environmental impacts of leisure-time consumption. The project also included a quantitative calculation of energy use related to different leisure-time activities. The results of these calculations are documented in a separate report (Hille *et al.*, 2007). In the qualitative part of the project the aim was to explore a wide range of leisure activities that are related to everyday life, as well as weekends and holidays. The themes in the interviews were among others: Leisure-time activities, weekend activities, holiday travelling and the use of holiday home.

Selection of households

In line with the qualitative research approach a strategic selection of households were made on the basis of different variables relevant for the main research questions of the project. Because of the focus on decisions and interaction within the household, families with school children and two adult persons were selected. Thus, single-parent households, singles and couples with no children were not studied. The strength of just selecting families with school children is that it gives a rich material on the social relations between different household members: wife and husband, adults and children. Many important general and traditional societal values are tied to this household category. The interviewees represented a wide range of occupations from manual workers in industry, workers in public and private services to academic professions. Independent professions such as farmers and IT-consultants were also recruited to the project.

Twelve households in total were recruited from five different municipalities in the central parts of eastern Norway. Together they represented different living environments: a big city, a suburban community and a small community (town/ rural area).

4. Findings

In Norway more than 3 million summer holiday trips is carried out every year. In 2005 for the first time more outbound than domestic travels were made. While most of the travels abroad includes stays at hotels or similar accommodation facilities, the accommodation at domestic holiday trips are mostly in private homes followed by private holiday homes. Travelling by air was the main means of transport on outbound holiday trips, while car was the main means of transport on domestic travels in the summer 2005 (Statistics Norway 2007). These figures of Norwegian travel habits show that there is a great difference in both accommodation and means of transport between domestic and outbound holiday trips.

In the following I will use foreign travels and holiday at the family cabin as two cases to illustrate how changes in social norms and 'holiday habits' co-evolve with changes in the socio-technical system.

Foreign holiday travels

It has been significant changes in international tourism and air transport over the last decades. The most important changes are connected to the development of charter trips in the 1960ties and -70ties. The close co-operation between air transport companies, tour operators and local communities developed this form of tourism into big business. They lowered the prices, thus holidays by the warm and sandy beaches of the Mediterranean was no longer reserved for the few privileged of the 'leisure class'. During the 1980ties charter trips to Spain or other Mediterranean destinations became available for most people due to affordable prices and improved accessibility. While the prices on charter travels went down, the prices on ordinary air flights stayed relatively expensive. This development has been driven by the specific organisation of the charter concept. The charter trips represent a separate market, thus it is in limited competition with the regular air traffic. First of all the tour operators' chartering of whole flights reduces the prices. Secondly, the flights are adjusted to the regular air traffic at the airports so that the flights are carried out at inconvenient times of the day when no other flights are made.

During the 1990ties a general deregulation of international air traffic initiated a second wave of rapid growth in air travels. While business travels have decreased in Norway since the mid 1990ties, leisure travels have shown a significant growth in numbers (Hille et. al 2007). This increase is not in charter flights, but in ordinary, scheduled flights. The deregulation has opened the market for new airlines that offer cheap flights to attractive holiday destinations. This development has contributed to a change in Norwegians travel habits, with an increase in people travelling to European cities where these cheaper airlines operate.

The social conventions of the holiday trip

In families with children the holiday destination seems to depend much on the age of the children. One of the city couples with children in the late teens expressed that they used to go to Spain when the children were small, but now they stay at the cabin in the summer and rather go for long weekends to cities in Europe the rest of the year. While another couple with small children explained that they used to go to Denmark, because it gave access to different activities such as horse riding:

'It is no drawback that there is an activity that the children like nearby. The things we do in our holiday is much for the sake of the children' (couple, small community).

A couple with teenagers made their first holiday trip abroad just before the summer. They spent five days in London. The wife explained that this vacation in London first of all was for the sake of her children:

'Our kids say that all their friends have been (so many) other places (...), but it is not true that all the others have travelled that much' (woman, city).

One experience was that when the children grow older they had more clear expectations for the holidays, high on the list was for instance to travel far away to 'exotic' destinations. In families with children there is a social pressure to take some kind of holiday trip during the summer, as this couple describes it:

'We have only stayed at home once. It was the summer when we bought this house. Then we went for this trip to the Mediterranean in the winter holiday, because the kids hadn't had any vacation at all' (couple, suburban).

To this couple staying at home during the holiday was in conflict with the common social norms, and to compensate they arranged an 'extra' trip the following winter holiday. These examples from the interviews show that social conventions of where and when to travel, strongly influence the families' decisions. The holiday plans change when getting kids, and with the age of the kids. As one of the mothers express: *The holiday is for the sake of the kids.* But the holiday habits must also be seen in relation to the changes in the travel business as a socio-technical system where the accessibility to an increased number of destinations is steadily improved.

Developments in the use of holiday homes

The market for holiday homes is rapidly increasing, and these properties have become important as investments. In the period 2001-2006 approximately 20.000 holiday homes were built in Norway. In the same period Norwegians acquired 15.000 holiday homes abroad, which means that more than 55.000 Norwegian households today have a holiday/second home abroad (Hille et al., 2007). An increasing number of families own or have access to more than one holiday home. The standards and infrastructure are constantly improving, especially in connection with development of new estates (Arnesen et al., 2002; Kaltenborn et al. 2005). The average area of a new holiday home was 80m² in 2005. This is 25m² more than the average holiday home (Hille et al., 2007). The new developments towards more and larger cabins create conflicts between the demand for infrastructure, such as roads, electricity and water, and the need for nature preservation and public access to nature. In addition, consumption at the cabin demands increasingly more resources. The development of cabins seems to follow the trends of general housing consumption; Norwegians prefer cabins with higher standards, including new and more household appliances, ICT equipment etc.

In the Norwegian context, and especially in the middle classes, the holiday-home or cabin life has traditionally been associated with "back to the nature" primitiveness and outdoor recreation, where the enjoyment of nature is a fundamental part (Grimstad & Lyngø, 1993). This ideal has been most relevant for the cabins in the mountain areas, where many old summer farms have been converted into cabins. Because these cabins are old they often have low standards. Originally they were built in a simple fashion, often with traditional Norwegian building techniques, materials and decoration techniques. The holiday homes that are built today often have similar standards as new homes regarding the infrastructure (water and energy) and household appliances. This development towards higher standards of holiday homes, challenges the traditional Norwegian view of the primitive life at the cabin.

Among the interviewees these types of discussions about the standards emerged, and they were weighing the benefits and drawbacks of different solutions, for instance in the case of this suburban couple that could not agree on the standard of the family cabin:

'It is cold and 'uncosy' ... If it had been up to me I would like one of these luxury cabins with a dishwasher and a shower and stuff. I get no relaxation from travelling all the way (to the cabin) just to experience that everything is ten times as inconvenient as at home.' (woman, suburban)

At this cabin there was only a water pump that was installed after the woman was introduced to the family. They also get a little electricity from a solar-cell panel with limited capacity and they have an outside lavatory ('*utedo*').

'It is the opposite experience to me. 'If we should have this luxury at the cabin, it is not real to me at all. Then I would not feel that I am away at all, I think ... If we shall have dishwasher at the cabin, then it is all wrong' (man, suburban).

However the ideals of the simple standard may have to give way for the ideal that the cabin is a place for gathering the family. Changing conventions of cleanliness, comfort and convenience seem to challenge the ideal of the primitive cabin, and the wish for labour saving technologies seems to be a legitimate reason for upgrading the standards of the cabin. However, the upgrading does not necessary include all kinds of household technologies. For instance among the interviewed families we found resistance against installing appliances like TV sets and Internet at the cabin. On the other hand if upgrading the cabin with electricity and TV will make the kids want to come along, then it is likely that the family will make this upgrading (Vittersø 2007).

5. Discussion

The question initially raised in this paper if people are less aware of environmental issues in their leisure time than in everyday life, must not be reduced to a question of individual attitudes and behaviours. The findings in this study give no general support to the hypothesis put forward initially that consumers lower their environmental awareness on holiday. Leisure time consumption must be seen in a broader context than the individual consumer or the single household. The findings in this study suggest that the families' holiday travels are socially motivated, where different social norms play significant roles in the different holiday contexts. The holiday is basically about breaking off from everyday routines, but this can have many different meanings. It could mean to 'reward oneself' with a luxurious holiday to an exotic destination, to travel like a globetrotter round the world, but also to visit family and friends or seek the tranquillity at the cabin in the Norwegian mountains. Environmental concerns may or may not be included in all these different settings. However, by applying a practice theoretical approach the paper shows that the holiday activities on the one hand are framed by social norms, individual and collective expectations, competence, habits and routines within the family, and on the other hand by different socio-technical systems.

The increase in outbound holiday trips is an example on how social norms on the household level co-evolves with changes in the socio-technical system driven by the international tourism and air transport industry, which steadily increases the availability of long distance holiday destinations. These destinations become more available both regarding lower prices and broader selections (more and diverse destinations). More airports and more air flights

reduce the travelling time and the distance to the local airport. Increased availability has made it possible for more households to take their holiday abroad. From being something exclusive this is now a normal holiday activity, and as seen from the interviews in this study, both children and parents expect to travel abroad during holiday.

In the same manner traditional ideals of the primitive life at the holiday cabin are challenged by new standards and conventions of comfort and convenience. New cabins have the same standard as ordinary housing estates regarding electricity, water and sanitary solutions. The findings in this study point to a social pressure for upgrading the older cabins in the same manners as the new ones.

These two examples show that the development of socio-technical systems function as drivers for improved standards and changing consumption norms, but that dependent of the context these developments may have radical different environmental and political implications.

Until now the air transport industry has faced few international environmental regulations such as taxes or quotas on CO² emissions. This has only to a certain extent been applied on the national (e.g. CO² taxes in Norway) or individual level. Environmental NGOs, travel agencies etc. encourage travellers to pay for 'CO² quotas' when buying their tickets. However, the changing of international tourism industry in a more sustainable direction does not only involve the international air transport industry, but it also have national and local implications in terms of the local communities and regions that economically and socially benefit from this industry.

The development of new holiday resorts in Norwegian mountain regions with cabins, holiday apartments, hotels etc. has contributed to local development as well as local environmental problems. This development also functions as a driver for increased leisure consumption in general. These changes are mainly associated with increased resource demand, especially connected to energy use and that it occupies considerable areas of land. However, the demand for improved standards must also be seen in the light of the fact that when the first cabins were raised in the early 20th century, the standard was poor also in most private homes. Thus, these changes may not always be to the worse if upgrading of standards results in that people use their cabins more. This could be positive, especially when considering alternative uses of leisure time, such as travelling by air to far distant holiday destinations.

The two examples with outbound holiday travels and holiday homes underline the political dilemma between economical development and environmental protection. The findings in this paper also point to the importance of directing policies at the societal level in order to create changes at the household or individual level. In spite of the heterogeneity of the two cases analysed in this paper, they both point at some general features about holiday and leisure activities: They represent a break away not necessarily from 'everyday green routines', but from the everyday life in general. The holiday represents an expectation to experience something different from everyday life, but not necessarily in the form of conspicuous, luxurious or extravagant consumption. Most important, holiday activities represent a central part of family life. The holiday is a social space where the family gathers and experience things together which is important for creating a family identity. Regardless of the type of holiday activity, the children's expectations and wishes are central in both the planning and carrying out of holiday activities. This is in line with Millers' observation of the role of consumption in family life. Miller argues that the traditional patriarchal family structure is under pressure, and that the children are about to take the husbands role as the main object of devotion in the family (Miller 1998). It is important to take these observations into

consideration when analysing the environmental and political implications of leisure consumption.

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Theme 16. The role of consumers in innovation policies

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Papers

Grunert, Klaus G.: Consumer-based innovation: The analysis of consumer preferences in new product development, and the potential supporting role of consumer policy

Heiskanen, Eva & Raimo Lovio: User Knowledge in Housing Energy Innovations

Hyysalo, Sampsa: User innovation, design space, and everyday practices: Rodeo Kayaking case revisited

Johnson, Mikael & Kalle Toiskallio: Who Are the Habbo Hotel Users - And What Are They Doing There?

Saastamoinen, Mika, Eva Heiskanen, Kaarina Hyvönen, Tanja Kotro & Petteri Repo: Consumers in Product Development: Empowered or Exploited?

Consumer-based innovation: The analysis of consumer preferences in new product development, and the potential supporting role of consumer policy

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Innovation is often considered part and parcel of technological research and development. Yet innovation is also related to the discovery of unfulfilled needs – and how to come up with products and services to meet these needs. This presentation focuses on direct consumer input and user driven innovation, which is defined as “a process towards developing new product or service concepts in which the ability to understand and address consumer needs and preference formation on the basis of analysis is crucial”. This presentation discusses:

- How the interaction between consumer needs on the one hand and producer innovation processes on the other can be improved
- How consumer policies may contribute to more efficient consumer-oriented innovation in business and trade

It is not easy to be innovative or pursue user driven innovation. This is evident from the fact that most new product concepts flop. Short of having developed the desired product for the market and the consumers, the producer has also wasted valuable resources. Therefore it seems highly pertinent to examine how direct consumer input could play a part in the innovation process. How do we best facilitate user/producer communication to ensure that new product concepts are tailored to suit specific needs *before* they are launched?

In trying to answer this question, a number of tools that can be used to analyse consumer quality perception and preference formation will be presented, and will be related to a theoretical model of consumer quality perception. It will also be discussed how such instruments can be embedded in producers’ produce development process. A few business cases, where such instruments have been successfully employed, will be used for illustration.

After showing that instruments for analyzing consumer preferences and integrating this information into the product development process are indeed available, the question on a possible role for consumer policy in furthering consumer-oriented innovation will be addressed. It is widely accepted that there is a role for public policy in furthering innovation, but it is usually restricted to technology development and knowledge transfer between research organizations and companies and does not take consumer issues into account. It will be shown that the classical instruments of innovation policy – support of R&D, education of a qualified workforce, support of knowledge transfer – are at least as important for consumer-driven innovation than for technology-driven innovation. In addition, it will be argued that consumer policy and its classical instruments can have a role in furthering information as well. Examples of classical instruments with an innovation aspect are consumer access to complaint handling, which generates data that can be fruitfully exploited in innovation processes, and product tests, that have a direct impact on

manufacturers' product development. Such classical instruments could be expanded by new forms of dialogue for a that have the aim of facilitating the information flow between consumers and producers in such a way that the consumer-oriented development of new products is facilitated.

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User Knowledge in Housing Energy Innovations

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Abstract

Energy and energy conservation are traditionally fields in which technical expertise has an important role. Other recent research has emphasized the role of user involvement in energy innovations. Yet, little is known about the type of knowledge that users and producers have in different industries or what actually happens in attempts to transfer this knowledge from one party to another. Do users possess knowledge that is significant for the development of new energy systems that conserve energy and combat climate change? What is the nature of this knowledge and how can it be mobilized? What can be gained in energy innovation by involving users? Is enhanced knowledge exchange sufficient to align the interests of users and producers? We address these questions by applying the user innovation framework to a case study on the development and introduction of a low-energy housing procurement competition and labelling concept in Finland.

1. Introduction

According to the EU *Green Paper on Energy Efficiency*, the buildings sector accounts for 40% of the EU's energy requirements. Research shows that more than one-fifth of the present energy consumption could be saved by 2010 by applying more ambitious standards to new buildings and when refurbishing existing ones. Energy costs are also becoming increasingly significant for households as well, especially in cold climates, as the prices of electricity and oil are rising.

Energy and energy conservation are traditionally fields in which technical expertise has had an important role. Expert knowledge is needed to analyse energy flows, to select and install appliances, and to prioritize conservation measures. From this perspective, ordinary consumers are often seen to exhibit a 'knowledge deficit': many authors have been concerned that ordinary consumers are quite ignorant about energy issues (e.g. Kempton 1987; Melasniemi-Uutela 2000), and are thus unable to capably adopt their role in energy conservation efforts. On the other hand, other recent research has emphasized the role of 'user innovations' in alternative energy and energy conservation and has documented the role of user-innovators in housing energy innovations (e.g., Rohracher and Ornetzeder 2005). The above-mentioned lines of research represent two extremes: in the first, users are represented as ignorant and in need of training and education, whereas in the second they are represented as having important knowledge the innovation process.

Von Hippel and colleagues have highlighted the crucial role of users in innovation in many different industries and types of products (von Hippel 1986; 1998a; 2005; Lilien et al. 2002; Lüthje 2004). Von Hippel describes the innovation process in terms of the distinct domains of knowledge that producers and users possess. Producers have knowledge about technical solutions, production capabilities, etc. and users about their needs, the context of use, and their own capabilities as users. Both sets of knowledge are characterized by ‘stickiness’: they move relatively freely within their own domain, but are difficult to transfer outside it. Hence, close involvement and user participation is needed to ‘unstick’ the knowledge, allowing it to contribute to a common innovation process.

The notion of user involvement has also been highlighted in innovations with a sustainability or environmental aspect (Rohracher 2003; 2005). It has even been suggested that user involvement is particularly important for such innovations, which often attempt to find alternative and radically innovative ways to fulfill user needs in a more eco-efficient way (Heiskanen et al. 2005). Following this line of argument, a range of experiments in user involvement in sustainable innovation have been conducted in recent years, with more or less promising outcomes (e.g., Weaver et al. 1998; Heiskanen et al. 2005; Hoffman 2005). In spite of the evolving nature of this debate, there are also documented examples of cases in which users have made a distinct contribution to the development of sustainable technology.

The role of users has gained increasing momentum in innovation research, including sustainable innovation, during the past four decades. Yet not much of this research has focused on conceptualizing *the type of knowledge that users and producers have in different technological fields* and contexts of use, or on understanding *what actually happens in attempts to transfer this knowledge from one party to another*. The present article attempts to conceptualize the role of user knowledge in housing energy innovations. Do users possess knowledge that is significant for the development of new energy systems that conserve energy and combat climate change? What is the nature of this knowledge and how can it be mobilized? What can be gained in energy innovation by involving users?

We address these questions by reviewing recent research in user innovation and by applying this conceptual apparatus to a concrete case: the development and introduction of a low-energy housing labelling concept by Motiva, the Finnish Energy Agency. This project was not fully successful in reaching its aims, and one of the suggested reasons is that it lacked a “homebuilder’s perspective” (Halme et al. 2005). After introducing the project, we examine how users were involved, and how knowledge was exchanged among experts and users. We then go on to consider other, alternative, ways in which users might have been involved or have been involved in other projects. On the basis of this analysis, we draw conclusions on the potential and limitations of user involvement from a knowledge management perspective in housing and energy innovations.

2. Perspectives on knowledge and expertise

Users and knowledge about household energy

Studies have found that people do not know a lot about household energy use (Eurobarometer 2002; 2006). For example, people do not know which sectors consume the most energy, and they do not understand the economics of energy conservation investments. In Finland, for example, a study commissioned by the MTI (2002) indicated that climate change mitigation is becoming one of the key motives for energy conservation. Yet people are not very aware of what the largest sources of carbon dioxide emissions are. Spontaneous responses (N=1002) to the question “how can you

combat climate change personally?” mostly focused on reducing car use (36%). Conserving energy or using renewable energy in space heating was identified by only 10% of the respondents as one way to combat climate change.

While such findings suggest that more public education is necessary, they can also sometimes be criticized for exhibiting a ‘deficit model’ (Irwin and Wynne 1996) of lay knowledge concerning energy. It is assumed that because lay people do not have the same kind of knowledge that experts do, they know nothing. Other authors consider the problem of energy knowledge from the opposite perspective (Shove 1998; Chappels et al. 2000). Experts simply frame energy use in different terms – often ones that are very distant from ordinary households’ concerns. They fail to understand why households behave irrationally because they fail to grasp the logic of energy use. The households’ perspective is one in which an appropriate level of comfort is the dominant goal, not energy conservation. In-depth studies of energy-related behaviour reveal that households have an underlying logic to their behaviour, and energy-related actions ensue from that ‘everyday’ logic (Kempton 1987; Kempton et al. 1985).

Some attempts have been made to find ways in which experts and ordinary households could communicate sensibly on energy, taking into account the breadth of the chasm separating their ‘vocabularies’ and conceptual frames. Mostly, this has involved qualitative, observational research or ordinary households’ sensemaking processes, and analyses of how energy experts attempt to target their messages in a way that takes into account the experiential knowledge of ordinary consumers (e.g. Darby 2003). Yet the problem remains: energy efficiency is ‘invisible’, and thus very difficult to communicate in a way that integrates both experts’ and ordinary citizens’ perspectives (Chappels et al. 2000; Parnell and Popovic-Larsen 2005).

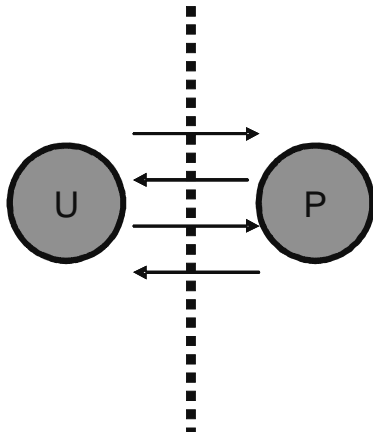
Perspectives on knowledge and expertise

The previous discussion on the exchange of energy efficiency knowledge among experts and lay people reflects a fundamental problem in product innovation and design. Von Hippel (1998) has termed this a problem of “sticky information”: information about users’ needs and manufacturers’ capabilities is highly contextual, tacit and difficult to transfer from one site to another (von Hippel 1988b; von Hippel 2005). This problem slows down the product innovation process – a number of rounds of information exchange are needed in order to establish facts and clarify perspectives. Often, these rounds occur through experimental product introductions, which may sometimes entail costly failures (Figure 1a).

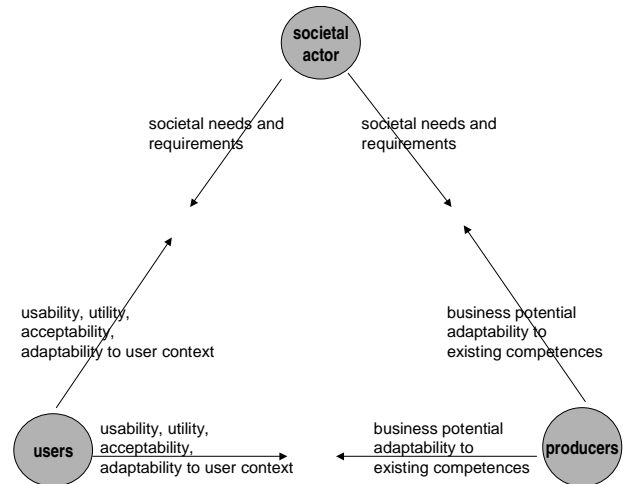
The problem of “sticky information” is further complicated in the case of societal innovations such as those concerning energy efficiency (Kivisaari et al. 2004). Here, societal actors like public energy agencies have their own perspective on the innovation, which differs from those of the users and producers. The societal actor may know more about the need to promote energy conservation innovations and about the new technologies available to do so. The societal actor will thus need to try to communicate with both producers and users in order to promote its own knowledge and understand the requirements and competencies of the market actors, i.e., the users and the producers (Figure 1b).

Figure 1. (a) Von Hippel's (1988b) view of the problem of 'sticky information' in product innovation and (b) the particular problems in societal innovations (based on Kivisaari et al. 2004)

a)



b)



The most frequently proposed solution to this problem is intensified interaction between the world of designers and the world of users. This can consist of *designer participation in the user context*, *user participation in design*, or *user innovation* (Table 1).

Designer participation in the user context: Designers may go to visit the users at home or at their workplace, and use ethnographic observation to understand the users' world (e.g., Koskinen, et al. 2003; Hyysalo 2004). A number of design tools have also been developed on the basis of ethnographic or field observations, such as contextual design (Beyer and Holzblatt 1998) and empathic design (Leonard and Rayport 1997). These design tools help designers to convert the results of ethnographic observations into design solutions. For example, the empathic design method draws on "user personas" or "user scenarios" as a background for designers to brainstorm solutions that are more user-responsive.

We are not aware of any direct applications of ethnography-based design tools in the field of sustainable innovation. But, for example, Chappels and Shove (2005; see also Shove 2003) have made extensive use of field research to investigate and problematize the concept of "thermal comfort". They argue that laboratory-based research on thermal comfort (which has formed the basis for design codes and standards) has adopted a 'naturalized' fixed conception of comfort that does not correspond to reality as reflected in field studies. Field studies have engendered 'adaptive' models of thermal comfort, which reveal the cultural variety of perceptions of comfortable temperatures, as well as the active role of building users in adapting to various kinds of indoor environments. Chappels and Shove also reveal the historically and socially constructed nature of thermal comfort and argue that designers should not unquestioningly adopt a fixed definition of comfort, but also take into account adaptive behaviour and offer designs that offer "sensory stimulation and extensive adaptive opportunity". Stated simply, this could mean offering natural ventilation and accepting some variability in indoor temperatures.

User participation: Participatory design, in particular in the workplace, has a long tradition in Scandinavia (Kensing and Blomberg 1998). In recent years, user participation has also evolved to encompass a broader range of users. User participation means that users join designers “at the drawing board”, for example by participating in “user groups” (Tomes & Armstrong 1997). User groups can be used, for example, for idea generation, and have been found to develop highly original ideas for new products (Magnusson 2003). Other tools and methods in this category include “customer idealized design”, in which customer groups engage in redesigning a product or services to meet their ideal requirements (e.g., Ciciantelli and Magdison 1993; Kaulio 1998), and focus groups, which can be used in a variety of ways to critique and improve product and service concepts (Bruseberg and McDonagh-Philp 2002).

This approach has been applied, for example, by Spaargaren et al. (2006) to identify how well a variety of sustainable innovations fit into their everyday life and social practices. Consumers participated in focus groups, in which they discussed the way such innovations interacted with their social practices, and the types of technological and behavioural change involved. Through such participation, the organizers were able to identify misfits between the innovation and the everyday settings in which they were intended to be used. For example, early introductions of compact fluorescent light bulbs were found to give off a white, cold light that was considered uncomfortable. In a similar vein, Hoffman (2006) and colleagues have used user workshops to identify development needs in a sustainable product concept in the GELENA project. The product concept was an electrically amplified bicycle, which was expected to reduce private car use and thus carbon dioxide emissions. The user workshops identified features of the product concept that required improvement, such as concerns about theft.

User innovation: Users’ own inventions and innovations can be a direct source of commercial products. Von Hippel and colleagues (Lüthje, 2004; Franke & Shah, 2003; von Hippel, 2005) have found that at least in some product groups, a large proportion of users invent and customize their own products (von Hippel 2005). Such innovative users are called “lead users”. Companies can support and make use of users’ own inventions through “lead user workshops”, and for some products like computer games, “user toolkits”, i.e., open design platforms, allow designers to outsource part of the software design to innovative users (von Hippel, 2001; Jeppesen & Molin, 2003; Holmström 2004).

Alternative energy is a sustainable technology in which user innovation has traditionally had a significant role (Jamison 2001). As contemporary examples of sustainable user innovation, Ornezeder and Rohrer (2006) have analysed two Austrian cases of user innovation in solar thermal collectors and woodchip boilers. Here, enthusiastic users organized to build sustainable energy appliances in local self-help groups. Even though such approaches are not mainstream, the Austrian examples are not insignificant: self-build groups manufactured 40 000 solar collectors and about 100 wood chip boilers in the past decades. In the case of the woodchip boilers, users also made some significant design improvements (safety, comfort) to manufacturers’ existing designs. Ornetzeder and Rohrer (2006) stress the role of knowledge sharing in groups of users with different professional and educational backgrounds, as well as a good knowledge of their own requirements for such applications. They also highlight the role of self-organized groups in disseminating sustainable innovations – in particular, in the solar thermal case, self-organized groups contributed significantly to the diffusion of solar technologies in Austria.

Table 1. Types of user-producer-society interaction in sustainable innovation

Type of interaction	Examples of projects	Key contribution
Designer participation in the user context	Field studies of thermal comfort and building users' adaptive behaviour (e.g., Chappels and Shove 2004)	Field observations can identify alternative usage patterns, challenge technical definitions of user needs and problematize existing designs
User participation in design	Focus groups for testing and developing sustainable innovation concepts with citizen-consumers (e.g., Spaargaren et al. 2006) User workshops for testing sustainable product concepts (e.g., Hoffman 2006)	Users can identify problems in innovative concepts and suggest design improvements based on everyday experience
User innovation	User innovations (e.g., Rohracher and Ornetzeder 2006)	Self-organizing user groups can make design innovations and disseminate sustainable innovations

The examples show that user-producer interaction and user involvement in design can make a significant contribution to sustainable innovation, and can also facilitate the dissemination of knowledge on the need for and the available solutions for adopting more sustainable technologies. With this promise in mind, we now turn to consider a project aiming to promote an energy-efficient innovation, low-energy housing, with a view to considering user needs and involving users in the innovation process. We first simply describe the project and its context, and then turn to analyzing how users were involved, or represented, at different stages of the project.

3. The Motivoittaja project – introducing a user-friendly low-energy housing concept

As a case study on the role of user knowledge in the introduction of energy innovations, we consider a recent Finnish project aimed at promoting 'low-energy housing', i.e., a housing concept that consumes at least 50% less energy than standard models¹. In 1999, Motiva, a state-owned company responsible for promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy, launched a project aiming to mainstream and 'normalize' the concept of low-energy housing through a technology procurement competition and labelling system (called 'MotiVoittaja') targeted at the producers and consumers of *prefabricated detached homes*. The project was a moderate success: it managed to attract a large number of entries, and contributed to more public interest and debate on energy conservation in space heating. Yet the product concept and label did not become popular, and the definition of low-energy housing remains ambiguous. In the following, we first consider the aims and design of the project

Background, aim and design of the project

Key technologies to reduce heating energy consumption were first introduced during the oil crises, and a number of experimental zero-energy and minimum-energy houses have been built over the decades. Yet the cutting-edge designs have not been widely adopted due to a lack knowledge,

¹ The case study is based on earlier research (e.g., Mikkola and Riihimäki 2002; Savonen 2004; Halme et al. 2005). This research has been complemented by reviewing other documents, conducting an analysis of construction-oriented Internet discussion sites and an interview with a representative of Motiva, the project manager in this case (Aho 2006). More details about this case study are available in Heiskanen et al. (2007) as part of the *Create Acceptance* project funded by EU FP6.

awareness and financial motives among homebuilders (i.e., users) and construction companies. Following some early unsuccessful experiments, low-energy technologies have also suffered from an ambiguous public image. Lay people still often associate high levels of insulation with the concept of “bottle houses” – i.e., houses that are too well sealed from their environment resulting in mould pollution and respiratory problems (e.g., Hakala and Hottinen 1998). The MotiVoittaja project aimed to overcome this stalemate by commercializing a new “moderate” and “user-friendly” concept of *low-energy housing*.

Low-energy housing as conceptualized in the project refers to a set of different technologies. The technologies employed include increased thermal insulation, low-energy windows, reduced air leakages, recovering heat from exhaust air, extracting energy with heat pumps, passive solar energy and building orientation. A key aspect of low-energy housing is a *systems view* of designing a house. Design is based on a thorough understanding, control and utilization of the energy flows within a building. Through this design approach, low energy solutions could be reached without large additional investments, and without compromising indoor air quality or comfort.

The Motivoittaja project sought to promote the diffusion of the low-energy concept through a technology procurement competition. Technology procurement is a policy instrument for stimulating innovation through a targeted acquisition process. An influential buyer or group of buyers formulate the requirements and evaluate the products, and market transformation is further influenced by support activities (e.g., rebates, labelling or awards) (Westling 2000). In the MotiVoittaja project, the award was designed to function as a label of endorsement, allowing prospective customers to identify ‘certified low-energy houses’. Moreover, Motiva undertook to assemble an ‘initial buyer group’ of prospective homebuilders willing to make a commitment to purchase a ‘MotiVoittaja’ house.

The aim of the project was to transform the prefabricated housing market by creating a new product concept – the low-energy prefabricated house. This concept would signal a new, more positive image of energy-conserving construction solutions, such as convenience, indoor air quality and affordability. The project managers hoped that such houses would attract a broad range of customers, and would thus help to mainstream low-energy housing. A more general aim was to raise awareness of energy efficiency and its importance as an environmental aspect of housing.

Two organizations were closely involved in the development of the vision. The competition was launched and administered by Motiva Ltd. This fully state-owned company focuses on the promotion of energy efficiency and the adoption of renewable energy sources. The other key partner was the Finnish national technical research institute, VTT, which had been intensively involved in developing low-energy housing technology and design concepts with an emphasis on user benefits: comfort, healthy indoor climate, simplified heating solutions and reduced lifetime costs. One of the underlying ideas in this concept is that energy-efficiency and indoor air quality are not contradictory goals, but can be simultaneously improved through better management of air and energy flows (Halme et al. 2005).

Motiva and VTT also tried to take into account the consumers’ expectations on the basis of previous experiences of problems in adopting low-energy housing (Savonen 2004; Halme et al. 2005). One was to reduce the financial risk involved. The construction process is stressful for consumers– for many, a once-in-a-life investment requiring significant time and financial resources. Few consumers are interested in experimenting with new technologies in this situation – hence, an external ‘label of endorsement’ by a reliable, unbiased party might increase consumers’ confidence. Lack of branding and marketing was also perceived as an obstacle to low-energy housing (Halme et al. 2005). The

underlying belief was that homebuilders are increasingly consumers of ready-made products. The product should be easy to identify and purchase, and it should convey other than energy- and environment-related benefits, such as comfort and healthy living (Halme et al. 2005)

A jury of external experts was invited to determine the winners. The jury included a representative from the VTT (the National Technical Research Centre), Tekes (the National Technology Agency), the Ministry of Environment (in the role of regulator of the built environment), and a regional co-operative bank (Länsi-Uudenmaan Osuuspankki), representing the interest of mortgage-lenders to reduce the financial risk of homeowners. Two organizations represented the user perspective in the jury. One was the National Association for Detached Housing Construction (PRKK ry). The 5000 members of this organization are mainly individual homebuilders and people renovating their houses, and the association serves them by providing training events and advice. The other user representative was the Technical Director of the University of Helsinki, representing an end-user of energy-efficient construction solutions. The jury members participated mainly as experts, but also partly as representatives of the respective interest groups (e.g., users).

Manufacturers of prefabricated houses were selected as the target group because of their growing market share². The winners of the competition were promised the right to use the MotiVoittaja label in their marketing. The winners would also be entered into a product record allowing homebuilders to identify the best solutions from an unbiased source. In addition, Motiva made a commitment to assemble a purchaser group and facilitate the winning manufacturers' negotiations with them.

The competition was published at the beginning of April 2000 and the winners were announced in May 2001. The initial response, i.e., the number of entries into the competition, was positive. There were 20 entries into the competition – i.e., almost half of all manufacturers entered a design, including three of the ten largest manufacturers. Eight of the entries were considered by the jury to merit being awarded with the MotiVoittaja label. The total energy consumption of the awarded designs ranged from 60 to 130 kWh/m², but was at least 35% less than average (Aho et al. 2001). In spite of the differences, all eight designs were promoted equally. Furthermore, the right to use the MotiVoittaja label was awarded retroactively to two other designs that met the criteria. The winning designs were very similar in appearance and overall design to the standard type of prefabricated house offered in the market. Motiva and the jury were quite happy with the cost level achieved: the construction costs varied from 1300 to 2000 euros per m² of living area.

Four of the 10 companies awarded the label actually offered their winning design for sale, and three were still offering a “MotiVoittaja” house in 2006. The housing manufacturers were somewhat disappointed with the sales performance: they had expected a more enthusiastic market response to their new models, and more deals with the initial buyer group (Mikkola and Riihimäki 2002; Aho 2006). They believed that consumers were cautious about low-energy models for fear that they involve complex technologies that are difficult to operate. Their impression was also that consumers only focus on initial investment costs, and fail to grasp the importance of total lifetime costs. They were also aware of the fact that consumers are not very trustful of manufacturers' promotional materials: they thus called for third-party calculations of consumption figures and costs (Mikkola and Riihimäki 2002; Savonen 2004).

² According to the current estimate, their share of the detached house market was about 68 per cent in 2005 (PTT 2006). There are about 40 producers on the market, producing about 10 000 houses annually (Nordic Ecolabel 2005). The most popular form of setting up a prefabricated house is for consumers to do part of the work themselves or have it done by contractors, but turnkey constructions are also gaining popularity (Halme et al. 2005).

MotiVoittaja did not turn out to be a branding success. The project largely failed to promote commercial models marketed specifically as low-energy housing and to establish a widely acknowledged set of criteria for this type of housing. Yet in general, one can conclude that the targets of raising awareness of low-energy housing and mainstreaming the concept were actually fairly successful – even though it is difficult to isolate the contribution of the project to the overall development in this area. The idea of houses with about 50% less energy consumption has been adopted quite widely, but there is still a lot of debate about the effectiveness of different solutions to meet this aim.

User representation and participation in the project

User were present – directly or indirectly – at various stages of the project (Table 2): in setting up the criteria, in selecting the winning models, in assembling the initial purchaser group, and in communicating about the project in the media and in direct communications (e.g., fairs). Moreover, potential users can self-organize on the Internet, and the MotiVoittaja project and low-energy housing has provoked some interesting discussion threads on Internet discussion forums.

Table 2. Forms of user involvement in the MotiVoittaja project

Type	Organizers	Involvement	Purpose
Planning, criteria-setting and selecting the winning entries	Motiva	Representatives of expert and stakeholder groups: VTT, Tekes, Ministry of Environment, detached housing association, housing finance, expert end-user	Represent expertise and interests from different positions (technology development, finance and regulation, market players and end-users)
Assembling the initial purchaser group	Motiva	40 homebuilders (some of whom dropped out later)	Create market Spread knowledge through peer experience
Formal communications	Motiva	Media representatives > media users Housing Fairs > exhibitors and visitors	Create awareness of energy efficiency Disseminate information about new construction technologies and designs
Informal communications	Self-organized, facilitated by Internet discussion sites	Homebuilders Professionals	Exchange views and experiences about construction issues
Market	Manufacturers Motiva	Prospective homebuilders	Build a house (low-energy or not)

Planning, criteria-setting and selecting the winning entries was conducted by experts: the project managers, the expert evaluators and the jury involved in the competition. There were, however, two user representatives in the jury. In particular, the representative of National Association for Detached Housing Construction (PRKK ry) represented the homebuilder’s perspective in the project. Moreover, the project managers and the jury made an effort to address some of the homebuilders’ (perceived) concerns related to low-energy housing, namely costs, convenience and indoor air quality (for more details, see Tekes 2006):

Formal communications. Most of the communication on the project followed a top-down model. Communications were directed at the trade and daily press and other media. The project received relatively extensive media coverage, and most of the press was extremely favourable. Low-energy housing was introduced as a modern and future-oriented approach. Moreover, there is extensive information available on the project on the Motiva website, which has been complemented after the project with a calculation tool for energy costs. However, the project managers themselves were of the opinion that more efforts should have been placed in communications after the competition, but this was not possible due to budget limitations (Savonen 2004; Aho 2006).

Nonetheless, one important communication success was achieved through participation in the Finnish nation-wide Housing Fair events. These are annual events that create a new model housing development each year in a different location, and illustrate novel technologies through demonstration constructions. These events are visited by approximately 150 000 visitors each year, including both experts and ordinary people. After the event, the houses are sold to ‘normal’ families, and the fairgrounds are turned into a residential area. Motivoittaja was presented as a concept in the 2001 event, and demonstration houses were built for the 2002 event.

Assembling the initial purchaser group. Gaining market commitment from initial purchasers is an important part of technology procurement projects. In this case, purchasers were mainly private consumers, so assembling the group was a complex task. Prospective buyers were contacted through the National Association for Detached Housing Construction at training seminars and by advertising in the association’s newsletter. Finally, a buyer group of 40 families was gathered. Yet the buyers turned out to be quite reluctant to make binding contracts with the manufacturers – they merely agreed to give priority to the awarded models. In the end, some were not satisfied with the standard awarded models, and requested so many modifications that the houses no longer met the energy efficiency criteria. Others ‘dropped out’ for various reasons, such as financial problems or other changes of plans.

The most important initial buyers were also purchasers of Housing Fair houses. Three different awarded models were constructed for the Housing Fair in Kotka (in Southeast Finland), and were actually sold before the fair. The families who moved into these houses became the most important showcases for the MotiVoittaja concept – so much so, actually, that they became quite annoyed with all the publicity, and decided to stop giving interviews. Their houses, the energy efficiency solutions, their construction costs and annual energy bills, as well as interviews about their family life were displayed on the Motiva website, offering at least some personal peer experiences for other prospective homebuilders.

Informal communications: In the formal communications, the media coverage was quite favourable. The ‘unofficial’ communication ongoing on Internet discussion forums reveals a more mixed reception³. Such sites are an important source of knowledge for a growing number of homebuilders. The ‘experts’ on these sites are often professionals or seasoned self-builders. The discussion sites showed that homebuilders are also faced with a confusing array of heating and insulation options and combinations, but they also revealed that there was a lot of discussion on low-energy housing, and more and more discussants were telling about their own personal experiences.

Both positive and negative discussions could be found about low-energy housing. The sites revealed very divergent opinions on what “low-energy housing” means, and much debate about real-life

³ 139 discussion threads in the Suomi 24.fi forum and 53 discussion threads in the Rakentaja.fi forum were examined, identified by using the search terms “low-energy housing” and “MotiVoittaja”. The review also includes newspaper articles linked by discussants (e.g., HS 2004; HS 2005).

heating costs (as opposed to calculations based on technical performance). One recurring topic seemed to be whether to invest in geothermal heat pumps or increased insulation. This line of discussion implies that the ‘systemic design’ idea represented by researchers at the VTT was not adopted by ordinary homebuilders – people considered different technologies as separate issues. There was also some competition between contrasting concepts of ecological housing: one being based on traditional, vernacular construction methods and natural materials, and other ‘modern’ one involving well-sealed structures and highly controlled air and energy flows. Some of the proponents of ‘traditional’ ecological housing oppose tightly-sealed and ‘smart’ low-energy homes.

Market: By stimulating a market for ‘mainstream’ low-energy housing, the project attempted to align itself with the (perceived) interests of ordinary homebuilders, and especially the growing group of middle-class people who rely extensively on ready-made market offerings. This group would also include people concerned about the environment and about future energy costs, and the project tried to serve up low-energy housing as a solution to both concerns. Yet homebuilders are, in fact, a quite variegated group of consumers. They typically consider a number of different heating and construction options (Mikkola and Riihimäki 2004) and balance a range of different requirements. Prefabricated houses are also not an ordinary industrial product. They are sold in small quantities, and even ‘standard’ models are often modified and tailored extensively. This is somewhat problematic when considering energy efficiency from a ‘systemic design’ perspective: modifications should not interfere with the planned and controlled energy flows.

The consumer segment that the design competition attempted to target does clearly exist, but is perhaps not as easy to enrol as believed. A survey conducted half a year after the competition was resolved (Mikkola and Riihimäki 2002) showed that homebuilders do value energy efficiency – 40% of the respondents (N=229) reported it being an important criterion when selecting a prefabricated house. Some of the respondents (8%) had never heard of low-energy housing, and about half had heard of it, but stated that they knew very little about it. A relatively large share (14%) had considered low-energy housing, but decided otherwise. Nine percent of the respondents stated that they planned on building a low-energy home – which does show a clear growth pattern.

The consumer survey also revealed that interest in energy conservation and ecological solutions is growing among homebuilders. Homebuilders felt, however, that there is not much reliable information on the topic, and they were confused by the different concepts. The attempt to equate low-energy housing with ecological housing has not been too successful: only 39% of the respondents believed that an ecological house consumes less energy than a normal detached house. Less than half believed that one can halve a building’s energy demand with small additional construction investments (Mikkola and Riihimäki 2002). The consumer surveys and Internet discussions thus show that there is still a lot of confusion about the concept of low-energy housing, and that energy-efficiency is not automatically equated with ecological housing.

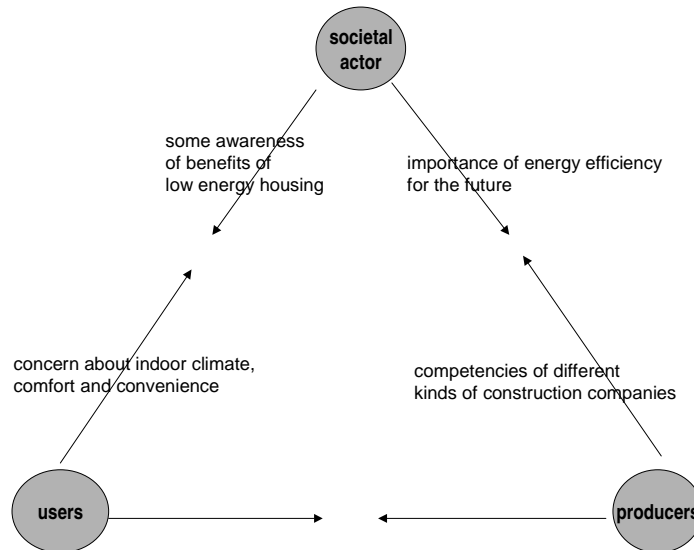
User involvement and knowledge exchange in the MotiVoittaja project

In the following, we consider the interaction between users and producers and users and the societal actor involved, i.e., Motiva, in the MotiVoittaja project. We identify knowledge exchange challenges that were successfully met, and ones that were not equally successful.

In terms of successes, the Motivoittaja project surmounted some communication challenges vis-à-vis users and producers (Figure 2). It did manage to raise user awareness of the benefits of low energy housing, to some extent. It also managed to address some user issues, such as comfort, convenience, and good indoor air quality. But the project seems to have been more successful in communicating with the producers, i.e., the prefabricated housing manufacturers. A large number of

these companies became convinced of the future importance of energy conservation in housing, which is reflected in the large number of entries in the competition. The competition design, which was fairly open to a variety of solutions, also managed to address the variety of competencies existing in these small companies.

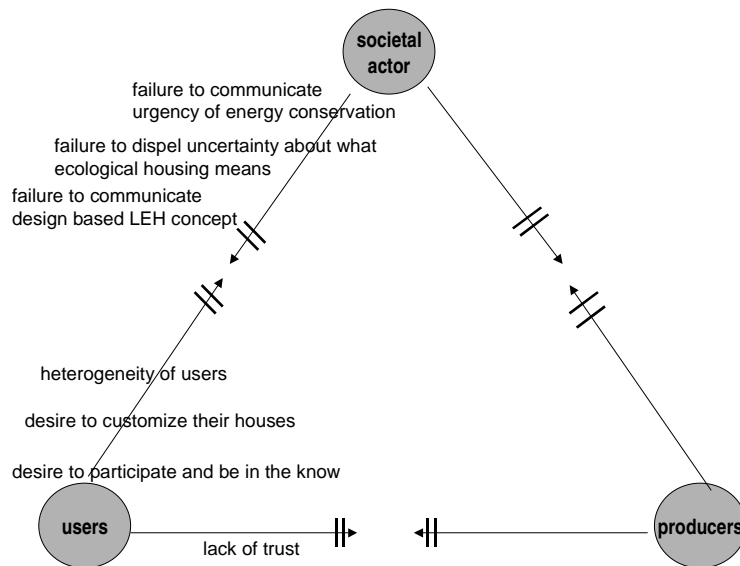
Figure 2. Successful aspects of the communication between societal actor, users and producers in the Motivoittaja project.



Yet the Motivoittaja project also failed to address a number of communication issues (Figure 3), in particular vis-à-vis users. In communicating its own agenda and concerns, it was not capable of convincing the users (homebuilders) of the urgency of energy conservation. At the time of the competition, signs of this urgency were not commonly visible. After the competition, the price of energy has steadily risen⁴. More stringent requirements on energy efficiency in buildings have been placed (Ministry of Environment 2006a) and there was even a committee was set up in 2006 to investigate the possibility of setting a particular environmental tax on detached houses using electrical heating (Ministry of Environment 2006b). These developments were on the horizon at the time of the competition, but the project was not able to communicate them convincingly. Moreover, the project failed to dispel the confusion surrounding low energy housing. Even though awareness was raised, the Internet discussions and the survey (Mikkola and Riihimäki 2002) show that people are still confused about which solutions are energy efficient and environmentally sound.

⁴ For example, the real price of electricity has risen by about 15 % since 2001 (Energiamarkkinavirasto 2007) and the price of heating oil has risen even more (Öjyälän keskusliitto 2007).

Figure 3. *Unsuccessful* aspects of the communication between societal actor, users and producers in the Motivoittaja project.



The project also failed to discover some key features of the user context that would have been important for the project design. These include the diversity of the user base, the desire to participate and “be in the know”, and their desire to ‘tailor’ solutions and to customize their house, which interfered with the design-based concept of low-energy housing introduced.

There is also a communication issue between the users and the producers, which neither the Motivoittaja project nor the producers have managed to resolve. This is the lack of trust of homebuilders (i.e., users) in the information provided by prefabricated housing manufacturers. Such trust is very important when investing in new, untried solutions such as the novel low energy housing concepts.

4. Discussion: alternative approaches to intensify knowledge exchange among users and experts

The previous section identified some of the communication failures of the Motivoittaja project, and next we consider whether more intensive interaction between users, producers and societal actors might have helped to surmount some of those failures. We revisit the three categories of user involvement presented in Table 1, and consider the kind of contribution that they could have made to the Motivoittaja project.

In the Motivoittaja project, users were mainly involved in an indirect manner. In the jury of the competition, users were involved through two representatives, and assumptions were made about users on the basis of previous experiences by the designers of the project. An attempt was also made to engage users in the pre-specified role of initial buyer. Users were not, however, eager to adopt this role, nor did they behave according to expectations. They were not willing to make a commitment to purchase a winning design, and moreover, some of the users wanted to make

modifications to the prefabricated design, which interfered with the energy conserving features. In the survey conducted after the competition, homebuilders turned out to be a more heterogeneous group than was acknowledged by the user representation that informed the competition design.

Designer participation in the user context refers to close ethnographic or interpretive research of the user context by those involved in project design. As indicated in Table 1, this can contribute to more detailed knowledge of how users actually use technologies, and to a more sophisticated understanding of the origins of user requirements. In the Motivoittaja project, it seems that a better knowledge of the *user context* would mostly likely help the project to address usability, utility, acceptance and user context issues to a greater extent. It is likely that the designers of the project were, in fact, to some extent aware of the diversity of the user base and the complexity of the homebuilding process. More systematic field observations might, however, reinforce the role of this knowledge in the design of the project. This is a problem that Akrich (1995) has identified: even when there is useful experiential knowledge or marketing research available, designers' user representations tend to converge around pre-defined project targets, and user knowledge that does not fit into the picture is easily discarded.

User participation in design refers to the direct involvement of users in the design of the development and promotion of the innovation. As indicated in Table 1, the reported examples of *user participation* in design have helped to identify problems in sustainable innovations which hinder their uptake by users. Such approaches (e.g., user groups, focus groups) might have revealed, in particular, the reservations that users have vis-à-vis their role in the Motivoittaja project. Issues that might have come to the surface include the lack of trust in prefabricated housing manufacturers' claims and the users' desire to customize their homes. Moreover, a closer understanding of how homebuilders understand energy use and the concept of ecological housing could have helped the project managers to find ways to communicate the urgency of energy conservation.

User innovation implies a deeper and more fundamental participation by users. Here, users actually come up with solutions that are later adopted on a commercial scale or integrated into commercial-scale designs. As indicated in Table 1, this can contribute to low-cost solutions for disseminating sustainable technologies, and can also lead to design improvements, in particular in early stages of technological development. User innovations are not uncommon in low energy housing; in fact, many of the early 'zero-energy' houses were built by individual users for themselves. Individual users with a particular interest in energy do innovate in developing low energy housing concepts. Often, such concepts are quite variegated, ranging from extremely high-tech solutions with a high input by contractors to quite low-tech solutions with a large user input in construction. They are usually closely tailored to individual users' needs (Daniels 2007).

The notion of user innovation is partly contradictory to the vision of the Motivoittaja project, which aimed to go beyond individual custom-tailored solutions and to move low-energy housing into the mainstream market. We agree that it is not obvious that even the best and most inventive users' self-designs are readily transferable to the mainstream market. There is a great variability in users' requirements and in their knowledge levels and desires to participate in designing, building and operating their homes. Most homebuilders are first-timers, with little experience and a relatively low knowledge level on construction issues in general and energy efficiency in particular (Mikkola and Riihimäki 2002). They accumulate a lot of useful experience during their homebuilding project, and the Internet discussion sites show that homebuilders are extremely willing to exchange experiences and reveal their knowledge and ideas to others.

As in the case reported by Ornetzeder and Rohrer (2006), user innovation in housing energy is more likely a collective than an individual endeavour. A large group of users, with some existing experience in homebuilding, could likely come up with a range of ideas for better low energy concepts. Ornetzeder and Rohrer describe a traditional way of sharing knowledge through collective work among villagers. In less tightly knit communities, the Internet could offer a solution for systematic knowledge sharing and open innovation. For example Halme et al. (2005) suggested that the Motivoittaja project might have considered an “open design platform” rather than encouraging each manufacturer to come up with its own competition entry. Perhaps users could also contribute to such an open innovation platform. It might also be possible to create a design tool that allows users to customize their own low energy homes while maintaining the low-energy design features through selective customization affordances.

Nonetheless, we can argue that engaging *user innovation*, along with more *user context knowledge* and *user participation* would most likely have also helped the project to communicate the rationale (societal needs and requirements) underlying low energy housing. There are two reasons for this: a closer contact with users helps to understand their communication needs, but can also help to access peer-to-peer communication networks, which are most effective kind of communication. Projects aiming to promote energy efficiency (or other societal goals) can greatly benefit from the use of such existing networks by finding grass-roots promoters and “multipliers”, i.e., people who carry the message forward on their own initiative (e.g., Brohmann et al. 2006). Peer-to-peer communication is usually more effective and is also perceived of as being more reliable than top-down communications.

In addition to the commonly mentioned problems of communication between users and producers, our case also highlighted the issue of *trust*, which has gained less attention in the user involvement literature. The users’ lack of trust in the producers’ communications was one of the problems not fully solved in the Motivoittaja case. Perhaps users would be more willing to engage in experimentation with low-energy housing if they could be directly served by a neutral, impartial third party (i.e., an intermediary organization) when contracting construction solutions. Motiva is an intermediary organization, but one operating on the national level and providing general information. In addition, it might be helpful if municipalities had specific service centres for consumers providing individual service and contracting low-energy solutions with the primary aim to serve the homebuilders’ interests.

5. Conclusions

Motivoittaja is an example of a project that was quite ambitious and user-friendly when compared to many other energy-efficiency projects (see e.g., Vreuls 2006). Yet we have seen that even this state-of-the art project could most likely have been improved had users been involved more intensively, and had the project also made use of user participation in communication about the project. However, the case also shows that existing methods for user involvement require tailoring to different contexts.

Our case illustrates the fact that *users’, producers’ and societal actors’ knowledge is differently distributed in different industries*. Methods for user participation need to be adapted to the needs of specific user-producer (and societal actor) constellations. The example of homebuilding is a special case: users have a strong involvement in their homebuilding projects, and they have a lot of ideas about their needs and expectations toward their new homes. Nonetheless, most users are first-time users, with little knowledge of the homebuilding process. Once having been through the process,

the users are much wiser. Even today, users share much of their accumulated knowledge with each other, and promoting such peer-to-peer knowledge sharing may be one of the elements in successfully promoting low-energy housing. Thus, the notion of user-inclusive innovation communities (von Hippel 2005; Heiskanen et al. *forthcoming*) could provide some useful insights for energy efficient housing design.

Detached houses are also products in which local knowledge plays an important role. Unlike many other industrial products, users have a relatively large role in specifying the product, and thus those promoting low-energy housing cannot merely focus their efforts on producers. Prefabricated houses are not conventional mass-produced products, but rather mass-customized products. Design solutions need to consider this characteristic, and there is a need to find solutions that can accommodate a lot of customization without compromising energy efficiency features.

There are also indications that *more interaction between users, producers and societal actors could promote the flow of knowledge about the need for sustainability innovations* and the available solutions. In the Motivoittaja case, the project designers were aware of the impending urgency of improving the energy efficiency of detached houses, but were not fully capable of communicating this urgency to the users. Effective communication requires intensive interaction, which is not possible directly between an individual project manager and thousands of users. Closer user involvement can help both to target communications at issues of user concern, and to make use of peer-to-peer communication networks.

While the literature on the role of users in sustainable innovations provides promising examples, *the role of users, producers and societal actors in sustainable innovation is still poorly conceptualized*. This is the case in the user involvement literature more broadly (Heiskanen et al., *forthcoming*). For example, there is still a need to conceptualize better the different forms of lay and expert knowledge involved in the development of new knowledge and new solution (e.g., Collins and Evans 2002; 2004). Moreover, the user involvement literature has not paid much attention to issues of power, interests and trust (Hyysalo & Lehenkari 2002; Ivory 2004); it is often implicitly assumed that information asymmetries and conflicts of interest are solved by improved communications. The fact that different parties may not want to reveal all the information they have, or may not be willing to take the information received at face value, is usually not explicitly addressed. Thus, more attention should be devoted to finding ways of organizing user-producer interactions that serve to align the long-term interests of different parties.

We can thus conclude that the development and promotion of sustainable innovations can benefit from applying ideas and methods in the field of user-producer interaction and user-oriented design. It is, however, important to add that such methods cannot be transferred from one sector to another unquestioningly, but practitioners need to take into account the specificities of each sector, product and local context. Moreover, there is a need for more in-depth studies of the mobilization of different types of knowledge in the innovation process, and more systematic conceptualization of factors facilitating and obstructing knowledge flows and the alignment of different parties' interests.

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User innovation, design space, and everyday practices: Rodeo Kayaking case revisited

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Abstract

User innovation school by Eric von Hippel and his numerous co investigators has done ground breaking work in exploring how and why users innovate, in identifying lead-users and contributions from user innovation communities. The present paper focuses on four understudied issues in this framework that come visible when one re-examines the analysis of rodeo-kayaking by Baldwin, Hienerth and von Hippel (2006) and Hienert (2006) originally geared towards exploring the role of user-innovators in industry development also after the earliest stages. These themes are 1) the scope of user innovation; 2) the evolution of design space for a user practice; 3) the range of ways users are involved in innovation; and 4) the range of users that are innovative in design relevant ways. The findings related to these issues add some qualifiers and suggest re-phrasings to some of the questions user-innovation school asks about user-innovation and industry development.

Keywords: User innovation, design space, enactment of technology, practice, free-style kayaking, rodeo-kayaking.

1. Introduction

Take an average free-style kayaker. What recent user-innovations you do expect to find in his kayak year 2007? Should one proceed by interviewing him about the modifications done to it or interviewing the designers of his kayak the answer is blunt: none or one. The kayak model is in all likelihood a variation of what Baldwin et al (2006) call as the dominant design of “centre buoyant planing hull”, and the one likely mentioned invention is forming personalized foot-rests for greater comfort in this particular kayak model. But even this may not get reported for that is what everybody *always* does for *any* freestyle kayak, so it is not that inventive. When you compare this to other users, you are prone to notice that the inventive stuff, quite according to the expectations of user-innovation theory (e.g. von Hippel, Eric, 1988, 2005) is left to relatively few lead-users who are in top of the sport, have had a decisive impact on its development, gain much from any improvement, and who are also technically savvy enough to try out their own modifications on their own or in service of some of the manufacturers (Baldwin *et al.*, 2006; Hienerth, 2006).

The answer changes when one goes and joins the kayaker for a series of evening trips to nearby rapids and to longer excursions out to the more exiting rivers. You would likely to need to get out in the backwash yourself to gain the absorbtive capacity for the rather sticky information about holes, waves, moves, technique, hazards, excitement, gear, rapids and so on. But with this experience, one would soon notice various micro-adaptations and micro-innovations (paddings, thrusters, ways to

resist cold and contaminated water, www-forums and www-discharge meters et cetera et cetera). One would also begin to pay attention to the frequent changing of kayak models despite their surface similarity, and changes in the play-spots: people did not use to play in all the places they do now, and some cool places of the past are now seen as lame “sunday surf” or simply non-fit. The shortening of kayaks has allowed our average paddler to do vertical moves such as cartwheels and flips, and do them also in fairly shallow holes in the river without banging to the rock underneath. In all, you might begin to get suspicious that these changes have something to do with the changes in the base of practitioners, and not only with the inventive lead users.

In short, the experience would draw attention to four understudied issues in studies by the user innovation school by Eric von Hippel and his numerous co investigators that come visible in the analysis of rodeo-kayaking by Baldwin, Hienert and von Hippel (2006) and Hienert (2006):

A) The scope of user innovation. User innovation school is first to emphasize that 10-38% of the users of industrial as well as consumer products develop or modify their equipment. But they pay little heed to less tangible alternative uses, improved uses, non-uses, purposefully diminishing functionality et cetera. These can affect a product and its future development just as decisively. The presence, even the regularity of these sorts of alterations is well established in consumption studies and ethnographies of work. Their pooled economic significance has been suggested by studies on learning-by-doing (e.g. Rosenberg, 1982), and hinted in other analyses on industry change, such as those related to over-served or miss-served customers (Christensen, 2003).

B) The evolution of design space. While flagging the importance of user-innovation in opening and exploring new design space, user-innovation school focuses solely on equipment and narrowly conceived technique innovations. The evolution of user practice—in which the products are used and which ultimately sets the design space—is not affected only by these classes of innovation. Innovations concerning the purpose, style, places, rules and organization of user practice are just as important. Many of these have direct bearing upon the design space through the expansion of the activities done within the practice, shaping of their direction, forking of these activities into separate sub-practices and formation of entirely new groups of users with distinct preferences.

C) The range of ways users are involved in innovation. Dichotomizing user-purchasers, user-innovators, user-manufacturers and other manufacturers in fact diminishes the scope of visible user innovation involved in equipment manufacturing. Also non-user origin manufacturers tend to have their networks in place to both cutting edge experts and lay users. In effect, many of them are creating and sustaining their own user innovation communities. User-manufacturers are likely to have better absorptive capacity and better linkages in place for tapping into the sticky information embedded in user practices. Nonetheless, also non-user manufacturers can, and often do, involve users in testing and evaluating models, prototypes and early versions; acquainting designers to their work practices and environments; forecasting trends and envisioning new products; and even as participating in the actual design either as experts of their own work.

D) The range of users that are innovative. It is well established that lead-users create proportionally very significant amount of user inventions and modifications to existing products. But when we consider the less dramatic forms of user-inventiveness highlighted in the course of this paper, the picture changes somewhat. Pooled minor alterations and modifications contribute to the evolution of both equipment and user practice, leading to further evolution in the design space. In analogue to developments in diffusion studies in late 1980s, local modifications and adaptations can be the key to the diffusion of innovation, spreading it to yet new user groups, forming new lead-users and in producing cross-overs from nearby practices. Should we want to phrase this in terms of

democratizing innovation (von Hippel, 2005), lead-users are like citizens of the polis of Athens; savvy, willing and highly visible elite who is easily seen to constitute the relevant sphere of action. But take away the rest of users, the power of democratized innovation would collapse in analogue to Athens being stripped of cultural, economic and political inputs from women, slaves and foreign merchants that all fell outside its formal democratic institutions and practices.

The present paper discusses the above suggested themes in relation to the user-innovation paradigm by relating them to the rodeo-kayaking analysis presented by Hienert (2006) and Baldwin, Hienert and von Hippel (2006). The inquiry into rodeo—or, more precisely free-style kayaking—is done mostly by re-examining themes and data already presented particularly in the Hienert (2006) paper in relation to and Baldwin et al (2006) paper, but also complementing these findings by the present author's seven year involvement in the sport and recording his field experiences in Scandinavia during the season 2007 as a participant observer. The paper is structured as follows. It first recounts Baldwin et al (2006) analysis and argumentation on rodeo-kayaking and then provides reminders and additions to this story in four sections that correspond to the a, b, c, d arguments above. The paper ends with a methodological discussion and consideration of the challenges involved in embracing the directions sketched in this paper in user-innovation framework.

2. Recounting rodeo-kayaking case

Let us recount the rodeo kayaking case by Baldwin, Hienert and von Hippel (2006). Rodeo kayaking emerged at the turn of 1970s and has since grown from a few thousand people's folly into around four million people hobby and 100M\$ annual business with for instance, approximately 50000 kayaks purchased in 2002. In terms of equipment, it is a paradigm case for user-innovation and its relationship to manufacturer-innovation as Baldwin et al elaborate. Early river kayaks used and modified for rodeo were done by users from fiber-glass by hand lay-up techniques. Some of these users began to make kayaks for others, and evolved into user-manufacturer businesses. Plastic rodeo kayaks emerged in mid 1970s when two plastic manufacturers turned fibre-glass user-designs into plastic boats. This led to market expansion as plastic boats were easier to maintain as they did not need repair after every encounter with (numerous) rocks in rapids. The relatively expensive design specific molds for plastic kayaks required higher capital investment, for which reason only some of the user-manufacturer businesses switched to plastic, while others continued with fibreglass, serving such niches where rock collision was less an issue than stiffness, low weight and improved design: basically slalom kayaks and some competition kayaks for rodeo.

In the 1980s most rodeo kayakers used commercially manufactured plastic boats, but according to Baldwin et al, these did not turn the development platform as they did not allow easy user modification. User-innovators built their novel designs using traditional fiber-glass lay-up techniques that allowed relatively easy and cheap experimentation. The cradle for much of the user innovation were "squirt-boats" that had an almost sinking buoyancy achieved by customizing the boat to paddler weight and body proportions. The ends of a squirt could be pushed under water by just leaning, which allowed new tricks and ease with existing moves. But their low buoyancy made their usage in white-water risky and tricky and low cavity made cramming in them uncomfortable and in some designs, getting out of the (potentially already sinking) boat hard. Only few thousands of such boats were ever made and used mostly on flat-water or in comparably modest currents.

What Baldwin et al term as the emergence of a dominant design happened in late 1980s when user-innovators invented a boat that had much buoyancy in the middle but little at the ends, which could consequently be pushed under water when initiating moves, while its flat hull allowed planing on a wave. As this design appealed for a larger use-base than did squirt boats, as well as was less critical

on weight and body proportions of the paddler, it invited mass-volume plastic manufacturing. The bulk of users as well as technique and equipment innovation shifted to this new type of “center-buoyant” boats. New manufacturers—at first solely of lead-user origin—entered into industry, and the development intensified. In contrast to earlier 4-5 year release intervals, manufacturers began to introduce new models annually or biannually at the end of 1990s. Both Baldwin et al (2006) and Hienert (2006) assert that a fairly standard free-style kayak emerged around 2000, after which radical innovations changed to incremental improvements and variations. All the while, 100% innovations in technique came from users, while users also dominated innovation in hardware (62% of major and 83% of minor innovations) over user-manufacturers (2% major and 13% minor innovations) and over manufacturers (25% of major and 15% of minor innovations).

Baldwin et al (2006) the reasoning explaining these numbers is as follows. User innovators and user-manufacturers hold advantages over potentially production-process-wise more effective manufacturers (in mainstream kayaks and in other related fields) until the design space becomes closer to getting mined out with time. Before this, the expected inter-arrival time between successful new designs doesn't allow them to redeem their more capital intensive investment, at least not in a manner that would drive smaller players with higher variable costs of production out of the market. User-manufacturers have already paid their design costs through their own experimenting; they are already in the user community which allows word-of-mouth (and credibility) advantages in marketing as well as in design through tapping in ideas and modifications that are in the air amongst users; and finally they already have set-up their prototyping facilities, while entrants must first invest in these. Baldwin et al go on to sketch out a likely shared equilibrium model that would follow even in case where some manufacturer (amongst user-manufacturers or an outside player) shifted to high-capital facilities: the high-capital manufacturer would likely excel in mass produced equipment, while user-manufacturers continue to dominate the end with most advanced performance...insofar as there were significant differences between models frequently enough. In their terms, this condition persists insofar as the design space did not get exhausted, or as long as the design space kept on expanding as they point out with the spur on equipment development through the introduction of standing waves in world championship repertoire in 1997.

3. The scope of user innovation

The observation of evolution of design space serves as a departure point for us in stretching the boundaries of user-innovation paradigm. The studies of the user innovation school have been groundbreaking in establishing how many users develop or modify products: 19-36% of users of industrial products (Herstatt & Hippel, 1992; Morrison *et al.*, 2000; von Hippel, Eric, 1988, 2005) and of 10-38% of consumer products (Luthje, 2004; Franke, 2003; Luthje, 2005). At the same, the paradigm doesn't pay attention to how technology is *enacted* in everyday practices of users (Lave, 1988; mol, 2002; Orlikowski, 2000). This is basically to say, that user innovation school—probably due to wanting to be on the safe side when doing quantitative analysis of user-innovation—presume in their figures that unless a user builds a modification or invents a new design, their alterations of technology are not design relevant. Further rationale behind this lies in the original lead-user method. If you take *the perspective of an equipment manufacturer seeking to innovate* it makes sense to identify those users who gain most and tend to go the furthest in their modifications and inventions in order to find those people with whom the company primarily wants to collaborate.¹

¹ Von Hippel and others have established that by this focus you are likely to come up with people who have best articulated the design or innovation in relation to their requirements and are likely to have the best motivation to give their time and expertise in collaborating with you (von Hippel, Eric, 1988, 2005). These people have also in high

Nonetheless, last twenty or so years of ethnographic research in consumption studies (e.g. Holt, 1995; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1991), technology domestication literature (Berger *et al.*, 2006; Silverstone & Hirsch, 1992; Sorensen & Williams, 2002), workplace studies and information systems research (McLaughlin *et al.*, 1999; Orlikowski, 2000; Sorensen & Williams, 2002) has univocally showed that the dominant assumption in the diffusion studies that most people adopt innovation as is (Rogers, 2003) simply does not hold. It is rather a rule rather than an exception that people adapt and appropriate technology in particular and varying ways, and in so doing, accommodate and domesticate it to the spheres of their work and leisure practices.

A more sophisticated way to say this is that when people enact technology, they also enact meanings, rules, habits and other technologies and blend these into the way they enact a particular piece of equipment (Orlikowski, 2000). They thus add in social structures and elements of practice that can significantly hinder or diminish the purposes for which and the ways in which a technology is being used. More importantly, if these elements were not deployed, the equipment would not function as equipment at all—the ability to use is not inherent capacity of users, but constituted by the habits, skills, schemes for making sense of and operating technology, along with divisions of labour, fellow practitioners, other instruments, and the purposes for which the equipment is tried to be used for.

Free-style kayaking is no exception here. Along using their equipment in ways anticipated by the designers of the gear, people do various small things “micro-inventions” and “micro-adaptations” to make their kayaks work and alter their uses so as to make this usage meaningful for them. These include but are not limited to:

- Spending hours to form personalized foot rests inside the kayak
- Creating various sorts padding inside the boat to make the paddler fit in more tightly and comfortably in various moves
- Various hard and inflatable “thrusters” (ranging from commercially available to inflatable children’s beach ball stuffed under the spray-skirt) are used to maximize buoyancy when vertical with the kayak.
- Custom fitting places for camera storage, extra ropes, first-aid kit, buoyancy aids (ranging from children’s beach balls to the manufacturer supplied) etc. without compromising the abilities of the kayak
- Complementing standard kayaking gear with all sorts of cold water resistors: custom fitted earplugs, paddles with taped in neoprene gloves, grease in the face etc.
- Contaminated water management: eating pro-biotic bacteria, acid drinks and even antibiotics to better resist contaminated water, and in so doing, opening up new waves in flooding creeks and rivers to paddling despite the drawbacks of their water.
- Having the play-range of every play-site figured against the www-available water discharge meters to avoid hours of wasted driving to rivers and so on.
- Exchanging updates, rides, advice and gear through various discussion forums in the Internet.
- Subtle even if clandestine river-shaping such as leaving in ropes for better upstream return to a playwave, slightly shifting rocks downstream of a good hole during the dry season et cetera
- Establishing various house-rules and self made scoring systems to allow competing during a practice session even during the dry season

likelihood most articulated view of how the requirements for instrumentation can be reified from their practice, and sometimes even also of how the improved instrumentations are best introduced back to their practice.

4. The evolution of design space

Let us examine the effects of creating varying versions of technology-in-practice through micro-innovation and micro-adjustment on design-space. Users enact-in-practice only some of the material and symbolic properties built in technologies. As illustrated by Jean Lave in regards to supermarket (Lave, 1988, 150-151):

“The supermarket, for instance, is in some respects a public and durable entity. It is physically, economically, politically, and socially organized space-in-time. In this respect it may be called an “arena” within which activity takes place... At the same time, for individual shoppers, the supermarket is a repeatedly experienced, personally ordered and edited *version* of the arena. In this aspect it may be termed a “setting” for activity. Some aisles do not exist for a given shopper as part of her setting, while other aisles are rich with detailed possibilities“

In similar vein, white-water sections of rivers and equipment that allows entering them form an arena for the rodeo-kayaking practice. But the versions (or settings) of this arena that different paddlers can enact differ drastically: one’s sweet spot can be sheer boredom or nightmare for another. The enactment and arena form important pairings beyond individual instances of doing practice and using technology. The important issue here is that the arena, in other words the design space in the whole, has remained fixed only in regard to water:² we need not only to look at the equipment and behaviour in the white-water, but also their mutually constitutive evolution. Here free-style kayaking can be regarded a “dynamically stable” socio-cultural practice: it has evolved a great deal but within a recognizable and re-countable pathway (Cf.Hyysalo, 2006a). The generic imagination animating the practice has remained the same: You take a kayak and perform moves (or tricks) on a river, mostly in places (such as waves, stationary waves or holes) where you can stay also after the move and not move off it with the downward current.

Yet, if we compare the first paddlers, kayaks and moves and current ones, there is hardly any similarity. Early rodeo kayaking consisted of putting an over four metre sabre shaped kayak sideways into a hole to be trashed up and down as in rodeo or making it loop vertically (out of) there. Alternatively, one could perform a spins while surfing on a low gradient or simply giant wave, where such long kayak can be turned without getting its long ends stuck up in the upstream current. As documented also by Hienert (2006, 279): “Actually, rodeos in those days were won by paddlers who were able to perform some kind of show on the river (e.g. Shawn Baker juggled three stones in the middle of a class IV river without using his hands to paddle in 1990; in 1991, Jan Kellner pulled a banana out of his spray skirt and started eating the fruit on the rapids).” In contrast, current free-style kayaks are shorter than the paddler and thrust into an array of mostly vertical moves that stay in the hole or standing wave. Cartwheels, Flips and “blunts” are done by Regular Joes, while moves such as back-flips, Space-Godzilla (A flip rotated to end in a cartwheel) or Pan-Am (making an aerial 360 degree roll from a bounce) have become possible along with top end moves that escape the nerve, acrobatic skill and even the comprehension of most enthusiasts.

It is notable that the second generation 1980s and third generation 1990s “old school” plastic kayaks are still used in beginners’ classes, and respectively, the old-school tricks are often taught in advanced beginner level as initiations to the sport. All this is witness to the co-evolution of the instrumentation and practice of the sport: the equipment makes it easier to do the tricks, allows doing them in easier spots in the river, and hobbyists have learnt more effective ways to teach novices how to get the tricks done. It is aspects of this development that we turn to now, for they

² Even though it should be noted that the steady increase in hydro-power plants has diminished the scope of the arena slowly but significantly over the years.

complement to as well as complicate the argumentation by Baldwin et al (2006) on effects of user-innovation on design space, migration of user-innovation to manufacturing as well as entry of high-capital manufacturers to a new user domain.

The key argument here is that the dominant design of centre buoyant hull by roughly the year 2000 has not marked a clear cut end of equipment or practice development in free-style kayaking. While equipment changes may have become more incremental, the ongoing development has also expanded the arena within which the sport can be performed as well as the range of people who are able to create meaningful versions of this practice:

- a) the diminution of kayaks has meant that moves such as flips have become possible also in other than monster-size holes, cartwheels and splitwheels are easy to do in many holes and, consequently, they have become accessible to the less expert, the less reckless and the less agile paddlers.
- b) decent playholes are not too readily available, particularly in flat areas where the majority of large cities are positioned. It makes a huge difference to the numbers of boaters whether you have to drive an hour, two hours or a day to get to the nearest play-spot.
- c) many free-style places are seasonal: if up north or high up, freezing becomes an issue during the winter, and if down south they are too dry for most of the year. Along broadening the range of available places, the diminution of kayak has meant that many moves can be performed, practiced and even competed also in flat water (swimming halls, bays, lakes) with the same boat you can take to white-water, and also with ease that makes it sensible for others than the champions of the sport. This greatly facilitates the development and fun that the paddlers experience.

The combined net effect has been a rapid growth in the amount of paddlers, and in the wake of this, the range of orientations that people have towards the sport. As Hienert (2006, 284) notes, but as Baldwin et al curiously forget “the real breakthrough in the market in that [mid 1990s] stage was reached because the innovations and designs for the boats enhanced their usability for customers... With more buyers of rodeo kayaks from traditional market segments, the structure of the community changed, too.” This change is not over. While in mid 1990s it was the traditional white-water segment that joined in, there currently are many free-style paddlers that do not do that much other white-water: they do fluent flips and cartwheels, but they could not even come down a grade IV river, and would require a grade I for any banana eating!

The world champions and other lead-users continue to fashion the expert end of the sport and equipment, but as with other sports equipment such as various bicycles, Olympic kayaks, climbing, skis etc. the market has become increasingly segmented. The choice of kayak, other equipment and the emergence and adoption of various user initiated inventions depends on what the particular person does and where. There is considerable variation within the design space even without a stream of radical innovation, depending:

- a) their skill level: when the acrobatic skill increases people tend to change to kayaks that allow them to better take the next step in their repertoire be that spins, cartwheeling, flips, backflips or what have you.
- b) the water conditions: people who predominantly play in “big water” prefer longer and more buoyant kayak relatively to their body weight than those that predominantly play in small water. Likewise, the preferred design and keenness to change to a newer boat depends on whether one plays in waves or in holes.
- c) ergonomics and comfort: when a kayak is down to less than 180cm it becomes rather tricky find one where your feet are sort of ok but it is not over-buoyant for initiating tricks. It is common that as the trick repertoire of the paddler grows he experiences new ergonomic

problems (for instance from being crammed in too tight to having your feet battered by the rock bed at the initiations of a flip).

- d) Dependency on rule changes: As Baldwin et al (2006) note, inclusion of standing waves in title competitions changed the shape of kayaks and array of trick performed. The 2005 rule change that you got points per one sort of move similarly marked a move towards more all-round kayaks. Such norm and practice orientation changes affect directly the explorable design space.

The net effect of the mismatch between models and kayaks is significant. As Hienert (2006, 281) learned from a recent online poll on boatertalk (2003, with 2,191 votes), the main kayak discussion forum in the United States, 28.34% of all participants buy a new rodeo kayak every year, 26.24% every second year. And current freestyle kayaks do not wear out or brake too easily!

The evolution of design space is thus spurred by various activities and preferences by users. The initial closure of design space tends to be reopened from time to time both locally and globally. The histories of other equipment intensive sports such as of bicycling is worth remembering here. The early history of bicycle appears to show a clear closure in the form and stabilization of meaning of the bicycle in late 19th century (Bijker, 1995), but in closer analysis there were three distinct frames of production. Biking has also branched into an array of differentiated sports including the radical re-definition of biking and industry with mountain bikes (Rosen, 2002). It is thus a rather bold move to *ceteris paribus* assume that a design space a.k.a. the whole arena for practice *can* be mined out in relation to equipment, but it naturally remains an open question how long intervals in significant novelties is enough for investment intensive production methods to drive out small scale user-innovators out of the market (and to which degree).¹ But this is somewhat different question to ask.

5. The varieties of user participation in innovation communities

User innovation paradigm has focused mostly on user initiated innovation and innovation communities formed by users. But there are more traditional but no less important ways in which users provide important feedback for innovation. These forms can in many respects erode the clear analytic division between purchasing users, innovating users, user-manufacturers and (supplier-) manufacturers. Let us recount four most common forms of user involvement in innovation, which can arguably found to some degree in most industries.

1) Testing and evaluating models, prototypes and first versions

Probably the most wide spread mode of user involvement in innovation is that of reporting bugs and minor shortcomings and suggesting improvements. This happens with virtually every product after its market launch the latest (e.g. Gardiner & Rothwell, 1985; Hyysalo, 2006b; Hyysalo & Lehenkari, 2003; Schrage, 2000). It is hard and expensive to weed out the bugs in the code by simulation or the like. There are also problems that reveal themselves only in site specific use as they are about connections with other equipment or about environment specific features, which simply cannot be tested anywhere else (von Hippel, Eric & Tyre, 1995).

User involvement in iterative testing and improvement need not wait until the beta testing or market launch. Users often evaluate mock-ups both in workshops as well as through on-site simulations of how the new technology is thought to work. This can begin as early as concept design, which allows reducing the amount of costly redesigns later with more or less ready and functional product. (Buur & Bagger, 1999).

2) Acquainting designers to work practices and users' environments

As in medical equipment manufacturing, in free-style kayaking it is common practice to ask some users (or people that might become future users) to help designers to grasp what it is that users do and prefer. Giving guided tours, select useful literature or training materials or teaching designers about their field are common practices in the development of sports equipment and designing for specialized professions. Also qualitative research skills such as interviewing and field observation works in principle everywhere, as long as users are not hostile towards the particular developers (Bentley *et al.*, 1992). Extensive variations of such collaboration are approaches such as "user dialogue" (Buur & Bagger, 1999) where designers and users systematically explore users work, its tools and environment and discuss ideas and possibilities for improving them. This surfaces issues that would not surface in an interview and which would easily pass unnoticed during observations. For instance, recurrent problems, work-aroundings and latent innovations surface much easier when going through work and its instrumentation on site. Such an arrangement also prompts users to spontaneously come up with issues they think designers should know and thus helps counter developers' often substantial tacit ignorance about the activities they are designing to. With established target market such as kayaks, some users can become an external memory or repository of knowledge in introducing new employees onto the company's business environment as well as a legitimate source for further information in projects that meet new settings or requirements.

3) Forecasting trends and envisioning new products

Third common aspect of user collaboration is forecasting trends and envisioning new products. People in user domain are strategically placed to discuss future technological options and routes that may open from the likely development more generic technologies. The simplest and most common form of such user collaboration is to convene *advisory boards*. These need not be limited to high corporate level strategic decision making, but can concern a technology area or even a major product development project. A rather more rare variation is partnering where a user organization (or group) gives the developer company sustained help in regard to visioning, user environments, testing et cetera, and in return enjoys benefits such as getting test devices for free (Hyysalo, 2006b, Hyysalo & Lehenkari, 2005).

More focused efforts are various envisioning workshops. *User seminar* is an event where key user partners are invited to discuss a selected theme, for instance the future development of a technology. Often this discussion is facilitated by materials such as each participants short report of their experiences of and requirements from the technology or presenting findings from research related to the technology. User seminars can create a space where different users and the developer can exchange ideas and deepen their understandings of each others priorities and problems. (Hyysalo & Lehenkari, 2003, 2005; Miettinen & Hasu, 2002). A more specialised formats of a user seminar are for instance a *future workshop*, where the idea is to convene a range of stakeholders that are differently affected by a likely technological change or initiative. The goal is to elaborate pathways and means that could lead to desired outcomes (Jungk & Mullert, 1987; Kensing & Madsen, 1991). *Lead-user workshop* has been suggested by the user innovation paradigm: here a company convenes a group of lead users together. First 1-2 days are spent identifying trends, followed by 1-2 days of envisioning of ideas for new products and improvements. (e.g. Hearstatt & Hippel, 1992).

4) Users direct participation in designing

User involvement in design usually means having users participate in concept design phase as experts of their own work and its instrumentation. Mock-ups and various illustrations such as models of work can be used to facilitate communication between designers and user representatives. While technologically savvy and articulate users are likely to be easier partners in such designing successful participatory design projects have been run also with rather low tech and poorly educated people. Such user groups need more skills in facilitating from designers and creating representations in support of the work than do people who are used to similarly complex conceptual activities (Bødker *et al.*, 2004; Ehn & Kyng, 1987, 1991; Säde, 2001).

The temporal extent of collaboration has been taken perhaps furthest in *co-realization* projects, which proceed through acquainting designers and users to each others environments and priorities to joint-concept design, to iterative prototyping and finally to joint-iterative improvement of technology at users site that can last even for years. The importance of this approach lies not only in its ambitious projects but especially in that it articulates the fact that successful complex systems are seldom reached by any one time design effort. They not only require sustained iteration, but their very potential is in the way an improved technology allows for new work arrangements, which in turn require and enable slightly different technical solutions, which in turn again facilitate more effective working etc. (Bucher *et al.*, 2002; Hartswood, M. *et al.*, 2000; Hartswood, Mark *et al.*, 2002).

How about in free-style kayaking? All the above stated forms of user involvement can be found in the established manufacturers that seek to enter free-style kayaking business. As stressed by the gross majority of Hienert's interviewees: "From 1995 to 2000, established manufacturers began to look for paddlers who performed very well in competitions and also had a sense for upcoming market trends. By doing so, they identified lead users and they also reproduced a form of subcommunity around them to innovate for the company's purposes (company teams). In parallel, Internet communities emerged, and the manufacturers created electronic platforms for their customers to meet and discuss the new innovations. In this way, they integrated different actors within one innovation system and additionally used very direct feedback from the community." One may doubt if most people in company teams count as lead users in terms of equipment development, but they are certainly expert paddlers, testers and prospectors of the future of the sport.³ Baldwin *et al* (2006) argue that user-manufacturers are likely to have potentially better network connections and capacity to absorb user innovations than mere suppliers. But with company teams, networks and platforms, the user-innovation communities around non-user manufacturers may go a long way in this capacity too.

6. The range of innovative users

There are several types of users that are particularly appealing to consider whenever searching for partners for product development. As established by user-innovation paradigm *lead-users* are people who a) face earlier than other users in their field the trends related to a particular technological domain, and b) would benefit significantly from improved technology, and in many cases, have for this reason modified existing technologies or even created their own prototypes.

The sample of interviewees in Hienert and Baldwin studies clearly consists mostly of lead-users that pine for the old days when men were men and built their own kayaks. But as is evident from the above discussions, there are several other types of users that are important for innovation. As

³ Indeed, perhaps the most common collaboration partner for R&D companies is a *leading expert*, such as renowned surgeon or a top athlete. They add credibility, are perfect testers, and have a sense of the future development of their practice even if not of its equipment.

already noted, there is a growing recognition in diffusion studies and innovation literature since early 1990s that many innovations do not diffuse “as is” (Fleck, 1993; Moore, 2002; Rogers, 1995). The solution favoured by innovators and early adopters can be too unreliable, raw and/or expensive for early majority let alone late majority of users. For instance, micro-wave oven had to be transformed from a feature rich “brown good” targeted to young single males cooking pre-heated dinners to “white good” used predominantly by female household and having fewer alternatives before it became popular (Ormrod, 1994).

Rodeo-kayaks feature a similar discontinuous diffusion Hienert 2006, 287: “The once so uncontrollable and rough prototypes had become customer adapted. That point marked a true breakthrough for the commercial success of the rodeo kayak. From that time on, amateurs could learn to paddle in a rodeo kayak from the very beginning. They did not have to buy two or three kayaks at the same time for different uses. The new kayaks could even be used better for lessons in beginner’s skills such as rolling or bracing (techniques in kayaking that are used for river running). By continuing the process with incremental innovations, user manufacturers can now sell slightly new designs and fittings to customers every year...Therefore, in our cases of user innovation in the kayak rodeo industry, we found that radical innovations sparked the emergence of the industry, but incremental innovations were needed for the success of the commercialization process, the enlargement of the market.”

Such discontinuous diffusion—rather than a singular homogeneous diffusion curve—has relevance for lead user framework. First, as indicated by diffusion theory, people adopt innovation by the example of *near-peers* (Rogers, 1995). There are limits to who counts as near-peer in practices that are factually segmented by different settings and by different orientations of its practitioners:

- i) It is a very real possibility that the over-all lead-users do not lead the development of the practice entire, but instead there are somewhat different sets of lead-users and opinion leaders in different areas of the practice, particularly in times when the practice begins to be in the verge of branching into many (compare velodrome, road, track, and downhill bicycling that have each in turn evolved from a common practice).
- ii) The other river kayakers that *demand*ed the lead-users to create more usable and safer equipment in mid 1990s resemble closely what we called *crucial users* in our study of database software for diabetes treatment (Hyysalo & Lehenkari, 2003, 2005) In terms of diffusion theory, crucial users can be located after the edge of the “chasm” between early adopters and early majority with the following attributes (Moore, 2002). Their more precise attributes are:
 - These users do not receive extraordinary benefits from the technology. Their relative lack of enthusiasm makes them require clear value and smooth and relatively carefree operation from the innovation before they adopt it.
 - These users are not only burdened by the technology in question so that they do adopt innovation if it has benefits (vs. Laggards in diffusion theory). Thus if these people do not adapt the innovation, it has some definite barriers to adoption or continuation of usage for even less interested peoples.
 - These users are not intimidated by technology, and are likely to file reasoned complaints or simply shun at the novelty if it is not easy enough to install and use, too expensive, or suit poorly their ecology of tasks. This means they are articulate enough for a manufacturer to be useful.
 - These are users that must be enrolled in order for the user-base to grow to a point when economies of scale in production and delivery can bring the price of the technology down and positive network externalities to step in through big enough population of users.

The catch with crucial users, though, is that they are likely, almost by definition, to be less enthusiastic about collaborating with a manufacturer in R&D, and thus, gaining advantage of their perspective requires the sort of repertoire of user-involvement sketched in the section 5. of this paper.

Hienert also notes rightly that as in many industries, also free-style kayaking manufacturers solve their partner selection problems by classifying their customers and user-contacts in many categories. They have a limited number of strategic partners, typically clustered around company teams, that they see as forerunners in their fields and able to contribute fresh and viable ideas to their product development. In addition there are test users, from whom they gather feedback on bugs and suggestions for minor improvements but with whom the company does not engage in more overarching design collaboration. The majority of users is treated as merely paying customers from whom any wishes for modification or extra support is discouraged and viewed as a necessary evil in maintaining good customer relations and/or an additional source of revenue for the company (Hyysalo, 2004; Johnson, 2007; Pollock *et al.*, Forthcoming; Wang, 2007). *User groups* and *discussion forums* are a widely used form to gather different users together. On the other hand they can be valuable in providing peer support for other users (and in so doing increasing the value of the technology) as well as in facilitating positive image for marketing purposes. On the other hand user groups can be harnessed to collecting and refining design ideas, introducing designers to their concerns or a stock from which to invite people to participate in more structured user seminars to discuss new launches, envision future directions and so on. On the more cynical side, seminars can act as legitimacy and consensus building devices and “cacophony management-tools” for the producer. By showing users the array of competing user requirements they can better justify their rational in choosing some rather than other development paths for users whose views have de facto been suppressed. Having representatives of customer organizations agree on potentially ill suited changes in a seminar, makes them more likely to defend and explain their necessity back in their organizations (Pollock *et al.*, 2007; Wang, 2007). In this sense user seminars complement the more typical “divide and conquer” strategy in managing users that some producers such as SAP and other EPR producers (Pollock *et al.*, 2007; Pollock *et al.*, 2003) exercise when dividing users in different classes of relative importance and privileges (to be discussed in more depth below). However, benefits from having user groups and especially discussion forums tend to require both a genuinely useful and positively felt technology as well as some cultivating. Releasing junk or out-priced stuff will easily turn the users against the company. Gaining useful ideas most likely requires active following, inviting users to participate in events and motivating them to participate and give out their opinions and creativity (Bødker *et al.*, 2004).

Albeit less significant for rodeo-kayaking *secondary and tertiary users* (e.g. Dix *et al.*, 2004; MacCaulay *et al.*, 1990) are worth mention. These are people who do only minor tasks with the technology (such as maintain it or feed in information to it) or are people who are simply affected by it. Moreover, many products and services have a range of primary users along the key beneficiary from or operator of the system. Wishful thinking over what intermediary users (or a network of primary users) provide for a technology has been regarded a major cause of failure particularly in for instance groupware (Grudin, 1994): along designing human machine interaction of singular end-users also broader organization of user practice (including its inherent power relations, tensions, bottlenecks and so on) needs to be grasped. There has thus far been little discussion of secondary and tertiary stakeholders in user-innovation communities, but in business strategy literature they are well recognized as key stakeholders and sources of inventive ideas in co-creating value through re-aligning the elements in value-stars between suppliers, customers, and service and platform providers (e.g. Normann & Ramirez, 1994). The importance of these types of

users grows when the technology in question is more systemic or configurational (Williams *et al.*, 2005).

In sum, it is well established that lead-users create proportionally very significant amount of user inventions and modifications to existing products. But we need to consider the less dramatic forms of user-inventiveness highlighted in the course of this paper: micro adjustments and inventions related to both equipment as well as to how and where the practice such as free-style kayaking is being conducted. In analogue to developments in diffusion studies in late 1980s, local modifications and adaptations can be the key to the diffusion of innovation, spreading it to yet new user groups, forming new lead-users and in producing cross-overs from nearby practices. Should we want to phrase this in terms of democratizing innovation (von Hippel, 2005), lead-users are like citizens of the polis of Athens; competent, willing and highly visible elite who is easily seen to constitute the relevant sphere of action. But take away the less grandiose inventive inputs from the rest of users, the power of democratized innovation would collapse in analogue to Athens being stripped of cultural, economic and political inputs from women, slaves and foreign merchants that all fell outside its formal democratic institutions and practices.

7. Discussion: Methodological considerations and further challenges

Let us now go through each of the above arguments in turn and see how it affects Baldwin et al (2005) argumentation in regard to the importance of user-innovation to the industry development.

1) The effortful micro adaptations and micro-inventions that users do in enacting meaningful and practically apt versions of technology undeniably emphasizes the importance of user-innovation. Merely consider the opposite: a company launching a technology, but its users unwilling to explore and render it effective. The company would need to get everything right at the outset and even so, the practice itself would need to somehow flow with very little deviations, without any artful integration of its elements (Suchman *et al.*, 1999). Orlikowski's (2000) analysis of superficial use of Lotus Notes to merely email in a management company in contrast to its rich adaptation in another company is perhaps a good illustration here: without active user engagement the development of technology and associated further user-practice development easily stalls. User manufacturers may have greater access to and sensitivity in recognizing small but inventive enactments of the technology, which in principle would add to their competitive advantage.

2) User micro-innovation was suggested in all likelihood to affect the evolution of design space both through segmenting the practice as well as advancing each of its branches further. This argument straightforwardly supports Baldwin et al (2006) claims to the competitive assets of user-manufacturers and disadvantages for outside manufacturers.

3) User involvement, user communities and ways to harness of their responses and innovativeness to R&D was suggested to take several different, even if somewhat more modest, routes along lead-user development and related user-innovation communities. The division between user-innovators, user-purchasers, user-manufacturers and outside manufacturers appears stylized in this view. Entities such as manufacturers are not homogenous, nor are they strictly bound by their organizational boundaries. Company teams and other enthusiasts can compensate to some extent for the manufacturers lacking competence in user practice. Moreover, in kayaking manufacturing program users have been regularly hired in companies as designers as they have or can learn also the needed technical competences (Hienerth, 2006). The blurring of the boundary between user-manufacturers and other manufacturers may undermine some of the calculations by Baldwin et al on industry dynamics. However, if it does so, it does it because of the role of users' industry

development is *greater* not lesser, for they contribute also to the competence of the non-user manufacturers.

4) Finally, lead-users are not the only users who provide significant inputs to innovation in both equipment and particularly in regard to the evolution of the practice. The creation of mass markets is greatly facilitated, and may even require, the input from crucial users (or lead-users in each discontinuous segment where the diffusion happens). Micro-adjustments and effortful enactment of equipment lays ground for lead user efforts. How this affects divisions between users, user-manufacturers and supplier manufacturers remains an open question.

In general, there is a question about the purpose and methodological repertoires in studies of user innovation. It is common to studies in the user-innovation paradigm that there are frequent reference to heterogeneity of needs and motives of users, but the eventual explanatory schemes then resort to rather rationalistic explanations, vague catch-all concepts such as “joy of problem solving”, individual psychological motivations, and economic projections for why people engage in free revealing, user innovation communities and the like. When compared to literature on participation in practices and communities (e.g. Bourdieu, 1977; e.g. Chaiklin & Lave, 1993; Lave & Wenger, 1991), these explanations seem not only economy-minded—with the stated intent of showing that there is an underlying economic rationale (von Hippel, 2005)—but unfortunately also rather economized as accounts of what goes on in social practices and as accounts the range of design relevant phenomena in them.

There are of course two sides to this coin. Even if user-innovation paradigm and its characteristic focus on significant equipment inventions by users may overlook the full scope of innovation related phenomena in user-communities, their approach allows making an economic and business case for corporations that also have important say over the conditions within which user innovation can happen. Democratizing innovation can be read as an important message targeted to corporate and policy making audience in hopes that they further help rather than hinder the expanding and protecting the arenas for user innovation. This message in mind the phenomena highlighted in this paper present mostly a rather soft case: It remains very hard to quantify the subtle modification and range of inventive enactments of technology, let alone relate this to quantifiable advantages to manufacturers. Perhaps we are here faced with the old truism about the merits of qualitative exploratory studies and those of quantified studies and stylized models when the phenomena to be inquired is already relatively well charted.

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ⁱ There naturally can be strong incentives to invest in keeping a practice as stable, for instance in sports the election of the sport to Olympic games, or a overly hegemonic position of some associations or manufacturers.

Who are the Habbo Hotel Users – and What are they Doing There?

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Abstract

Who are the Habbo Hotel users, and what is so important in this virtual world that one quarter of the Finnish 10-15 years old population like to spend time there regularly? We present user categorisations based on empirical data from participant observations, a survey, user interviews, and fansite articles. Our results show a learning curve of about 3-4 months in average regarding Habbo behaviour and opinions, and we found some correlations between demographics (mainly age and gender) and online activities. The study found no single motivation for Habbo use, but instead points towards diversity, open-ended use, and creative content production. The users take part in the innovation process, since what active users do in Habbo becomes both a fundamental part of the use experience and a source of inspiration for the Habbo developers.

1. Introduction

This is an account of our research driven by our curiosity towards the Habbo Hotel users, who they are and why Habbo fascinates. Habbo is many things: a software product for digital communities; a social networking site for children and young teenagers; a playful and non-violent virtual world where parents can trust their children to be reasonably safe, etc. However, Habbo is also an example of a change in technical innovation that has gained an increasing amount of attention during the past five or ten years.

In many cases, technology users have not had much of an impact in technology production compared to other actors involved in the production of technology: technology sponsors, innovators, vendors, service providers, educators, architects, designers, tech support, etc. The users do not hold a very favourable position, since traditionally the innovation is seen to flow from the different developers via the other mediating stakeholders to the user (technology push), and not vice versa. The interests of the users are not the ones that are served first, because in most cases business and technology production come first, giving the interests of the users a very challenging position. (Kling 1977)

On the other hand, examples of successful products emerging from close cooperation between producers and customers have led to an increased attention to user-driven innova-

tion (Nordic Council of Ministers 2006, Hyysalo et al. 2007). User needs are in the center of such approaches as participatory design (Greenbaum & Kyng 1991, Schuler & Namioka 1993), user-centred design (Beyer & Holtzblatt 1998, Norman & Draper 1986), usability engineering (Nielsen 1993) and lead-user design (von Hippel 1988). In some cases, the users take matters in their own hands by modifying existing products, a few even forming own companies. In other cases, researchers and product development companies have developed user-centred methods ranging from early user involvement, making flexible products that support customisation (Laukkanen 2005, Nardi 1993), to representing and modeling users and their activities (Bødker 1998, Maguire 2001).

However, also value-production has changed as computing technology has become cheaper and more pervasive. Community builders and researchers (Hagel & Armstrong 1997, Kim 2000, Preece 2000) argue that software for communities gain a great deal of value after the launch of the product/service/community. Effort is needed from the community moderators and value is created by the content-producing community members. This means that the traditional maintenance phase in the software lifecycle, when many considered the software project to be completed, has changed to something important, because now there are both significant costs and value involved.

This shift in the design-use relationships raises many new questions. Producers need to know when and where to adjust their processes to meet the new demands on the production and collaboration with users. How can large amounts of simultaneous users be supported technically and socially, as well as represented in design? Revenue models need to take into account content produced by users, and the roles of consumers and users in innovation policies need to be attended to.

One way of approaching this problem area is to study who the Habbo Hotel users are and what they do there. In the Mobile Content Communities research project that started in 2003 (Turpeinen & Kuikkaniemi 2007), the authors followed the development of the Habbo Hotel: the users and communities, new features, and the design-use collaboration. Sulake Corporation, the producer of Habbo, was an industry partner in the research project and based in Helsinki, which enabled research access to product development. Early in the project Habbo become an interesting case study for several reasons:

- its innovative revenue model with no entrance fee, but rather micro-payments for online activities, which makes it possible for the users to try out the product first, and pay more if the product quality continues to meet expectations
- the producers' success in making Habbo a reasonably safe place for its young users
- its unique position on the virtual world market: retro, playful, and non-violent

During the project, Habbo continued to fascinate the authors, because of its

- active users taking part in the content production (Salovaara et al. 2005)
- user-created Habbo-themed websites (Johnson & Toiskallio 2005)
- developers' responsible role in governing different users' interests (Johnson 2007)
- input to the discussions on the concept of community (Johnson & Toiskallio 2007)

This article aims to open up the category of Habbo users – what different users are there and how do they differ? We studied demographics and online activities with both quantitative and qualitative methods. The next section gives a brief background to Habbo and the starting points for the study: multiplayer games studies and user research.

2. Background

Habbo has its origins in the experiences from multimedia cdroms and two Internet chat rooms, Mobiles Disco and Lumisota. In terms of Internet technologies, Habbo is a graphical chat environment on the Web accessible with a web browser with the Shockwave plug-in. This chat environment is designed as a virtual hotel where people can hang out and make new friends. When checking in to the virtual hotel one creates one's own cartoon-like Habbo avatar that can walk, dance, eat, drink and chat in the cafés, restaurants, swimming pools and games rooms. Besides experiencing these common rooms in the hotel, one can decorate and furnish a room of one's own. In contrast to many online games, there is no entrance fee to the virtual world, which allows the majority of users to chat for free. The profit model is based on micropayments in the hotel instead. Virtual furniture, minigames, and membership in the Habbo club are bought with so called Habbo credits. These credits can be purchased with pre-paid cards, bank transactions, or special text messages that add a specified amount of money to the customer's mobile phone bill.



Figure 1. Screenshot from Habbo Hotel (Sulake 2006)

The research approach in this report is based in user research and games studies, research fields that aim at understanding users and players. *User research* (Hackos & Redish 1998, Beyer & Holtzblatt 1998, Kuniavsky 2003) is based on the idea that knowing more about the users will help designers create better products that meet the user needs. User research typically includes identifying user groups, understanding their context of use (ISO 9241-11 1998) by visiting user sites and making interviews and observations of the users in their own environment. However, the underlying assumption of many user research models is a product development model where the user needs are fairly well stabilised. Design for digital communities on the other hand does not assume an existing target market; especially online entertainment products strive to facilitate the formation of new communities around the product. This, and because entertainment products are used in a leisure context and usability is not concerned with gameplay, is why it is difficult to apply mainstream usability and user research models to understanding Habbo users.

Games studies have researched computer games for more than a decade from technical, aesthetic and socio-cultural perspectives by a growing number of researchers with different backgrounds (Aarseth 2003). Closest to Habbo is the research on MUDs (textual chat environments) (Cherny 1999) and virtual worlds (Bartle 2003, Book 2004, Brown & Bell 2004, Mulligan & Patrovsky 2003, Yee 2002). Most attention has been paid to the gameplay itself, the question of what constitutes a game, and structural game elements (Kon-

zack 2002). There is some research on player models (see below) and also other motivations to participate. For instance, the “Children and Young People as Players of Game Cultures” -project (Ermi et al. 2004) report that 75 % of the 10-12 y. children (N=284) play digital games at least once a week, that owning games is a good argument for inviting friends, and that games aid in learning English. Playing online games is not only a question of the game itself, but rather a mix of online and offline matters.

The question why do people play massive multiplayer games has been asked many times in games studies. Table 1 presents four player models that have acted as inspiration for our Habbo research. Bartle’s (2003) infamous socializers-achievers-explorers-killers model has been applied in many cases, but since Habbo is a non-violent game environment¹, the killer category does not fit². Following the hermeneutic rule that if the parts change, then the whole needs to be revisited, we engaged in looking for other models.

Table 1. Player models for virtual worlds (from Bartle 2003).

Bartle 1997	Farmer 1992	Hedron 1998	Yee 2002
MUD	Habitat (graphical chat)	Ultima Online	Everquest
Socializers	Passives	Survival	Achievement
Achievers	Actives	Competence	Grief
Explorers	Motivators	Excel	Leadership
Killers	Caretakers	Prove Mastery	Relationship
	Geek Gods	Seek New Challenges	Immersion
		Everything Is One	

Farmer’s model of passives, actives, motivators, caretakers, and geek gods from Habitat seemed to fit Habbo fairly well. It made sense to understand motivators as those few who create games for the others in Habbo (playmakers in Salovaara et al. 2005), caretakers as the Habbo moderators, and geek gods as the Sulake game developers. However, Farmer’s model lacked a lot of context and demographics to satisfy us, which motivated us to move forward with the aim of finding suitable player categories for Habbo.

3. Methods and Research data

When talking about users we made the following initial distinction: demographics and Habbo activity. This distinction was elaborated on during our survey work (Table 3), but it enabled us to break down the initial who-is-the-user question in to three different questions: 1) what is the demographics of the Habbo users? 2) What are the popular activities in Habbo, and 3) Does the demographics correlate with the Habbo activity?

Table 2 summarised the empiric data in the Habbo case. Here we focus on the survey data, fansite articles, and player interviews. For data analysis, we have used both quantitative methods (frequencies, cross-tabulation, cluster analysis) and qualitative methods (qualitative content analysis and membership categorisation analysis).

¹ Because of the non-violent characteristics of Habbo compared to Ultima Online and Everquest, we have not discussed Hedron’s and Yee’s models in relation to Habbo.

² If we stretch killing towards grief play (disturbing other players), one could potentially apply it to Habbo as well, but since Habbo is a moderated environment and grief play is not acceptable, that still leaves the killer category in an illegitimate position compared to the other motivations.

Table 2. Empiric data in the Habbo case.

Main empiric data	Background data
<p>survey³: Habbo visitor profile, 06/2004</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 10000, 21 questions with structured answer alternatives, 6 open questions <p>fansite (Habbo-themed website) articles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habbo's own amateur "mediaworld", 2004, selected articles from ~25 fansites with 5-50 articles each, 150 MB downloaded material <p>developer interviews, 04-05/2005</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10x 1,5-3h open-ended thematic interviews, some development documents • client developers, server developers, graphic designers, ADs, project managers <p>player interviews, 10/2005</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 players interviewed in 2 individual, 2 pair, and 1 group interviews <p>artefact analysis of Habbo Hotel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stereotypic images, affordances 	<p>First-hand Habbo experiences / participant observation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • once or twice per month sporadic visits to Habbo Hotel <p>project meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at Sulake once every 2-3 months • 5 recorded meetings, ~10 informal <p>Confidential work with Sulake</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community manager survey, N=4, 2003 • user feedback for release 9, 2006 <p>2 TKK student assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • data gathered by students • usability test, fansite starter kit <p>Informal second-hand experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • friends, colleagues in Habbo • professional media articles

4. Results

The explorative survey (see subsections 4.1 and 4.2) suggested that we needed to go deeper into what the popular activities in Habbo were, to pinpoint the different motivations to participate. Our fansite studies (4.3) and player interviews revealed the diversity in the emergent Habbo activities. We describe the emergent use in section 4.5, but before them we also describe the pre-defined Habbo categories made by the developers (4.4).

4.1. Statistics: Habbo Visitor Profile

Because there were no data available on the Habbo visitors, we decided fairly early in the project to do a visitor profile survey, to get some quantitative background data for our otherwise mainly qualitative analysis. We were interested in both demographics and online Habbo activities, so we created a model of how we understood the Habbo visitor (Table 3). Our objectives was to find out which of these attributes were related to each other, for instance if age or gender says anything about what the visitors do in Habbo.

The survey was carried out as a web-based survey and a link to the web form⁴ was put on the Habbo frontpage, under the Habbo News section. We asked 27 questions, of which 21 had structured answer alternatives and the last 6 were open. The survey was open for two weeks, during 22.6.2004-6.7.2004, and we got roughly ten thousand Habbo responses (N=10 613). During this time around 160 000 users visited Habbo, which gives us a re-

³ Questions and answer frequencies available at <http://mc2.soberit.hut.fi>

⁴ We used a survey research service provided by Digium Research, see <http://www.digium.fi>

sponse rate of about 6%. We discarded about 300 answers, of which some were intended as jokes, but typically it was empty or double answers, since the survey service did not restrict multiple answers from the same computer.

Table 3. Model of the Habbo Visitor

Traditional background	Other activities	Online Habbo activities	Habbo fansites	Habbo background
Age, gender, region	School, hobbies, other games, friends	Chatting, furniture, decorating rooms, creating games, making friends	Favourite, visit frequency, reading & writing, forum discussions	Age in Habbo, visit frequency, network connection, logon place

We did three major kinds of analyses: a) frequencies, b) cross-tabulation, and c) cluster analysis. We start with an overview of the frequencies (4.1.1), continue with findings from the cross-tabulation (4.1.2), and end with the visitor clusters (4.1.3).

4.1.1. Overview

Table 4 shows an overview of the answer frequencies to some background questions.

Table 4. Overview of survey answer frequencies

Variable	Description										
age	75% of the respondents were between 10-14 year old.										
gender	Roughly 50-50, equal amounts of boys and girls.										
region	All over Finland, not only big towns or countryside.										
access location	93% log on from home										
Habbo age	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>years in Habbo:</th> <th>0-1</th> <th>1-2</th> <th>2-3</th> <th>3+</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>% of respondents:</td> <td>29%</td> <td>26%</td> <td>27%</td> <td>17%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	years in Habbo:	0-1	1-2	2-3	3+	% of respondents:	29%	26%	27%	17%
years in Habbo:	0-1	1-2	2-3	3+							
% of respondents:	29%	26%	27%	17%							
Visit frequency	everyday 46%, a few times a week: 40%										
Visit freq. fansites	more than half visit at least once a week										

4.2. Findings

Sulake has reported⁵ that 90% of the Habbo visitors don't pay. However, this doesn't mean that these non-paying visitors are not interested in Habbo furniture. Based on preliminary interviews and fansite stories we had got the impression that it is possible to have nice rooms and make careers in Habbo without spending money, for instance by trading or receiving gifts. Our survey showed that a large part of the visitors get furniture through donations, competitions, or as rewards for favours. Of the 26%⁶ (2557) who said that they don't buy anything, 57% (1451) still receives furniture donations, 48% (1229) trades furniture, and 31% (782) gets furniture items as pay for "work" in Habbo. Thus, we

⁵ Press release 25.10.2004. <http://www.sulake.com/press/archive>

⁶ Disclaimer: The percentages should be read as percentages of the answers to the survey, which is biased towards active Habbo visitors. The share of all users who don't buy anything is much larger than 26%.

can draw the conclusion that from “I don’t spend money in Habbo” does *not* follow “I’m not interested in furni”. In other words, also people who don’t spend their own money in Habbo contribute to Habbo’s virtual economy through transactions and value creation.

Before we did our study, we had good reasons to believe that two factors very much influence Habbo behaviour and attitudes: habbo-age and visit frequency. Our data showed that this is indeed the case. Habbo-age has a strong influence on Habbo attitudes. Figure 2 shows a few trends. We can distinguish different types of curves: a) a rising trend that stabilises at 4-6 months (green, yellow, blue), b) a decreasing trend that stabilises at 4-6 months (red, lila), and c) a decreasing trend all the way (orange, brown).

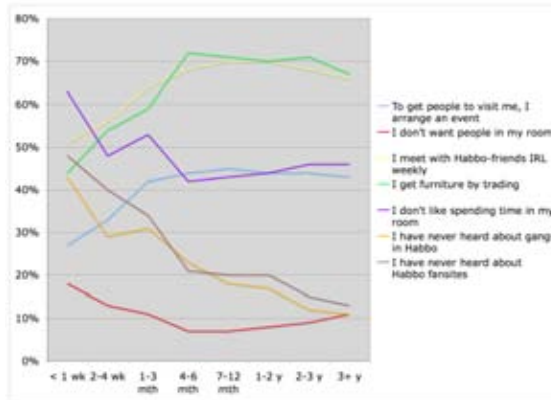


Figure 2. The importance of Habbo-age.

From these curves we can draw two conclusions. First, since it is possible to distinguish trends *at all* means that Habbo-age is a really important variable. Second, the data suggests that there is a learning curve of about 3-4 months, after which opinions stabilise. In addition, the slight change in the later parts of the curve can be interpreted as a decrease of participation in Habbo, foreshadowing the end of their Habbo careers.

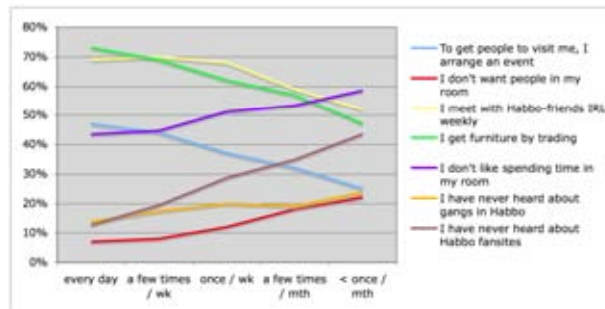


Figure 3. The importance of visit frequency.

The other variable that clearly influences the Habbo career is the visit frequency (Figure 3). The data suggests that those who visit Habbo often are more likely (decreasing trends) to arrange events, trade furniture, meet with Habbo-friends outside Habbo. And, those who visit Habbo rarely are more likely (rising trends) *not* to want people in their rooms, *not* have heard about gangs nor fansites, not like spending time in their own rooms.

The two above figures show that common sense and research data agrees. More time spent in Habbo is related to being active (arrange events, trade furniture, etc.) there. The learning curve was very interesting to note. But is there any underlying variable that can

predict time spent in Habbo? Can we say that people of a certain gender, age, or from a certain region are more likely to be active in Habbo? We will go through these questions (section 4.2.2), but before that we will turn to other patterns in our data. A cluster analysis will show the relevant patterns in the data, which factors make a difference.

4.2.1. Cluster Analysis

The aim of the cluster analysis was to create a manageable number of player clusters to explain the data. (Figure 4). Since this was an explorative questionnaire, the emerging cluster dimensions were considered more important than the exact percentages.

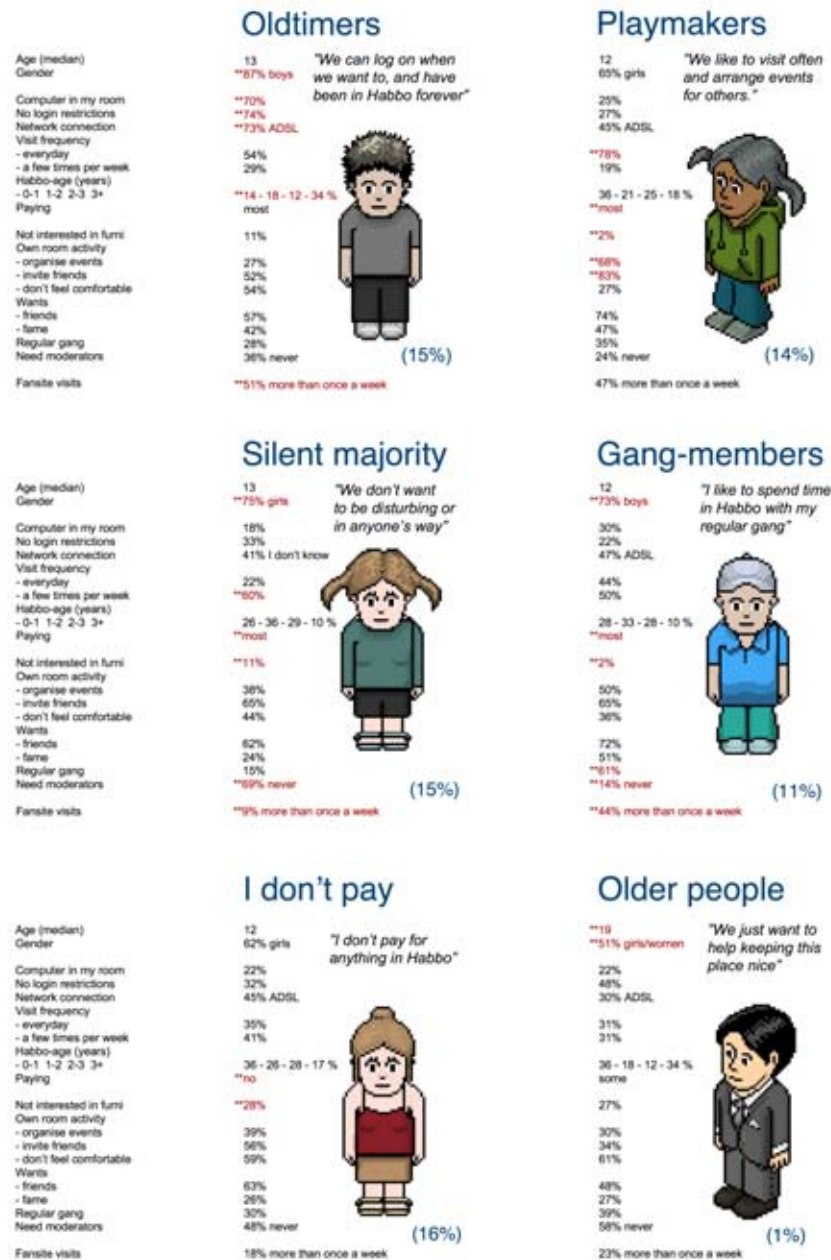


Figure 4. Habbo user groups based on cluster analysis

Three criteria were important in the analysis: a) a strive for groups that one can explain, b) no logical conflicts within groups, e.g. non-buyers and buyers in different groups, c) as large part of the data as possible included, e.g. anything that explains more than 50% is good. The SPSS-statistic program provided the functionality: Two-Step Cluster.

We ran around 30 different cluster analyses to find out what would be a sensible number of groups to meet the above criteria. The first sensible cluster result is shown in Figure 4, and the significant variables that explain the particular cluster are marked with two stars (**). We ended up with 6 groups that we named Oldtimers, Playmakers, Silent majority, Gang-members, I don't pay, and Older people. These groups explained 72% of our data.

However, these clusters were based on all variables, which meant that the background variables (gender, age, etc.) took over. For instance, when we tried to create 7 clusters instead of 6, the next emerging group would have been an all-girls group. To remedy this issue, we decided to analyse background variables separate from habbo activity variables. An analysis suggested that two dimensions were more distinguishing than others: 1) privacy – publicity, and 2) arranging events – not spend time in own room. Figure 5 shows our previous clusters put on these dimensions. In the next subsection we analyse in more detail two of the background variables usually considered important, age and gender.

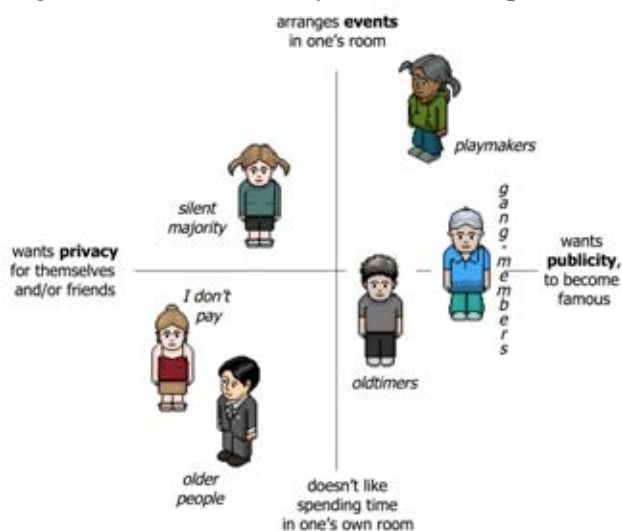


Figure 5. The two most important ingame dimensions.

4.2.2. A Brief Note⁷ on Age and Gender in Habbo

“...girls and boys have different things, boys collect all those furni there, and girls chat”
(Pair interview 10.6.2004)

Early in the project, in the first user interviews, we encountered very categorical statements like the one above about boys and girls in Habbo. Because no use statistics was

⁷ A gender perspective can be much more than this “within categories” analysis. For a study on gendered self-presentation in Habbo, see Pietiläinen (2004). For a useful contextualisation of gender and online communities from a constructivist perspective, including discussions of hegemonic masculinity and normative femininity, see Sveningsson Elm (2007).

available to confirm or contrast these gender stereotypes, we decided to put them to a test in our survey. Table 5 below shows a cross-tabulation of the topics in the survey and gender. It is based on the question “I am”, with the answer alternatives “a boy”, “a girl”, “a man”, “a woman”. The age for when someone becomes a man or a woman was not predefined, in contrast, the respondents could define themselves as boy, girl, man, or woman.

The survey showed fairly similar distributions in getting furniture. One difference is that 74% of the boys compared to 65% of the girls report that they get furniture by trading. Another difference is that a slightly larger share of the girls receive furniture as gifts (54% vs. 47%). Based on this survey, rather than finding furniture trading something that mostly boys do, we find that a majority of both boys and girls trade furniture in Habbo.

Table 5. Gender similarities and differences.

	Boys	Girls	Men	Women
Number of respondents (N)	4672	4744	497	317
Percentage of all respondents	46%	46%	5%	3%
Age (median)	13	12	15	15
Age (ave)	12.8	12.6	16.7	17.2
Computer in my room	42%	24%	55%	32%
No login restrictions	41%	32%	60%	53%
Does not know network connection	18%	41%	11%	27%
Visit frequency				
- everyday	47%	45%	47%	42%
- a few times / week	39%	42%	37%	36%
Habbo-age (years)				
- 0-1	31%	31%	25%	33%
- 1-2	26%	28%	17%	23%
- 2-3	26%	29%	27%	25%
- 3+	17%	12%	31%	20%
How do you get furniture? (multichoice)				
- I buy them	66%	64%	61%	63%
- I receive them as gifts	47%	54%	44%	51%
- by trading	74%	65%	62%	58%
- by working (as salary)	30%	27%	25%	26%
- by cheating	4%	1%	8%	2%
- I'm not interested	10%	15%	18%	21%
Own room activity (multichoice)				
- organise events	39%	50%	35%	35%
- invite friends	61%	62%	52%	52%
- don't feel comfortable	44%	45%	51%	51%
Wants with room? (multichoice)				
- furniture	33%	29%	28%	29%
- friends	65%	68%	58%	56%
- fame	48%	26%	46%	24%
- fansite fame	14%	6%	19%	5%
- something else	13%	22%	21%	30%
Spends time with regular gang	38%	26%	38%	34%
Never needed to call a moderator	27%	39%	29%	44%
Visits fansites at least once a week	50%	34%	47%	27%

The similarities in Habbo-age and visit frequency is striking. Among the few differences we note that, like in many previous gender studies (Nurmela 2002), boys tend to have easier access to services (Habbo) compared to the girls. Also familiar from research on gender stereotypes (Svahn 1999), more boys than girls report that they strive for fame. Despite this, a larger share of the girls (50%) reported that they arrange events to get others to visit their room (boys 35%). For some reason the Habbo-themed websites created by users, so called fansites, seem more popular among boys than girls. While leaving a detailed exploration of age for future work, we note that it seems like the men and women tend to be less social compared with the average. This is understandable as they are a marginal group in Habbo.

4.2.3. Bias towards active players

As with surveys in general, also this survey gathered answers from the committed and active community members. This is visible in the table below.

Table 6. Checking Habbo-age and visit frequency is a way of determining bias.

	0-1y	1-2y	2-3y	3+y
Every day	15%	11%	12%	8%
A few times a week	11%	12%	11%	5%
Once a week	1%	1%	1%	1%
A few times a month	1%	2%	2%	1%
Less than once a month	0%	1%	1%	1%

4.2.4. Open questions after the survey

Although we were satisfied with the survey and what we learned from doing it, the survey still left some questions open. First, we targeted the survey to answer the question “who are the Habbo users”, not what motivates them to go there. Second, the survey was successful in describing a snapshot of the Habbo community, but community research (Kim 2000) tell us that the motivations for community members to participate change during their career in the community. To answer these questions we studied the Habbo fansites and interviewed Habbo visitors. We will come back to these questions in the conclusion.

Third, when doing the explorative survey we did not fully understand the diversity of all the Habbo activities going on. During our analysis we learned that a Habbo “event”, as we called it in the survey, can be broken down in to many dimensions. For instance, the event (or series of events, making it more like an activity) can be described in terms of large or small, long-term or temporary, visible or underground, open or closed. Furthermore, the group activity leading up to the event can be hierarchic or democratic, valuing uniqueness or competition, and the purpose of buying furniture and decorating the room varies from just for fun to becoming rich, to imitating real world games. The point being, in the survey, where people answered that they would create an event to get people to visit their rooms, we lacked data on what kind of event they were talking about. Our fan-site studies made us wiser in the above respects, as the next section shows.

4.3. Learning from the Habbo Fansites

We studied 173 Finnish Habbo fansites in 2004. The focus was on what could be learned about the Habbo visitors and their Habbo practices from user research (Hackos & Redish, 1998; Kuniavsky, 2005), focusing on the membership categories visible through the fansites. Since the fansites are accessible without research intervention, the risk of distorting the data by the presence of the researchers is reduced.

The most popular fansites are usually made by a small team of Habbo fans with different expertise and roles. For example, one designs the look and layout of the site, another one writes the stories, and a third has the technical skill to publish the site on the Web. The most active fansites have small updates (such as news and rumors about Habbo) several times per week, but publish reviews and articles once a week or bi-weekly. Some fansites group their articles together and publish them as an issue of a Web magazine. The Web magazines seem to follow a rhythm of one issue per one or two months. The fansite contents were classified and a list of common fansite elements was produced (Table 4).

Table 4. Common Habbo Fansite Elements (based on Johnson & Toiskallio, 2005).

Fansite Elements	Description
News and rumors	Fansites are convenient for Habbo visitors who want to reach a large audience, a fast way of spreading information about Habbo happenings (e.g., competitions, pop idols visiting Habbo), new features, news about Sulake Corp.
Participation	The fansite audience is provided ways to comment on the fansite through discussion forums, guest books, polls, etc..
Links	The fansites link to relevant Habbo places: other fansites, and to the hotels in other countries.
Hints, secrets, guidelines	Fansites teach newcomers both basic and advanced tricks with which to impress others. Guidelines on acceptable behavior are frequent.
Reviews and lists	The fansites keep track of the features and possibilities in Habbo: public spaces, different furniture items, pets, etc.
Histories	Two major histories are told on the fansites: the history of Habbo and the history of that particular fansite
Fashion and celebrities	Habbo "journalists" interview Habbo celebrities, avatars who have become famous in Habbo, and report on fashionable clothing and activities.
Graphics	Edited screenshot pictures are an integral part of many fansites, some even provide pixel graphics drawing schools.
Habbo fiction	A few fansites write fictional stories about characters in Habbo.
About	Who comprises the fansites staff, number of visitors, updates, banners, etc.
Real life	Habbo meetings "in real life," stuff not about Habbo that is important to teenagers, as well as blogs, e-cards, etc.

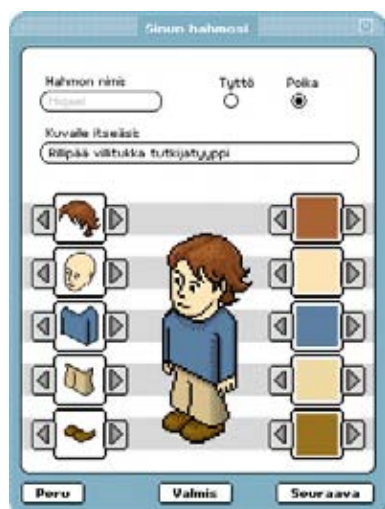
Based on the fansites, we clustered the hotel residents into eight groups: a) furniture traders and collectors, b) chatters (in public rooms), c) gang-members and VIPs (insider groups not open to everyone), d) supervisors with administration powers, e) cheaters, f) quiz-makers and players, g) the hotel manager (a Sulake employee), and h) celebrities. Similarly, 11 popular activities were identified: trading furniture, casinos, dating, beauty contests, competitions, dice games, team sports, formula tracks, talk shows, clubs & ho-

tels, and orphanages. More important than the exact details of these listings are two observations about Habbo that they convey: the diverse and commonplace qualities of Habbo. First, there is not one particular Habbo activity that attracts all Habbo visitors, but many different ones. Second, the activities going on in Habbo resemble games with rules and pretend play familiar from schoolyards, playgrounds, youth clubs, and so on.

The Habbo visitors and their practices seem to be strongly influenced by the fansites. They complement Sulake's official Web site by providing more detailed information about the hotel from an experienced visitor's point of view. Hints, secrets, and guidelines, and stories about Habbo fashion influence the boundaries for acceptable behavior in Habbo. The fansites improve the Habbo visitors' awareness of the fan cultures around Habbo, and also reproduce and reinforce social positions (like potential Habbo career paths or legitimized visitor groups).

4.4. Pre-defined Habbo Categories

The Habbo aesthetics de-emphasise bodily differences between visitors. All avatars look like they are of the same length, height, and age. The visitors can choose their own clothing, hair styles, and skin colours from a pre-defined set (Figure 6).



QuickTime™ and a TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor are needed to see this picture.








Figure 6. Self-presentation possibilities for Habbo avatars. Left: the avatar of one of the authors. Right: an avatar from Pietiläinen (2004).

There are two avatar categories visible in the user interface in Figure 6, girl and boy. Unlike many other MMOGs, the Habbo designers chose not to use categories such as race, nationality, region, or alignment (good, evil, etc.). At the time of the study, there was a dozen special Habbo badges that show the special status of certain Habbos. Some of these the visitors can buy, some of these are earnable, and some of them signify volunteers or other workers. Table 10 shows a summary of these badges.

4.5. Emergent Habbo Categories

By combining elements from the pre-defined sets, the Habbo visitors have chosen their own **clothing styles**. Table 7 shows examples of Habbo clothing styles.

Table 7. Some examples of common clothing styles (Kriisipalvelu.net 2005⁸)

...	Punk	Gothic	Teinix (teenie)	Wannabe	Own style	...
...	Bright colours, irokese	White skin, dark clothes	Pastel colours, round cheeks	Strict clothing, smart behaviour	Doesn't care about fashion	...
						

However, Habbo visitors are not only clustered based on their looks, it is also about their textual description, the room decoration theme, their style of chatting, and behaviour patterns. A common way of talking about Habbo avatars is through a their profession. Some Habbo visitors **pretend to have a profession in Habbo**, which involves decorating their room and behaving according to the selected profession. Some fansites have written articles on this role-playing phenomenon and discussed the following professions: journalist, nurse, tv-show host, bartender, pharmacist, actor, police, doctor, fireman, postman, veterinarian (Nerokala 2005, DJ Joneppe 2002⁹).

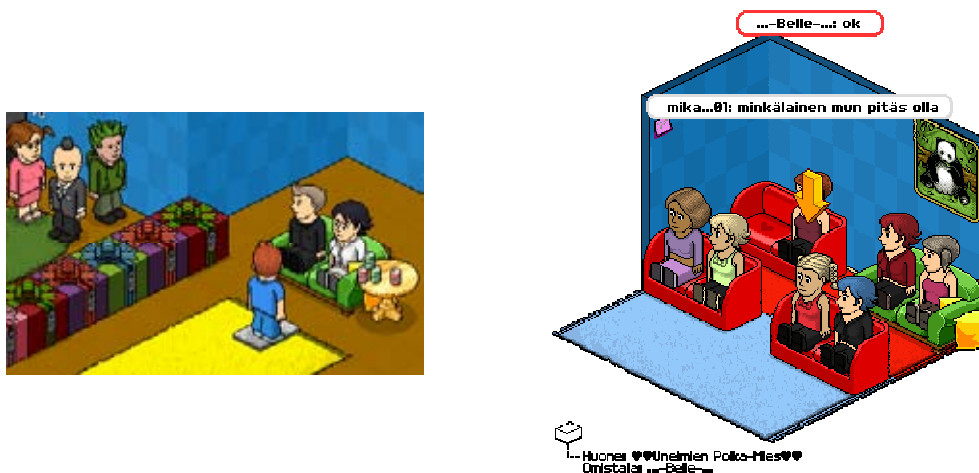


Figure 7. Two examples of visitors imitating TV-show formats in Habbo: Habbo Idols (left) and The Bachelor (right).

Imitating TV-show formats is another popular way of creating a hotel guest room theme. Figure 7 shows two examples, Habbo Idols (a room visited during a user interview 19.10.2005) and Habbo Bachelor (Unelmien Poikamies in Finnish) reported on the fansite Kriisipalvelu.net (May 2006). We have also found mentions of other tv-shows such as Greed, Do you want to be a millionaire, Big Brother, Survivor, America's Next Top Model, and different Dating-formats.

⁸ Kriisipalvelu at <http://habbomatic.com/>

⁹ Nerokala at <http://nerokala.com/> and DJ Joneppe at <http://www.kolumbus.fi/djjoneppe/index.htm>

The diversity of the popular Habbo activities is very large, however one way to **compare activities** is to look at their **characteristics over time**. For instance, an activity can be open to everyone, or only for selected visitors (closed). It can be fleeting, or continue over a longer time period. The activity can be arranged in a hierarchical way or be more democratic, and it might be very visible or more underground. Below (Figure 8) are three examples highlighting these dimensions.



Figure 8. Three different kinds of social activities: orphanage (left), bingo (middle), gang (right).

To the left is an orphanage, where people come to be connected as child and parents, and continue to roleplay as a family. The room owner stands in the image to the right, the child is in the middle (yellow shirt), the child queue in the bottom left, and the wannabe parents in the upper left. The middle image shows bingo, using a set of interactive dice furni: the person who rolls the same dice number as the room owner wins. To the right is a gang's recruitment room. Table 8 shows some differences in these group activities.

Table 8. Some characteristics of group activities

	Orphanage	Bingo	Gang
Open-closed	Open	Open	Closed
Fleeting-durable	Fleeting	Fleeting	Durable
Hierarchical – democratic	Game master + democratic participants	Game master + democratic participants	Hierarchy with participant ranks
Visible – underground	Visible	Visible	Underground

The virtual world also has other properties that have inspired games. Furniture traps, tele-running, and sumo-wrestling is can be mentioned as examples. Figure 9 shows a furni trap game that **plays with the spatiality of the hotel**. The assistant to the room owner runs the game by moving six tables in a row-like way, one table one square forward at a time, thereby reducing the available floor space for the players. The number of players is reduced as they are trapped. In some games, the trapped players can buy themselves out of the trap to continue the game.



Figure 9. Furni trap game: 1) starting position (left), 2) decreasing available floorspace (middle), 3) one player is trapped (right).

Yet another way of clustering Habbo activities is to look at **the role of the furniture in the activity**. In the previous examples furniture has played a secondary role in the room. It is also possible to consider furni as ends in themselves. For instance, furniture museums have appeared in Habbo: when a room is filled with all different furni items, which the owner has spent much time to collect. Or, when the room owners just want to decorate the room with the aim of making something beautiful. Figure 10 below shows three examples of Habbo furni laid out in a way that should make the room owner very cool.



Figure 10. Furniture that makes you look cool. TV-wall (upper left), lots of writing desks (lower left), icehockey theme (right).

The TV-wall is cool, because it's an original idea in Habbo, since to place a tv-set above another, once has to use a special bug/feature that is not known to everyone. This shows technical competence, patience, and a sense of aesthetics. The room filled with writing desks is cool, since Habbo visitors know that one has to be member of Habbo Club for ten months to get just one desk of this type. This fortune shows that the room owner is a successful trader. The ice-hockey theme on the right is cool because of its thematic decoration, and because the owner show off with several furniture items that have only been for sale during two week periods in the hotel's history. Table 9 summarises the role of furniture items (virtual assets) in Habbo activities. Furniture can be an end in itself, it can be a means for something else, or play no role at all.

Table 9. The role of furniture in Habbo activities

Role of furniture	Description	
Furniture as an end in itself	to collect all different furni items furni as aesthetically pleasing	
Furniture as a means for something else	to make friends to make others happy to become famous to become rich	to show status as props for role playing as props for chatting
Indifferent to furniture	socialisers / chatters that keep contact with friends made in and outside Habbo	hackers (against the system) grief players

Based on our player interviews, we have also looked at how the Habbo visitors talk about the other Habbo visitors. In addition to describing Habbo visitors based on what they do

in Habbo (activities), Table 10 summarises the membership categories that were used during our interviews to explain to us what other kinds of Habbo visitors there can be.

Table 10. Predefined and Emergent Visual and Nonvisual Membership Categories.

Predefined visual categories	Emergent visual categories	Non-visual categories
<p><i>avatar appearance:</i> boy / girl</p> <p><i>purchasable badges:</i> Habbo Club, Golden Habbo Club, Halloween smile</p> <p><i>special badges:</i> Habbo staff, NGO workers, youth workers, mental support, VIP guests</p> <p><i>earnable badges:</i> Habbo X (guides), fansite authors, Battle Ball gurus</p>	<p><i>clothing styles:</i> punk, gothic, teenie, wannabe (strictly dressed), personal style (independent of fashion)</p> <p><i>professions:</i> journalist, nurse, TV show host, bartender / waitress, pharmacist, actor, police, doctor, nurse, fireman, postman, veterinarian, etc.</p> <p><i>TV show formats:</i> Idols, the Bachelor(ette), Greed, Do You Want to be a Millionaire, Big Brother, Survivor, America's Next Top Model, "Dating," etc.</p> <p><i>categories formed from value judgments on others' appearances:</i> good looking, bad looking</p>	<p><i>visitors from other hotels</i> (nationality / language region) speaking another language</p> <p><i>age:</i> small children, "my age" (teen), older</p> <p><i>gender:</i> combinations of nickname, avatar, real body (e.g., boy with girl avatar but masculine nickname)</p> <p><i>Habbo age:</i> newbie, regular, guru</p> <p><i>relation to room:</i> room owner, visitor, shared rights</p> <p><i>friends made in or outside of Habbo:</i> Habbo friends, real friends</p> <p><i>trading furniture:</i> little by little, skilled traders, cheaters</p> <p><i>time of day</i> (is associated with distinct visitors): daytime (children with flu at home, mothers), after school (preteens), evening-night (older, best discussions)</p>

5. Conclusion

During our Habbo visitor interviews, we tried to find out whether the visitors would identify themselves with one particular visitor category or Habbo activity as presented above. None of the interviewees really accepted to be labelled as one particular category, as they all mentioned that they started out doing certain things in Habbo and then moved on to try other things. They claimed that they got bored of doing the playing the same game or keeping the same room activity after a few weeks.

This brings us back to the original question, who are the Habbo users? During the project, we sought to generate some user groups or categories to explain that the people who visit Habbo can be divided into these and these categories. We started out by exploring Habbo for ourselves and making pilot interviews, ending up with a few preliminary categories: furni collectors, chatters, late-evening party people, mafioso, sheriffs (volunteer moderators), and cheaters. The survey gave us more background data to work with as it confirmed our assumption that time spent in Habbo really correlates with knowledge of and activity in Habbo. A cluster analysis of the data suggested six user clusters that we named Oldtimers, Playmakers, Silent majority, Gang-members, I don't pay, and Older people.

We also found two dimensions of Habbo activities that correlated more strongly than the others: a strive for publicity vs. privacy, and arranging events vs. not spending time in own room. The fansite studies and our interviews opened up the emergent types of use.

We have shown examples of Habbo clothing styles, Habbo professions, TV-show formats, competitions, and other fun ways of being together in Habbo. We briefly analysed some characteristics of and the role of furniture in the Habbo activities. We also provided a listing of the categories our interviewed visitors used when describing Habbo players.

When going through all these different ways of describing the Habbo users, the diversity of the Habbo uses is striking. Answering the question of who the Habbo users are with one particular categorisation does not seem fair. Neither is a simple two-dimensional model enough. What we can do, however, is to provide a summarising list of aspects that are important in Habbo. It is possible to distinguish different user categories based on all of the dimensions in the list. Depending on the motives behind the question, different categorisations can be made. The list can also function as a map for discussing a Habbo career with a Habbo user: which aspects drew the user into Habbo, which aspects made the user come back, and so on.

Table 11. Summary of important aspects of Habbo

Aspect	Description
one's own avatar(s)	clothing styles, character description
one's own rooms and furniture	collecting, trading, decorating, browsing the furniture catalogue
Habbo homepage ¹⁰	your avatar's homepage that is visible to anyone on the web.
friends	school, hobbies, new friends, dating, distant friends
play	beauty contests (popularity), TV shows, games of chance, Habbo-sports, playing with the spatiality of the virtual world
Habbo career	celebrities, getting rich, popular room, in a game or gang, being a fansite author, being a Habbo guide
testing boundaries and rules	expressing self, treating others (e.g. cheating, bullying), finding and using glitches in the hotel architecture

While this study answers the empirical question of what users do in Habbo, the study also highlights a general aspect of many community software products: the users' important roles in the innovation process. The users take part in the content production, some as active playmakers, and others as equally important participants and audience. What the users do in Habbo becomes both a fundamental part of the use experience and a source of inspiration to the Habbo developers.

Our work shows that there are no self-evident ways to group all the users for all situations. For instance, it is not clear how stable the user clusters based on the survey are over time. On the other hand, Table 11 supposedly presents the Habbo dimensions that won't disappear over time (assuming the technology doesn't change drastically). There are several reasons for why different organisational stakeholders need categorisations. Marketing for instance, needs some knowledge of the demographics of the Habbo users, but since demographics do not necessarily correlate with action in the game, it is hard to design for demographics. Therefore categorisations of player activities are more useful for development. However, categorical knowledge is not the only type of knowledge useful in design. Previous research has shown that anecdotal knowledge (a.k.a. stories and narratives) plays an important role in design. Long-term interaction with the users

¹⁰ New feature of February 2007

through various user feedback channels provide the developers a broad resource of anecdotes of what and how the users innovate with the Habbo furniture.

So, the question is not how many personas is enough to represent the users of Habbo, since in the Habbo case there are two particular features that makes developer-user dialogue easier compared to many other product development contexts. First, the developers have easy access to what the users do with and in Habbo, anyone can log on and check it out. Second, the online discussions in the user-created fansite forums provide the developers with loads of user feedback and insights into what the users expect. Then it is possible both to meet the expectations as well as make surprises.

Future work involves reflections on what kinds of user categories one can make. In this report, we have not taken a strong position in advance of what we were categorising but tried to be open towards different things: individuals vs. groups, ingame (rooms, activities) vs. demographics (age, gender, region, etc.). The empirical data could be analysed more to distinguish user careers and lifecycles.

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Consumers in Product Development: Empowered or Exploited?

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1. Background: Growing interest in consumer involvement

The idea of activation and empowerment of citizens has been characteristic to the so-called New Public Management school of thought that is said to be a prevalent intellectual force in public management. In emphasizing managerial thoughts and market orientation, New Public Management has directed public agencies to view citizens as active clients or consumers. (E.g. Eräsaari, 2006; Vabø, 2005.)

Traces of these thoughts can be seen in the Finnish consumer policy program, which also sets an active and competent consumer as its goal, and highlights the importance of understanding consumer views and needs. One particular way of activating consumers that is mentioned is the collaboration of consumers and producers, which is thought to bring consumer perspective into the product design process. Consumer and producer collaboration is seen as beneficial to both parties. Consumers get better products because their views and needs are taken into account in product design. Producers benefit, because better products sell more. (Heiskanen et al., 2007; KTM, 2004.)

Consumer/user involvement has evoked a lot of enthusiasm also in the design and innovation management literature, and has spurred the development of a variety of methods for

involving users and eliciting their needs and ideas, such as contextual design, empathic design, participatory design and the lead user method (Beyer & Holtzblatt, 1998; Greenbaum & Kyng, 1991; Kaulio, 1998; Kelley, 2000; Koskinen et al., 2003; von Hippel, 2005). Current topics of interest include the issue of how users are represented and how their perspectives are mediated into the design process. For example, when should one include experienced and expert users, and when should one include 'ordinary' users? How are users capable of providing valuable input on products that do not yet exist, and how useful are different methods in generating the necessary user experience? (Bowie, 2003; Hyysalo, 2004; Johnson, 2007; Kujala & Kauppinen, 2004; Oudshoorn et al., 2004; Stewart & Williams, 2005.) Recently, the debate has also included more critical or qualified voices. It is argued that the application of user involvement methods does not self-evidently mean that users are adequately represented in innovation and design, nor does the lack of methods automatically mean that users are totally absent from innovation. Another topical issue is how the input gained from user studies and involvement exercises is converted into practical design solutions, and how useful the different forms of user input are for companies developing innovative products. (Olson & Bakke, 2001; Heiskanen & Repo, 2007; Kujala, 2003; Kotro, 2005.)

Although consumer involvement in product development has been dealt with in the literature to a great extent, while stating its benefits to enterprises, there has been less debate on its benefits – or costs – to consumers. The benefits to consumers – better products – have often been presented as a self-evident background presumption. All in all, this subject has been examined mostly from companies' point of view. Also in the ONNI research project implemented by the National Consumer Research Centre, we examined consumer/user involvement more from the companies' aspect. However, we also debated the meaning of consumer involvement in product development from the consumers' point of view.

2. The ONNI Project: Consumer Involvement in Practice

ONNI was a joint project by the National Consumer Research Centre and the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation (Tekes). In ONNI, we investigated how small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which have limited resources to engage in user research, obtain and manage user knowledge, and how current practices could be improved. In the project, we assessed current practices and experimented with intensified user interaction together with selected SME participants. For this purpose, we conducted the following types of investigations: a survey of 15 SMEs (in the field of interactive computing); a survey of seven companies providing services in usability and user research; intensified user involvement experiments with four companies. The users who were involved in the product development experiments were members of the consumer panel of the National Consumer Research Centre, which consists of about 1,000 voluntary consumers participating in research projects.

Our research indicated that correctly timed and dimensioned utilisation of consumer involvement may be useful to companies in many different ways. User involvement contributed to usability and functionality improvements, gave input on how to enhance the utility and enjoyability of the products, and gave new product ideas. Moreover, engaging in the user involvement exercises energised the enterprises to devote additional efforts to develop and improve their innovations. (Heiskanen et al., 2007; Repo et al., 2007.)

Along the benefits of user involvement, we recognised a number of caveats. Many of the methods of user involvement presented in the literature have been designed thoroughly and comprehensively. SMEs are likely to have few resources to carry out such methods to a full extent. In our exercises, short-term user involvement produced benefits without extensive use of resources, which the participating SMEs appreciated. Involving users – even in a limited scale – was arguably better than doing nothing at all. On the other hand, there are obvious risks in carrying out lightweight short-term exercises in user involvement. In particular, product developers’ views on users may become or remain biased. Caution is needed when balancing the benefits of such exercises against the risks. (Heiskanen et al., 2007; Repo et al., 2007.)

In the ONNI research project, consumer/user involvement in product development was examined primarily from the companies’ point of view: how they could better utilise the information produced by consumers in product development. However, questions on the kinds of impacts consumer involvement has on the consumers/users themselves were raised during the research project. Is user involvement really beneficial to consumers, or do the producers get all the benefits? How well are consumers represented if only a handful of non-representative consumers are involved in product development? How to motivate consumers to participate in product design? How to reward them and compensate their effort? In the following, we debate consumer involvement in product development from the consumers’ point of view based on our experiences.

3. Consumer Perspective on Consumer Involvement: Empowerment or Exploitation?

Increased user input in product development is being encouraged both in politics and in business life. How can we assume this to impact the consumers: are consumers empowered or exploited?

This can be examined through two distinctions. First of all, most consumers do not have the opportunity (and do not want to!) participate in companies’ product development. Therefore, we should differentiate between consumers involved and not involved in product development. Secondly, participation in product development is to the benefit of the consumer on the one hand, but also brings costs or disadvantages on the other hand. By combining these dichotomies, we obtained the following four-fold table:

	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Costs</i>
<i>Involved</i>	a) Benefits from involvement	b) Costs from involvement
<i>Not involved</i>	c) Benefits without involvement	d) Costs without involvement

a) Benefits to consumers involved in product development

Consumers involved in product development do not often receive monetary compensation for their input (see, e.g., Jeppesen & Frederiksen, 2006). Instead, they presumably gain many kinds of other benefits from their involvement. The most apparent benefit seems to be the fact that they gain products that better meet their needs because they have been involved in their

design (cf. Jeppesen & Molin, 2003). At the same time, their relationship with the product may become more intensive.

Involvement in product development may be rewarding due to the creativity required by the process. Learning and creating new things must be a good reason for many consumers to participate in product development. The social nature of the product development process may also be a pleasant experience. Product development is usually carried out in a social forum in which it is possible, for example, to bring forward one's expertise and gain peer recognition (cf. Jeppesen & Molin, 2003).

Even if there is no actual monetary compensation for participating in product development, some consumers may find that applying their own expertise and skills has been useful in subsequent jobseeking. Those involved in product development may build their own reputation in the field and, at best, find employment (cf. Jeppesen & Frederiksen, 2006).

The benefit gained by consumers involved in product development may also be something other than a personal gain. They may participate in product development in order to ensure that the views of their own reference group (for example, people with reduced mobility) are taken into account. This way, they have an opportunity to have a say and provide "common good" with their own input.

b) Costs to consumers involved in product development

Naturally, consumers taking part in product development also face costs or disadvantages. They may spend a lot of time and effort to help the company in the product development process. As consumers are not professionals in product development, they do this in their own time. Consumers taking part in product development do not usually receive monetary compensation for their involvement, but the company they have helped may earn rather large sums with these products (cf. Jeppesen & Molin, 2003).

c) Benefits to consumers not involved in product development

Consumers not involved in product development themselves may, nevertheless, gain benefits from the fact that other consumers have introduced a consumer's point of view to the product development process. Presumably, they too can enjoy the better products that should be created through product development along with consumer participation. On the other hand, it is true that only a certain group of consumers take part in product development, and it is not self-evident that their needs are the same as those of a wider consumer group.

d) Costs to consumers not involved in product development

It can be presumed that consumers not involved in product development would have no disadvantages from the fact that some other consumers introduce the consumer's viewpoint to product development. However, increased consumer involvement may also have indirect impacts on consumers who have not participated in the product development process. If new products have been designed on the terms of active lead users (cf. Jeppesen & Frederiksen, 2006), they are not necessarily suitable for every person.

Increased seeking of the consumer viewpoint may result in an undesirable outcome from the consumers' point of view also if the companies start to place unfinished products on the

market to a greater extent, with the intention of finishing them on the basis of feedback from active consumers. It is unlikely that ordinary consumers would be happy to use unfinished products that function properly only after a number of updates.

It is also necessary to bear in mind that even if interest in consumer involvement and the resulting products with higher degree of tailoring is on the increase, most consumers want to purchase most of the products after they are finished. A great proportion of consumers are not enthusiastic about the idea that they would have to take part in product design. As one of the consumers who took part in our research stated with sarcasm: “And now we even have to *invent* the products.”

4. What Kind of Compensation Should Consumers Receive for Participation?

Consumer involvement in product development may provide many kinds of benefits to consumers themselves, and not only to companies. On the other hand, it may also result in a variety of disadvantages or costs. To make the practice, which is still not very common, more widespread, it should be regarded as fair by the consumers. The pros and cons should be distributed in a just way. Even if companies as such were not interested in what is fair or right, the practice should not exploit consumers because that would not necessarily work in the long run. Therefore, consumers should be recompensed for their input in product development. It should also be ensured that consumers not involved in product development will not incur disadvantages from the new way of product design.

It would at least be fair that the compensation for users is agreed on in advance, whether it is a direct monetary compensation or recruitment. The distribution of benefits and profits from consumer input should also be agreed on in a fair and equal manner. Although this is often a question of a win-win situation, it may be regarded as unfair if the company makes considerably higher profits from it than the assisting consumers.

Von Hippel has the most radical idea about organising compensation for consumers: he suggests that the money reserved for product development should be directed to consumers who innovate the products (von Hippel, 2005).

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Roundtable: Nordic consumer culture? Towards a research agenda

Conveners

Søren Askegaard
University of Southern Denmark

Dannie Kjeldgaard
University of Southern Denmark

Jacob Östberg
Stockholm University

Papers

Overview of the roundtable

Special Session: European Consumer Policies Against Childhood Obesity

Conveners

Professor Lucia A. Reisch
Copenhagen Business School (CBS)
Denmark

Professor Suzanne C. Beckmann
Copenhagen Business School (CBS)
Denmark

Papers

Overview of the session

Beckmann, Suzanne C. (CBS), Katharina M. Keimer (BIPS) & Lucia A. Reisch (CBS): Food Based Dietary Guidelines: National differences and the challenges of developing a standardised European guideline

Billaux, Cecile (European Commission, DG SANCO, Brussels): Childhood obesity – we have the policies but do we have effective monitoring?

Grunert, Klaus (Aarhus School of Business, Aarhus University (MAPP)): The role of nutrition labelling – a useful tool for consumer information?

Sjöström, Michael (Karolinska Institutet, Huddinge, Stockholm), Jonatan Ruiz, Fran Ortega, Toomas Veidebaum & Luis Moreno: Physical Activity, Fitness and Obesity in Childhood. Policy implications of the EU-projects HELENA and ALPHA

Special Session: Current Aspects of European Consumer Policy

Conveners

Prof. Dr. Lucia A. Reisch
Copenhagen Business School
Denmark

Dipl. soc. oec. Sabine Bietz
University of Calw
Germany

Papers

Overview of the session

Jain, Angela, Lucia A. Reisch, Martin Schielfelbusch, Alexander Schulz & Dennis Tänzler:
Sustainability as a consumer policy goal – results from an international study

Kyriacou, Akis: Evidence-based policy: Measuring consumer preferences, satisfaction and detriment

Raijas, Anu: Consumers' subjective views of well-being (abstract also available)

Consumer Ombudsman Session

Conveners

Nordic Consumer Ombudmen

Roundtable Session

Nordic Consumer Culture? Towards a Research Agenda

Conveners: Søren Askegaard, University of Southern Denmark; Dannie Kjeldgaard, University of Southern Denmark; Jacob Östberg, Stockholm University

The consumer culture track at Consumer 2007 represents the concluding event for the Norforsk-financed Network for Research in Consumer Culture. This roundtable aims at suggesting outlines for a new research agenda in order to continue some of the research activities that germinated from the network. The overall purpose is to outline theoretical and empirical foundations for the existence of a particular Nordic version of contemporary consumer culture.

Theories of consumption and consumer culture are often rooted in Northern American cultural contexts. These cultural contexts are typically characterized by a high level of stratification and social differentiation leading to strong binary oppositions between the ones that can take part in the carnival of consumption and those who cannot. Previous research seems to indicate that the Nordic societal model of relative open markets, strong welfare systems, and a relatively egalitarian stance to social differentiation has fostered a different type of consumer culture. Both producers (Kjeldgaard and Ostberg, forthcoming 2007) and consumers (Wikström 1997) perceive of consumer culture and globalized market offerings differently than markets actors in more stratified cultural contexts.

Management theory researchers have defined particular Nordic theoretical and practical approaches to management and organisation theory (Czarniawska and Sevón 2003) that are rooted in the Nordic egalitarian consensus culture. Within marketing there is a strong Nordic school of relationship marketing (Grönroos 1994; Gummesson 1996) as well as the network approach to industrial marketing (Håkansson and Ford 2002). Both these schools of thought emphasise the importance of cooperation both horizontally between firms and vertically between firms and buyers. The present project seeks to make a similar effort concerning consumer culture and study how the particular socio-historic milieu of Scandinavian has shaped a specific rendition of a global consumer culture. In recent years there have been some efforts to develop more localized theoretical conceptualizations of consumer culture theory and marketing. Cova and Cova (2002) has proposed that there is a specific Latin consumer culture that is more focused on sociability and community than the dominant logic of an autonomous consumer stemming from the predominantly North American school of thought. Another critique of the North American school of thought, this time in the field of marketing, comes from the proponents of "Celtic Marketing" (Brown 2006) who propose that the strict focus on analysis, planning and control has left many of the spontaneous, imaginative, and whimsical activities that are important to understand contemporary markets under-analyzed.

The purpose of this roundtable session is to engage researchers and policy makers in a discussion of different aspects of Nordic Consumer Culture and to discuss the possibilities for developing a research agenda for a joint Nordic research effort. This would have the potential to bring a revision of the existing theoretical body of knowledge on consumer culture and would have clear policy implications by providing knowledge on how Nordic consumer cultures handles and are influence by the processes of globalization.

The following network members have agreed to participate in the roundtable: Søren Askegaard, Dannie Kjeldgaard, Jacob Östberg, Per Østergaard, Anu Valtunen, Joonas Rokka, and Tessa Gjødesen. An additional number of network and other conference participants can be expected to take part in the roundtable.

The roundtable will include also participation by Professor Richard Wilk, Indiana University. He will also make some comments, entitled "Reflections on a Nordic consumer culture."

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Nordic Consumer Policy Research Conference

Helsinki, 3-5 October 2007

Special Session: European Consumer Policies Against Childhood Obesity

Convenors:

Professor Lucia A. Reisch, Copenhagen Business School (CBS), Denmark

Professor Suzanne C. Beckmann, Copenhagen Business School (CBS), Denmark

Background and aim of session:

The prevalence of childhood obesity poses a serious public health problem. In Europe, it is estimated that about every fifth child is overweight. Among many other biological, social, cultural, and psychological factors, increased marketing efforts for unhealthy food and drink targeted to children have been blamed to contribute to this pandemic. In the US, drastic regulative measures have been taken, e.g., a ban on soft drinks in public elementary schools.

In spite of years of research, however, the relationship between food marketing and childhood obesity is still not fully understood. A first aim of this special session is hence to provide new insights from latest research into the influencing social factors – in particular the role of advertising and consumer information - of overweight / obesity of young consumers.

The issue lies at the intersection of consumer policy and public health policy. Consumer organizations - such as BEUC - have given the topic of food advertising and children's overweight top priority on their agenda. Hence, a second aim of this session is to analyze what consumer policy actors (governments, NGOs, the Media, but also the companies themselves) can and should do as regards using the diverse consumer policy instruments (regulation, information, organization, socialization) in the fight against childhood obesity.

Presentations

Suzanne C. Beckmann (CBS), Katharina M. Keimer (BIPS) & Lucia A. Reisch (CBS):
"Food Based Dietary Guidelines: National differences and the challenges of developing a standardised European guideline"

Michael Sjöström, Karolinska Institute, Huddinge (Stockholm):
"Physical activity, fitness and obesity in childhood. Policy implications of the EU-projects HELENA and ALPHA"

Klaus Grunert, Aarhus School of Business, Aarhus University (MAPP):
"The role of nutrition labelling – a useful tool for consumer information?"

Cecile Billaux (European Commission, DG SANCO), Brussels:
"Childhood obesity – we have the policies but do we have effective monitoring?"

Kees de Winter (Food Officer at BEUC, Brussels):
"The role of nutrition labelling and food advertisement as a consumer policy tool" (working title, to be confirmed)



Food Based Dietary Guidelines: National differences and the challenges of developing a standardised European guideline

Suzanne C. Beckmann, Katharina Keimer & Lucia A. Reisch
on behalf of the IDEFICSstudy consortium

The rising prevalence of obesity across Europe, particularly among young people, poses one of the greatest public health challenges for the 21st century. Childhood obesity is particularly alarming, because it is passing the epidemic into adulthood and thus creates a growing health burden for the next generation. Unhealthy diets and sedentary lifestyles are the main contributors to overweight and obesity, which are among the leading risk factors for the development of chronic and non-communicable diseases. The IDEFICSstudy is an integrated project financed by the EU 6th Framework programme with the aim to determine relevant factors for the development of obesity in a multi-country setting.

The core of the IDEFICSstudy consists of population-based intervention studies to be set up in pre- and primary school settings. As an input to the design of these intervention studies, we have conducted an analysis of existing national guidelines and recommendations concerning healthy diets and lifestyles. The ultimate objective was to compile key messages of these guidelines in order to derive a set of standardised FBDGs (= Food Based Dietary Guidelines).

Official national guidelines and consumer information regarding the nutrition of children have been collected by the national survey centres from all participating IDEFICSstudy partners. The basic messages of all guidelines have been translated into English, summarised and analysed for similarities and discrepancies. The comparison of guidelines refers primarily to those countries where survey and intervention are carried out: Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Sweden and Spain. Secondly, countries where complementary research is carried out are also covered, namely Denmark, France and Great Britain. Furthermore, USA, Canada, Australia and Japan have been included as well, to broaden the base of knowledge concerning the prevention of childhood obesity.

All available Food Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDG), including some guidelines on physical activity, as well as Guidelines for parents and for schools and institutions regarding the nutrition of children and prevention of obesity have been compared and analysed.

Our findings show that a comparative analysis of Food Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDG) is more challenging than what one would expect at first. The main challenges, resulting not only in difficulties of comparison but also of developing standard core guidelines across countries, are related to national differences concerning:

- the definition of food groups (e.g., whether potatoes are a vegetable or not)
- the definition of quantities (e.g., what constitutes "1 serving")
- the recommended quantitative intake
- the focus on certain food products embedded in cultural norms and traditions

Taking these difficulties into account we consider it quite difficult to present anything else but very general recommendations, since any specific recommendation has the potential to collide with existing national guidelines, thus causing confusion.

Nordic Consumer Policy Research Conference

Helsinki, 3-5 October 2007

Special Session „European consumer policies against childhood obesity“

Synopsis of Talk – Cecile Billaux – European Commission, Directorate General for Health and Consumer Protection

Childhood obesity – we have the policies but do we have effective monitoring?

The EU Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health was launched in March 2005 to “provide a common forum for all interested actors at European level where: (a) they can explain their plans to contribute concretely to the pursuit of healthy nutrition, physical activity and the fight against obesity, and where those plans can be discussed; (b) outcomes and experience from actors’ performance can be reported and reviewed, so that over time better evidence is assembled of what works, and Best Practice more clearly defined.”¹

From the outset it was recognised that the members of the Platform would need to monitor their achievements if they were to demonstrate their impact to others and to learn from their own practices. This was a challenging task, however, and not all Platform members were equally skilled in this area. Consequently a Platform Monitoring Working Group, which was chaired by the European Commission and comprised members of the Platform, was set up in March 2005 and produced a “Monitoring Framework” and a “First Monitoring Progress Report” in 2006.² Subsequently a second Monitoring Progress Report was produced for the second anniversary of the Platform (March 2007).³ This Report presented the achievements of the EU Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health in 2006, but also examined how successfully the Platform’s members had been in monitoring their progress.

The report was a summary of the achievements of 121 commitments that had been made by Platform members - covering areas such as education, physical activity, food labelling, food reformulation and advertising and marketing. The commitments varied significantly in their size and scope and had been made by a variety of different actors – e.g. consumer and health organisations, the food industry and Governments. Reporting on what these commitments had achieved was a difficult task and, in itself, the exercise of producing the report identified some of the issues that defined effective monitoring. These being; the need to be specific when setting objectives and reporting on actions, the need to focus on relevant information when monitoring, the need to devise appropriate methods of measuring results, the need to communicate information clearly, the need to state the Platform’s contribution to a commitment, and the need to dedicate sufficient resources to allow effective monitoring.

The report also included an exercise by which the quality of the monitoring activities was assessed. The results indicated that the average (mean) quality score for the commitments was 2.88 (out of a maximum of 5), with a crude interpretation of this score suggesting that, on average, the monitoring forms fall just short of an “adequate” standard. These results

¹ EU Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, ‘Diet, Physical Activity and Health – A European Platform for Action’, March 15 2005. http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/nutrition/platform/docs/platform_charter.pdf.

² http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/nutrition/platform/docs/eu_platform_1mon-framework_en.pdf

³ http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/nutrition/platform/docs/eu_platform_2mon-framework_en.pdf

suggesting that a significant number of monitoring forms were not entirely adequate and that some Platform members are struggling with the monitoring of their commitments.

The experiences in the Platform show the difficulty of monitoring activities aimed at reducing obesity – be this for children or adults. However, it is essential that effective monitoring is put in place by all those involved in such activities as without this it will be difficult, if not impossible, to understand what works and what does not work. In relation to the Platform it is hoped that the Monitoring reports and guidance will act as a catalyst to ensure that there is an overall improvement which can be reflected in any future report on the achievements of the Platform. However, the experiences in the Platform are worth sharing with a wider audience as they are just as relevant for any activity or policy aimed at reducing obesity.

Nutrition labelling: Can market communication lead to healthier consumer food choices?

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The link between diet and diseases such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, hypertension and some types of cancer is a continuing source of debate. In developed countries, these diseases account for an increasing proportion of deaths, and represent a growing challenge for the public health authorities. There has therefore been increasing attention on measures aimed at encouraging more healthy eating patterns.

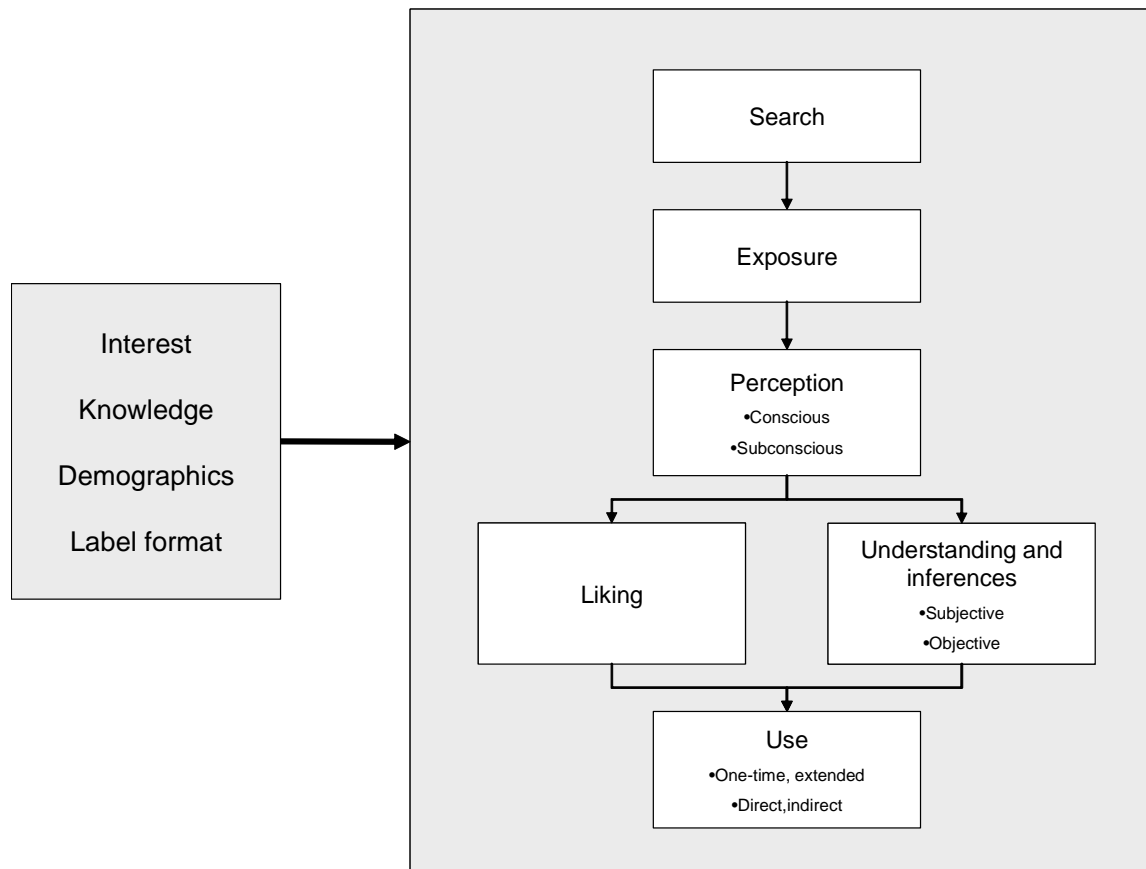
Nutrition information on food labels, nutrition labelling, is one of them. Effective and efficient nutrition labelling is important for all stakeholders. For public policy it is about reducing information asymmetry and providing consumers with information that can actively help them in making informed choices and stimulate healthier eating. For consumers, it provides an easy-to-use cue in bringing about more healthy food choices. For consumer associations, it is an important element for ensuring their right to be properly and correctly informed. For retailers and the food industry, nutritional information on food labels is a way to provide consumers with the nutrition information they need to make an informed choice, as well as a way to position and differentiate themselves from their competitors, and to demonstrate good corporate social responsibility.

There is ongoing discussion about whether nutrition labeling is effective and about ways in which it can be improved. The European Commission is preparing a new directive on nutrition labelling, and several national governments have been pushing voluntary schemes in cooperation with retailers and industry. This has stimulated considerable research activity, particularly in the area of front of pack labelling (“Traffic Lights”, Guideline Daily Amounts – GDAs - and other formats), and nutritional labelling more generally.

Existing research on the effects of nutrition labeling will be reviewed using the hierarchical model shown in Figure 1 (Grunert & Wills, in press). The model shows how the availability of nutrition information on food labels can have an effect on dietary intake. Only nutrition information on food labels to which the consumer is *exposed to* can be expected to have any effect. Such exposure can take place in the shop or at home. The likelihood of exposure is increased if the consumer actively *searches* for it, although accidental exposure is also possible. Exposure will only have an effect if the information is *perceived* (consciously or subconsciously) by the consumer, and any effects on purchase decisions will depend on consumers’ *understanding* of what the nutrition information on the label means. Understanding has both a

subjective (the *meaning* the consumer attaches to the information) and an objective (whether the consumer's understanding of the message is compatible with the intended meaning) component. Consumers may *infer* a meaning by relating the information to pre-existing knowledge. Consumers' choices may also be affected by their *liking* for a particular label. Finally, the food label information may be *used* in making choices, which may affect both immediate and future decisions about purchasing the product. It can also change the overall pattern of shopping, for example, by altering the perception of food categories that are subsequently considered more or less healthy than previously. Nutrition information on food labels may that way affect consumers' *dietary intake*.

Figure 1: A model of the effect of nutrition labeling



The review of existing research shows that consumers are generally aware of the link between food and health, and are interested in getting nutritional information. When asked, many consumers claim that they use nutritional information from food labels often or even most of the time, though observational studies seem to indicate that use is vastly over reported in this type of study and that actual use may be much lower. It has also been shown that self-reported use depends on the shopping situation (new vs. known product, time pressure, type of product) and on demographic characteristics (more label use among women, older consumers, parents, higher socioeconomic educated classes). With regard to typical back-of-pack nutrition labels, a range of problems with regard to legibility and understanding have been documented. With regard to

front-of-pack signposting, some newer research has shown that consumers like this additional information and seem to be able to understand both traffic light formats and GDA-based formats.

Important gaps in existing research emerge as well. There is a need for more research on consumer motivations for using nutrition labels, and on determinants of the attractiveness of different types of labels for consumers. There is also a need for more research on real-life use of nutrition labels – how much and what is actually perceived and read in the shop and at home, how does it influence buying behaviour for the individual product, for the product category, for whole shopping baskets. Finally, there is a need for more research on how consumers interpret and make inferences from nutrition labels, and how they combine nutrition information on food labels with other information to infer overall healthiness of a product. A number of new research projects are currently in the preparation phase, and it is expected that some of these gaps will be filled during the next few years.

Effective nutrition labelling relies on consumer learning on what food and its ingredients do to the body, and on that consumers will use the knowledge thus acquired in making food choices. Consumer research has pointed to some of the limits of this approach. One of the major characteristics of consumer decision-making for food products is that these decisions are made very fast, with a minimum amount of information processing, and largely based on heuristics that simplify decision-making (e.g., Bettman & Payne 1998). One major heuristic that consumers use is based on brands. Instead of evaluating products on multiple characteristics, consumers may base their choice on the brand, which is taken as a proxy for everything the consumer would like to know about the product – a certain taste, good quality, convenience, origin, ethics, safety, etc. Given the increasing attention to health questions, it is likely that healthiness of a food product will in the future also increasingly become an aspect of brand image. When this happens, consumers wishing to make healthy choices may base their decisions on whether the brand has a healthy image, rather than on the more objective information to be found on nutrition labels. It is important to see the potential function of nutrition labelling in the context of other cues that consumers are confronted with in the shopping situation, including the brand.

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NORDIC CONSUMER POLICY RESEARCH CONFERENCE 2007

TOWARDS A NEW CONSUMER? TOWARDS A NEW CONSUMER POLICY?

Venue: Helsinki, October 3-5, 2007

Special session: **European Consumer Policies Against Childhood Obesity**

Convenors: Professor Lucia A Reisch and Professor Suzanne C Beckmann, Copenhagen Business School (CBS), Denmark

Physical Activity, Fitness and Obesity in Childhood; Policy implications of the EU-projects HELENA and ALPHA

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The prevalence of childhood obesity poses a serious public health problem. Low levels of physical activity in the population have been blamed to contribute to this pandemic. In spite of years of research, however, the relationship between physical activity and obesity is still not fully understood, especially among young individuals. Numerous physical activity intervention studies have failed to show an effect on the overweight and obesity among the young individuals. Maybe the currently used recommendations about increasing physical activity are wrong. A better understanding is needed in order to improve formulation of public health policy and recommendations, and maybe also what consumer policy actors can do in the fight against childhood obesity.

In a series of studies within the European Youth Heart Study (EYHS) we have clarified more in detail the relations between levels of physical activity, cardiovascular fitness and fatness among children and adolescents, in about 1000 school-aged children, either 9 or 15 years old, in Sweden and Estonia. We have observed that the intensity of physical activity rather than the total amount (objectively assessed), may be important in relation to the prevention of obesity in children. The total amount of physical activity does not seem to be associated with fatness in individuals at these ages. Physical activity of moderate intensity levels seems to positively influence the levels of fitness, but not the levels of fatness. Taken together, the data suggest that a certain intensity physical activity level is required in order to obtain health benefits. When the data were analyzed separately in overweight (obese included) and non-overweight children and adolescents, we consistently observed that increased levels of vigorous physical activity, rather than light/moderate, are associated with a higher fitness levels in children and adolescents independently of the weight status. The results also suggest

that vigorous physical activity can play an important role in the prevention of central childhood obesity, independent of other determinant factors such as television viewing, birth weight, maternal educational level and parental overweight/obesity. However, data from interventional studies have failed in showing a positive effect of physical activity programs on body fat in children and adolescents. Due to the complexity of measuring physical activity in young people, the apparently obvious association between physical activity and fitness and fatness, has not been well established yet. Further research is needed to ensure reliable and efficient recommendations.

To identify and prevent children and adolescents from risk of obesity, and to be able to evaluate effects of alternative intervention strategies, comparable testing methodology across Europe has to be developed, tested, agreed upon and included in the health monitoring systems currently under development by the European Commission (DG SANCO; EUROSTAT, etc.). Efforts are being made in order to standardize and improve the assessment of physical activity and fitness in Europe. Such an example is the APLHA study, which main goal is to develop instruments for assessing levels of physical activity and related health determinants. Large-scale multi-centre studies such as the HELENA study (Healthy Lifestyle by Nutrition in Adolescence) are urgently needed in order to provide harmonised and comparable data through Europe.

Nordic Consumer Policy Research Conference

Helsinki, 3-5 October 2007

Special Session „Current Aspects of European Consumer Policy”

Convenors:

Prof. Dr. Lucia A. Reisch, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

Dipl. soc. oec. Sabine Bietz, University of Calw, Germany

Background and aim of session:

The recent new interest in consumer policy issues in Europe has many sources. Consumer policy is increasingly viewed and institutionalized as a distinct policy field on the various political levels (e.g., the new DG SANCO with Commissioner Maglena Kuneva; national Ministries for Consumer Policy in several nation states, national consumer policy strategies). Moreover, the EU has discovered consumer policy issues as a motivator for European citizens to look at the EU in a more positive light and to bring Europe closer to its citizens. Hence, consumer policy has become a louder voice in Europe, both institutionally and politically.

This Special Session brings together some current themes of European consumer policy issues. One of the papers in this session (Jain et al.) deals with the challenge of sustainable development and presents some results of a comparative study on “Consumer Policy and Sustainability” in five states. Different national approaches taken to develop more sustainable lifestyles as part of national consumer policy regimes are assessed.

One of the three main objectives of the new EU consumer strategy (2007-2013) is to enhance consumers' welfare. The Commission aims for an “evidence-based” policy, informed by sound consumer research and solid indicators. EUROBAROMETER and similar tools promise to provide the empirical evidence on consumer preferences needed for informed policymaking, but in fact, more qualitative research is needed for real evidence-based politics. The presentation by Akis Kyriacou deals with the Commission’s chosen measures to meet this challenge. Another contribution (Raijas) presents an approach to grasp the more intangible indicator of “subjective well-being”.

Presentations

Angela Jain (nexus institute, Berlin), Lucia A. Reisch (Copenhagen Business School), Martin Schielfelbusch (nexus institute, Berlin), Alexander Schulz & Dennis Tänzler (adelphi research institute, Berlin)

”Sustainability as a consumer policy goal: Results from an international study”

Akis Kyriacou (DG SANCO, Brussels)

” Evidence-based policy: Measuring consumer preferences, satisfaction and detriment”

Anu Raijas (National Consumer Research Centre, Helsinki)

„Consumers’ subjective views on well-being”

Abstracts

Nordic Consumer Policy Research Conference

Helsinki, 3-5th October 2007

Special Session „Current Aspects of European Consumer Policy”

Sustainability as a consumer policy goal – results from an international study

by

Angela Jain (nexus institute, Berlin), Lucia A. Reisch (Copenhagen Business School), Martin Schielfelbusch (nexus institute, Berlin), Alexander Schulz & Dennis Tänzler (both adelphi research institute, Berlin)

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It has been only in the past decade that sustainable consumption has become a consumer policy issue.¹ Before that, sustainable consumption and production have been perceived mostly as environmental and development policy issues, but not as being at the heart of consumer policy.

In 2004, the German government² has commissioned a study with the aim to empirically compare consumer policies for sustainable lifestyles in four European states (Germany, France, Great Britain, and Sweden) and the United States of America. In collaboration with leading consumer policy researchers from these countries, the rationale and objectives of governments shaping national consumer policies were analysed, and the policy successes and failures were evaluated. The paper reports key results from this study.³

The analysis is based on policy cycles in four areas that have been identified as particularly relevant for the link between consumer policies and sustainability, namely: What policies and measures are formulated and implemented

- to protect consumer health
- to protect the economic interests of consumers
- to improve consumer representation and information, and
- to support sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Based on a discussion of conditions for successful policy development and key sector trends in selected policy areas (especially: energy, transport, and agriculture), the findings indicate that all five countries are only in the first stage of combining the requirements of both consumer policies and sustainability.

¹ Reisch, Lucia A. (2004). Sustainable consumption as a consumer policy issue. In: L. A. Reisch & I. Røpke (Eds.). The ecological economics of consumption, pp. 175-189. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

² The German Federal Agency for Agriculture and Food on behalf of the German Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture, project No. 35/2004. Contractors were Adelphi Consult and "nexus Institute für Kooperationsmanagement und interdisziplinäre Forschung", two independent research institutes based in Berlin.

³ The full study with the whole range of results can soon be found in: Tänzler, Dennis & Angela Jain (2007): Verbraucherpolitik und Nachhaltigkeit im internationalen Vergleich. Munich: Oekom (to be published in November 2007).

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"Evidence-based policy: Measuring consumer preferences, satisfaction and detriment".

The new EU consumer strategy, covering the period 2007-2013, has three main objectives: to empower consumers, to enhance consumers' welfare and to protect consumers effectively. The Commission's ultimate aim is to achieve a more integrated and effective internal market, particularly in the retail dimension.

In order to attain the aforementioned objectives, EU consumer policy has set out five priority areas:

- 1) Better monitoring of consumer markets and national consumer policies
- 2) Better consumer protection regulation
- 3) Better enforcement and redress
- 4) Better informed and educated consumers
- 5) Putting consumers at the heart of other EU policies and regulation

In order to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the consumer strategy, the Commission will continue working on developing its evidence base activities in the field of consumer policy. At the moment consumer policy research is based on activities initiated by the Commission itself (DG SANCO and other services) and also on research data coming from national administrations as well as other public or private bodies.

DG SANCO's research agenda primarily involves the following projects:

Eurobarometers – This is a well established tool based on face to face interviews. It has the possibility of covering all 27 Member States, Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Turkey. On a regular basis, DG SANCO runs surveys covering areas such as the Internal Market and services of general interest.

Focus groups – This tool is an in-depth qualitative study of the attitudes of a selected social group towards a given subject or concept. However, results cannot generally be extrapolated to the whole population. The methodology uses focus groups of between 8 to 10 persons or individual interviews. The discussion guide is non-directive, and leaves some room for spontaneous expression. DG SANCO has carried out various focus groups covering areas such as the Internal Market and services of general interest.

Consumer satisfaction study – This study was carried out with the purpose of developing indicators of consumer satisfaction in various sectors providing services of general economic interest. Consumer satisfaction is measured both directly ("observed satisfaction") and through the statistical processing of responses to specific questions ("calculated satisfaction"). The survey uses a robust and homogeneous methodology across Member States and sectors. The analysis of the survey results is built in a way that allows comparisons on how consumers feel across sectors in one Member State and in a particular sector across Member States. This methodology can be extended to other sectors.

Consumer detriment – the European Commission commissioned a study to analyse the issue of consumer detriment and develop appropriate methodologies for the measurement of its impacts. The study is based on five pillars: definition of the concept; a methodology for the estimation of consumer detriment; market monitoring indicators; pilot tests, a multi-disciplinary review of existing research.

In addition, the *Seventh Framework Programme* covers a wide area of topics some of which are of directly related to consumer policy such as the research area covering "Interactions

between types of knowledge, economic growth and social well-being". Amongst other issues this aims to examine the role of behavioural economics and other social sciences in order to promote understanding of consumer behaviour in complex retail markets, something which is of particular interest to EU consumer policy.

The Commission is in particular trying to identify those in the research community with experience in empirical research on consumer behaviour.

Consumers' subjective views of well-being

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Abstract

Scholars, politicians and media are all currently interested in welfare, well-being, the quality of life and happiness. Factors influencing this important field in people's lives have been sought in macro and micro environments. Statistics can easily be acquired, for instance, on GDP, employment, private consumption and income level in various societies. This objectively measurable subsistence is a necessary prerequisite for well-being, but is not alone able to describe the whole picture of well-being. The aim of our study is to investigate consumers' subjective views and experiences of well-being. The focus of the study is the living conditions that refer to their everyday life circumstances through income and consumption habits. Are consumers able to evaluate what is needed in their personal well-being, i.e. what elements related to consumption and activities? What is the relationship between commodities (goods and services) and activities (e.g. watching television) when producing well-being? The subjective view of well-being has been studied to a rather limited extent and research from this viewpoint is therefore needed.

In the spring of 2007 we shall collect some qualitative data in order to shed light on the subjective well-being of consumers. This qualitative approach will enable us to explore the meaning of well-being in the everyday life of consumers. The data will be collected by organising six focus group conversations (each 6-8 participants) where we shall motivate the participants to discuss the contents of their everyday well-being. We suggest that consumer well-being can be approached by asking about satisfaction with life. We are interested in consumer satisfaction with 1) choices concerning time use and consumption, 2) the functionality of the market (private, public and third sectors) and 3) interaction between the consumer and market. Although the data are not representative, this is the best way to explore well-being experimentally. We will avoid leading the conversations and allow the participants talk freely with each other. In this way, we expect to acquire some totally new data on well-being.

The recorded discussions will be transcribed. From the written text, we aim at identifying the issues repeated in the participants' discussions as well as the surprising ones. The repeated themes will be analysed more deeply because they are relevant in well-being. Well-being probably consists of ordinary activities and everyday commodities. We are interested in what activities and commodities are important in producing well-being and what the interaction between them is.

It is particularly important to develop new approaches to well-being research because well-being has been investigated a great deal but not comprehensively. The results of this study will be useful for various parties: scientific communities, public institutions, consumer authorities, commercial companies and ordinary people. The study will benefit political and economic public institutions by providing new information about the consumers' experiences of well-being. Consumer authorities need new perspectives concerning consumers' reactions to the activities in the market. In addition to this, companies will benefit from understanding consumer well-being. The research project will offer solutions for various situations related to time and money in the everyday life of ordinary people.

Consumers' subjective views on well-being

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Abstract

The aim of our study is to investigate consumers' subjective views and experiences of well-being. The focus of the study is the living conditions that refer to the everyday life circumstances through income and consumption habits. In our qualitative research well-being was approached by asking about satisfaction with life. Like previous studies, the dimensions of everyday well-being consist of health, social relationships and economic subsistence. The results of this study will be useful for various parties: scientific communities, public institutions, consumer authorities, commercial companies and ordinary people. The study will benefit political and economic public institutions by providing new information about the consumers' experiences of well-being. Consumer authorities need new perspectives concerning consumers' reactions to the activities in the market.

1. Introduction

Scholars, policy makers and the media are all currently interested in citizens' welfare, well-being, the quality of life and happiness. However, the above-mentioned concepts are not exact synonyms and their meanings also vary depending on the context. Furthermore, interest in the well-being of citizens varies between institutions. The focus of research lies on understanding the topic that is interesting and multifaceted. From the policy makers' point of view, citizens with a high level of well-being are productive workers and consuming actors in the market. In the media, welfare, well-being, the quality of life and happiness are themes that interest a large audience.

Research has revealed that well-being generally comprises material living, physical and mental health, and social relations (e.g. Hirvonen et al., 2003; Siltaniemi et al., 2007, 37-38; Torvi & Kiljunen, 2005, 59; Quality of Life in Europe, 2004). In public discussion, well-being is mainly connected with financial wealth, health and happiness. Well-being as a concept, as well as a phenomenon, is very broad and multidimensional and changes over time. Sauli and Simpura (2005, 5) stated that the presentation of well-being is modified by scientific assumptions, political and administrative operations, as well as statistical changes.

Well-being has been approached in research from the viewpoint of consumers' needs or resources. In the need theoretical approach, well-being is supposed to reach by means of need satisfaction. The problem with this approach is how to define a sufficient level of need satisfaction. The resource-based approach pays attention to an individual's resources to achieve need satisfaction, aiming at well-being. (See e.g. Siltaniemi et al., 2007, 9-10.)

No external institutions are able to define what is currently needed for consumer well-being. Conceptions of well-being are very often based on statistics, restricted surveys or expert information. The data can be outdated, and the results are discussed based on averages. How consumers experience well-being in their everyday life when using commodities from the market, public sector and environment is rather poorly known. Consumers themselves are the best experts on their well-being.

The subjective view of well-being has been studied to a rather limited extent and research in this area is therefore needed. Information concerning well-being in the everyday life of consumers is needed in research, private enterprises and the public sector. This knowledge would facilitate direct interaction and improve understanding between the actors in the national economy (see Mokka & Neuvonen, 2006, 7-8). Subjective well-being should be one criterion for development related to consumer policy, and research could also help in this work. The need for this type of knowledge has been expressed both in Finland and elsewhere in Europe (Hämäläinen, 2006; Quality of Life in Europe, 2004).

The aim of the present study was to investigate consumers' subjective views and experiences of well-being. The focus was on the living conditions that are associated with everyday life circumstances. I was interested in whether consumers are able to evaluate what commodities and activities are needed for their personal well-being. I was also interested in whether there is any relationship between commodities (goods and services) and activities (e.g. watching television) when producing well-being.

The structure of the paper is as follows. The relevant previous research in the area of well-being is next presented, after which the methodology utilised with the empirical data is introduced. The results are then presented and discussed.

2. Previous research

Erik Allardt, a famous Finnish sociologist and researcher in the area of well-being, defined well-being as the satisfaction of basic needs that could be interpreted by individuals themselves (Allardt, 1993). Allardt stated that well-being consists of satisfaction of the following needs: material and non-personal needs (having), needs connected to human relations and identity (loving) and needs related to integration in society and living in unison with nature (being). Allardt argued that in order to realise comprehensive view of well-being, objective and subjective living conditions should be investigated together. (Allardt, 1976.) The Finnish tradition in well-being research often leans on Allardt's ideas. Recent studies

suggest that well-being consists of three parts: material well-being, health and social relations (e.g. Hirvonen et al., 2003; Siltaniemi et al., 2007, 37-38).

Ruut Veenhoven (2000) developed a fourfold matrix - four qualities of life - that can be utilised as a good basis for investigating well-being in the everyday life of consumers. The matrix takes account of environmental circumstances and personal characteristics with life opportunities and reality. Environmental circumstances relate to living conditions and cultural values. Personal characteristics are based on the human psychophysical condition, capability, values and attitudes. In the model, subjective well-being is based on what individuals consider valuable and important in their lives. Life opportunities create the framework and opportunity for an individual's life, but do not necessarily transfer to real life: certain factors may cause real life to be worse than the life circumstances let us objectively suppose, or vice versa.

The factors influencing people's well-being have been sought in macro- and micro-environments. At the macro-level, the well-being of the citizens and society is reported in various statistics and registers (see e.g. Sauli & Simpura 2002, 2005), for instance gross domestic product (GDP), employment, income level, poverty, private consumption and sickness. This data is easy to acquire and it facilitates a comparison between countries. In the micro-environment, factors such as social relations, housing circumstances and regional services (e.g. stores, public transport, sports facilities) have been demonstrated to influence people's perceptions of their well-being. Many specialised surveys concerning health, experiences of safety, education, labour, working conditions, affluence and consumption have shed some light on the dimensions of well-being. To summarise, the problem is not the lack of data in this area but the interpretation and creation of the general view.

Objectively measurable subsistence is a necessary prerequisite for well-being. It facilitates an international comparison, but the picture of well-being is described in average terms and an unbalanced way. For instance, GDP is a common indicator of material well-being. It reveals a high level of well-being in Finland: between the years from 1995 to 2006 the GDP in Finland increased on average by four percent per year, and according the preliminary data for 2006 the GDP was almost 32 000 euros per capita at current prices (Statistics Finland, 2007). The connection between economic growth and people's everyday life is based on the assumption that growth in the national economy will increase well-being equally for everyone. This has not happened: for instance, Easterlin (1995, 37-38, 40) demonstrated that economic growth has been faster than the improvement in the well-being of citizens. Well-being includes many aspects that are not based on the economic affluence in society. However, Lindholm (2001), for instance, has suggested that financial well-being could strongly determine all the dimensions of well-being, because a low level of subsistence may narrow the scope of activities, diminish social relations, cause health problems and finally lower the meaningfulness of life. Even though economic indicators describe citizens' living conditions, it is impossible to quantify a precise figure to their well-being. Therefore, it is challenging to follow the development of well-being.

Studies measuring well-being, life satisfaction and happiness have revealed that most people feel well, satisfied and happy (e.g. Hirvonen et al., 2003; Siltaniemi et al., 2007; Boelhower, 1999; Diener et al., 1999). In Europe, well-being has been investigated in the first European Quality of Life Survey (Quality of Life in Europe, 2004) and the recent (2006-07) European

Social Survey (www.europeansocialsurvey.org). Both surveys have been very extensive, also examining other questions in addition to subjective well-being. The advantage of these surveys has been their comparison of well-being within and between nations.

3. Methodology

In order to find something new in consumers' subjective well-being, qualitative data were collected. The method utilised was the focus group discussion, where the participants were motivated to discuss the contents of their everyday well-being. The concept of well-being was avoided in the discussions because of its many and ambiguous definitions. Well-being was instead operationalised as 'satisfaction with everyday life' and 'fluency of everyday life'. The discussions were divided into three parts: 1) consumer satisfaction with the choices concerning time use and consumption, 2) consumer satisfaction with the functionality of the market (private, public and third sectors) and 3) consumer satisfaction with the interaction between the consumer and market. This paper focuses on the first theme.

The participants in the focus group discussions were recruited from the Consumer Panel maintained by the National Consumer Research Centre (NCRC). The Consumer Panel is a register consisting of approximately 1000 members over 18 years old from all around Finland. The members of the panel are ordinary people who have voluntarily joined. In return, the panel members receive a copy of the magazine *Consumer*. Because of their voluntary participation the Panel members are a select group: they are more interested than the average citizen in consumer questions. Furthermore, they are relatively highly educated and the majority of them live in towns in Southern Finland.

The panel register is divided into five regions, of which the two regions with the largest number of panel members, namely Helsinki and Tampere, were selected for this study. In April 2007, e-mails were sent to 87 panel members in the Helsinki region and 34 members in Tampere. As the timing, i.e. the beginning of May 2007, was suitable and the theme was interesting, it was relatively easy to attract participants for the discussions. The aim was to attract eight participants to four separate discussions. Panel members are committed to participating in the studies and development projects of the NCRC. The discussions in Helsinki were arranged in the meeting room of the NCRC and in Tampere in a hotel meeting room.

The total number of the participants in the study was 28, 19 of whom were women and nine men. The participants were unknown to each other. Twenty participants in three groups discussed in Helsinki, and eight in one group in Tampere. The number of participants in the groups was five, seven and eight in Helsinki and eight in Tampere. The aim was to form groups of participants in various life phases so that the discussions might be more multifaceted. The participants were mainly middle-aged: their age varied between 28 and 72 years, the average being 52. The participants were highly educated, half of them having graduated from university, and they were mainly officials. The households of the participants were small, 75 percent of them living alone or with a spouse.

Each meeting began by completing a short questionnaire that oriented the participants to the theme of the discussion. The questionnaire asked the participants what they considered as the most important resources concerning their life satisfaction.

Discussions were preceded by a brief presentation of the study and a general overview of the discussion topic. I emphasised that was interested in the personal opinions of the participants. The discussions were arranged after the working day, starting at five p.m. Therefore, the meetings were opened with refreshments and small talk, which proved a good way to 'break the ice'. Each discussion lasted two hours, from five to seven p.m. It was straightforward to stimulate discussion among the participants, and they could have talked for even more than two hours, but this was considered a reasonable limit. A research assistant recorded each discussion.

The framework of the discussions was planned beforehand but not strictly followed, being utilised only if the discussions were straying from the theme or if there were silent moments. I avoided leading the discussions to any great extent but allowed the participants talk freely with each other. In this way, I expected to acquire some new information concerning well-being.

The recorded discussions were later transcribed. After transcription the text was read several times to searching for the themes. In this phase, the framework prepared for the discussions was not utilized but new themes were sought. The aim was to identify the recurring issues in the participants' discussions as well as the surprising ones. The recurring themes will be analysed more deeply because they are most relevant to this study.

4. Results

The meetings began with the participants completing a short questionnaire that oriented them towards the theme of the discussion. The questionnaire asked what they considered as the most important resources concerning their life satisfaction. There was little variation in the answers: the participants considered the most important resources to be good health, human and family relations, and the economy. They were also asked how satisfied they were with their living circumstances. Of the alternatives in the questionnaire, the participants were most satisfied with their apartment and least satisfied with the opportunity to influence society as a citizen. They also considered the location and consumer electronics of the apartment important, and the opportunity to have an influence as a citizen of less importance.

Discussions began by considering everyday life, which makes up the majority of each person's life. Life is seen as an entity composed of work, domestic chores and free time. Each part has to work and be in balance because they influence each other. Everyday satisfaction is possible only if a person can be satisfied with all the arenas and enjoy activities in them. A typical day was characterised as a day full us regularities, uniformity, routines, commitments and institutional time schedules (e.g. work, day care). Despite its boredom, ordinary everyday life produces a sense of safety. Feeling safe is a relevant element in everyday satisfaction. The participants did not wish for any extreme experiences in their everyday life. However, in searching for variety, routines need to be varied in a safe way, such as doing activities in another order or changing daily routes. Routines were seen as hazardous because they could

'suffocate' a person, making him or her want to get rid of everything. One's time therefore has to be arranged, allowing some time to do whatever one wants without any commitments or time schedules. The participants discussed how in order to maintain one's resources it is important to rest now and then, although lying on a sofa was deemed an unfavourable way to spend time.

The home, one's own place, is needed for everyday life. The home was considered the central place to feel everyday satisfaction. Autonomy at home is illustrated by wearing different clothes from those at work ('like peeling the work from the skin') or wearing old clothes. Being satisfied at home means that a person does not have to have any roles and can be as she or he wants to. Home was seen as an important place in many ways: for instance, working far away from home is dull because a person is not able to do things that can be done at home.

Everyday life at home was divided into domestic chores and free time. The domestic work – making meals, cleaning, laundry, shopping, paying bills, repairing, and gardening – is something obligatory that has to be carried out by people themselves. It can produce satisfaction if there is no hurry and it can be done voluntarily. When living alone, it was considered easy to escape domestic work. The participants talked about the standard of domestic work: they could define this standard by themselves and it produced their satisfaction. No outsider could decide, for instance, how often one must to clean the apartment.

In discussions, free time was clearly separated from domestic work and it was seen as a counterbalance to work, not to domestic work. Free time is free from all work. The participants spent free time at home, for instance, by watching television, being occupied with a computer or reading. A computer was an item that divided opinions: some of the participants thought that they could not live without a computer, whereas others considered a computer as only belonging to work. A computer was mentioned as one of the goods that increase everyday satisfaction.

Even though the participants were not asked about work, they raised this topic in the discussions. Because most of them worked full-time, work had a central role in their everyday lives. Work considerably influences everyday life because it takes up a great deal of the day. Work sets the time schedule for the day and the week. In retirement, all the weekdays are similar. Therefore, it was understood as important that in retirement people have to find other activities to structure the day and week. The retired participants mentioned that people have to be prepared for retirement; they must find a meaning for each day. Some of the participants enjoyed their work and they often voluntarily worked overtime, even at home. For them the community in the working place is important. In their work they appreciated that they could experience success and the relevance of their work. For the other participants, work was physically or mentally demanding, and therefore they saw that it ruled their life in a negative way. As a positive feature in work, they mentioned that time passes quickly. It would be interesting to know what this actually means: do we want to be free from work as soon as possible? Or is this only the talk of effectiveness that is admired in our society? The most satisfied persons appeared to be those who could separate work from home and free time.

People experience satisfaction in their everyday lives if they are aware of its meaning. This meaning usually comes from conducting activities. Maybe the background is in Finland's history as an agricultural society, but the participants told that they feel satisfaction when they have completed something. Satisfaction also comes from the results of the activity, like a clean house. After completing one task, one may look forward to further tasks or feel satisfied with having nothing more to do. This is an interesting finding: is our life just about the completion of activities? As at work, the participants also sought to experience success at home.

People may reveal something interesting if everyday life is approached from the opposite direction. The participants told that the reverse of everyday life offers an opportunity to do something different that makes a person delighted and happy, and does not involve routines, commitments or time schedules. The participants wanted to spend most or all of their holiday time away from home because they saw this as the only way to escape domestic work, i.e. everyday life. 'The best holiday is without everyday routines', as one participant said. Interestingly enough, dishwashing and cleaning in a summer cottage under primitive circumstances were not seen as domestic work: even though they are obligatory, the surroundings are different and there is no rush. A holiday can only be spent at home if a person is strong enough to ignore domestic work.

The environment does not support the separation of weekdays and weekends, because many service providers offer their services every day, even on Sundays. Therefore, the distinction between a holy day and a weekday blurs. Furthermore, the cultural rituals at home have almost disappeared: in earlier times, Sunday began on Saturday evening after cleaning the house and having a sauna.

Even though they were not asked about it separately, the participants discussed the importance of health to their everyday satisfaction. Health is often taken for granted, but has also been emphasised in many well-being studies (e.g. Hirvonen et al., 2003; Siltaniemi et al., 2007, 37-38; Torvi & Kiljunen, 2005, 59; Quality of Life in Europe, 2004; Veenhoven, 2000). Health seemed to be the basis for every activity and influences every other part of life: work, domestic chores and hobbies. Physical and mental health was considered as important, because only healthy individuals are able to perform activities.

The importance of other people was emphasised in every discussion. The social environment was seen as divided into many concentric circles. First comes one's own family, meaning those persons that one lives together with. The second circle consists of the 'old family', i.e. parents and siblings. In the third circle are close relatives, friends and acquaintances, and in the fourth and outer circle are colleagues at work. People in each circle have various tasks and roles in social life. The influence of social relations on everyday satisfaction was discussed a great deal. When living in a family, it was considered important to share the domestic chores. Those living alone talked more about the significance of people outside the home. The participants told that everyone needs someone to talk to and spend time together with. The importance of having a variety of friends was discussed: different friends are needed for different occasions.

The participants admitted that financial security is important in everyday satisfaction because it brings opportunities to life. Money does not always make a person happy but it makes life less complicated. Even though the economy was considered important, the participants saw that money has to be spent wisely. The discussions took very critical view towards shopping and acquiring goods. The background to this view lies in the background of the participants: because they belong to the consumer panel, they are not typical consumers but highly educated and very aware of consumer issues. Most of the participants in the discussions were middle-aged and wealthy people who had probably already acquired all the necessary goods. The participants admitted that even though they wanted new things all the time, they were satisfied with their present situation. The participants said that shopping in shopping centres was unsatisfactory and a waste of time. They stated that people compare their own living circumstances with those of their neighbours. Therefore, they are never satisfied but they want more and more all the time. The participants suggested that much dissatisfaction arises when people are unable to stop wanting more. They see only what they do not have, not what they already do have. We can be dissatisfied with life because our basic needs are fully satisfied. Life is too easy: we do not have to struggle for bread or security. The participants were moralistic and considered that we should be ashamed with this kind of dissatisfaction: we should be satisfied and happy to have been born in a wealthy part of the world.

The participants revealed that to achieve satisfaction it was relevant to experience being subjects in their own lives: to have autonomy concerning their life, to influence issues in the environment, and to interact with other people and take them into account. The news around affects the experience of satisfaction. For instance, climate change or rises in interest rates concern the participants because they understand that changes in the macro-environment influence their lives.

5. Discussion

In Finland and the developed Western countries the basic needs of consumers are for the most part fully satisfied and there are enormous numbers of alternatives to satisfy needs. The increase in alternatives has followed general economic growth, the expansion of commodity supply and consumers' higher standards of living.

The aim this study was to investigate consumers' subjective views and experiences of well-being. Like previous studies, it was revealed that the dimensions of everyday well-being consist of health, social relationships and economic subsistence. Each dimension is important, and they mutually interact. In practice, everyday well-being seems to consist of ordinary activities, as well as balance between time and effort spent in work, domestic chores and free time.

The completion of activities is important in everyday satisfaction. Many everyday activities have no economic value but they are still valuable to consumers, and produce well-being for them. In order to conduct activities, an individual has to be healthy. The study participants considered that people are responsible for their own everyday satisfaction: it is not transferable to other actors in society.

As far as the theme of the study and its experimental nature is concerned, the qualitative approach proved to be an excellent choice. Although the data were not representative, this was the best way to explore well-being experimentally. This qualitative approach enabled the meaning of well-being in the everyday life of consumers to be explored. Because no preliminary information was available concerning well-being in the everyday life of consumers, it was useful to examine the theme by allowing the participants to discuss it freely. Discussion in groups rather than individual interviews formed the main source of data. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) proposed that the quality of focus group data is influenced by the behaviour of the participants in the group, i.e. how openly they discuss their ideas, views or opinions.

Despite its limitations, the data offered abundant new information concerning well-being in practice. Although the participants in the focus group discussions were selected, the results of the analysis provided usable tools for a larger quantitative study.

It is particularly important to develop new approaches to well-being research because well-being has been investigated a great deal but not comprehensively. Therefore, the research area of well-being should be developed and strengthened. The statistics produce aggregate, national-level data but data on the individual level is needed. The results of this study will be useful for various parties: scientific communities, public institutions, consumer authorities, commercial companies and ordinary people. The study will benefit political and economic public institutions by providing new information about the consumers' experiences of well-being. Consumer authorities need new perspectives concerning' reactions to the activities in the private and public sector. In addition to this, companies will benefit from understanding consumer well-being. The research project will offer solutions for various situations related to time and money in the everyday life of ordinary people.

One of the objectives of consumer policy in the EU is to enhance consumer welfare, which is the core of the functional markets (Commission of the European Communities, 2007, 5). Consumer policy mainly deals with market commodities and their distribution, as well as environmental issues linked to consumption. This whole entity produces well-being among consumers. Therefore, the starting point in consumer policy should be the everyday life of consumers: the need for better understanding related to these activities and the use of commodities that produce well-being among consumers is evident. It is impossible for consumers to be rational - as policy makers assume - in every situation, but they may appreciate other aspects in their life.

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Consumer Ombudsman Session

Cross border services, digitalisation and online services

- Buying digital content online

We will present the highlights in the ongoing case against iTunes, and especially address questions related to the use of DRM and unbalanced standard contracts. Furthermore, we will share our thoughts about what consumer problems DRM can lead to, both as regards music and other digital services

- Payments by electronic media and consumers

We will discuss the responsibility for the companies responsible for the system - with special emphasis on system security and the consumers own risk and on the use of overdraft fees

- EU consumer law at a crossroads: new rules on marketing practices, applicable law and the country of origin principle

We will discuss the consequences of the framework of EU consumer law as regards the protection of consumer rights in cross-border online transactions

- Vulnerable consumers in the digital environment

We will discuss questions related to children and young consumer, with emphasis on mobile services, and the fact that consumers often have to make very rapid decisions, which is the case with for example loans by SMS.