

A study of how sustainable lifestyles are lived and maintained



En undersøgelse af hvordan bæredygtige livsstile leves og opretholdes

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Resumé

Dette speciale udspringer af en personlig og akademisk interesse i, hvordan man lever og forbruger bæredygtigt. Den forståelse af et bæredygtigt forbrug, der anlægges i dette speciale, lægger vægt på, at et bæredygtigt forbrug også er et reduceret forbrug, hvilket kan synes i strid med eksisterende normer i vestlige forbrugersamfund. Derfor tages der udgangspunkt i personer for hvem det lykkes at leve bæredygtige livsstile med mindre forbrug og udforskes, hvordan sådanne livsstile opretholdes.

Undersøgelsesmetoden er eksplorativ og kvalitativ, og dataindsamlingen foregår igennem kvalitative interviews med seks informanter, der frivilligt har reduceret deres forbrug for at leve simple og mere bæredygtigt. Den valgte teoretiske ramme bærer præg af en dialektisk tilgang, der fokuserer på spillet mellem individuelle og sociale kræfter, og bruger Processual Theory of Identity og Transtheoretical Model of Behaviour Change til at forstå ændringen i forbrug som en proces og Self-Determination Theory og Social Identity Theory til at forstå de processer, der spiller ind på opretholdelsen af ændringen i forbrugslivsstil.

Baseret på undersøgelsens resultater kan det konkluderes, at det at leve en bæredygtig livsstil er komplekst, og at bæredygtige livsstile sammensættes af en række forskellige praksisser fra de trivielle til de mere radikale. Fleksibilitet og 'fredning' af nogle forbrugsområder kan muliggøre opretholdelsen af bæredygtige livsstile og gøre det lettere at indgå i fællesskaber, men synes også at begrænse graden af bæredygtighed. Følgende faktorer har betydning for opretholdelse af bæredygtige livsstile: en internt motiveret oplevelse af at gøre det rigtige og leve i overensstemmelse med egne værdier, en eksternt motiveret oplevelse af at få mere økonomisk og tidsmæssig frihed gennem reduktion af forbrug, udgifter og arbejdstimer, kompleksiteten i at træffe bæredygtige valg, tilhørsforhold og gruppemedlemskab samt livsfase og livsstilens varighed.

Resultaterne indikerer, at nogle kæmper mere med at opretholde deres livsstil end andre, og det blev argumenteret for, at dette kan være influeret af i hvilken grad behov for kompetence, samhørighed og autonomi understøttes. Derudover kan det konkluderes, at opretholdelsen af bæredygtige livsstile indebærer en risiko for social marginalisering, hvilket udgør en udfordring. Der ses en tendens til, at

des mere informanterne lever i overensstemmelse med egne værdier, des mindre påvirkes de af eksternt pres. Et reduceret forbrug kan medføre tab af social anerkendelse og kræver en evne til at håndtere socialt pres enten gennem separation fra referencegrupper eller gennem fleksibilitet. Separation kan både opfattes som fremmende eller hæmmende, men ved negativ separation fra referencegrupper ses det, at ydre motivation og en støttende partner er vigtige faktorer i opretholdelsen af en bæredygtig livsstil. Resultaterne indikerede, at tilhørsforhold til en referencegruppe kan være vigtigere, når livsstilen er eksternt motiveret, og at vigtigheden af at tilhøre en gruppe kan være påvirket af livsstilens varighed.

Opretholdelsen af bæredygtige livsstile indebærer ikke nødvendigvis en risiko for at falde tilbage til tidligere, mere forbrugsintensive måder at leve på, men dette synes at være påvirket af, hvor længe man har levet med bæredygtigt forbrug. Der kan altså spores en tendens til, at risikoen for tilbagefald mindskes med årene og erstattes med en stræben efter yderligere udvikling af livsstilen og yderligere reduktion af forbruget. Forbrugsomstillingen har tilsyneladende ikke et naturligt slutpunkt, men kan rettere forstås som en kontinuerlig, gradvis udvikling.

Endelig foreslås det, at separation og indre motivation synes at føre til den mest bæredygtige livsstil i form af det mindste forbrug, men at indre motivation, tilhørsforhold til en gruppe og fælles værdier med en støttende partner kan føre til det bedste resultat for bæredygtighed, hvis det medfører en positiv påvirkning af omgivelserne i retning af mere bæredygtige livsstile.

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1. Introduction

The Earth cannot sustain the current levels of excessive consumption seen mainly in the developed countries (Alexander 2012: 1). We are consuming and using (up) finite resources at an accelerated pace while negatively impacting the environment in the process, to such a degree that our levels of consumption have become unsustainable. In fact, the so-called ‘*ecological footprint method*’¹ illustrates that if we all had an American lifestyle, we would need more than five planets to support us (Stockholm Environment Institute 2009: 2). We have one. In order to achieve sustainable consumption, we need to consume differently, but also to consume *less*, which, however, few governments or individuals are ready to accept (Alexander & Ussher 2012). This is also reflected in research according to a 2009 report from Stockholm Environment Institute, which points out: “*there is insufficient research aimed at reducing consumer demand. There isn’t the acknowledgment needed to recognise that in order to reduce the impact of our lifestyles we must consume less.*” (UNEP 2009: 33). ‘Growth is good’ appears to be the battle cry in many affluent countries, as economists and politicians stress the need for citizens to consume to ‘keep the wheels turning’ – especially in a time of financial crisis (Thøgersen 2005: 149). However, we are heading towards an environmental crash if consumption levels continue at the current pace and we do not succeed in changing and reducing our consumption. This means that a transition towards more simple and sustainable lifestyles is necessary.

Ultimately, the consequences of living beyond the means of our planet’s eco systems and resources will come to affect everyone, which means that achieving and maintaining sustainable consumption is an individual as well as a societal problem. The three main groups that influence consumption - government, business and consumers - will all have to consume differently and less in order to achieve consumption levels that can be sustained by the available resources on Earth.

It is necessary to achieve and maintain behavioural change for sustainable consumption, but it is not straightforward (Jackson 2005a). Unfortunately, much speaks against wanting and consuming less in an era in which more consumption and more growth is often equated with more happiness, more welfare. Increasingly, consumption has become about more than meeting basic needs, rather, we

¹ The ecological footprint method is a tool used to assess the environmental impact of consumption. The size of an ecological footprint corresponds to the land areas used for consumption, thus the ecological footprint of an individual depends on his or her consumption level and pattern (Høyer & Holden 2003: 334)

consume in order to fulfil a range of needs, to construct and communicate our identities, to provide ourselves with comfort or reward, to relax, to ‘keep up with the Joneses’ and to live up to our civic responsibility. Nevertheless, as Jackson (2005a) points out, individuals do change their behaviour. There are people who challenge the predominance and excess of consumer society and succeed in not only achieving reduced consumption levels, but also maintaining such simple and sustainable lifestyles. Academic research has typically aimed at segmenting such people and focused on the early stages of consumer transition. Yet, not much research has followed people along their transition to explore how they maintain their sustainable lifestyle and keep up the effort of reducing consumption in an era of ‘more’ in which it may be easier to “*acquiesce to the allures of convenience*” (Banbury et al 2012). In other words, explored how sustainable lifestyles become sustainable. The necessity and potential difficulty of maintained behavioural change for sustainability make those who do succeed interesting subjects of study.

These considerations lead me to pose the following question:

1.1 Problem statement

How are sustainable lifestyles with reduced consumption lived and maintained?

1.1.1 Research questions

The following research questions will be used to guide the research process:

- How can sustainable lifestyles be understood?
- Which factors influence the maintenance of sustainable lifestyles?
- To which extent do group influences play a part in maintenance?
- How do influencing factors lead to sustainable outcomes?

1.2 Delimitations and reservations

This is a small-scale study in which knowledge is produced through the collection, analysis, and discussion of consumer narratives. It relates to a single country and region. The sampling is purposive and a particular group of people is recruited, namely persons who have voluntarily chosen to reduce their consumption levels to live a sustainable lifestyle. These persons are different

from the general population as they have reduced their consumption levels and managed to maintain a less consumption-intensive lifestyle. With a small sample of six interviews, the findings cannot be considered representative and cannot be generalised to the general population. Furthermore, they cannot provide exhaustive answers to how sustainable lifestyles are lived and maintained. However, they may indicate tendencies and broaden the understanding of people who are consuming less as well as provide ideas for larger-scale research projects. It should be noted that this thesis does not go into an aspect such as infrastructure, which is relevant, but lies outside the focus of this thesis. The research objective is to gain a deeper understanding of how sustainable lifestyles of consuming less are lived and maintained.

1.3 Structure of thesis

In order to explore and seek to answer the problem statement, the literature on sustainable consumption and the consumer transition towards sustainable consumption will be reviewed in chapter 2. On the basis of the literature review, a theoretical framework will be presented in chapter 3. Then, chapter 4 will present methodological and philosophical considerations as well as the research design. Chapter 5 will present the findings of the study and in chapter 6 the findings will be analysed and discussed. Finally, a conclusion will be reached and perspectives for future research presented along with personal and academic reflections.

2. Literature review

2.1 The concept of sustainable consumption

The notion of sustainable consumption is linked to the idea of sustainable development, which can be defined as “(...) *development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*” (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987: 43). Sustainable consumption can be defined in a similar way as “*an obligation to conduct ourselves so that we leave to the future the option or capacity to be as well off as we are*” (Solow 1991: 181). That is, sustainable consumption is about equity and a moral obligation to future generations. At the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, the issue of sustainable consumption was put on the political agenda in the conference’s policy blueprint with a chapter on “*Changing Consumption Patterns*”, which stressed the necessity of government, business and civil society to work towards sustainable consumption patterns (Holt 2012: 236). This is necessary because especially affluent, industrialised countries are consuming at levels that are ecologically unsustainable. The consumption of e.g. fossil fuels is problematic as they are non-renewable and the burning of fossil fuels emits CO₂, a greenhouse gas connected to global warming. Furthermore, the ecological footprint method shows that on a global scale we are using resources that require 2.8 ha of land per person when in fact only 2 ha of land per person are available to us (Peattie 2009: 260-261). In other words, sustainable consumption has to do with changing consumption patterns, especially in the affluent countries, to consuming *differently* and consuming *less*.

2.1.1 Weak and strong sustainable consumption

Sustainability is generally considered a vague concept (Solow 1991: 1002), and it is unclear exactly what sustainable consumption is and what needs to be done to achieve it. The traditional or ‘*weak sustainable consumption approach*’ (Lorek & Fuchs 2011) relies on technical solutions, eco-efficiency and consumption of green and ethical products, i.e. market-based solutions to the challenges of sustainable consumption. In contrast, the alternative or ‘*strong sustainable consumption approach*’ (ibid.) calls for a more radical change with focus on limits to growth and consumption and emphasises the need to consume *less*. The traditional approach could be critiqued for maintaining the status quo and not addressing the roots of the problem, i.e. consumption levels. However, it can be considered the more politically feasible approach since an approach that

questions economic growth goes against the goals of most governments that see economic growth as a sign of welfare, which is reflected in the emphasis on GDP.

The point of origin of this thesis is the strong sustainable approach and the belief that changes in consumption through e.g. eco-efficiency and environmentally friendly products are important, yet do not sufficiently address the severity of the ecological crisis. Instead, reducing consumption levels is seen as a crucial part of sustainable consumption. This is also connected to the question of whether more consumption truly leads to more happiness or whether consuming less can actually lead to a better quality of life and well-being as well as more sustainable consumption levels (Jackson 2005b).

2.1.2 Power and responsibility

Three main groups can be said to influence consumption: consumers, business and government. An important and central discussion in the field of sustainable consumption deals with the question of power and responsibility. The discussion revolves around who has the power and the (main) responsibility to change consumption patterns. Three main approaches can be found in the literature on sustainable consumption: the '*voluntarist approach*', the '*determinist approach*' and the '*dialectical approach*' (Cherrier 2012).

The voluntarist approach is based on the assumption that consumers are rational, autonomous, utility-maximising choice- and decision-makers and lies at the root of rational choice theories. The voluntarist approach emphasises strategies that focus on information and awareness following the assumption that the rational consumer will do the right thing and consume responsibly if provided with the right and adequate information. This approach sees unsustainable consumption as a form of 'market failure' that can be rectified through e.g. information to the consumer and includes research that points to consumption as a new political arena in which the consumer-citizen can exercise his or her free choice through consumption as a form of voting (e.g. Shaw, Newholm and Dickinson 2006).

The determinist approach, on the other hand, questions both the idea of the rational consumer and the degree of power, and thus responsibility, the consumer has to change his or her consumption patterns and e.g. reduce consumption. Consumers are viewed as 'locked-in' to certain behaviours because of structural forces that they have little power to influence (Barnett et al 2011). This

approach focuses on infrastructure and systems of provisioning (Shove 2003) and the embeddedness of consumption in social practices and structures as a determinant of consumption and consumption levels. An example of such infrastructure is housing, as the design of a house and the type of housing to a great extent determines energy consumption (Høyer & Holden 2003). The determinist approach would point out that the voluntarists overlook factors such as asymmetrical information, legislation and infrastructure and that making the individual responsible for consumption can be seen as a strategy of 'blaming the victim'.

Finally, the dialectical approach "*highlights the dynamic interplay between the individual and structural forces*" (Cherrier 2012: 249). An example of this approach can be found in Thøgersen (2005) who focuses on how public policy may empower consumers by minimising both internal and external constraints of the individual with regards to moving towards sustainable consumption. This approach seeks to breach the gap between the voluntarist approach and the determinist approach, which are both considered somewhat reductionist.

These three approaches differ in how they relate to the power and responsibility of the three groups of consumers, government and business respectively to change consumption patterns and thus to the debate of agency versus structure². The voluntarist approach places a great deal of power and responsibility with the consumer provided that the consumer is made aware of sustainable consumption issues and has access to information allowing him or her to make an informed consumption choice. The determinist approach, on the other hand, argues that the consumer has little power to influence the structural and sociological forces that shape consumption and therefore has little responsibility to change consumption patterns and instead sees policy-makers and business as empowered and responsible. Following the dialectical approach, both elements of agency and structure are important. The consumer has a degree of freedom to make consumption choices and changes, but he or she is also affected by structural and social forces. Within this approach, power and responsibility for consumption lie with all three groups, consumers, government and business. It could be argued that the dialectical approach offers the most valuable perspective as it seeks to include and acknowledge both structural and individual forces and avoid determinism and reductionism, which is helpful, especially when researching consumer experience in which it is

² The agency-structure debate refers to a key debate within sociology, which revolves around whether we, as humans, are free to act or whether our behaviour is determined by structural forces. (Layder 2006)

important to keep an open and explorative mind without reducing the consumer to either absolute freedom or absolute determinism.

2.1.3 Sustainable consumption in practice

Private consumption forms a significant part of the environmental impact of a nation and household consumption makes up as much as 30-40 % of overall consumption (Grunert 1993 in Peattie 2001) which makes consumers an important group of actors for study. Consumers have some power over their share of resource use and emission of pollutants (Thøgersen 2005), and it could also be argued that consumers' consumption and non-consumption decisions can send an important signal to government and business, which leaves consumers with a degree of power over and responsibility for their private consumption.

Spangenberg & Lorek (2002) divide household resource consumption into ten categories or 'consumption clusters': clothing, education/training, food, health care, housing, hygiene, laundry and cleaning, recreation, social life, and transport. These clusters are considered to be both environmentally relevant and under "*significant influence*" of consumers (ibid.: 134). Spangenberg & Lorek point out that three of the clusters, education/training, health care and social life, are primarily matters of state consumption (at least in Europe). Of the remaining seven, three make out approximately 70 % of material extraction and energy consumption: housing and construction, food and nutrition, and mobility and transport. The remaining four, clothing, hygiene, cleaning and recreation, are still relevant, however, they account for less than 5 % of aggregate resource consumption (ibid. 135). Below, six of the clusters will be briefly reviewed with regards to what can be done within these clusters to make consumption more sustainable. This review is by no means exhaustive, but it represents some of the sustainable practices that can be adopted in working towards sustainable consumption.

First, it should be noted that sustainable consumption involves all stages of the consumption process: planning, purchasing, using, maintaining and disposing and that strategies of reducing, reusing and recycling are relevant to all clusters.

2.1.3.1 Food and nutrition

One of the most sustainable behaviours within this cluster is to eat less meat (Bonini & Oppenheim 2008: 58-59) as the production of especially beef is a significant contributor to the release of greenhouse gases. Buying more organic products could be a greener food consumption practice as organic production refers to farming without the use of artificial chemical fertilisers and pesticides and providing animals with natural living conditions (Seyfang 2009: 84). Reducing ‘food miles’, which refers to “*the distance food travels between being produced and being consumed*” (ibid.: 86), is another important aspect. Stopping food waste is also an important practice in this cluster. It is estimated that on average each Danish citizen living in a single-family house throws away 42 kilos of perfectly good food every year, which represents a great resource waste (Danish Environmental Protection Agency 2012: 11). According to a UN report, global food waste corresponds to 1.3 billion tonnes with a value of 750 billion dollars a year. This makes food wastage the world’s third largest contributor to CO₂-emissions (FAO 2013: 6).

2.1.3.2 Transport and mobility

Within this cluster, measures to achieve more sustainable consumption patterns would be to reduce airplane and car transportation and opt for other modes of transportation such as bus, train, bicycling, and walking. Two types of environmental impact are caused by transport modes: influence on (global) climate change due to release of greenhouse gases and release of (local) air pollutants that can cause damage to humans and environment (Verbecke 2009: 33). Airplane transportation is the worst mode of transport due to its high level of emissions, yet, it has become an increasingly common, convenient, and cheap mode of transportation and within a generation it has become normal to travel internationally and mostly by airplane (ibid.: 22). Time is an important factor as we have come to see the travel to our destination as a waste of time instead of an experience in itself (ibid.: 28). Transportation by car is the second worst option while bus and train are the most environmentally friendly options (ibid.: 33-34).

2.1.3.3 Housing

Housing is a great determinant of private resource consumption. Sustainable consumption behaviour within this cluster could involve living in dense and concentrated housing such as multifamily houses or apartments, which require less energy for heating, having energy-efficient white goods and saving on water and energy use by e.g. taking shorter showers and avoiding the use

of standby electricity. Distance is also an important factor since living in an urban neighbourhood close to work, institutions and shops would require less mobility (Høyer & Holden 2003: 346)

2.1.3.4 Clothing

For some, shopping is a recreational activity and clothes are seen as a means of communication about oneself. The fashion industry encourages changing (some of) one's wardrobe every season and the many changing trends could be seen to encourage a lot of waste because items easily become 'so last season'. Here, sustainable consumption behaviour could be to buy less items of clothing, buy things of good and lasting quality and buy second-hand instead of new items (this goes of course for many elements of shopping such as furniture and toys). The textile industry is a significant polluter and e.g. the production of cotton involves high levels of pesticides and water use. For this reason, buying organic cotton products would also be a sustainable practice.

2.1.3.5 Cleaning and hygiene

We have social norms relating to practices of cleaning and hygiene such as showering and laundering, and these are not often questioned. Shove (2003) studies practices of showering and laundering and how they relate to feelings of comfort, cleanliness and convenience. Cleaning and hygiene has come to be connected to our feelings, and many feel that they have to shower once a day to feel clean. Sustainable consumption within this cluster could be to e.g. take fewer and shorter showers using water-efficient showerheads or flow regulators, wash clothes at lower temperatures, line-dry instead of using a tumble drier, and collect and reuse water.

2.1.4 Sustainable lifestyles

Sustainable lifestyles are patterns of action and consumption, used by people to affiliate and differentiate themselves from others, which: meet basic needs, provide a better quality of life, minimise the use of natural resources and emissions of waste and pollutants over the lifecycle, and do not jeopardise the needs of future generations (Mont 2007 in Stockholm Environment Institute 2009: 1)

The concept of '*lifestyle*' refers to the style, way or mode of living of an individual or group of individuals. Sustainable lifestyles are made up of various social practices or segments that together form patterns of action and consumption, and these practices may be divided into '*green consumption practices*' and '*anti-consumption practices*'. An example of a green consumption

practice would be to buy a pair of organic jeans whereas an anti-consumption practice would be to use an old pair of jeans for longer, mend broken ones, or buy or lend second-hand jeans, i.e. anti-consumption entails practices of rejecting, reducing, reusing and recycling (Black & Cherrier 2010). In other words, green consumption refers to the consumption of environmentally friendly products and anti-consumption, on the other hand, “*literally means against consumption*” (Lee et al 2009) and can imply both a general reduction in consumption and the reduction or rejection of specific products or brands (Iyer & Muncy 2009: 160). Anti-consumption practices are in line with the strong sustainable approach, which holds that reductions in overall consumption levels are necessary to ensure ecological sustainability. It is important to note that both green consumption practices and anti-consumption practices can form part of a sustainable lifestyle, and that the line between them may sometimes be blurred. However, anti-consumption practices and the reduction of consumer demand are key aspects in achieving sustainable consumption (Jackson 2005b, Peattie & Peattie 2009, Stockholm Environment Institute 2009). Employing anti-consumption practices can be considered a more radical lifestyle change than substitution of consumption goods, as “*Acts, practices or lifestyles of anti-consumption goes against prevailing norms and, as such, help us to understand the barriers, conflicts, tensions, and struggles to reject or avoid consumption.*” (Lee et al 2013: 187).

This section has defined sustainable lifestyles as patterns of action and consumption that include green consumption practices and/or anti-consumption practices. The section could also have focused on trying to define the ‘*sustainable consumer*’. Much academic attention has been given to this task, but Black (2010) questions whether there is such a thing as the sustainable consumer. He finds that there is no fixed ‘*consumer identity*’. Rather, consumption practices have become intertwined with the daily practices of central roles (mother, wife, sister, friend), and Black argues that if consumption practices have become a part of our roles, so can anti-consumption practices. He posits, referring to Black & Cherrier (2010), that individuals do not try to become sustainable consumers, rather they gradually incorporate sustainable practices into their daily lives and existing roles. This goes along with seeing consumer identities as something that is gradually forming or “*emerging*” (Reijonen, 2011) through different “*processes of identification and recognition*” (Cherrier 2007: 332). Persons who are trying to live more sustainable lives can be seen as “*consumers in transition*” (ibid). This calls for a focus on practices and lifestyles rather than identities.

2.2 The consumer transition

The previous section gave an introduction to the concept of sustainable consumption, an overview of sustainable consumption practices within different consumption clusters, and an introduction to sustainable lifestyles. In this part of the literature review, the focus will be on the consumer transition and will be divided into sections that explore why people decide to change their consumption lifestyles, which practices they undertake, which barriers they face, and what makes them keep going with respect to their sustainable lifestyles.

The notion of transition refers to change and the passing from one condition to another. Here, the consumer transition should be understood as the voluntary change a person can undertake from a consumption-intensive lifestyle towards a more sustainable, simpler lifestyle, i.e. “living with less” (Craig-Lees & Hill 2002). However, the notion of a transition implies a process with a form of starting point and a finish line at which point one has arrived at a destination. The degree to which the consumer transition can be understood as such will be discussed at a later point.

Much academic attention has been concerned with understanding what characterises people who have chosen to consume more sustainably and what lies behind their decision. The literature spans a wide array of classifications for people who undertake sustainable consumption practices from ‘*voluntary simplifiers*’ (Shama 1985, Elgin 1993, Schor 1998, Etzioni 1998, McDonald et al 2012) over ‘*ethical consumers*’ (Shaw & Newholm 2002) to ‘*anti-consumers*’ (Iyer & Muncy 2009). Two forms of divisions recur in the literature: the division between personal motivations and societal motivations (why) and the division between approaching sustainable consumption through maintained, but greener consumption and through anti-consumption (how). For instance, Iyer & Muncy (2009) distinguish between ‘*global impact consumers*’ and ‘*simplifiers*’ as two types of anti-consumers, the first seeking to reduce general levels of consumption for societal concerns and the latter seeking to reduce general consumption levels for personal reasons. Shaw & Newholm (2002) distinguish between ‘*ethical simplification*’ and ‘*downshifting*’ as two forms of ‘*voluntary simplicity*’ with ethical simplification responding to ethical concerns and downshifting to self-centred concerns.

2.2.1 Why do some people decide to consume more sustainably?

The focus is on people who could be included under the generic term of voluntary simplicity, which as its basis implies “*the foregoing of maximum consumption and, possibly, income*” (Shaw & Newholm 2002: 169). Below, the motivations for engaging in more sustainable consumption are reviewed and the distinction between external and internal concerns is kept up for the sake of clarity although it is recognised that people often downshift their consumption for a combination of socio-environmental and personal concerns (Cherrier et al 2012: 400).

2.2.1.1 Sustainable consumption for personal concerns

Many people in the affluent countries are dissatisfied with the fast pace, stress and rat race of modern society (Huneke 2005), which has them enmeshed in the ‘*work-and-spend cycle*’ (Schor 1998: 99) signifying patterns of long work hours and increasing consumption spending which does not generate the expected satisfaction. That is, voluntary simplicity may have “*as much to do with the time pressures and pace of life dictated by a highly competitive and marketized economy as it has with overconsumption of material things.*” (Witkowski 2010: 249). For these people, consumer society has not delivered happiness; rather, they find that over-consumption leads to stress, unhappiness and disillusionment (Zavestoski 2002b). This dissatisfaction and disillusionment can be triggered by an event such as starting college or empty nest which prompts self-inquiry and reflections about one’s way of life, leading to “*an awakening to the normative background of life, including parental education, religion, and consumer culture.*” (Cherrier & Murray 2007: 16). This awakening and the dissatisfaction with a consumer ideology, which has failed to deliver more happiness and well-being, can lead people to search for quality of life elsewhere than through consumption. This suggests that the reason for deciding to change one’s way of life is reactive and externally driven to address concerns in the outside world such as the pressure and stress of modern high pace lifestyles. The decision may also be proactive and internally driven by a search for community, a wish to reorient oneself away from careerism and materialism and live according to one’s own values as well as striving for harmony with nature (Moisander & Pesonen 2002).

Generally, sustainable consumption for personal concerns is characterised by a desire to achieve a better quality of life. That sustainable consumption can lead to a better life for the individual is supported by some research (Jackson 2005, Jenkins 2006 in Iyer & Muncy 2009).

2.2.1.2 Sustainable consumption for societal and ethical concerns

Sustainable consumption for societal and ethical concerns is characterised by a focus on the benefits for society and the welfare of the planet as well as the view that high consumption levels are bad for society as a whole. People who are motivated by such reasons are concerned with environmental, social, and/or animal welfare issues (Huneke 2005, Shaw & Newholm 2002). They believe that the Earth is used beyond its carrying capacity and worry for the eco-system, and they believe that over-consumption in the richer nations leads to poverty in less developed countries (Iyer & Muncy 2009: 160-161). These people “*are concerned with the effects that a purchasing choice has, not only on themselves, but also on the external world around them.*” (Harrison, Newholm & Shaw 2005: 2). They feel that the world has been made unstable due to exploitative consumption (Cherrier 2009: 183).

2.2.2 How are people consuming sustainably?

The previous section dealt with the question of why some people decide to consume more sustainably. This section will deal with *how* people consume more sustainably and which practices they undertake.

A wide range of acts and practices can be considered a part of a sustainable consumption lifestyle and they may be divided into (non-exhaustive) categories of:

- ‘*Boycotts*’ or ‘*rejection*’: avoiding certain brands, products or forms of consumption
- ‘*Positive buying*’ or ‘*buycotts*’: actively choosing e.g. local produce, Fairtrade or organic products
- ‘*Reduction*’: of e.g. car use or meat consumption
- ‘*Reuse*’: e.g. using waste water to flush toilets, buying second-hand, swapping
- ‘*Recycle*’: e.g. sorting waste so that it can be used again

(Harrison, Newholm & Shaw 2005, Black & Cherrier 2010)

As mentioned above, consumers’ approach to sustainable consumption may be roughly divided into green consumption practices, opting for environmentally friendly alternatives, and anti-consumption practices, seeking to reduce consumption. However, this demarcation may not always be useful as elements may overlap, as e.g. positive buying of local products can be viewed as a

green practice, but it also involves reducing food miles and thus, consumption of non-renewal resources. Also, it should be noted that “*individual consumers may adopt one or more behavioral approaches, including downshifting, voluntary simplicity, and/or more sustainable levels of consumption through the selection of more ethical alternatives.*” (Shaw & Newholm 2002: 169).

Sustainable and reduced consumption practices often take the form of mundane everyday practices such as recycling, line-drying, not using technical equipment such as microwaves or air conditioners, reducing car trips and turning off the lights, using public transportation, eating organic foods, growing vegetables, etc. (Cherrier, Black & Lee 2010: 1761-62). Some research indicates that more extreme or radical practices such as reusing water from e.g. the washing machine to flush toilets may involve embarrassment and a fear of being stigmatised or perceived as deviant (Black & Cherrier 2010) which may be related to two opposing representations of sustainable consumption in society: one that naturalises a sustainable consumer, who carries out small good deeds, but keeps a low profile and does not question the market and one that marginalises more radical approaches to sustainable consumption as naïve and abnormal (Moisander & Pesonen 2002).

2.2.2.1 Individual strategies for sustainable consumption

There is a tendency to place people into categories of those who do and those who do not consume sustainably. However, “*most consumers can be viewed as suspended in some kind of tension between grey and green purchasing*” (McDonald et al 2012: 450) and a more accurate view of consumers may be to see them as carrying out multiple and not always consistent practices and purchases and as influenced by their social context. For instance, one theory of how consumers move towards sustainable consumption divides individual strategies for sustainable consumption into three overall strategies: ‘*Selector*’, ‘*Translator*’ and ‘*Exceptor*’ (McDonald et al 2012). These three strategies vary in their degree of sustainable consumption. Selectors are green (sustainable) in one aspect, but grey (unsustainable) in others and they are motivated by a single issue, such as animal welfare. Translators are green in some aspects of their lives and grey in others. They are open to change, but do not seek it out and they approach sustainable consumption in a process-to-process way rather than employing a holistic change of lifestyle. If Translators are made aware of a certain problematic practice, and they consider it possible for them to change, they will take action. In contrast, Exceptors hold sustainability as a guiding principle in all aspects of their lives and are actively seeking to change their lifestyles. They are the greenest consumers, but have excepted some areas of their lives, perhaps they fly once a year. Another concept, which captures the idea of

individual strategies for sustainable consumption, is that of “*sustainable bricoleurs*” ” (Black & Cherrier 2010: 449), which refers to the way in which each person may construe his or her own notion of sustainability which allows for flexibility in a sustainable lifestyle.

2.2.3 Which barriers do people face when engaging in consuming sustainably?

The previous sections have explored why and how individual consumers move towards sustainable consumption lifestyles of reduced consumption, which might imply that consumers are relatively free to change their consumption. However, following the dialectical approach, consumers’ abilities to make lifestyle changes are influenced by both personal and structural forces and in acknowledgement of this, a brief review of barriers to sustainable consumption lifestyles will be presented.

2.2.3.1 External barriers

Two areas of external barriers may be identified as especially salient: social barriers and structural barriers. Social barriers refer to cultural meanings and norms, i.e. to the way consumption is used to communicate and construct our identities and for status display and distinction. It also refers to the social norms we live by with regards to e.g. “... *unsustainable consumption practices, such as car-driving, flight-based vacations, owning big homes, and eating meat.*” (Thøgersen 2005: 149). With regards to social norms about sustainable consumption, as mentioned above, research indicates that there might be a perceived dichotomy between the ‘*socially acceptable green consumer*’, a well-informed choice-making individual, on the one hand and on the other hand the ‘*voluntarily simple green consumer*’ who is marginalised as a dangerous, asocial person or portrayed as naïve and a ‘treehugger’ (Moisander & Pesonen 2002). This indicates that people who choose a more ‘radical’ approach to sustainable consumption are at risk of being stigmatised (Black & Cherrier 2010). Cherrier et al (2012) refer to a ‘*glass floor*’ with regards to consumption reduction, which implicates that there is a limit to how much consumers can reduce their consumption without violating dominant social norms and underscore that acceptance from friends and family is needed. Structural barriers refer to infrastructure and available alternatives, which has to do with issues such as space and suburbanisation and to the accessibility of environmentally friendly product alternatives. That infrastructure is important in the implementation of sustainable practices is

generally accepted in the literature (Høyer & Holden 2003; Huneke 2005; Shove 2003, Bartnett et al 2011).

2.2.3.2 Internal barriers

Internal barriers cover such areas as lifestyle barriers, e.g. limited time, energy and habits, informational barriers referring to limited knowledge about problems, tasks and solutions as well as financial barriers (Thøgersen 2005, Isenhour 2010). This is in line with Huneke's (2005) findings that people experience difficulties implementing their decision to consume sustainably due to e.g. lack of time and ambiguities with practices working against each other (e.g. buying foreign organic products or local non-organic products or the dilemma of water use vs. resource reuse when cleaning out containers for recycling).

2.2.4 How do people maintain sustainable consumption lifestyles?

Most research within the field of sustainable consumption deals with the early stages of the consumer transition and with determining types of sustainable consumption and consumers. The focus on how to change people's unsustainable consumption and on what motivates people who engage in sustainable practices is only natural because it is crucial for the environment that more people take up sustainable consumption practices. However, sustainable consumption lifestyles are not achieved merely by changing behaviour. It is also important to keep from falling back to unsustainable consumption patterns, which may be challenging as Banbury et al (2012) state *"Ultimately we are worn down and acquiesce to the allure of convenience."* Sustainable consumption practices and lifestyles have to become, well, sustainable. This may be difficult, especially if sustainable consumption is understood to involve less consumption as reducing consumption appears to go against dominant social norms (Cherrier et al 2012, Lee et al 2013). So far little academic attention has been paid to maintaining sustainable consumption, but this section seeks to draw out important aspects in the maintenance stage of the consumer transition.

Research within the field of sustainable consumption has pointed at a range of external and internal barriers for engaging in sustainable consumption (e.g. Thøgersen 2005, Isenhour 2010), which may also be salient in the maintenance stage of the consumer transition. Indeed, some studies indicate that leading a sustainable lifestyle can be challenging and is often framed in terms of 'trying' and 'doing as much as I can', which points to the necessity of continuous effort to maintain sustainable

practices and lifestyles (Black & Cherrier 2010). In a study by Cherrier & Murray (2007), consumer transition is found to be a process consisting of four stages: ‘*sensitization*’, ‘*separation*’, ‘*socialization*’ and ‘*striving*’ in which the consumer gradually changes his or her consumption behaviour in a dialectical relationship with the social context. According to the authors “*The actual process should be considered within a context of struggle and tension over the ability to shift away from past selves and mode of “having” and the possibility to adopt new selves and mode of “being.”*” (Cherrier & Murray 2007: 25). They refer to Fromm’s notion of two modes of existence: a ‘*having mode*’ and a ‘*being mode*’. The having mode involves a constant striving for more consumption and commodities to reach a state of well-being, whereas the being mode of existence involves being critical towards ideas of social status and possessions and becoming emancipated from social chains (Fromm 1978 in Cherrier & Murray 2007: 3-4). The final stage of the transition, striving, involves a struggle to integrate the new and old lifestyle and “*to reconcile the past with the present and the envisioned future.*” (Cherrier & Murray 2007: 23). This study suggests that the consumer transition should be understood in a frame of continuous struggle, negotiation and tension and indicates that the final stage of the transition is no exception. However, the authors do not explain what maintains efforts to live sustainably and the study also raises the question of whether there might be a stage after the striving stage, less marked by conflict.

Nevertheless, such struggles of living a sustainable lifestyle may not be felt by all who reduce consumption. Cherrier (2012) notes that for some people sustainable consumption practices come naturally whereas for others they are experienced as a daily and continuous struggle. Informants who experienced the maintenance of a sustainable lifestyle as a burden framed consumption in general as negative and destructive, which let them to feel bad when carrying out any form of consumption. They also experienced a sense of social exclusion in not being able to identify with any local social context. In contrast, those who experienced living a sustainable consumption lifestyle as natural had no absolute good or absolute norms of consumption and used consumption practices to express identity, connectedness and community with others. This suggests that a flexible outlook on sustainable consumption as well as the ability to express oneself through consumption and integrate sustainable consumption into one’s social context and relationships is crucial for the degree of struggle experienced in maintaining reduced consumption. That sustainable and reduced consumption practices allow for self-expression of actual or desired identities is confirmed by Black & Cherrier (2010). This seems to indicate that sustainable consumption lifestyles should fulfil both personal and social needs in order to be maintained.

2.3 Summation of literature review

The first part of the literature review gave an overview of the concept of sustainable consumption, which has to do with meeting our own human needs while making it possible for future generations to meet their needs and essentially with consuming differently and less. There are two main approaches to sustainable consumption, one that emphasises technological solutions and eco-efficiency, the weak approach, and one that emphasises the need to consume less overall, the strong approach to sustainable consumption. Also, three different approaches to the question of the degree of power and responsibility of consumers, business and government to change consumption patterns were identified. Finally, an overview of sustainable consumption in practice within relevant consumption clusters was given.

The second part of the literature review divided the literature on the consumer transition into four sections. The first dealt with the question of why some consumers are choosing to consume differently and less and showed that a distinction is often made between sustainable consumption driven by personal concerns and sustainable consumption driven by societal concerns. Personal reasons for sustainable consumption are dissatisfaction with the fast and stressful pace of modern society, wish to improve quality of life, and live according to one's own values and external reasons for sustainable consumption are environmental, social, and animal welfare issues. The second dealt with how people consume more sustainably and showed that sustainable consumption may be approached through green consumption practices and/or anti-consumption practices such as rejection, reducing and reusing, and that consumers employ various individual strategies for sustainable consumption and may approach it flexibly as sustainable bricoleurs. The third section briefly reviewed external and internal barriers for engaging in sustainable consumption lifestyles such as dominant social norms and infrastructure and limited resources and energy. The final section reviewed the literature with regards to how sustainable consumption lifestyles are maintained. It was noted that little academic attention has been paid to this point in the consumer transition, which, however, is an important focus as sustainable consumption entails not only changing unsustainable consumption patterns, but also maintaining these changes. It was suggested that maintaining sustainable consumption lifestyles can be perceived as a burden and a continuous struggle, but that a flexible outlook on consumption and the ability to express oneself and integrate sustainable lifestyles and practices into one's social context and relationships could make sustainable lifestyles natural and, thus, help maintain them.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1 *The consumer transition as a process of change*

3.1.1 Processual Theory of Identity (PTI)

Cherrier & Murray (2007) research the consumer transition and develop a processual theory of identity formation in the context of dispossession. The authors refer to the formation of consumer identity as a continuous negotiation between the self and social structures (Cherrier & Murray 2007: 2). They identify four stages in this process: ‘*sensitization*’, ‘*separation*’, ‘*socialization*’ and ‘*striving*’. In the sensitization phase, informants are starting to question the way they live and perhaps the norms of society and this examination is often prompted by a triggering event, e.g. starting college or a new relationship. They often experience a sense of a ‘before’ and an ‘after’, and the before is often referred to as being unaware or non-critical, i.e. just following along with everyone else. As a consequence of the critical reflection and questioning of lifestyle and norms, they start to disconnect themselves from their old way of life, previous norms and from friends or family in the separation phase. The socialization phase underscores the importance of social influences in the consumer transition as informants in the socialization phase are “... *reaching out for others’ life examples*.” and find inspiration to live differently from inspirational others such as friends or lovers and gain access to new social groups. The final phase, striving, “*is a highly reflexive stage which incorporates both considering others and answering fundamental existential questions about the self*” (Cherrier & Murray 2007: 22). This involves a struggle to integrate new and old lifestyles and learning “*to live in this new reality with themselves and with others*” (ibid. 23). There is, in other words, a dialectical negotiation going on in which both individual and social forces are considered and sought integrated.

3.1.2 The Transtheoretical Model of Behaviour Change (TTM)

The TTM is an integrative model that seeks to include and integrate elements from other theories into a comprehensive theoretical framework of change. According to the TTM, the change process consists of a series of stages of change: ‘*Precontemplation*’ in which there is no intention to change, and individuals may be unaware of any problem with their behaviour, ‘*contemplation*’ in which individuals are aware of a problem and wish to change it, but have not yet committed to making the

change, '*preparation*' in which small steps towards change are taken and action is intended in the next month, '*action*' in which individual "*modify their behavior, experiences, or environment in order to overcome their problems*" (Prochaska et al 1992: 1104) and finally, '*maintenance*' in which efforts are made to avoid relapse and to consolidate a lifestyle. Maintenance lasts from six months to an indeterminable point in the future – it may last a lifetime (ibid.: 1103-1104).

The TTM sees the process of change as a spiral, rather than a linear process, because relapse and recycling through stages is the rule rather than the exception. Therefore, it is important to have developed strategies that help achieve and maintain change, called processes of change. The ten processes of change include:

1. '*Consciousness raising*': Becoming aware of self and problem
2. '*Dramatic relief*': Experiencing and letting out feelings about problem and solutions
3. '*Environmental reevaluation*': Evaluating how one's problems or behaviours affect one's environment
4. '*Self-reevaluation*': Evaluating own feelings and thoughts about a problem
5. '*Self-liberation*': Deciding to act or believing in being able to act
6. '*Reinforcement management*': Self-reward or reward by others for making changes
7. '*Helping relationships*': Sharing problems and receiving support
8. '*Counter-conditioning*': Employing alternatives to problematic behaviour
9. '*Stimulus control*': Avoiding or replacing problematic behaviour cues
10. '*Social liberation*': Increase in alternatives becoming available in society, structural support

(Prochaska et al 1992: 1108)

The processes of change are connected to the stages of change so that specific processes of change are especially salient in different stages. Four processes of change are deemed especially important for the action and maintenance stages of change: Counter-conditioning which in the context of reducing consumption could be growing some of your own food instead of buying it in a store, stimulus control e.g. avoiding social contexts that are centred on spending, reinforcement management which could take the form of a reward for having cut back on water consumption or food wastage, and finally, helping relationships such as support in carrying out reduced consumption practices such as producing one's own food or saving on water. TTM emphasises social pressures, internal challenges and special situations as the most common threats to maintenance of change.

3.2. Maintaining change

3.2.1 Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Self-Determination Theory is a theory of motivation, which can offer an explanation to the effort people put into engagement in and maintenance of certain acts, practices or lifestyles. “*Self-determination theory is based on the assumption that people have intrinsic needs and psychological drives, and that these intrinsic needs provide energy for the organism to act on its internal and external environment.*” (Thøgersen 2005: 160). According to Ryan & Deci (2000), three such needs can be identified empirically: the needs for ‘*competence*’, ‘*relatedness*’, and ‘*autonomy*’. Within SDT, autonomy should not be understood as independence or individualism; rather, it refers to a feeling of volition, of freedom to act in a certain way (Ryan & Deci 2000: 74). Motivation can be ‘*intrinsic*’ or ‘*extrinsic*’; the former refers to our inherent tendency to be curious, active and exploring and implies doing something solely because it is satisfying to do whereas the latter refers to doing something to achieve a certain outcome, e.g. I can repair a pair of socks instead of buying new ones because I find the activity in itself valuable and calming (intrinsic motivation) or I can do it to save money (extrinsic motivation). According to SDT, social environments that support the innate needs for competence, relatedness and autonomy facilitate intrinsic motivation (ibid.: 71). However, we not only carry out activities that are intrinsically motivating, indeed, many of the things we do in our daily lives are to some degree extrinsically motivated. Our motivation for carrying out such behaviours vary in degree from amotivation to active personal commitment, which reflects differences as to which extent the value or regulation of the behaviour have been taken in (‘*internalisation*’) or, even further, become a part of our sense of self (‘*integration*’) (ibid.). These degrees of motivation can be viewed as a continuum ranging from amotivation to intrinsic motivation and internal regulation with varying degrees of extrinsic motivation between these outer points. The continuum represents different degrees of autonomy or self-determination. The least autonomous type of extrinsic motivation is ‘*externally regulated*’, i.e. responding to external demands or control, then follows ‘*introjected regulation*’ in which external regulation is taken in, but not fully accepted as one’s own often to avoid guilt or to give a sense of pride. Then comes ‘*regulation through identification*’ which is more self-determined and refers to taking an action in as personally important or valuable. The final, most autonomous type of extrinsic motivation is ‘*integrated regulation*’ which “*occurs when identified regulations are fully assimilated to the self, which means they have been evaluated and brought into congruence with one’s other values and*

needs.” (Ryan & Deci 2000: 73). According to SDT, the more we are externally regulated, i.e. doing things because of external demands or control, the less interest and effort we put into these activities and, on the other hand, the more we are internally regulated, the more interest, joy and energy we put into performing or maintaining activities (ibid). That social environments that support competence, relatedness and autonomy facilitate motivation goes not only for intrinsic motivation, but for extrinsic motivation as well. SDT argues that feelings of belonging and connectedness with others are central for internalisation since the primary reason for carrying out extrinsically motivated activities is because they are modelled or valued by influential others whom we want to belong or not belong to (ibid.). With regards to how the needs correspond to regulation, Ryan & Deci state:

Contexts can yield external regulation if there are salient rewards or threats and the person feels competent enough to comply; contexts can yield introjected regulation if a relevant reference group endorses the activity and the person feels competent and related; but contexts can yield autonomous regulation only if they are autonomy supportive, thus allowing the person to feel competent, related, and autonomous.” (Ryan & Deci 2000: 73-74)

This means that with regards to extrinsic motivation support for competence, autonomy and relatedness leads to greater internalisation and integration whereas failure to support these needs results in diminished motivation and well-being, i.e. *“extrinsically motivated actions can also become self-determined as individuals identify with and fully assimilate their regulation. Thus, it is through internalization and integration that individuals can be extrinsically motivated and still be committed and authentic.”* (Ryan & Deci 2000: 74). In order to fully thrive, all needs must be met. Their relative importance, however, varies throughout the life span and according to cultural contexts (ibid.: 75). Ryan & Deci conclude *“... motivation is perhaps the critical variable in producing maintained change.”* (ibid.: 76)

3.2.2 Social Identity Theory (SIT)

Most societies around the world tend to organise in groups that favour the ‘in-group’ and discriminate against the ‘out-group’ (Wetherell 1982 in Jackson 2005a: 79). This is the point of origin of SIT, which at its basis implies that *“social identification with a ‘reference group’ is a key*

component of identity” (Jackson 2005a: 79). As defined by Tajfel (1978 in Ellemers 1999: 372), our social identity stems from knowing that we belong to a certain group (or groups) together with the emotional and value significance that we assign to that group membership. In other words, social identity can be perceived as consisting of three aspects: ‘*awareness*’ that we belong to a certain group, a positive or negative ‘*evaluation*’ of this group membership, and emotional ‘*involvement*’ or commitment to a certain reference group or groups (Ellemers 1999: 372). Importantly, our degree of identification with or commitment to a certain reference group is the main aspect that makes us shape our behaviour in accordance with the group (ibid.: 385). That is, a person may be aware that he or she belongs to a certain group, but it is the degree of commitment to this group that most influences whether this person does what is ruled in or out according to the group membership. A person can have a positive or negative social identity, which depends on the evaluation of the group that he perceives himself as belonging to, and people strive for a positive social identity and wish to feel good about the group, they see themselves as belonging to. The in-group is evaluated by comparing it to relevant out-groups, and people may find alternative parameters of comparison if the comparison is unfavourable (Tajfel & Turner 1979: 43). In the context of reducing consumption, this may mean a negative evaluation if the parameter of comparison is conventional material status symbols such as owning the newest computer or having expensive clothes, but a positive evaluation if the parameter is freedom, morality, and authenticity.

As pointed out by Jackson (2005a), SIT helps explain the importance of social norms³ on behaviour since we can be more or less likely to carry out certain acts or practices due to belonging to a certain group. That is, our social identity enables or constrains certain behaviours, such as e.g. reduced consumption practices. Finally, SIT also implicates that certain social norms can be more or less salient in certain situations because a person often belongs to more than one group. “*The fact that typically I will belong to more than one reference group suggests that I am likely to be subject to different – and sometimes competing – social influences*” (Jackson 2005a: 82). This means that reducing consumption may be perfectly acceptable and positively evaluated in one group, but in another group of social influences it may be negatively evaluated, which can lead to value conflicts.

³ The concept of social norms can be divided into two aspects: ‘*descriptive norms*’, which refers to what most people do and what we think of as normal in a given situation and ‘*injunctive norms*’, which refers to what ought to be done and what is the moral thing to do, which implies social rewards or sanctions. Personal norm, on the other hand, refers to what I think should be done. (Jackson 2005a: 59)

3.3 Selection of theories

The first part of the theoretical framework, consisting of the PTI and the TTM, serves the purpose of providing an understanding of how change occurs as a continual process of stages or phases. It provides the necessary theoretical backdrop to understanding the maintenance of sustainable and reduced consumption lifestyles. The PTI offers an understanding of maintenance as striving for integration of old and new, especially with regards to the social context and the TTM provides an integrative model, which posits that different processes of change, such as reinforcement and helping relationships, are relevant in different stages. The second part of the theoretical framework relates more specifically to the maintenance stage of change and includes SDT, which provides an understanding of how social environments that support the needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness are crucial for engaging in and maintaining acts, practices and lifestyles, and SIT, which allows for insight into how group membership and reference groups affect our ability to maintain certain consumption practices and lifestyles. The theories enable the consideration of both individual and social forces on maintenance of sustainable and reduced consumption lifestyles, which is in line with a dialectical approach to sustainable consumption.

Overall, the selected theories are consistent with a social constructivist approach as they attempt to move beyond the structure-agency debate, which reflects my own scientific position. The theories move away from the view of the individual as (solely) a rational agent and places weight on the social context, social norms and rules, but are not completely deterministic. This is also in line with the dialectical approach. It should be noted, however, that SDT with its focus on innate, psychological needs is not directly in line with a strict social constructivist approach as social constructivism would argue that needs are socially constructed. However, the theory does stress that the relative saliency of the needs vary according to cultural contexts and emphasises the social environment, which means that it places weight on the influence of the socio-cultural context on the individual. The relative importance of the needs and how they are fulfilled and expressed is to a great extent a result of the socio-cultural context and values which is not inconsistent with the social constructivist view that how the social world is constructed determines what actions are socially acceptable and which are not. SDT is in line with a dialectical approach that places weight on the interaction between individual and structural forces.

The PTI, SDT and SIT have all been developed, used, or mentioned in the context of sustainable consumption (e.g. Cherrier & Murray 2007, Thøgersen 2005, Jackson 2005a). The TTM, on the other hand, was developed to explain and promote intentional change in the context of health behaviours, addiction and disease prevention and has been used as the basis for behaviour change management programmes. It has also been described in a book titled: “*Changing for Good: A Revolutionary Six-Stage Program for Overcoming Bad Habits and Moving Your Life Positively Forward.*” A literature search revealed no use of the TTM for sustainable consumption so far. Maintaining a reduced consumption lifestyle may be compared to maintaining a healthy lifestyle since a healthy lifestyle will also include various practices of anti-consumption and as e.g. unhealthy eating can also be embedded in social contexts and relationships. However, it is probably more socially accepted and encouraged to live a healthier lifestyle than to live a lifestyle with less (e.g. an anti-consumption lifestyle) as it is still not generally accepted by either individuals, government or business that it is necessary and beneficial to consume less (Alexander & Ussher 2011). Furthermore, the physical and psychological benefits may not be as tangible with a lifestyle of reduced consumption as with a healthy lifestyle. This perhaps makes social relationships and own values more salient for a sustainable consumption lifestyle.

3.4 Comparison and discussion of theories

The TTM was developed through studying self-changers who have changed their behaviour on their own. A similar approach in the context of downshifting is seen in Cherrier & Murray (2007) whose stage theory of identity construction was developed as a framework of self-change. When comparing the two stage models, the PTI has one stage less. Their respondents, however, identify a ‘before’ and ‘after’, and in the before they were ‘asleep’ or ‘not thinking’, which could be compared to the TTM’s precontemplation stage. Whereas in TTM the contemplation stage is described as being aware of a problem and weighing pros and cons of changing, PTI’s sensitisation stage refers to an awakening and reflexivity triggered by a specific event which leads to disruption and questioning of one’s normative background. The TTM’s process of change, consciousness raising, could be used about the triggering event that is referred to in PTI. The next stage in the TTM is preparation in which the self-changer is taking small steps towards change and planning to change. For PTI, it is separation, which refers to distancing oneself from social shaping and social influences. Cherrier & Murray (2007) underscore the influence and significance of others whereas TTM is more based on the individual as an agent even though it does incorporate relationships and

the external environment. In the next stage of the TTM, the self-changer takes action and changes his/her behaviour whereas in PTI the next stage has to do with learning from others' life examples through socialisation and becoming inspired and able to live differently. The final stage of the TTM is maintenance: maintaining the new behaviour or lifestyle and trying to avoid relapse and to consolidate a new way of living. In the PTI, it is striving: struggling to maintain control over one's new way of living and learning how to live with the new lifestyle and how to live with others in it. A key aspect of PTI is that the individual is set in a social context and that identities and lifestyles are relational whereas the TTM appears to view the individual as more of an independent agent. Cherrier & Murray (2007) point to a continuous dialogue between the individual and consumer culture and social influences. However, TTM also takes up the importance of helping relationships and of contexts that may trigger certain behaviours, so the TTM also lends some weight to external forces. The TTM is in a way more of an instrumental model that can be used both to describe the process of change, but also as an instruction on how to go about changing whereas PTI describes identity formation in the context of a process of change (downshifting). It does not seek to instruct people on how to change. Cherrier & Murray (2007) stress that social relationships play a central role in the identity formation process and that they can both enable and constrain change. However, they do not ask what creates a successfully maintained lifestyle change, but emphasise that changing one's consumption is a continuous negotiation and struggle with oneself, others and with consumer culture. The TTM also emphasises that social pressure is a very common threat to maintaining change.

Together, the theories argue that change happens in a process of stages, and it is influenced by a series of factors such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, needs fulfilment, reinforcement, helping relationships, and group belongingness. However, they leave some things unsaid and do not sufficiently explain how different combinations of factors lead to or constrain sustainable outcomes. For instance, they do not thoroughly explore the role of group belonging over time and how much it helps to be a part of a group or conversely, the consequences of separation from a reference group. Also, the theories point to maintaining as striving and change as a continuous struggle with the risks of relapse, but they do not explain the degree of such striving and struggles and the outcome for sustainability.

4. Methodology and philosophical considerations

4.1 *A social constructionist perspective*

This thesis is based on a social constructionist approach, which implies being critical of taken-for-granted knowledge and ways of understanding persons or things in the world. Further implications of a social constructionist approach are the views that people understand the world in relation to their own historical and cultural place in it, and that knowledge is constructed and sustained through engaging in social processes and interaction with each other. The latter also means that our descriptions, constructions and representations of the world affect which social actions are acceptable and normal and which are not (Burr 1995: 2-5). However, I adopt a moderate take on social constructionism, following the view of Fairclough that social structures may well be the result of social interaction, but once the constructs are in the world they become realities that can enable or constrain the construction of the social (Fairclough 2003: 8).

4.2 *A qualitative method of research*

This thesis takes an exploratory approach because the purpose is to explore and gain a deeper understanding of how people live and maintain a sustainable lifestyle of consuming less. Thus, the method needed to answer the problem statement should give access to rich data in the form of insights into an informant's life-world and the appropriate approach is therefore a '*qualitative*' method of research. This is characterised by a concern with trying to determine the character and meaning of something whereas a '*quantitative*' approach is characterised by a search of general rules and seeks through the use of surveys and statistics to determine the quantity or size of something. In contrast, the qualitative method often focuses on few samples that are studied in depth (Kvale 2007a: 68ff).

4.2.1 Qualitative research interviews

Within the field of qualitative research a variety of methods are available, each with their own set of advantages and disadvantages to be taken into consideration. To explore and seek to answer the problem statement, the data should be rich, allow for a thick description, and give access to the life-world of an informant and his or her experiences with and perspectives on living and maintaining a sustainable consumption lifestyle. For this purpose, '*qualitative research interviews*' is an

appropriate method as they are “*particularly suited for studying people’s understanding of the meanings in their lived world, describing their experiences and self-understanding, and clarifying and elaborating their own perspective on their lived world.*” (Kvale 2007b: 46). The qualitative research interview is a prominent and frequently used method within the qualitative approach because it gives access to rich and detailed data. Interviews are used throughout the literature on sustainable consumption (e.g. Moisander & Pesonen 2002, Black & Cherrier 2010, MacDonald et al 2006, etc.). The overall purpose of the qualitative research interview is “*obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena.*” (Kvale 2007b: 8). The interview should be understood as a conversation between two people in which knowledge is produced in interaction.

The employed approach to the qualitative research interview is inspired by Thompson et al’s (1989) existential-phenomenological interview and by Thompson’s (1997) interpretive hermeneutic framework, which render four concepts central: intentionality, emergent dialogue, narrative, and hermeneutic endeavour. With regards to intentionality, the informants have been purposively selected because they have realised a sustainable consumption lifestyle change and are living with less, i.e. they have downshifted their consumption. Emergent dialogue is a key aspect in the interview process and means to allow themes and understandings to emerge from the informant’s narrative and avoid too many pre-planned questions. However, the interviews are not entirely open and efforts will be made to keep the interview within the overall topic of maintaining a downshifted consumption lifestyle without being too directive. It is an act of balance to allow for an emergent dialogue whilst acknowledging that the interviewer has a specific research purpose, and it is this balance between the structured and the open that is expressed in a semi-structured interview. The concept of narrative refers to how we structure our experiences by organising events into coherent narratives. This structuring of narratives is marked by selectivity, which highlights some events and experiences and leaves others out of the narrative. It is a part of the analysis to focus on this selectivity and try to make out which meanings and understandings that make certain events or issues prominent in an informants’ narrative (Thompson 1997: 446). Finally, the concept of hermeneutic endeavour is central in the analysis. Hermeneutics can be characterised as the study of the interpretation of texts, which within hermeneutics is expanded to also include conversations (Kvale 2007a: 56). The purpose of hermeneutics is to reach a valid understanding of a text. The ‘*hermeneutic circle*’ is an important concept. It covers the process of how the interpretation of single parts are determined by the interpretation of the whole and how working with single parts

can lead to changes in the understanding of the whole. An interpretation of a text is never based on the parts of the text or the whole on its own, but must involve the process of moving back and forth between parts and whole until a reasonable interpretation is reached (Kvale 2007a: 57). The hermeneutic circle is used to identify patterns within a narrative (intra-text level) and across informants' narratives (intra-case level).

Still, there are some disadvantages of interviews as a data collection method. Interviews are time consuming as it takes time to recruit interview persons, develop an interview guide, carry out interviews and transcribe them. Furthermore, in interviews there can be problems of recall, i.e. memory problems, communication problems such as lack of articulation skills and disclosure problems, which involves social desirability bias, meaning that an informant can tend to answer what he or she thinks the interviewer wants to hear and the sensitivity of some topics (Rook 2009: 146-).

4.3 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues are an inseparable part of research and should be considered before undertaking empirical research. First of all, the purpose of the study should be considered with respect to its scientific value as well as the improvement of the human situation investigated. It should intend to contribute positively both on a micro level (informant) and a macro level (society). With regards to the current study, it is sought that the interviews should be a pleasant and enriching experience for the informants since they will be listened to attentively and allowed to reflect about their story. On the societal level, the current study could contribute to knowledge about living a life with less consumption and perhaps challenge the merits of consumption-intensive, unsustainable lifestyles. The beneficial consequences of the study would be to arrive at a better understanding of how behavioural change in the context of sustainable consumption is maintained and give more academic attention to consumption reduction and reduction of consumer demand. The study may contribute to enhancing the situation of the participating group of subjects by creating a better understanding of their alternative lifestyles and ultimately enhance the human condition by focusing on a way of living that is more sustainable for the planet and sharing the view that this is possible. Designing the study with ethics in mind includes gathering informed consent from informants. The informants will be asked to sign a consent form and be briefed before and debriefed after the interviews are carried out. The consent form will inform the informants that participation is

voluntary, that they can withdraw at any time, that they will be secured anonymity, and about the use of the interviews in the study. In the interview situation, ethical issues concern possible stress during the interview and changes in self-understanding. As a general rule, the interviews will be carried out in informants' homes to allow them to feel comfortable and mitigate stress. This also allows the interviewer to experience the informants in their own surroundings.

4.4 Research quality

When the quality of research is determined it is often with regards to criteria of objectivity, reliability, validity and generalisability. However, these criteria are developed within a positivist paradigm, which conceives of knowledge as something that can be gathered or 'mined' free from researcher influence whereas the social constructionist paradigm sees knowledge as socially constructed and negotiated in interaction. This does not mean that criteria of objectivity, reliability, validity and generalisability do not apply to qualitative research; yet, they must be understood within a different frame. In a positivist perspective, objectivity refers to clear facts and objective knowledge is gathered uninfluenced by prior knowledge, feelings or opinions and often by quantitative methods of measurement. In a constructionist perspective, objectivity can be understood as e.g. reflecting the nature of the object studied, letting the object speak for itself and allowing the object to object, and Kvale notes that these forms of objectivity can, in principle, be achieved through the qualitative interview (2007b: 121-122). Reliability refers to the question of whether findings are trustworthy and consistent and concerns whether another researcher could reproduce the study and reach the same results. This of course has some challenges within qualitative research in which the researcher is the instrument and knowledge is co-produced in interaction between interviewer and interviewee. However, reliability in interview studies can be sought through transparency; that is, consistently and thoroughly setting out and explaining methods and procedures. Validity refers to the question of whether something is valid and true, and it is often expressed in the question of whether one has investigated what one intended to investigate. Validity deals with the quality of the knowledge produced and is sought here by continually relating issues to the research problem and by securing consistency between different aspects of the research process. Finally, the question of generalisability in a positivist understanding refers to whether findings can be generalised to the general population, whether they are universal and definitive. This understanding of generalisability becomes irrelevant in a constructionist perspective in which there is no objective, universal knowledge. Instead, knowledge is socially

constructed and sustained and our views of the world are determined by our historical and cultural position in it. The aim of qualitative studies is not to generalise and seek ultimate, universal truths; rather the aim is for in-depth understanding of a phenomenon. A common objection to qualitative studies is that they have too few subjects to allow for generalising findings. However, the relevant question within qualitative studies is not whether findings can be generalised globally, but whether the knowledge produced can help understand a similar situation, i.e. whether the knowledge is transferable.

4.5 Selection criteria and recruitment

Accounting for considerations about selection criteria is an important quality criterion in qualitative research. This involves questions of *whom* to interview, *how many* to interview and *how* they are recruited. The selection criteria, which were applied in the selection of informants, were informed by the literature review and theoretical knowledge. The advertisement for informants defined sustainable consumption as significantly reduced consumption of resources, stressing less consumption over different consumption, in line with e.g. the UNEP report of 2009 calling for researching consumption reduction and reduced consumer demand and with literature on anti-consumption. Furthermore, the advertisement called for persons who agreed with the statement that ‘consuming less is a central part of sustainable consumption’. Moreover, the call was for persons who had formerly lived a consumption-intensive lifestyle, which they had voluntarily chosen to change to a simpler lifestyle of consuming less (examples such as practices of meat consumption, car consumption, recycling, repairing and borrowing were given) (following the Simplicity Institute 2011 in Alexander & Ussher 2011) out of concern for the environment and/or for personal reasons. It was stated that the person should have lived like this for a least six months in line with the TTM stage of maintenance, and that the lifestyle was considered to be a long-term way of life (following Alexander & Ussher 2011). The study does not set a quantitative measure for the level of reduction informants should have achieved in order to be selected as it would be difficult to measure and since the crucial thing is that informants have experienced or are experiencing a voluntary reduction of consumption and engage in anti-consumption practices. It should also be noted that the depth of reduction varies according to the starting point of each informant.

The number of informants is another important aspect of the selection process, which should be considered on the basis of the purpose of the study, the resources of the researcher, and the need to

collect enough data for in-depth analysis. According to Kvale, the number of interviews tends to be around 15 ± 10 , and he questions the idea of more interviews leading to better research and argues that many studies could have benefited from fewer interviews and better time to prepare and analyse (Kvale 2007b: 44). Even though basing the number of informants on time and resources is generally not approved of in the literature, it is nevertheless an important pragmatic concern. It would not be defensible to take on more interviews than can be thoroughly processed and analysed, and the current study does require considerations about time and resources and for this reason the number arrived at was six informants. Small samples that are studied in depth are common in qualitative research as the aim is not to be able to generalise findings to the general public, but rather to collect detailed, rich data that gives insight into persons' life-worlds.

Four of the six informants were recruited from and through the Danish eco-village Dyssekilde, which is founded on values of ecology, sustainability and community and is the most sustainable village in Denmark. Recruitment took place through an advertisement in the eco-village weekly newsletter. The final two informants were recruited through the Danish sustainability network 'Omstilling.Nu' (Transition.Now) and through the researcher's network as it proved difficult to recruit informants.

4.6 The interview guide

The purpose of the interviews is to collect rich, personal stories about the experience of living and consuming sustainably. Developing an interview guide can be challenging especially for semi-structured interviews as a balance should be sought between allowing for themes and stories to emerge in dialogue and using a set of predetermined questions to guide the conversation and cover research questions. As the approach is exploratory and this particular focus of maintaining sustainable consumption lifestyles has not been paid much attention, the interview guide was developed on the basis of the researcher's pre-existing knowledge from the literature review and on the theoretical framework. The first part of the interview guide aimed at achieving an understanding of how the informant has changed his or her lifestyle and what the circumstances of the change were as well as the depth of change. This included asking about which routines were changed, which were not, and why. The second section sought to find out whether and to which degree the lifestyle was experienced as challenging, which was assumed based on the literature review as well as the emphasis of TTM on avoiding relapse in the

maintenance stage (Prochaska, DiClemente & Norcross 1992: 1103-1104) and what the benefits of a reduced consumption lifestyle are. The third and fourth section dealt with the significance and influence of the social context in terms of potential societal pressures or experiences of community as well as the positive or negative influence of social relationships.

The interview guide was changed slightly after the first four interviews that took place within a very narrow time frame (three in one day to accommodate the wishes of the informants as well as the necessity of travelling to the eco-village and one the following week). The overall structure was maintained, but some questions were changed to become more idiomatic and precise, while some were left out and a few were added. For example, a question was added about whether the changes in consumption happened at once to get a clearer picture of how the change took place, and the question of whether consumption was seen as a characteristic that sets people apart from each other was left out as the informants did not really understand it. The question of whether informants see their way of consuming as unique was changed to how common they experienced reducing consumption is as informants seemed to stumble upon the word unique. A question was added about whether the informants' friends and family had also reduced consumption to gain a better understanding of the social context. Also, the second interview guide was more specific in asking about reducing consumption instead of changing consumption. Altering the interview guide could pose a dilemma for the replicability and reliability of the interview study; however, as this is an exploratory study, it is not possible to know exactly what to ask for, and the insights gained by developing the interview guide outweigh potential methodological inconsistency.

The interview guide may have benefited from a clearer focus on one or two practices or areas of consumption. However, the wish was to explore the entire lifestyle change and allow for the informants to share their experiences of reducing consumption in the ways that were most salient for them.

4.7 The interviews

The informants were first briefed through the advertisement for informants and then again at the beginning of the interviews. The purpose and frame of the interview was stated and the stage was set by asking the informant to speak freely and give detailed descriptions. It was underscored that

the interview should be seen as a conversation about a topic of shared interest. The informant was asked if he or she had any questions before the interview began. The interview began with a short presentation of the interviewer in order to open up the conversation and create a relaxed atmosphere. At the end of the interview, the informants were debriefed and asked if they had any final points to add.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim⁴. This generally implies capturing every word without paraphrasing, including nonverbal communication, fillers and false starts. The level of detail required in transcription depends on the research purpose and after the first four interviews it was found that the level of detail was too rich as it provided for very time-consuming transcription without adding valuable information. For this reason, the final two interviews were transcribed with a lower detail level, e.g. excluding fillers and the interviewers' use of encouraging communication such as 'Mmm'.

4.8. Informant profiles

4.8.1 Albert

Albert is 65 years old. He is an associate professor and PhD and lives with his wife of 45 years. He is not a member of the eco-village, but he is very active in the local community and has taken several local initiatives such as a local food market based on low food mile products. Albert and his wife run a farm and have sheep, hens, bees, and a vegetable garden. The farm is self-sufficient in electricity and makes use of solar heating, a masonry stove, and a wood burner. Albert and his wife are trying to become as self-sufficient as possible.

4.8.2. Ben

Ben is 61 years old. He used to work as a teacher, but now he is a taxi driver, caretaker, and works other odd jobs. He lives with his wife who is a member of the eco-village. Ben downshifted his work hours and consumption when he met his present wife because he became inspired by her lifestyle. Ben is very committed to limiting the household's consumption of especially energy, water and electricity. During the interview with Ben, his wife joined and was able to add

⁴ Full transcriptions are enclosed on CD.

perspectives to his story. This was not planned or intentional on the part of the interviewer, but it can be considered to aid the understanding of Ben's experience of reducing consumption.

4.8.3. Carl

Carl is 62 years old. He is a disability pensioner and lives in the eco-village, which he has done practically since the foundation of the village in 1990. When he was young, he suffered from allergies and started to become interested in diet and nutrition. After a course on this, he quit dairy products and meat and has gradually become more interested in collecting his own food, and now he collects and grows most of his own food, e.g. edible seaweed. Carl has a girlfriend who lives in Copenhagen.

4.8.4 Diana

Diana is 42 years old. She works as a yoga instructor and body therapist. She lives in the eco-village with her husband and their four children. Diana grew up in a typical Danish family and worked in the shipping industry for 10-12 years. When she started to do yoga, she realised that she was not happy with her way of life and began to reflect about her lifestyle including her way of consuming. As a result of this reflection, she began changing her life both professionally and personally. Diana and her family save on water, separate waste, recycle, and use second-hand instead of buying new things. They are very aware of buying organic products and pay attention to food miles.

4.8.5 Erin

Erin is 67 years old. She is a psychologist and lives north of Copenhagen with her boyfriend. She used to live in the countryside, but moved in with her boyfriend 2 years ago. They have very different lifestyles and social environments. Erin is very concerned about the environment and her change of consumption has happened gradually. She has reduced her consumption of meat, water, and electricity and she repairs and uses second-hand clothing instead of buying new things.

4.8.6 Frank

Frank is 28 years old. He is a master's student at the university and volunteers in the sustainability network 'Omstilling.Nu' (Transition.Now), a network primarily of and for young people. He started

changing his consumption four years ago after a climate change seminar, which awakened him. He is interested in the connection between various crises, financial, climate, environment, resource, and social crises. He has especially reduced his consumption with regards to meat consumption and flying. He also sorts his waste and tries to avoid buying new things.

5. Findings

5.1 *Living with less consumption*

The informants indicate both internal and external reasons for beginning the transition towards more sustainable lifestyles, such as a sense of dissatisfaction in one's life, inspirational others, and the understanding of connections between consumption and environment. Diana frames her transition in terms of "awakening" to understand that she was not happy, which happened when she began to practice yoga and became very inspired by her yoga teacher. This made her reflect about her lifestyle, which she had not done before "*I have never asked questions about life, I have really just, you know, oh that's what my parents did, so I have really just done the same and actually lived like them*" (ll. 26-28). Frank uses the expression of "revival" to describe the effect of a climate seminar he participated in which made him aware of environmental problems. The sense of separation from a certain mode of living that is described by Diana is echoed in Ben's description of "divorcing himself" from his former life (and wife) when he met and became inspired to downshift by his present wife. For Carl, his transition from "*a regular meat eater to now*" (ll. 3-4) began with health concerns and was strengthened by achieving knowledge about the effect of meat production on the environment as well as understanding the challenges of food production and resource consumption. Albert and his wife started with a vegetable garden as the first step towards the lifestyle of self-sufficiency they are living today. Finally, Erin became especially attentive towards her way of consuming after being alerted to her huge consumption of energy for heating and what that meant for her financial situation as well as for the environment. In general, the reasons for engaging in a sustainable lifestyle are various, and the interview persons are not necessarily primarily motivated by environmental concerns.

The informants employ a range of sustainable and reduced consumption practices. These practices vary in degree within various clusters, from small, mundane practices to other more radical ones. In

order to reduce the consumption of water, informants mention turning off the water while e.g. brushing teeth and washing vegetables and reducing the water used for washing up. Efforts are also made to collect and reuse water, especially by Ben:

our washing water that comes from our washing machines, it comes out through a hose in a basin at the back of the house, and then we collect it in some buckets and then we use it to throw in our toilet (...) each time I wash my hands, I take a bowl and pour the water into a bucket that I then use to flush the toilet. (ll. 99-102, 298-300)

These water-saving practices are time-consuming and Ben estimates that he uses an hour a day in order to save water by e.g. collecting it in rainwater barrels. Albert, Ben, and Diana have all purchased technical equipment to reduce energy-consumption such as solar panels, masonry stoves, and wood burners. Albert and his wife are self-sufficient in electricity and solar heating and Albert is considering whether the solar energy could be expanded to supply others with energy as well. Diana mentions using all of their savings for solar cells because her family is big and use a lot of power. Maintaining and using the technical equipment requires rigour and time as e.g. utilising a masonry stove and a wood burner requires cutting down the wood, chopping it, storing and drying it, and stoking the fire. For Ben, utilising his equipment in the most energy-efficient and resource-minimising way requires careful attention and the use of a timer.

All informants place emphasis on purchasing organic produce and limiting food miles. Several of the informants also mention cutting down on their meat consumption and e.g. Frank tries to limit his meat consumption to two-three days a week referring to the principle of 'week-day vegetarian'. Two of the informants are to some extent self-sufficient in food from farming and vegetable gardening (Albert) and collection of food in nature such as various plants, weeds and seaweed (Carl). Carl and Diana both participate in the eco-village communal garden project.

Diana and Frank both experience dilemmas when it comes to choosing sustainable products in the supermarket, e.g. choosing whether or not to purchase blueberries from Chile because of the environmental strain of high food miles. Carl refers to carefully selecting products looking for biodynamic labelling, eco-labelling, and food miles. Erin has recently become inspired by an acquaintance to limit packaging by buying unpackaged fruits and vegetables. According to Albert, he and his wife:

have a hard time grocery shopping in the sense that we go for some very specific product groups, that is we don't knock just anything down from a supermarket shelf, we actually very often come home with very, very little in the basket, and that is because there are a lot of things that we don't care to buy (ll. 173-178)

Waste sorting is an important practice for the informants and even though it can be time-consuming, it is seen as something that makes sense and gives a sense of satisfaction or even has a therapeutic effect. Erin has moved from a rural area with a strict waste sorting system to the Danish 'whiskey belt' (an upper-class area) "*where there is no waste sorting at all, which in my opinion is completely absurd*" (ll. 9-10). Reducing food wastage is also mentioned as a significant practice.

Except for Carl who has always used public transportation and Frank who has a set goal of limiting his flying to once a year, transport and mobility are to some degree exempted from efforts to reduce consumption. Diana flies, which she describes as a conscious choice and says that as far as she knows, it is one of the most polluting ways of transportation, but that there are some things she avoids learning more about. As for car transportation, her family only uses their car for special occasions and each time they consider the necessity of using it. Albert drives his car to work and flies to meetings in connection with his work. He verbalises this as a matter of time-efficiency and a requirement of the labour market, but acknowledges that it is an area that is unresolved. He has looked into electric cars, but he has not found a fitting solution because he needs to drive far (for work) and transport heavy things (for the farm). Erin repeatedly returns to her car-use during the interview as it is a major source of guilty conscience for her: "*Where I am really un-ecological and go against everything I think I should do is that I drive too much.*" (ll. 73-74).

Recycling, repairing, and reusing are also important practices, which include e.g. 'scavenging' for building materials and making use of the eco-village swapping station and second-hand stores.

5.2 Factors influencing sustainable consumption lifestyles

5.2.1 Internal motivation: Doing what is right

Well the advantages are that I think I am doing something that is right for the environment, for nature, for my children and grandchildren and for all people. That is, it's, it's not just local, it's global actually, right. So in that way I achieve

harmony between what I think and what I do. You know, we talk so much and do so little, right, and I really like that there is more harmony between those things, right, so it simply gives me a better conscience (Erin, ll. 252-257)

The theme of doing the right thing and living according to one's values recurs in and across the informants' stories and the motivation for living a sustainable lifestyle of reduced consumption appears to be a combination of self-interested and socio-environmental concerns, i.e. 'I do what makes me happy and that is good for the environment as well' and 'I do what is good for the environment and that makes me happy'. For Erin, it is important that she is acting on her beliefs and her environmental concerns to reduce a sense of dissonance between her attitude and behaviour. She emphasises that even the small things that she does which some might find insignificant are important because "*it starts somewhere, right.*" (ll. 572-573). In Diana's narrative, it is a recurrent theme that her lifestyle rests on a conscious, personal choice to live according to her own values and do what she feels is right, and she has found that even simple practices of sustainability such as sorting her waste make her happy: "*I can't tell you why. But if you take the human, that is the way we as humans then, when we give something, we always feel good. That is, it pays off to give something.*" (ll. 444-450). Diana also finds inspiration from Indian tradition, which emphasises the importance of a balance between giving and taking. The benefit of achieving balance between attitude, values and behaviour also echoes in Frank's story. After he participated in a climate seminar for young people, he became aware of environmental and climate crises and as a participant of the seminar, he was obligated to do presentations on the topic at local high schools which made it feel 'hollow' not to act upon his knowledge himself. Carl's primary concern is doing the right thing for his health, but it also motivates him that his way of consuming is better for the environment. For Albert, doing what is right entails becoming as self-sufficient as possible and for him it is fun and brings great quality of life to try to reduce his consumption and opt for 'closed circuits'. He derives a source of pride from working with self-sufficiency and in his words producing rather than consuming:

if we can put a dinner on the table, where we have grown the potatoes, and the meat is our own and the herbs have grown right outside the door, we think that is probably the best you can do. Even if it is a very simple meal, a simple meal, it is a big meal, it is impressive, it is something special, we think. (ll. 129-133)

For most of the informants, practicing sustainable consumption also provides a better quality of life because it involves becoming a part of something bigger or contributing to something bigger than oneself: *“I think it gives some perspectives on life that has to do with something further than the end of one’s nose. (...) It gives life, I think, a depth that you may not be able to get if you are just an ordinary, traditional consumer”* (Albert, ll. 487-499).

5.2.2 External motivation: Downshifting for freedom

Reducing consumption is also seen as a way to achieve more time and freedom. Sustainable consumption in the form of reduced consumption of e.g. electricity, water and material goods does not just save resources, it also reduces expenses, which provides greater freedom to downshift working hours and frees up time for leisure and interests. This can be seen as reversing the ‘work-spend-cycle’ (Schor 1998) i.e. spending less in order to work less in order to have more leisure time and freedom. This emerged as a very strong motivation and benefit for Ben who was inspired by his present wife. For Ben, reducing his consumption means having greater control of what he wants to do with his time, and he has gone from full-time employment as a high school teacher to working different part-time jobs such a taxi driver, caretaker, attendant, etc. At the time of the interview, he had just resigned as a janitor because he did not care for the job any longer: *“it provides freedom that you don’t have to worry about the future or take on work that you are not interested in. (...) The low consumption is freedom not to work so hard. So I use a lot of time on what I should have been doing while I was studying, that is reading books”* (Ben, ll. 315-323). These thoughts are also reflected in Frank’s story and he emphasises that reducing his consumption has meant that he can work less and has more time for friends, family and hobbies, which means that *“the good life it suddenly becomes a more social life, right. And the social life, it becomes possible because you don’t go out and buy a lot of stuff that you have to work a lot to be able to afford.”* (ll. 330-332). Frank stresses: *“you just have to be aware all the time, that you get something else in return.”* (ll. 96-97).

5.2.3 The complexity of sustainability: Making the right choice

The complexity of making the right, sustainable choice is taken up by several of the informants as one of the challenges of living a sustainable lifestyle, and it is clear that the lifestyle is full of compromise. For instance, the informants have different parameters when they make purchases, and it is not always possible to satisfy all parameters as when Albert buys solar panels from China or

when Diana sometimes buys her children blueberries that have been transported all the way from Chile. This highlights the complexity of sustainable consumption and indicates that it is not easy to make the right choices or even to be sure of what the right choices are.

So just those everyday things to start to think about those. They are really; it is really something that I think a minority has the energy to do. Also because some things can be so complex, like, like, it can literally be complex to know whether it is better to buy a Danish tomato produced in a greenhouse or one that has grown on a field in Spain, right. It is those things, it can really, I can understand that a lot of people totally give up. (Frank, ll. 287-292)

These dilemmas are accepted as a part of the lifestyle and informants rely on rules of thumb (such as mainly buying products from Europe, limiting meat consumption to two-three times a week and flying only once a year), eco-labelling, media information (e.g. one informant had just read in the paper that a dishwasher is more energy-efficient than doing dishes by hand) and sometimes on ‘gut-feeling’ to handle them.

5.2.4 Belongingness and social influences

The influencing factors described so far have mainly been situated with the individual, but consumption does not only take place as a function of individual motivation and deliberation, it is also a social phenomenon affecting and affected by the relations between individuals (Dolan 2002).

5.2.4.1 Partner and family

“... it is due to the fact that we support each other that we actually succeed in living like this.”
(Albert, ll. 797-798)

Maintaining a sustainable lifestyle requires continuous efforts to carry out sustainable practices such as collecting water for flushing toilets, tending to stoves or resisting potential social pressures to consume. These efforts are of course supported by the motivations the informants experience in the form of feelings of doing what is right and living according to one’s own values along with the financial freedom that comes with reducing consumption expenses. However, an important influencing factor also seems to be the household, i.e. the partner and family. Four of the informants are living with a partner, one has a girlfriend living in another town and one is single. Diana is the

only one who has small children, the rest of the informants have no children or their children have left home.

According to Albert, the degree of sustainability and self-sufficiency that he practices would be very difficult to carry out on his own as he not only shares the workload with his wife, but also common values and joint goals:

I sometimes think about that it's important that we have it as a common point of origin. If one of us thought 'oh, what the hell, we'll throw the food out' then it might actually become a source of conflict (...). But in that way our viewpoints, our habits, our priorities, our values have in many ways grown together over the years. You know, in reality we think the same thing about these things." (Albert, ll. 265-271)

In Ben's case, his present wife was the very inspiration for his change of consumption lifestyle and she is a crucial support to him even though their motivations for consuming less are different: She stresses her concern for nature and reducing her consumption has allowed her to live her dream of working as a ceramicist whereas his reduced consumption has been a way to escape the 'rat-race' and a dissatisfying job to work less and have more freedom. Carl's girlfriend supports his lifestyle and e.g. happily eats the food he collects and prepares, but as they are living apart, she is not a big influencing factor on his maintenance of sustainable consumption. Diana emphasises that she and her husband agree on how they want to live and support each other, which makes it easier to withstand social pressure or lack of understanding from friends and family. The well-being of the family and the children are the basis for the choices she and her husband make, which sometimes lead to less sustainable choices such as purchasing products that are high in food miles. These three informants all enjoy the help and support of their partners. In contrast, Erin's partner is from a social environment in which high levels of consumption are natural, and he is not very supportive or understanding of her efforts to reduce consumption. He laughs at it and calls her a puritan. She says that she could have wished for more support from him, but she keeps up her efforts and tries to influence him as best she can. She experiences more pressure to consume since she has moved in with her partner and finds that his social environment is very provocative for her to be in with a very high individual consumption level, but she withstands the pressure because it goes so much against her values.

5.2.4.2 Group belonging or group separation

I have lost some friends on this and that is simply because they couldn't cope with it themselves. Because when I do, you know that's how it is that when we as humans do some things and take a stand it affects our surroundings both in a positive and negative way. And that means that if I have made a decision about something I have had some friends who have had such a guilty conscience that they haven't been able to stand seeing me because they haven't done it themselves. And I don't care it is their life. And then they have chosen to withdraw, I can see. (Diana, ll. 591-597)

This statement from Diana holds an important point: When people change their consumption, it can affect their social surroundings and entail negative as well as positive consequences. Maintaining sustainable lifestyles can on the one hand entail social exclusion or separation and on the other hand community and group belonging or perhaps rather degrees of separation and degrees of belonging.

Two dilemmas seem to recur across the informants' stories: how do other people perceive of me and how do I relate to others? They are interconnected and appear to be related to a certain notion of sustainable consumers as being 'very strange, exotic people that you can't really identify with':

But there is a fine balance between living like we do because that is what we think is fun and then to be I called it a missionary before. And I try to balance it. I think I am less of a missionary than maybe I could be. But that's because I think (...) that it is important that those of us who live the way we do here are not perceived as very strange, exotic, weird people that you can't really identify with. (...) You can easily be perceived as a very self-righteous person- 'Oh, but I have all the right answers'. But I am also very aware, both in relation to you and also others, of saying that there are dilemmas, you know there are a lot of things that I, we haven't solved either. (Albert, ll. 513-535)

This indicates that living and maintaining a sustainable lifestyle of reduced consumption involves the risk of being marginalised and perceived as e.g. a 'missionary'. Albert is well aware of this risk and even though he would like to influence others and finds it meaningful to be a role model for a sustainable lifestyle, he tries to balance it because he does not want to create a sense of "*us the self-righteous and then all of the fools who can't get it right*" (ll. 155-156). However, he does not mind

being a ‘missionary’ when he is participating in meetings about local tourism as he feels that it is important and he can easily justify taking it up because he works actively with local food production himself. Albert represents his lifestyle as community oriented and stresses that for him it is a unifying and social way of consuming and living, and he and his wife have been involved in e.g. organic purchasing associations and organic food clubs. He also participates in networks such as Eco-Net and finds support in the local community: *“we talk in the process about our experiences with for instance the heating systems, there are a lot of us who have similar things. (...) Support each other, talk about it, exchange experiences, mess up from time to time and laugh a little about it”* (Albert, ll. 406-410). Diana was met with a lot of comments in the beginning of her lifestyle change and people thought she had joined a sect, but gradually she has been met with more understanding and acceptance. As stated in the quote at the beginning of this section, Diana’s consumption lifestyle has cost her some friendships along the way and many arguments with her parents. She tries to avoid being judgemental towards others’ way of consuming, and when she and her family visit others they do not try to influence their way of consuming. In their house, guests will have to go along with their way of living, and Diana has set up boundaries for the children’s grandparents to limit the ‘plastic crap’ they bring into the house and encourages them to buy second-hand instead. Diana mentions that fortunately her children are not so interested in material goods and do not object to second-hand clothing probably because the others in the eco-village are also into reusing and second-hand. She also mentions that she is happy that she is not living in Copenhagen where the exposure to consumption temptations and impulses is much bigger than in the eco-village. Diana stresses that the members of the eco-village have different approaches to and areas of interest within sustainability, but that the members are bound together by a general sense of moving in the same direction.

Carl, who is living the most unusual and probably most sustainable lifestyle, says that some perceive him as fanatic. Carl feels that he is expected to compromise with regards to his food consumption when he is not at home, and he sees that other people make such compromises, but he is unwilling to do so, so he avoids people and places where his consumption lifestyle is not accepted. This separation is not represented as social exclusion, but rather as a way to protect and maintain his lifestyle. He experiences a feeling of community in the eco-village in which his lifestyle is accepted and e.g. at community dinners his dietary wishes are considered. He thinks that if he lived somewhere else, he would still be able to maintain his lifestyle because he can use his

health as an ‘excuse’. This indicates that it may be perceived as more socially acceptable to consume differently for health reasons than for ethical and environmental reasons.

Erin’s own social reference groups, her friends and family, generally share her interest in sustainable consumption and her children increase her awareness of issues of sustainability. However, her boyfriend and his friends live very different lifestyles from her and move in social circles in which it is common to own up to five cars and where they “*consume, consume, consume. And they don’t give a damn about environment or anything*” (ll. 438-439). Erin’s boyfriend shows little understanding for her sustainable consumption and calls her a puritan. She experiences a feeling of inferiority in his friend group and a pressure to consume to keep up, but she refuses to give in to the consumption pressure because she sees it as an endless quest of more and more if you buy into the idea of ‘must haves’ and

that whole pressure there is at the moment to consume. Consume to get the society’s wheels going and decrease unemployment. All of that. That it can’t be right that we have to introduce more consume-and-throw-away-culture to get... Well to produce even more surplus” (Erin, ll. 451-454).

Ben recalls several episodes in which he has been met with negative appraisals because of his consumption, for instance one friend called him a ‘rag-and-bone-man’ because he collects and reuses e.g. building material and a colleague reacted negatively to visiting him in his allotment garden because he thought it nasty and poor. Ben’s downshift was a part of a larger life change in which he divorced his wife for a woman with very different values. In his ‘old life’, he refers to two main reference groups: a group of colleagues with whom he had much in common and shared the same political values and, through his stepchildren, a group of very wealthy people. The changes in Ben’s lifestyle led to a separation from his old social groups, and he experiences conflicted emotions about this separation and about sustainable consumption. He feels that he no longer fits in with the group of well-off friends because he cannot ‘keep up’ with regards to material consumption. Also, he found that when he started living according to the views and values that he shared with his colleagues, he became separated from them. Ben identifies a double standard in society in which it is socially acceptable to focus on sustainability and climate politics and in which there is an ideal of the good life: moving to the countryside and being a part of a community. He experiences that such opinions and dreams are socially accepted and positively appraised while actually living the reality

and reducing consumption can lead to a lack of social recognition. Ben's wife was the inspiration for his lifestyle change and he relies on her support in order to maintain sustainable consumption. He also reflects that he has got a new social circle and family through his wife.

“There will always be some like social recognition that you get (...), but that you are also giving through your consumption. And of course, it is a disadvantage, of course it can be a disadvantage that you don't get that social recognition” (Frank, ll. 365-366). Frank seems very aware of the risk of social marginalisation and repeatedly states that he is careful not to lecture others to avoid ‘suffocating them’. He has not separated from his reference group, but he experiences challenges with reconciling his new consumption lifestyle with his ‘old’ group of friends and his family who perceive him as very holy. Frank tries to strike a balance by being flexible where he can be and trying to make consumption choices that are sustainable, but also ‘socially acceptable’. He gives the example of changing his old phone, which he was teased a lot about, for a newer model that was more socially acceptable to his reference group, but buying it second-hand instead of new to make the change more sustainable. He also eats meat when he dines with friends even though it clashes with his wish to reduce meat consumption. For Frank, living and maintaining sustainable consumption has meant that he has gained a new reference group, and he has become a member of different sustainability networks. He stresses the necessity of community and social support and his new reference group provides an important place to vent and discuss dilemmas and confrontations with people who lack understanding of the lifestyle.

5.2.5 Sustainable consumption over time and phase of life

“It has to do with where you are in life” (Ben, ll. 992-93)

Where one is in life, i.e. one's life phase, age and experience, seems to be influencing sustainable consumption. Even though the majority of the informants were in their sixties, the group represents different phases of life. Frank is in his late twenties, a student, unattached and with no children. Diana is in her early forties, married and with a family of four children aged six months to 17 years old. Albert, Ben and Erin are all in their sixties, working, married or living together with their partner and their children have moved away from home. Carl is also in his sixties, a disability pensioner, living alone, and in a relationship with no children.

Frank has lived and consumed sustainably for the shortest span of time, about three years. He is also, at 28, younger than the other informants and in a phase in his life in which he has few commitments and in his own words is able to lead a very free life. However, he is also on the verge of a new phase in his life, where he will start his professional working life and perhaps settle down and start a family. It is in Frank's story that a sense of doubt about maintaining the lifestyle can be discerned and relapse may be more likely. *"Yes, I think everyone has doubts, like if this makes sense or something, right. I don't know how my situation would be if I made half a million a year. I might live completely different. Maybe I wouldn't, I might not have enough, you know, I doubt it, but it might be."* (Frank, ll. 382-386) This indicates that Frank has some doubts about whether his sustainable consumption lifestyle will 'fit' in a later phase in his life. Diana's family is her main priority and with four children, she has to prioritise her time. This means e.g. that some years they have the time to grow vegetables in the communal garden and other years they rely on shops to provide them with vegetables. Diana emphasises that her sustainable consumption lifestyle has developed gradually and that it requires energy. According to her, age and experience are important factors and the better you know yourself and the more you are comfortable with your own values, the easier it is to live sustainably, and these abilities often develop with age. Albert has lived and consumed sustainably for decades and his acts and practices flow from the idea of self-sufficiency. He acknowledges that the degree of sustainability that he is practicing today is possible because he has more time on his hands than when he worked more and when his children were living at home. His work commitments still affect his sustainable lifestyle as his job entails much work abroad and, thus, unsustainable airplane transportation. Erin's lifestyle of sustainable consumption has also gradually evolved with increasing levels of awareness. Like Albert, it is especially her working life that provides challenges for her degree of sustainability as she is driving her car a lot, which is also due to convenience. Carl has been interested in nutrition and a plant-based diet for many years and his interest has grown to include other areas of sustainable consumption. In his phase of life, he has the available time to live this lifestyle, and as he is living alone with no children, he is relatively free of social commitments. Finally, Ben, perhaps most clearly, emphasises the importance of one's phase of life for sustainable consumption. He states that downshifting one's consumption is a natural consequence of getting older. In a family with children *"there were things you should, you had to spend money on because you had a family with children, so a lot of things had to run smoothly. And your footprint on the world, as it's called, was probably very high"* (ll. 608-610). Ben also points to his experience that after a full workweek at his previous job, which he did not find very satisfying, he felt a need to reward or comfort himself with material consumption.

5.3 Summation of findings

The findings showed that the transition to sustainable lifestyles of reduced consumption is motivated by various internal and external reasons, predominantly of feelings of discontent with one's way of life, and a wish to achieve a balance between one's beliefs and one's actions. Sustainable and reduced consumption lifestyles involve a range of practices from small mundane acts, such as turning off the tap while brushing teeth to time-consuming water-saving practices, and collecting one's own food in nature.

The findings showed a range of factors influencing sustainable consumption lifestyles of reduced consumption. The informants identify two major motivations for reducing consumption: It gives a sense of doing what is right for nature, for other people, and of living according to one's own values, and it provides a higher degree of freedom in that reducing consumption means reducing costs, which allows for downshifting working hours and having more leisure time to e.g. expand one's social life. Another factor was the complexity of making the right choices for sustainability. Besides their individual motivations and deliberations, belongingness and social influences were also significant factors, both the close relations with a partner or family and the relations to reference groups. The latter seemed to entail varying degrees of separation or community. Across the informants' stories were indications of risks of social marginalisation connected to a view of a socially unacceptable sustainable consumer as 'missionary', 'self-righteous' and 'fanatic'.

Finally, the findings indicated that living a sustainable consumption lifestyle might become easier with age, and that it may be more difficult to maintain a sustainable lifestyle in phases of life in which work and family take up much time and energy.

6. Analysis and discussion

6.1 *How are sustainable lifestyles lived?*

Findings showed that the informants practiced sustainable lifestyles by undertaking sustainable, reduced consumption practices from everyday mundane acts such as turning off the tap while brushing teeth to more radical, time-consuming practices such as collecting water from showers, washing up, washing hands, and using the washing machine and reusing the water for flushing toilets. They also represented different focus areas from local food consumption and reduced meat consumption to reduced consumption of water, heat and electricity as well as reduced demand for new material goods. The informants have ways of living that are characterised by efforts to reduce their consumption and live simpler lifestyles with less, but more sustainable, consumption. Findings exposed the complexity of sustainable lifestyles, as it was characteristic that the informants in some areas went to great lengths to reduce their consumption, while other areas were excepted from efforts to consume more sustainably. The informants could be viewed as ‘sustainable bricoleurs’ (Black & Cherrier 2010) whose lifestyles are made up of different pieces or practices of more or less sustainable consumption: Some pieces consist of anti-consumption practices of rejection (of e.g. gifted plastic toys), reduction (of e.g. meat) and reuse (of e.g. waste water), others of green consumption practices such as buying organic and still other pieces of ‘grey’ or unsustainable practices such as flying for work purposes or driving for reasons of convenience. It was not necessarily a goal for the informants to reduce their consumption in every consumption cluster, with transportation being the most frequently excepted consumption type. With one exception, the informants had no clear aims for reduction; rather, they spoke of increased attention to specific areas of consumption and of openness to adopting sustainable practices when they were made aware of them, e.g. Erin stopped purchasing over-packaged foods after being alerted to the problem and Carl started collecting the water from his showers when a friends told him about the importance of reducing water use. According to Diana, adopting new practices is not challenging for her:

if I see something that works or hear about something, I think ‘that’s damned clever, I’ll do that’ or something. I don’t think that much about it, it’s just if it works and I can sense it in my stomach then it’s just that, I change it right away. It is not anything I use resources on at all.” (Diana, ll. 324)

The informants seemed to share a sense of moving and developing gradually towards sustainable consumption reduction. Most of the informants employed a flexible approach to consumption in which they acknowledged that they were not and perhaps could not be absolutely sustainable consumers. Also, most of the informants were open to adapting their consumption practices so that they accepted e.g. meat consumption when they were in the homes of friends and family. Some of the informants suggested that such flexibility has to do with the length of time one has practiced sustainable consumption: “... *we have also fallen more into place with it. We have also had periods where we have been perhaps very extreme, but you often do that when you move from something, then you go to another extreme and then you find your way back to a balance*” (Diana, ll. 611-614). On the one hand, the level of awareness and willingness to adopt new practices shown by the informants suggest that living a sustainable consumption lifestyle entails a degree of positive spill-over from one area to another which is a positive outcome for sustainability as it is not enough to consume sustainably in only one consumption cluster. On the other hand, it could be argued that the impact of their lifestyles for sustainability is reduced by the fact that the informants generally allow themselves to be unsustainable in some areas and employ a flexible approach in which they adapt their consumption in some social contexts. According to Cherrier (2012), flexibility as the absence of absolute norms of consumption and the ability to achieve community with others through one's consumption lead to sustainable lifestyles being experienced as natural. However, this says little about the outcome for sustainability, i.e. whether this flexibility means that the lifestyle is in fact less sustainable. It is perhaps telling that Carl who appears to be leading the most sustainable lifestyle and does not compromise with his sustainable practices is also the most isolated from social contexts (he is living alone, unemployed, and with no contact to his family). Together, this suggest that flexibility and the exception of some consumption clusters facilitate sustainable lifestyles and enable achieving or maintaining community with others, but it also appears to limit the degree of sustainability one can achieve.

In the literature review, transition was defined as referring to change from one thing to another and the concept of the consumer transition as a voluntary change from a consumption-intensive lifestyle to a more sustainable, simpler lifestyle with less consumption. It was noted that the concept of a transition denotes a process with a natural beginning and a destination. The two theories, PTI and the TTM, both explain change as a process of stages. PTI emphasises that the process, or transition, does not lead to ‘perfect’ or absolute sustainable consumers and its final stage is one of learning and striving for integration of new and old lifestyle elements. The TTM does not view change as linear,

but argues that relapsing and recycling through the stages are the norm rather than the exception. Overall, the informants do identify a specific beginning, a triggering event that led them to question their lifestyle and increased their awareness towards their consumption habits, e.g. Ben's meeting his present wife, Diana's meeting with a yoga teacher, and Frank's climate seminar. This contemplation or 'awakening' does not necessarily lead to changes right away, rather, it gradually builds and develops and also not everything is changed. The contemplation is in line with the first stage(s) of the PTI and TTM. However, the PTI stages of separation and socialisation are less straightforward in the informants' stories. The findings suggest that the informants do not seem to progress through these stages in the way the theory poses. Separation and socialisation seem to be happening as parallel processes that take different forms and significance for different informants. For instance, Albert emphasises socialisation and frames his lifestyle as community oriented and places weight on the social groups that have arisen and arise from his sustainable consumption. Separation for Albert is something that should be avoided, and he stresses the importance of dialogue and openness for sustainable consumption. In contrast, separation for Carl represents freedom from judgement and allows him to preserve his lifestyle whereas socialisation and group membership is less important as long as his lifestyle is accepted. For Ben, separation has been the outcome of changing his consumption since he no longer felt he could keep up with and gain social recognition from his former reference group, which is a source of internal tension and struggle for him. Socialisation for Ben mainly happens through his wife and her friends and family. Frank has gained access to new social groups through his consumption change and socialisation is a crucial element for him. He tries to avoid separation from his other reference groups by employing flexibility and toning down his sustainable lifestyle when he is with them. This suggests that separation and socialisation are not merely stages that the individual live through in a linear matter, but that they may happen in parallel and act differently for different people.

Both the TTM and the PTI have a final stage, which for TTM involves avoiding relapse and consolidating the lifestyle and for PTI involves striving to integrate old and new lifestyles and find a way to live according to one's values while being a part of one's social environment as well. Both could perhaps be translated into ensuring the *sustainability* of the sustainable lifestyle. The findings show that the informants are not solely maintaining their existing practices and lifestyle, in time they are also developing new practices and, thus, striving to do more and include more sustainable and consumption reducing practices into their lifestyle. For the majority of the informants their sustainable lifestyle was no longer new. It had grown and developed through several years of their

lives, for some even for decades. The informant who had experienced the most recent change of lifestyle also gave voice to the highest degree of doubts about continuing his reduced consumption. This seems to indicate that the intensity of doubts and tensions declines with time, even though dilemmas still occurred for the informants that had lived the longest with reduced consumption. This may mean that the 'striving' that is referred to in the PTI changes with time. At the beginning of the stage, it may refer to – as set out in the theory – striving to reconcile old and new lifestyles and learning to live with others and with oneself, but later it may also involve striving for further change and expansion of the lifestyle, i.e. a development from striving to *be* in a new reality with less consumption to striving to *do* more. It appears that the transition to lifestyles of sustainable consumption has no fixed point of termination. Instead, it seems to be a continuous change process with gradual adoption of new practices when time and energy permit it, an adoption that appears to become easier with time. The informants did not voice any visions of when they were 'finished' and, generally, there were areas of their consumption that were excepted for reasons of work requirements, convenience, or social issues.

It is interesting that there seems to be no vision for when a sustainable lifestyle is achieved successfully. For instance, the TTM was developed for addictions and health behaviour, and it could be argued that the behavioural change of such behaviour has a more straightforward termination. You have successfully ended your addiction to cigarettes when you no longer smoke and have not been doing so for a certain amount of time (according to the TTM more than six months). However, the risk of relapse persists, and the maintenance stage can last a lifetime, e.g. an alcoholic will always be an alcoholic. It is less straightforward to determine when e.g. a healthy lifestyle has been achieved. However, there is a range of media representations of how a healthy lifestyle looks like and a myriad of unofficial and official experts who supply advice on which diet is healthy and how much exercise one should strive for in order to live healthily. Moreover, government supports a healthy lifestyle and health appears to have become an important status symbol. In contrast, it is difficult to determine when a sustainable lifestyle is achieved, especially if it is understood to be based on consumption and consumer demand reduction. Does a sustainable lifestyle translate into consumption reduction in all consumption clusters? Does it involve a certain percentage of reduction, e.g. to per capita emissions of 2 tons of CO₂ per year? It could be argued that neither media nor government seem to offer many representations of sustainable lifestyles. This is not to say that no information is offered with regards to sustainable and environmentally friendly consumption. There are a lot of available information and awareness campaigns about e.g. turning

off stand-by electricity and recycling, but the discourses on lifestyles based on consumption reduction appear to be less available. The notion of consumption reduction clashes with the weight on GDP that is prominent in most Western countries and especially in a time of financial crisis, the most dominant story about consumption is that there should be more consumption, not less (Thøgersen 2005). That consumers should buy more, not less, want more, not less. There seems to exist a scale of acceptability or glass floor (Cherrier et al 2012) which influences how much one can change, i.e. reduce, his or her consumption level before being classified as deviant or ridiculed as a naïve tree-hugger. The debate on sustainability and sustainable consumption does not seem to include many voices that question consumption levels and seek to answer how much consumption is enough and how much is too much, i.e. what is sustainable and what is not. This may provide one explanation to why there seems to be no clear vision for what a sustainable lifestyle looks like and when it is reached, and thus no fixed point of termination for the consumer transition towards sustainable consumption.

6.2 Maintaining reduced consumption – between the self and the social environment

The literature on sustainable consumption largely agrees that the consumer transition towards sustainable consumption is paved with barriers (e.g. Thøgersen 2005, Isenhour 2010) and that reducing one's consumption is a continuous struggle connected with tension, conflicts and risks of marginalisation (Cherrier & Murray 2007, Lee et al 2013, Moisander & Pesonen 2002, Cherrier et al 2012). Based on this, it could be assumed that living and maintaining reduced consumption requires resistance and persistence and involves risks of relapse into less sustainable lifestyles. The assumption was only to some degree confirmed by the findings. The informants did experience dilemmas, challenges and tensions in maintaining lifestyles of sustainable, reduced consumption, but they generally did not frame their lifestyle as a burden or a continuous struggle and most of the informants experienced no doubts about continuing the lifestyle, rather as Albert expresses it “*No, I don't think so. [laughs] No, I haven't had that, no on the contrary. I have actually thought about how to expand it.*” (ll. 346-347). Overall, the informants were not concerned with avoiding relapse, which could be due to several influencing factors and the interaction between these factors.

6.2.1 The meaning of individual motivation

“You know, I think that when you make a choice as an individual then there are not many of the external things that affect you.” (Diana, ll. 667-668)

A red thread runs through Diana’s narrative, which is the emphasis on the personal, conscious choice to live and consume in a way that brings her into accordance with her values and makes her happy. In closing, she suggests a connection between how people feel about themselves and their lives and the way they behave towards nature and the environment. This indicates the importance of individual forces such as motivation and self-determination.

SDT posits that the support of intrinsic needs for competence, relatedness and autonomy provides motivation, which gives the individual energy to perform and maintain acts, practices and lifestyles. Ryan & Deci suggest that: “... *motivation is perhaps the critical variable in producing maintained change*” (2000: 76). SDT also argues that people who are internally motivated pursue activities with more joy, effort and persistence than people who are externally motivated, and that the former experience more well-being than the latter. This indicates that the degree to which needs are fulfilled influence the maintenance of sustainable lifestyles of reduced consumption and the degree of struggle experienced by the informants, and it was evident from the findings that some informants struggle more than others. If the informants were placed along the SDT Self-Determination Continuum (Ryan & Deci 2000: 72), it would illustrate that the degree to which they are self-determined in their motivation varies. This is reflected in the findings, which showed two main motivations for consuming sustainably: a sense of doing what is right and living according to one’s own values and downshifting one’s consumption levels to achieve more freedom and leisure time. Albert, Carl, Diana and Erin place most weight on the former, whereas Frank and especially Ben emphasise the latter. It could be argued that Diana and Albert display the highest degree of self-determined, intrinsic motivation. They are both living and consuming sustainably because it reflects their values and provides them with a feeling of satisfaction and happiness. According to Albert, he is also motivated by the ability to act as a role model for sustainability, and he frames sustainable consumption in the larger context of globalisation and supporting civil society over consumer society. He is then also motivated by reasons external to him, but these are fully internalised and integrated as a part of his self. Both appear to feel competent through their consumption, which is especially true for Albert, who achieves feelings of competence and self-efficacy through his work on the farm. Both Diana and Albert have strong, supportive relationships

with their partners who share their values and both express that they have the opportunity to be a part of social groups e.g. in the eco-village. Finally, both experience that their lifestyle is a result of a conscious choice, as stressed by Diana:

... I think it is such a personal choice and I think everyone could do it really. You could easily make a community like we have in a co-operative association in Copenhagen, really you could easily do that, think like that. (...) Everyone could do that really. I think it's more a question of doing, I don't think there is anything special or unique in it. I think the common thing for many of us here is that we have made a choice that it is something we want to spend time doing. (ll. 521-529)

It could be argued that Carl and Erin are more extrinsically motivated than Diana and Albert as their sustainable consumption serves purposes that are more external to the self, i.e. environmental and health reasons. However, they appear to have taken in these purposes, and e.g. Carl experiences that his way of consuming gives him an identity in the eco-village, which indicates integration of sustainable consumption into his sense of self. Carl experiences competence e.g. through his great knowledge of plants and nutrition and Erin through e.g. her practices of repairing and limiting waste. However, Erin does not always feel competent in purchase situations as she feels that it can be very complex to make the right choices for sustainability, for instance if the trustworthiness of eco-labelling is questioned in the media. Erin feels a sense of relatedness through her consumption, both because she feels she is benefiting future generations and because many of her friends and family members practice sustainable consumption as well. She is challenged, however, by her partner and his social circle in which sustainable and reduced consumption goes against the norm and high consumption levels are associated with success. She cannot avoid these people as she would otherwise be inclined to do. For Carl, separation from judgemental reference groups appears more important than relatedness. On the other hand, he lives in an eco-village in which his lifestyle is if not encouraged and supported then tolerated and accepted. Separation for Carl enables him to feel freedom to consume the way he wishes to. The social environment in which Erin lives does not fully support her autonomy to consume sustainably, she feels a lack of support from her boyfriend and also criticises the lack of transparency in production as well as the consumption pressure in the media to consume to keep the wheels turning.

Finally, it could be argued that Frank and, most prominently, Ben display the highest degree of external motivation. Both emphasise downshifting their consumption in order to achieve an external outcome: reduced expenses enabling reduced working hours and more leisure time. Ben emphasises that for the individual reduced consumption often has to do with reducing one's expenses first and foremost and that "... *many of the things with lifestyle and consumption, they are not so will-dependent. It has to do with where you are in life, with the people you meet. It's not so much idealism.*" (ll. 992-994). Frank, and to a lesser degree Ben, also voices environmental concerns. Still, the main motivation is freeing up time through reduced consumption, and for instance, Frank constantly reminds himself of what he is getting out of reducing his consumption, i.e. more time for his interests and social life. Frank and Ben both feel competent to reduce their consumption, and Ben gets positive feedback on his competence in his focus areas of water and energy reduction as he can tell from his bills that he is successful in consuming less. Most of the practices Ben carries out appear to be contingent upon the external reward or reinforcement of saving money. Frank feels relatedness through his sustainable consumption in one reference group whereas he tones it down in order to maintain membership to another reference group. Frank feels relatedness to a higher extent than Ben since Ben's consumption lifestyle is mainly valued and supported by his wife whereas he has separated from former reference groups because he no longer felt he could keep up or gain social recognition through his consumption. Neither Ben nor Frank seem to feel free in their sustainable consumption: Ben frames sustainable consumption as something that is not 'will-dependent' and Frank describes having to consider what is 'socially acceptable' in the reference group he values belonging to as well as the difficulties of making the right sustainable choices.

The findings showed variation in the degree to which informants were self-determined in their motivation with Ben as the most externally motivated and Diana and Albert as the most internally motivated. This does not suggest that Diana and Albert do not experience dilemmas, but it does offer an explanation to the degree of struggle and well-being the informants experience as Ben shows greater signs of struggle and discontent and Diana and Albert express more satisfaction and well-being. Still, Ben is able to maintain his sustainable lifestyle despite his struggles which may indicate that a supportive relationship to a partner and strong external reinforcement provides enough motivation to maintain sustainable consumption, even though the type of motivation he experiences may not provide a high degree of well-being.

6.2.2 A matter of belonging

Findings showed that all informants gave voice to the risk of marginalisation connected with leading a sustainable lifestyle. This confirms the literature, which points to what might be termed a scale of acceptability in sustainable consumption meaning that there seems to be a point at which sustainable lifestyles become perceived as too extreme, naïve or asocial (Moisander & Pesonen 2002, Isenhour 2010). Cherrier et al (2012) refers to this point as a 'glass floor' of socio-cultural barriers to downward carbon consumption. The informants have been met with evaluations such as holy, environmental fanatic, puritan, self-righteous, fanatic, missionary, sect, goody-goody, etc. Following SIT, such negative appraisals from reference groups can lead to tensions and doubts because group belonging lies at the basis of social identity, and people generally seek to follow the social norms of the group that they see themselves as belonging to. When someone changes his or her consumption lifestyle, it may be seen as a protest against and negative evaluation of the values of the reference group, which can lead to a negative social identity for other members of the group. This provides an explanation to the negative appraisals. Following SIT, if a person's reference group does not value certain behaviour, this person is less likely to keep it up, which indicates that negative appraisals and risks of marginalisation can be threatening to the maintenance of sustainable lifestyles. However, this challenge is not perceived as big enough for the informants to seriously call into question their sustainable lifestyle, and they relate to the risk of marginalisation in different ways. Albert finds that there is a very delicate balance between being a positive role model for a sustainable lifestyle and being marginalised as a self-righteous missionary, which makes it important for him to voice the dilemmas and difficulties in consuming sustainably to avoid alienating others. However, this mainly relates to his wish to influence others towards sustainability. He is not concerned about his own ability to maintain his lifestyle as sustainable consumption has become integrated in his sense of self and in the common goals and values he shares with his wife. Albert finds his lifestyle to be very social and oriented towards community. Like Albert, Diana's motivation to maintain her sustainable consumption lifestyle is not constrained by the risk of marginalisation even though she has experienced losing friends who have distanced themselves from her because of her change of lifestyle. She emphasises that she has made a choice to live and consume in a way that makes her happy and that she lives according to her own values. Also, she and her husband share the same values and support each other. Furthermore, Diana stresses that she has come to rest more comfortably in her lifestyle over time and with age whereas in the beginning she spent a lot of time and energy on finding her feet. Erin is especially confronted

with the risk of marginalisation in her boyfriend's social circle in which she experiences lack of understanding and social pressure to consume more. Still, she maintains her lifestyle because it is in line with her values and, as SIT would explain, because she is not committed to his group of friends, i.e. she does not really identify with them and thus, feels less need to conform to their social norms. Carl and Ben have both related to the risk of marginalisation by separating themselves from reference groups in which they no longer felt they fitted in or could find social recognition. In both cases, this separation can be seen as necessary to protect the lifestyle. Whereas for Carl the separation allows him to live and consume according to his needs and values, it represents a source of struggle and tension for Ben, seemingly because he still ascribes value to and feel emotional involvement with his former reference groups. Furthermore, he does not perceive himself as belonging to a new reference group, but his lifestyle appears to be maintained through the support of and community with his wife and the external reinforcement of reducing expenses and work hours and increasing leisure time. In contrast to Ben, Frank has maintained his group memberships even though his consumption has changed. He deals with the risk of marginalisation by striving for flexibility and socially acceptable compromise between his values and the norms of the group when he spends time with his 'old' reference group that does not share his values. For Frank, it is crucial that he has become a part of new reference groups that have sustainable consumption values as a common denominator and this group membership represents an opportunity to vent and discuss challenges. Also, he is reinforced by the opportunity to have more leisure time due to reducing his expenses.

Living and consuming sustainably involves the risk of social marginalisation, but the informants find ways to overcome this challenge and maintain their sustainable consumption lifestyles. It could be argued that they are influenced by different factors and that the degree to which they experience struggles varies accordingly. The literature on sustainable consumption emphasises the importance of social support as does the theoretical framework, but with basis in the findings, it can be discussed how much people actually need a supporting group membership in order to maintain their lifestyle. Diana's quote which opened the last section suggested that when a person makes a conscious, well-reflected choice as an individual, this person is less likely to be affected by external things, which might be rephrased to the statement that the more people live according to their values and regulations are internalised and integrated, the less likely they are to be affected by external pressure such as social pressure. The findings give some evidence to this statement. Diana and Albert who are the most internally regulated and motivated also appear to be less affected by

group influences. Both value feelings of working together for common goals and Albert sees the experience of community as a valuable part of his lifestyle, but neither express reliance on group membership to maintain their ways of living and consuming. Furthermore, neither Diana nor Albert connect their lifestyle with struggle even though it involves e.g. purchase dilemmas. Rather, they both emphasise an experience of gaining something rather than giving something up. In contrast, Ben and Frank are the most externally motivated and both voice experiences of social pressure and loss of social recognition connected with consumption reduction. It could be asked, then, how this external pressure affects them and which outcome it has for sustainability that they experience social pressure and lack of understanding and recognition. For Ben, it appears to result in more struggles and less sense of well-being, e.g. he repeatedly refers to feeling judged by others. However, the external motivation of being able to reduce expenses to provide more freedom is an important reinforcement for him, but perhaps the most important maintaining factor for Ben is his relationship with his wife, who supports him and for whom sustainable consumption is a crucial contributor to happiness. These factors are enough for Ben to maintain his reduced consumption, but they suggest that his lifestyle rests on a vulnerable foundation as it appears to be to some degree contingent on financial gain and the value ascribed by his wife to reduced consumption. In order to deal with the external pressure, Frank relies on flexibility in his sustainable practices in order to maintain his community with and sense of belonging to his 'old' reference group. Moreover, he has become a part of new reference groups centred on sustainability and it is through these groups that he finds support and a place to vent frustrations and discuss challenges. It could be argued that flexibility helps avoid marginalisation and loss of valued social ties. However, it might mean less sustainable practices, e.g. less reduction of meat consumption than Frank is striving for. Frank's new group memberships are clearly valuable for him, and he expresses a greater need for group belonging than the other informants. This could indicate that belonging and relatedness is more important when lifestyles are more externally motivated, but it could also be influenced by the fact that Frank is the youngest informant and has lived the sustainable lifestyle for the shortest span of time. It could be interesting for further studies to explore the influence of reference groups relative to age and the duration of sustainable lifestyles.

6.2.3 Outcomes for sustainability

An interesting question to look into is how the different influencing factors come together to create sustainable outcomes. Of course, this depends on how sustainable outcomes are understood, and the

substantial reservation should be made that this study has not measured the carbon footprint of its informants, nor has it been the intention to do so. It could be an interesting aspect for further studies to include measurements of carbon footprint to perhaps come closer to understanding the 'glass floor' or scale of acceptability for reduced consumption. Nevertheless, two of the informants, Carl and Albert, provide especially relevant examples in the question of sustainable outcomes. Carl most likely has the smallest carbon footprint of the informants as he travels only by public transportation, never travels by airplane, and sources most of his food from the nature around the eco-village and the communal garden. He exemplifies that it is not always necessary to be a part of a group in order to maintain a sustainable lifestyle, rather, it could be argued that the enabling and maintaining factors for Carl are that he lives according to his values and that he has separated himself from constraining social influences. He stresses the absence of opposition in the eco-village more than the presence of social support. Conversely, Albert represents the opposite of separation and isolation for sustainability. He is actively engaged in the local community and emphasises the meaning of being able to act as a role model for a sustainable lifestyle. In many ways, his aim is to influence the community around him to consume more sustainably. Albert and his wife are almost self-sufficient in food from their farm and self-sufficient in energy and generally consume sustainably in all clusters but transportation due to time consumption and work requirements. Transportation is a significant consumption cluster, and Albert is searching for solutions that will make his transportation habits more sustainable. Albert sees his lifestyle as oriented towards community and he feels related to different groups, but the most important maintaining factor for Albert is that he is doing what he thinks is right and living according to his values. The moral and practical support of his wife is also important to him and, as he explains it, their values and ways of living and consuming have grown together over the years and they help each other with the practical work on the farm. It could be argued that Carl, who is somewhat internally motivated and has separated himself from reference groups to protect his lifestyle, most likely represents the most sustainable outcome in terms of consumption reduction, but that Albert, who is internally motivated, experiences group belonging and has a supportive partner, contributes most to sustainable consumption outcomes as he is actively seeking to influence his surroundings to live and consume sustainably.

6.3 Summation of analysis and discussion

Sustainable lifestyles are lived and practiced through a range of different sustainable and reduced consumption practices from the mundane to the more radical. In some areas, the informants practiced strict reductions and went to great lengths to achieve these while other areas were excepted for reasons of e.g. work requirements or convenience, which suggests that sustainable lifestyles are complex and pieced together by anti-consumption practices, green consumption practices and some grey (unsustainable) practices. It was argued that flexibility and the exception of some consumption clusters facilitate sustainable lifestyles and enable achieving or maintaining community with others, but it also seems to limit the degree of sustainability one can achieve.

The consumer transition towards sustainability can be understood as a process of change taking place in stages. Overall, the informants identified a specific beginning for their lifestyle change leading to contemplation and gradually to change in behaviour, which is in line with the TTM and PTI. However, it was argued that separation and socialisation are not merely stages that informants move through in a linear manner, they can happen in parallel and act differently for different people, e.g. separation can be perceived as necessary to preserve and maintain the sustainable lifestyle or it can be avoided by practicing flexibility and compromise. Furthermore, it was argued that informants not only maintained their lifestyles, in time they were also oriented towards adopting new practices and developing and expanding their lifestyle. It was indicated that going beyond maintaining to developing was connected to the duration of the lifestyle as the informant who had lived with sustainable consumption for the shortest span of time was the only one to express doubts about continuing. It was argued that PTI's striving stage could entail both striving to reconcile old and new lifestyles, but also, later, striving to develop and consume even more sustainably. It was found that the consumer transition towards sustainable lifestyles appears to have no natural point of termination, and informants voiced no view of what a 'finished' sustainable lifestyle might look like. This might be influenced by a lack of representations of sustainable lifestyles in public discourse.

It was found that the degree to which informants were self-determined in their motivation for maintaining sustainable lifestyles varied, and that the informants who were more internally motivated and regulated, e.g. experienced higher degrees of fulfilment of their needs for competence, relatedness and autonomy, also experienced less struggle and more satisfaction and

well-being than informants who were more externally motivated. However, it was noted that Ben, who was the most externally motivated and experienced the most struggles, did manage to maintain his lifestyle which suggests that a supportive relationship to a partner and strong external reinforcement can provide enough motivation to maintain sustainable consumption even though it may not provide a high degree of well-being.

It was argued that maintenance of sustainable lifestyles involves a risk of social marginalisation because changed consumption, following SIT, can be perceived as a negative evaluation of the reference group. Still, it was found that this challenge was not strong enough to hinder maintenance. There was some evidence to suggest that the more people live according to their values and regulations are internalised and integrated, the less likely they are to be affected by external pressure such as social pressure. It was also argued that the risk of social marginalisation could lead to flexibility or separation, the latter could be perceived as enabling or constraining. Even when separation was framed in the context of struggle, strong external reinforcement along with a supportive, helping relationship with a partner were significant enough to ensure maintenance. Flexibility and membership of new reference groups were especially emphasised by Frank. That could indicate that belonging and relatedness is more important when lifestyles are more externally motivated, but it could also be influenced by the fact that he had lived the sustainable lifestyle for the shortest span of time.

Finally, the outcome of different factors for sustainability was discussed, and it was argued that separation in combination with internal motivation appear to lead to the most sustainable outcome in terms of consumption reduction, but that internal motivation, feelings of belonging and shared values and workload with a supportive partner might contribute most to sustainable consumption outcomes if it leads to influencing surroundings towards sustainable lifestyles.

7. Conclusion

This thesis originated from a personal and academic interest in sustainable consumption and in what makes some people successful in consuming sustainably over time. The purpose was to explore how sustainable lifestyles based on reduced consumption are lived and maintained. An exploratory, qualitative approach was employed in order to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of maintained behavioural change for sustainability. As such an approach calls for rich, detailed descriptions and experiences, it was chosen to do six qualitative research interviews with persons who had voluntarily reduced their consumption to lead sustainable lifestyles. A theoretical framework consisting of PTI, the TTM, SDT and SIT was used to explore, analyse, and discuss the findings. The choice of theories was in line with a dialectical approach focusing on the interaction between individual and social forces.

On the basis of the analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that sustainable lifestyles are complex and can be understood as pieced together by various practices from the mundane to the more radical and that they typically consist of elements of anti-consumption, green consumption and grey or unsustainable consumption. It was indicated that flexibility and the exception of some consumption clusters facilitate sustainable lifestyles and enable community with others, but it also appears to constrain the degree of sustainability one can achieve. The following factors were found to influence maintenance of sustainable lifestyles: the internal motivation of doing what is right and living according to one's values and the external motivation of downshifting one's consumption to reduce expenses and achieve more freedom and leisure time, the complexity of making the right choices for sustainability, belongingness and group influences, and finally the duration of the lifestyle and one's phase of life.

Moreover, it can be concluded that maintaining sustainable lifestyles of consuming less involves risks of social marginalisation, which makes out a social challenge. The study showed a tendency to suggest that the more people live according to their values and regulations are internalised and integrated, the less likely they are to be affected by external pressure such as social pressure. It was also argued that the risk of social marginalisation could lead to flexibility or separation, the latter could be perceived as enabling or constraining. When separation was framed in the context of struggle and loss of social recognition, strong external reinforcement along with a supportive, helping relationship with a partner were significant factors to ensure maintenance. It was indicated

that belongingness and relatedness to a reference group might be more important when lifestyles are externally motivated and that the importance of group belonging may be influenced by the duration of the lifestyle.

Furthermore, it can be concluded that in time informants were not only maintaining their lifestyles, but were striving to develop them further and adopt more sustainable practices. It was found that the consumer transition could be perceived as a gradual development with no natural point of termination.

Finally, it was suggested that separation in combination with internal motivation might lead to the most sustainable outcome in terms of consumption reduction, but that internal motivation, feelings of belonging, and shared values and workload with a supportive partner might contribute most to sustainable consumption outcomes if it leads to influencing surroundings towards sustainable lifestyles.

8. Reflections

At some point in the process of writing this thesis, I decided to draw up a personal thesis contract with my own learning objectives to remind myself that the most important thing for me was to learn and develop my skills, knowledge, and competences. The most important objectives were that at the end, I should have:

- Obtained new knowledge about sustainable consumption and sustainable lifestyles and especially that of downshifting one's consumption to consume less
- Gained experience with designing and carrying out a qualitative interview study

These objectives represent a novice researcher's exploration of new territories. Sustainable consumption is a rather new field of research and the topic of maintaining sustainable consumption lifestyles has received little attention in the literature. Furthermore, I had limited experience with carrying out primary research so I was venturing out into new territory both theoretically and methodologically, and I was eager to learn. In exploratory research, you do not know at the onset exactly what you are going to find, and my biggest challenge and most important experience has been how to deal with this. Consciously or not, I had a notion of the project as a linear process with a series of steps that had to be done just right. Instead, I found myself navigating in something altogether different and experienced firsthand what had been a central lesson in a previous course I had taken in project management: Projects are imperfect, messy, and unpredictable because the world is imperfect, messy, and unpredictable. You do not always have the information you need when you need it, and you have to adapt to changes. I could add that qualitative research is imperfect, messy, and unpredictable because people are imperfect, messy, and unpredictable. They do not always say what you expect them to say and they are often not easy to place into neat categories. This makes exploratory, qualitative research difficult. It also makes it interesting and worthwhile. For me, it meant that I had to approach the project with hermeneutic endeavour and continuously going back to previous sections and review and rewrite them in order to be able to move forward. This experience of doing exploratory, qualitative research was a very important lesson to learn on a personal as well as academic level, and I came to see it as a learning process.

On a more strictly academic level, this study may be thought of as a pilot study into the maintenance of sustainable and reduced consumption lifestyles. It was undertaken with a broad understanding of *consuming less* as key to achieving sustainable consumption. Further research

could benefit from narrowing the understanding further and a particular area of interest may be to focus on the effect of *buying less* on the self and on social relationships. In a study by Isenhour (2010), the author found that informants who were aware, interested and committed to sustainable consumption identified shopping less as one of the most important sustainable practices. However, the informants experienced shopping less as especially difficult due to a felt pressure to conform to social norms and expectations. It would be relevant to look into the anti-consumption practice of shopping less in a specific salient context e.g. efforts to shop less in the context of holiday celebrations or the growing non-shopping movements within fashion consumption. The study could recruit participants from a rural and an urban context to include the influence of place (Banbury et al 2012) and could follow the informants in a form of longitudinal study e.g. through a diary-interview method (Alaszewski 2006, Zimmermann & Wieder 1977), which would allow for gaining a deep understanding of “*the barriers, conflicts, tensions and struggles to reject or avoid consumption*” (Lee et al 2013: 187). The diary-interview method was considered for this study as it could give access to large amounts of rich data and reduce some of the disadvantages of research interviews such as communication problems. However, it requires much time and resources to develop the design, recruit willing informants, and process the large amounts of data appropriately and this was thought too extensive for the study. Still, in a large-scale study with more available time and resources, a mixed-method approach such as the diary-interview method could be very advantageous.

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10. Appendices

- Appendix 1: Advertisement for informants (original)
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- Appendix 3: Interview guide I and II (originals)
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- Appendix 5: Dyssekilde eco-village

10.1 Appendix 1: Advertisement for informants (original)

Interviewpersoner søges til speciale om bæredygtige forbrugere

Jeg er studerende på Copenhagen Business School og skriver speciale om bæredygtige forbrugere. Jeg søger derfor personer, der har tid og lyst til at sætte en times tid af til at medvirke i et interview. Interviewet foregår som en samtale, hvor du får et rum til refleksion og mulighed for at fortælle din historie.

Jeg arbejder ud fra et syn på bæredygtigt forbrug som et markant reduceret forbrug af ressourcer. Jeg søger personer, der tidligere har levet en forbrugsintensiv livsstil og for mere end seks måneder siden har lagt sin livsstil om, dvs. personer der kan nikke genkendende til følgende udsagn:

- Jeg har frivilligt valgt at leve et enkelt liv, hvor jeg forbruger mindre (f.eks. bruger offentlig transport eller deler bil frem for at køre i egen bil, flyver mindre, spiser mindre kød eller vegetarisk/vegansk, genbruger, reparerer eller låner i stedet for at købe nyt, etc.)
- Jeg har tidligere levet med et højere forbrug, men har nu valgt at leve en mindre forbrugsorienteret livsstil for miljøets skyld og/eller fordi jeg mener, at det er bedre for mig
- Jeg har reduceret mit forbrug, indkomst eller arbejdstimer
- Jeg har levet på denne måde i mere end et halvt år, og det er sådan jeg gerne vil leve på langt sigt
- Jeg mener, at det at forbruge mindre er en central del af det at leve bæredygtigt

Så hvis du har lyst til at medvirke, vil jeg være glad, da du gør det muligt for mig at lave mit empiriske speciale og lære mere om det at leve bæredygtigt med mindre forbrug.

Du kan kontakte mig på trine_helledie@hotmail.com eller på 25 39 17 05.

Alle oplysninger behandles naturligvis anonymt og fortroligt.

Mange hilsner og på forhånd tak for din hjælp

Trine Helledie

Specialestuderende på cand.ling.merc, Copenhagen Business School

10.2 Appendix 2: Advertisement for informants (translated version)

Interview persons wanted for thesis on sustainable consumers

I am a student at Copenhagen Business School and am writing my thesis on sustainable consumers. For this reason, I am looking for persons who have the time and want (lyst) to spend an hour on taking part in an interview. The interview will take place as a conversation where you will have room for reflection and the opportunity to tell your story.

I work with a view of sustainable consumption as a significantly reduced use of resources. I am looking for persons who have formerly lived a resource intensive lifestyle and who more than six months ago have changed their lifestyles, i.e. persons who can relate to the following statements:

- I have voluntarily chosen to live a simple life where I consume less (e.g. use public transport or share a car instead of driving my own car, fly less, eat less meat or vegetarian/vegan, recycle, repair or borrow instead of buying new, etc.)
- I have formerly lived with higher consumption, but have now chosen to live a less consumption intensive lifestyle for the sake of the environment or because I believe that is better for me.
- I have reduced my consumption, income or working hours.

- I have lived like this for more than six months and this is how I want to live in the longer term.
- I believe that consuming less is a central part of living sustainably.

Så if you would like to take part, I would be glad as it makes it possible for me to do my empirical thesis and learn more about living sustainably with less consumption.

You can contact me at trine_helledie@hotmail.com or 25 39 17 05.

Of course, all information will be treated anonymously and confidentially.

Best regards and thank you in advance for your help

Trine Helledie

Master's student at cand.ling.merc, Copenhagen Business School

10.3 Appendix 3: Interview guide (original)

10.3.1 Interview guide I

Briefing

- Jeg hedder, som du ved, Trine Helledie, og jeg studerer på CBS og er i gang med at skrive mit speciale. Jeg er både akademisk og personligt interesseret i bæredygtigt forbrug, og i mit speciale er det centralt, at bæredygtigt forbrug hænger sammen med at forbruge mindre i det hele taget.
- Er det i orden, at jeg optager interviewet?
- Det interview, vi skal begynde på om lidt, er en vigtig del af den undersøgelse, jeg er i gang med, der handler om hvordan personer skærer ned på deres forbrug, og hvordan de lever en livsstil med mindre, og derfor mere bæredygtigt, forbrug.
- Jeg optager interviewet, sådan at vi ikke skal koncentrere os om at huske undervejs, men bare kan snakke frit.
- Jeg regner med, at du har en times tid til at snakke med mig. Udgangspunktet er, at det er en samtale om et emne, vi begge to er interesserede i, og det er din historie om din

livsstilsændring, der er det centrale. Du kan bare tale frit, og jeg vil gerne have så detaljerede beskrivelser som muligt.

- Hvis jeg stiller et spørgsmål, som du ikke er helt sikker på, hvordan skal forstås, skal du bare spørge mig.
- Jeg har en samtykkeerklæring med, som jeg vil bede dig om at læse igennem og underskrive. I den har jeg skrevet, at interviewet vil blive optaget, at citater fra interviewet vil blive brugt til mit speciale, og at du vil komme til at være anonym.
- Har du nogle spørgsmål, før vi begynder?

Baggrund for de stillede spørgsmål	Interviewspørgsmål
<p><u>Indledende spørgsmål</u>, der anvendes til at åbne op for interviewet og få interviewpersonens egen forståelse af og beskrivelse af sin livsstilsændring. Etablere en forståelse af hvor meget interviewpersonen har ændret sin livsstil og få indtryk af personens før og efter.</p>	<p><i>Vi taler sammen, fordi du har sagt ja til at dele din oplevelse med at skære ned på forbruget. Jeg vil gerne vide noget om, hvorfor og hvordan folk forbruger. Jeg har nogle spørgsmål, men hvis der er noget udover dem, som du synes er vigtigt, må du endelig tage det op.</i></p> <p><i>Jeg vil starte med at præsentere mig selv kort: Jeg er 27, jeg bor i København med min kæreste. Jeg læser på Handelshøjskolen, og jeg har arbejdet med at skære ned på mit eget forbrug i et års tid. Jeg spiser meget mindre kød, køber mindre tøj og prøver at spare på vand og varme. Hvad med dig, kan du give mig en kort beskrivelse af dig selv?</i></p> <p>Hvornår skete den her ændring af dit forbrug af og hvorfor?</p> <p>Hvordan skete det?</p> <p>Hvilke omstændigheder (mennesker eller begivenheder) fik dig til at lave den ændring?</p> <p>Kan du beskrive, hvad du gør anderledes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hvordan er det forskelligt i forhold til tid? - Hvordan er det forskelligt i forhold til penge?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hvordan er det forskelligt i forhold til plads? - Hvordan er det forskelligt i forhold til hvor bekvemt det er? <p>Hvilke daglige rutiner har du lavet om på?</p> <p>Hvilke har du ikke lavet om på?</p> <p>- Hvorfor?</p> <p>Hvorfor har du ikke ændret (eksempler)</p> <p>Hvilke fordele er der ved det?</p> <p>Er der nogle nye aktiviteter, du bruger tid på?</p> <p>(Spørg om konkrete eksempler)</p>
<p><u>Livsstilen - naturlig eller besværlig?</u></p> <p>Spørgsmålene skal afdække i hvilken grad det opleves som svært og besværligt at leve med mindre forbrug.</p>	<p>Er du i tvivl, om du skulle fortsætte?</p> <p>- Har du overvejet at stoppe?</p> <p>Har du valgt noget fra ved at leve på den her måde?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hvis ja, hvad? - Savner du det? <p>Har du overvejet at gå tilbage til den måde, du levede på før?</p> <p>Er der nogle ting, du gerne vil ændre, men lader være med, fordi det er for svært?</p> <p>Hvad er fordelene ved at leve på den måde?</p> <p>Er det svært at have balance imellem gamle og nye forpligtelser i forhold til det her område af forbrug?</p>
<p><u>At leve i et forbrugssamfund</u></p> <p>Spørgsmålene skal afdække, om interviewpersonen oplever sig selv som gørende modstand imod forbrugersamfundet, og i hvilken grad forbrugersamfundets normer påvirker interviewpersonen.</p>	<p>Ser du forbrug som et karakteristika, der skelner mennesker fra hinanden?</p> <p>Ser du din måde at forbruge på som unik eller er der andre, som du føler et fællesskab med?</p> <p>Føler du noget pres til at forbruge mere?</p>

	<p>Er der et pres for at forbruge ligesom de fleste andre gør det?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undgår du steder eller personer, hvor du oplever det pres? <p>Er der nogle incitamenter for dig ved gå tilbage til at forbruge ligesom de fleste andre gør?</p>
<p><u>Sociale relationers betydning</u></p> <p>Spørgsmålene skal afdække, hvilken rolle sociale relationer spiller i livsstilen, om personen gør brug af støtte fra andre, om positive og negative rollemodeller er vigtige, og om personen oplever et socialt pres for at forbruge eller et fællesskab omkring at forbruge mindre.</p>	<p>Hvordan opfatter andre din livsstil?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Støtter de dig eller prøver de at afskrække dig fra det? <p>Hvordan har ændringen påvirket dine sociale forhold (venner og familie)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - F.eks. hvem du tilbringer tid med og hvor meget? <p>Kan du fortsætte din måde at leve på uden støtte fra andre?</p> <p>Oplever du, at det er værdi her i området at skære ned på forbruget af elektricitet og varme?</p>

Debriefing

- Nu synes jeg, at vi er kommet rigtig godt rundt om det hele. Er der noget, du synes, det er vigtigt at få med, som jeg ikke har spurgt om?
- Sluk mikrofonen.
- Vil du have information om resultaterne, når jeg er færdig med mit speciale? Jeg kan sende specialet, hvis jeg må, eller jeg kan sende et resumé.
- Må jeg kontakte dig igen, hvis der skulle dukke et eller to spørgsmål op?
- Tusind tak for din hjælp og for at du ville fortælle mig din historie!

10.3.2 Interview guide II

Briefing

- Jeg hedder, som du ved, Trine Helledie, og jeg studerer på CBS og er i gang med at skrive mit speciale. Jeg er både akademisk og personligt interesseret i bæredygtigt forbrug, og i mit

speciale er det centralt, at bæredygtigt forbrug hænger sammen med at forbruge mindre i det hele taget.

- Er det i orden, at jeg optager interviewet?
- Det interview, vi skal begynde på om lidt, er en vigtig del af den undersøgelse, jeg er i gang med, der handler om hvordan personer skærer ned på deres forbrug, og hvordan de lever en livsstil med mindre, og derfor mere bæredygtigt, forbrug.
- Jeg optager interviewet, sådan at vi ikke skal koncentrere os om at huske undervejs, men bare kan snakke frit.
- Jeg regner med, at du har en times tid til at snakke med mig. Udgangspunktet er, at det er en samtale om et emne, vi begge to er interesserede i, og det er din historie om din livsstilsændring, der er det centrale. Du kan bare tale frit, og jeg vil gerne have så detaljerede beskrivelser som muligt.
- Hvis jeg stiller et spørgsmål, som du ikke er helt sikker på, hvordan skal forstås, skal du bare spørge mig.
- Jeg har en samtykkeerklæring med, som jeg vil bede dig om at læse igennem og underskrive. I den har jeg skrevet, at interviewet vil blive optaget, at citater fra interviewet vil blive brugt til mit speciale, og at du vil komme til at være anonym.
- Har du nogle spørgsmål, før vi begynder?

Baggrund for de stillede spørgsmål	Interviewspørgsmål
<p><u>Indledende spørgsmål</u>, der anvendes til at åbne op for interviewet og få interviewpersonens egen forståelse af og beskrivelse af sin livsstilsændring. Etablere en forståelse af hvor meget interviewpersonen har ændret sin livsstil og få indtryk af personens før og efter.</p>	<p><i>Vi taler sammen, fordi du har sagt ja til at dele din oplevelse med at skære ned på forbruget. Jeg vil gerne vide noget om, hvorfor og hvordan folk forbruger. Jeg har nogle spørgsmål, men hvis der er noget udover dem, som du synes er vigtigt, må du endelig tage det op.</i></p> <p><i>Jeg vil starte med at præsentere mig selv kort: Jeg er 27, jeg bor i København med min kæreste. Jeg læser på Handelshøjskolen, og jeg har arbejdet med at skære ned på mit eget forbrug i et års tid. Jeg spiser meget mindre kød, køber mindre tøj og prøver at spare på vand og varme. Hvad med dig, kan du give mig en kort beskrivelse af dig selv?</i></p>

	<p>Hvordan har du skåret ned på dit forbrug?</p> <p>Skete ændringerne på én gang?</p> <p>Hvad har været den største ændring?</p> <p>Hvornår skete den ændring og hvorfor?</p> <p>Hvordan skete det?</p> <p>Hvad eller hvem inspirerede dig til at skrue ned for dit forbrug?</p> <p>Kan du beskrive, hvad du gør anderledes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bruger du mere eller mindre tid? - Bruger du færre eller flere penge? - Er det mere praktisk eller upraktisk end sådan som du gjorde før? <p>Har der været nogle forbrugsvaner, der har været særligt lette eller svære at lave om på?</p> <p>- Hvorfor?</p> <p>Er der nogle forbrugsvaner du ikke har lavet om på?</p> <p>- Hvorfor?</p> <p>Er der nogle nye aktiviteter, du bruger tid på?</p>
<p><u>Livsstilen - naturlig eller besværlig?</u></p> <p>Spørgsmålene skal afdække i hvilken grad det opleves som svært og besværligt at leve med mindre forbrug.</p>	<p>Hvad er fordelene og ulemperne ved at skære ned på forbruget?</p> <p>Har du være i tvivl, om du skulle fortsætte?</p> <p>- Har du overvejet at stoppe?</p> <p>Savner du noget efter du har skåret ned på forbruget?</p> <p>- Hvis ja, hvad?</p> <p>Er der nogle ting, du gerne vil ændre, men lader være med, fordi det er for svært?</p>
<p><u>At leve i et forbrugssamfund</u></p> <p>Spørgsmålene skal afdække, om interviewpersonen oplever sig selv som gørende</p>	<p>Hvor almindeligt oplever du det er at skære ned på forbruget, ligesom du har gjort?</p> <p>Oplever du et pres eller en forventning om at</p>

modstand imod forbrugersamfundet, og i hvilken grad forbrugersamfundets normer påvirker interviewpersonen.	<p>forbruge mere end du gør?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undgår du steder eller personer, hvor du oplever det pres? <p>Er der nogle incitamenter for dig ved at forbruge ligesom de fleste andre gør?</p>
<p><u>Sociale relationers betydning</u></p> <p>Spørgsmålene skal afdække, hvilken rolle sociale relationer spiller i livsstilen, om personen gør brug af støtte fra andre, om positive og negative rollemodeller er vigtige, og om personen oplever et socialt pres for at forbruge eller et fællesskab omkring at forbruge mindre.</p>	<p>Har dine venner og familie også skåret ned på deres forbrug?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hvis nej, har de forståelse for at du gør det? <p>Hvordan opfatter andre din livsstil?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Møder du forståelse? <p>I hvor høj grad har du brug for andres støtte?</p> <p>Har du nogle bestemte mål eller principper i forhold til at skære ned på forbruget?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hvis ja, kan du leve op til dem? <p>Hvordan har ændringen påvirket dit forhold til venner og familie?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - F.eks. hvem du tilbringer tid med og hvor meget?

Debriefing

- Nu synes jeg, at vi er kommet rigtig godt rundt om det hele. Er der noget, du synes, det er vigtigt at få med, som jeg ikke har spurgt om?
- Sluk mikrofonen.
- Vil du have information om resultaterne, når jeg er færdig med mit speciale?
- Må jeg kontakte dig igen, hvis der skulle dukke et eller to spørgsmål op?
- Tusind tak for din hjælp og for at du ville fortælle mig din historie!

10.4 Appendix 4: Interview guide (translated versions)

10.4.1 Interview guide I

Briefing

- As you know my name is Trine Helledie and I study at Copenhagen Business School and is currently doing my master's thesis. I have an academic and personal interest in sustainable consumption and in my thesis it is key that sustainable consumption is related to consuming less overall.
- Is it okay that I record the interview?
- The interview that we are started in a moment is an important part of the study I am doing on how people reduce their consumption and how they live a lifestyle of less and thus more sustainable consumption..
- I record the interview so we don't have to concentrate on remembering things, but can speak freely.
- I expect that you have an hours time to talk to me. Our point of origin is that this is a conversation on a topic that we are both interested in and it is your story that is central. Just speak freely and I would like as detailed descriptions as possible.
- If I ask a question that you don't understand, please just ask.
- I have brought an informed consent form that I would like you to read and sign. I have written that the interview is recorded, that quotes will be used for my thesis and that you will be anonymous.
- Do you have any questions before we begin?

Background for the posed questions	Interview questions
<p>Introductory questions, used to open up the interview and get the interviewee's own understanding of and description of his or her lifestyle change. Establish an understanding of how much the interviewee has changed his or her lifestyle and of the 'before' and 'after'.</p> <p>Identifying when, why and how much.</p>	<p><i>We're having this conversation because you indicated that you wanted to share your experience with reducing consumption. I'm interested in why and how people consume. I have some questions, but if there is anything else, you think should be mentioned you are of course welcome to do so.</i></p> <p><i>I will start by presenting myself: I'm 27, I live in Copenhagen with my boyfriend, I study at Copenhagen Business School, and I have been working on reducing my consumption for about a year now. I eat much less meat, buy less clothes and try to save on water and heating. How about you? - please give me a short</i></p>

	<p><i>description of yourself.</i></p> <p>When did you change your consumption of and why?</p> <p>How did it happen?</p> <p>What are the circumstances people or events that made you change?</p> <p>Can you describe what you do differently?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How is it different with time? - How is it different with money? - How is it different with space? - How is it different with regards to convenience? <p>What daily routines did you change?</p> <p>Which didn't you change?</p> <p>- Why?</p> <p>What benefits do you see?</p> <p>(Ask for concrete examples)</p>
<p><u>Living in a consumer society</u></p> <p>The questions should explore whether the interviewee sees himself/herself as resisting the consumer society and to which degree the norms of consumer society affect the interviewee.</p>	<p>Is society divided on how we relate to consumption?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If so, do you belong to a certain group? <p>Do you perceive consumption as a characteristic that distinguishes people?</p> <p>Do you consider your behaviour to be unique or are there other people that you feel in communion with?</p> <p>Do you feel any pressure to consume more?</p> <p>Are there pressures to go to the mainstream?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you avoid places or people where you feel this pressure? <p>Are there any incentives for you to go back or to consume like other person?</p>

<p><u>The significance of social relations</u></p> <p>The questions should explore which role social relations play in the lifestyle, whether the interviewee makes use of support from others, whether positive or negative role models are important, and whether the interviewee experience a social pressure to consumer or a community about consuming less.</p>	<p>How do others perceive your lifestyle? - Do they support or discourage your lifestyle?</p> <p>How did this change influence your relationships? - E.g. in time spent with others?</p> <p>Can you continue without the support of others?</p> <p>What is the value in this region to reduce consumption of?</p>
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Debriefing

- I think we have gotten around everything. Is their anything that you think it is important to say that I haven't asked about?
- Turn off the recorder.
- Would you like to be informed about the results when I am done with my thesis?
- Can I contact you again if I should think of a question or two?
- Thank you so much for your help and for telling me your story!

10.4.2 Interview guide II

Briefing

- As you know my name is Trine Helledie and I study at Copenhagen Business School and is currenntly doing my master's thesis. I have an academic and personal interest in sustainable consumption and in my thesis it is key that sustainable consumption is related to consuming lesss overall.
- Is it okay that I record the interview?
- The interview that we are started in a moment is an important part of the study I am doing on how people reduce their consumption and how they live a lifestyle of less and thus more sustainable consumption..
- I record the interview so we don't have to concentrate on remembering things, but can speak freely.

- I expect that you have an hours time to talk to me. Our point of origin is that this is a conversation on a topic that we are both interested in and it is your story that is central. Just speak freely and I would like as detailed descriptions as possible.
- If I ask a question that you don't understand, please just ask.
- I have brought an informed consent form that I would like you to read and sign. I have written that the interview is recorded, that quotes will be used for my thesis and that you will be anonymous.
- Do you have any questions before we begin?

Background for the posed questions	Interview questions
<p><u>Introductory questions</u>, used to open up the interview and get the interviewee's own understanding of and description of his or her lifestyle change. Establish an understanding of how much the interviewee has changed his or her lifestyle and of the 'before' and 'after'.</p> <p>Identifying when, why and how much.</p>	<p><i>We're having this conversation because you indicated that you wanted to share your experience with reducing consumption. I'm interested in why and how people consume. I have some questions, but if there is anything else, you think should be mentioned you are of course welcome to do so.</i></p> <p><i>I will start by presenting myself: I'm 27, I live in Copenhagen with my boyfriend, I study at Copenhagen Business School, and I have been working on reducing my consumption for about a year now. I eat much less meat, buy less clothes and try to save on water and heating. How about you? - please give me a short description of yourself.</i></p> <p>How did you reduce your consumption?</p> <p>Did the changes happen at once?</p> <p>What has been the biggest change?</p> <p>How did it happen and why?</p> <p>What or who inspired you to reduce your consumption?</p> <p>Can you describe what you do differently?</p> <p>- Do you spend more or less time?</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you spend more or less money? - Is it more or less convenient than what you did before? - <p>Have there been some consumption habits that have been especially easy or difficult to change?</p> <p>- Why?</p> <p>Are there any consumption habits you haven't changed?</p> <p>- Why</p> <p>Do you spend time on any new activities?</p>
<p><u>Lifestyle - natural or struggle?</u></p> <p>The questions should explore to which extent it is seen as difficult to live with less consumption.</p>	<p>What are the advantages and disadvantages of reducing consumption?</p> <p>Have you doubted whether you should continue?</p> <p>- Have you considered stopping?</p> <p>Are you missing anything after you reduced your consumption?</p> <p>- If yes, what?</p> <p>Are there things that you would like to change, but haven't because it is too difficult?</p>
<p><u>Living in a consumer society</u></p> <p>The questions should explore whether the interviewee sees himself/herself as resisting the consumer society and to which degree the norms of consumer society affect the interviewee.</p>	<p>How common do you experience it is to reduce consumption like you have done?</p> <p>Do you experience any pressure or expectation to consume more than you do?</p> <p>- Do you avoid places or persons where you experience this pressure</p> <p>Are there any incentives for you to consume like most people do?</p>
<p><u>The significance of social relations</u></p> <p>The questions should explore which role social relations play in the lifestyle, whether the interviewee makes use of support from others, whether positive or negative role models are important, and whether the interviewee experience a social pressure to consumer or a community about consuming less.</p>	<p>Have your friends and family reduced their consumption as well?</p> <p>- If not, do they show understanding for your reduction?</p> <p>How do others perceive your lifestyle?</p> <p>- Do they show understanding?</p> <p>- Møder du forståelse?</p> <p>To which degree do you need the support of</p>

	<p>others?</p> <p>Do you have specific goals or principle in relation to reducing consumption?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If yes, can you live up to them? <p>How has the change influenced you relationship with friends and family?</p>
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Debriefing

- I think we have gotten around everything. Is there anything that you think it is important to say that I haven't asked about?
- Turn off the recorder.
- Would you like to be informed about the results when I am done with my thesis?
- Can I contact you again if I should think of a question or two?
- Thank you so much for your help and for telling me your story!

10.5 Appendix 5: Dyssekilde eco-village

The Danish eco-village, Dyssekilde, is located in the north of Zealand and was founded in 1982 by five initiators on the idea of a vegetarian, spiritual and organic village. The village houses approximately 100 adults and sixty children. The houses are mainly constructed of organic and sustainable material, and the energy comes from renewable sources, i.e. windmills, solar heating, earth heating, etc. The inhabitants share a vision of a series of values such as organics, sustainability, community, respect and tolerance. A central aspect of living in the village is to treat the environment as gently as possible by reducing resource use and reducing private consumption, which e.g. means saying goodbye to the throw-away-culture and instead recycle and reuse resources which is why Dyssekilde has a large centre for waste sorting and recycling. The village has a wastewater cleaning system and uses only 60-65 % of the drinking water normally consumed in Denmark. The village is car free and basically self-sufficient in vegetables. One important aim has been to build local work places to minimise transportation.