The Scandinavian Political Consumers' Paradoxical Construction of Sustainable Consumption

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Abstract

Sustainability and sustainable consumption are themes which are becoming increasingly relevant and therefore also increasingly debated and discussed. Still, it seems as if the concept of sustainable consumption is many facetted and a concept which many people struggle to understand and therefore perform. This study investigates the fields of Scandinavian political consumption and sustainable consumption, by looking into the Scandinavian political consumers' construction of the concept of sustainable consumption, as well as what paradoxes are embedded in this. The study is based on Critical Discourse Theory, meaning that the analysis is carried out as a critical discourse analysis which is inspired by Fairclough's critical discourse analysis. To compliment the critical discourse analysis, Guattari's theory of The Three Ecologies is used to analyze and discuss the social practice of the construction of the concept of sustainable consumption with an emphasis on the paradoxical and contradictory aspects of the constructions of the concept. The study is of a qualitative nature, takes an inductive approach to the research and the ontological and epistemological foundation is based on constructivism. Because of the qualitative nature of the study, it has been designed as a case study, where the case is a case of Scandinavian construction of the concept of sustainable consumption. Furthermore, the study uses three interviews as empirical material for the analysis. The study's case thus consists of three informants' construction of the concept of sustainable consumption.

The study concludes that a total of 40 discourses about sustainable consumption were produced throughout the analysis, and that these could be divided into seven general discursive themes being: 'Consuming resources sustainably', 'Economy' 'Social aspect', 'Systemic critique', 'Requires resources', 'Conserving nature' and 'Unsustainable resources'. Furthermore, the study concludes that there are contradictions and inconsistencies as to how the Scandinavian political consumers construct the concept of sustainable consumption. It is further concluded that these inconsistencies can be considered an expression of change within the social practice of sustainable consumption in the context of Scandinavian political consumer culture. Moreover, the study concludes that paradoxes are present in the Scandinavian political consumers' construction of sustainable consumption, as five of them are being identified and exemplified. Regarding the paradoxes, it is concluded that these can all somehow be linked to capitalistic and materialistic social structures, but that these are changeable and therefore so are the paradoxes of Scandinavian sustainable consumption.

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Introduction

The world today is different from the world we had yesterday. And tomorrow the world will be different from the world we have today. The world is constantly changing; the climate is changing, cultures are changing, human behavior is changing. The fact that the world is constantly changing is a fact that regards all of the world's inhabitants. Therefore, people, institutions and organizations all over the world are changing too, to adapt to the new world standards.

Especially the global crisis of climate change has had people and political institutions all over the world change routines and ways of living to save the planet. A study which is more than 10 years old showed that even back then, more than 30% of the UK public had taken action "*explicitly out of concern for climate change*" (Whitmarsh, 2009, p. 18). Additionally, the U.N. Development Programme (2019, August 21st) reports news of countries, even ones that are far from as developed, rich or industrialized as the Western countries, which take political action in the fight against climate change. For instance, Bhutan has been able to neutralize the entire country's CO_2 emissions through a reforestation programme, and the government of Bhutan has committed to maintain the neutrality (U.N. Development Programme, 2019, August 21st). Thus, it would seem like the global society has come to realize that climate change is the reality for all the world. And therefore, action is being taken in all scales. Anything from big political solutions to smaller individual initiatives.

The reaction towards these undeniable changes that are happening to our planet can be observed in many different corners of human behavior, but one of the things that has been heavily debated in relation to the environmental problems is consumer culture.

Critics of consumer culture have highlighted various different issues related to consumer culture. For instance, has it been pointed out that almost all kinds of consumption have, at least, an indirect effect on the environment, especially because of the production in the industry, agriculture and energy sector (Harsch, 1999, p. 554). Yet, consumer culture in itself has also been debated, as it is considered to drive the market and the corporations, as the act as the suppliers for the consumers' demand (Harsch, 1999, pp. 555-556). Additionally, consumerism has been criticized for having become an end in life "*(...)imparting value and importance upon acts of consumption*"(Harsch, 1999, p. 556). According to Harsch (1999), then people do not only consume what they need or when it makes us more comfortable or happy. On the contrary, consumption often happens because of cultural or ritualistic reasons, which dominates

other more appropriate ends, for instance in relation to the environment and climate change (Harsch, 1999, pp. 556-557).

Criticism of consumption and consumer culture is not a new thing, but in relation to the increased focus on climate change and the environment, the ethics of consumption has yet again been heavily debated and thus given rise to behavioral change. This time around, the debate has spurred action which has shaped into *political consumerism* (Stolle & Micheletti, 2013, p. 40). Political consumerism, or political consumption means to use one's choices as a consumer in the market with the purpose to influence politics (Strømsnes, 2009, p. 303). There are many different ways to practice political consumerism. Stolle and Micheletti (2013, pp. 39-43) are highlighting boycotts, buycotts, culture jamming, discursive political consumerism and lifestyle commitments as actions which all involve individualized responsibility-taking.

There are many different conceptions of consumerism, which is in some way politically or ethically originated. Littler (2009, p. 2) has collected the different consumption tendencies under a headline, which she calls *radical consumerism*. Littler does not elaborate on any systems in between the different forms of radical consumerism, but I argue that some of the categories, which she mentions, could be characterized as subcategories to subcategories; for instance can political consumption as a subcategory cover other subcategories such as *green consumption* and *ethical consumption*. Green consumption is a concept that covers practices of taking care of the environment based on social, mental and natural dimensions, and it includes consumption of green products, recycling and 'consuming less'-lifestyles (Littler, 2009, pp. 92-98). Ethical consumption covers consumption of goods which have been produced through non-exploitative conditions (Littler, 2009, pp. 6-7). Yet, both of these forms of radical consumption can be exercised as a politically motivated form of consumption. And since sustainability is a highly politicized subject, I will in the following be referring to consumption activities, which are in any way concerned with sustainability, as political consumption. Additionally, 'sustainable consumption' will be used as a general term for radical consumption practices, which are being practiced as an expression of political engagement.

A behavioral development, which substantiates the claim of an increasing awareness of climate change and environmental issues amongst consumers, is the rise in people who have committed to a vegetarian lifestyle. In Denmark for instance, the union called Dansk Vegetarisk Forening (Danish Vegetarian Union) has experienced a dramatic rise in members over the last years. From 2016 to just 2018 the number of members of the union more than doubled(Dansk

Vegetarisk Forening, 2020, March 12th). A larger survey made by Coop Analyse (Coop Analysis) and Dansk Vegetarisk Forening shows that in 2019 2,5% of the entire Danish population, which is equivalent to 140.000 people, had chosen a vegetarian or entirely plant-based lifestyle, compared to 1,8% of the population back in 2017 (Dansk Vegetarisk Forening, 2020, March 12th). This indicates an increasing interest from individuals, who want to take political matters into their own hands, by making a choice as consumers not to eat animal products. Whether these individuals have chosen a vegetarian lifestyle for health reasons, to contribute to better animal protection or out of concern for the environment, it can be regarded as a highly political behavior.

The same politicized behavior can be observed in the consumers' relationship to plastic. A survey from 2018 shows that one of three Danes never buys plastic bags(Aarup, 2018, October 16th). Yet, not only do the consumers take action themselves, by never buying plastic bags, they also want their suppliers to take responsibility and provide sustainability. This is indicated through another survey from 2018, which shows that 52% of the consumers wanted super markets to focus on providing more sustainable plastic/packaging, which also turned out to be the overall top priority of the consumers (Aarup, 2018, October 4th).

Especially the aversion towards plastic has been significant during the last couple of years, and it might be because it has become such a big part of our everyday lives. Actually, for more than 50 years, the global plastic production has been continually rising (PlasticsEurope, 2015), but lack of recovery and recycling means that millions of tons of plastics end up either in the ocean or in landfills every year (U.N. Environment Programme, 2014, pp. 16-17). This means that plastic can be harmful from the very beginning to the very end, as pollution already occurs in the production phase. The process begins by including hazardous effects of potential oil spills, as well as the harmful consequences of oil extraction- and processing, which causes carbon emissions and other air, land and water pollutants (Thompson, Moore, vom Saal & Swan, 2009, p. 2153), since the production of plastic is based on oil. Actually, approximately 4% of the world's entire oil production is used as feedstock for plastic, and another 4% is used for powering the manufacturing process (Thompson et. al., 2009, p. 2153). Thus, the production of plastic contributes to damaging the environment, as the carbon emissions are key players in the process of global warming (Meyerson, 1998, p. 116).

The new behavior of the consumers has also resulted in many brands somehow adapting to the new demands of the consumers. But what about the part of the market whose main product is

based on or consists of plastic and therefore is not seemingly sustainable? How has this part of the market responded to the changes in demand?

One brand that has sailed through the plastic aversion and has had a consistently growing turnover the last couple of years is LEGO. It is probably safe to say that LEGO is one of the most popular toys on the market today. In 2019 LEGO had its best turnover to date (Mortensen, 2020, March 4th), gained market shares and opened more than a 160 new stores, as toy retailers all over the world collapse and face bankruptcies (Milne, 2019, September 3rd). LEGO's ever-increasing turnover must indicate some kind of equivalent interest from the consumers. Still, adults have, to a great extent, become aware of plastics' harmful impacts, and thus forsake plastics. Ever so many news sites, forums and blogs are writing about the toxicity of plastics, and how it should be avoided, especially in relation to kids (Faust, 2019; Life Without Plastic, 2010; Cox, 2018; Goldberg, 2019; Callahan, 2019; Martinko, 2019). Thus, it would seem like people are generally aware and concerned about the risks and the environmental impact of plastics, as they avoid them; but LEGO keeps on increasing sales and revenue despite of this. The continuous expansion of the LEGO empire in combination with a rising awareness about the potentially harmful and unsustainable effects of plastics, seems like a peculiar paradox, so what is it that makes people actually buy LEGO despite of their knowledge of plastic's harmful effects? Or to put in other words: Why do political consumers from time to time make seemingly unsustainable consumer choices?

Exactly what it is that makes us act in relation to sustainability and the environment, for instance by buying products from sustainably responsible brands, comes down to many different things. Yet, there is no doubt that there are different cultural prerequisites as to how we engage with sustainability and how important we think it is. Eom, Kim, Sherman and Ishii (2016, p. 1331) have proposed through their research that cultural backgrounds have an impact on what drives our motivation to action on sustainable behavior. Suggesting that consumption is of a cultural character can be regarded a viable perspective on consumption, considering that, for instance, some objects have different meanings or are used differently within different contexts. An example of this could be flags. In Denmark, flags are often used in relation to celebration. On birthdays, on other special occasions such as graduation, or even in relation to holidays the flag will be used for decoration, be waved and be raised on flagpoles. The German blogger Laura Berg (2014), who lives as an expat in Copenhagen, explains in a blogpost, which she named "The crazy Danes and their flags", how the Danish flag culture is entirely different than what she is otherwise used to. She even explains how she first considered the Danish use of

flags as a symbol of a political right-wing affiliation. This example provides quite a good illustration of the creation of meaning in symbols and objects, and thus the usage of these. In the following quote McCracken further elaborates further on why consumption should be regarded as a cultural phenomenon:

"Consumption is a thoroughly cultural phenomenon. (…) consumption is shaped, driven and constrained at every point by cultural considerations. (…)They [consumers] *use the meaning of consumer goods to express cultural categories and principles, cultivate ideals, create and sustain lifestyles, construct notions of the self, and create (and survive) social change*"
(McCracken, 1990, p. xi).

Especially the last part of this quote, the part that underlines how consumers use the meaning of consumer goods, is very relevant in relation to the concept of political consumption, which was mentioned earlier. As McCracken mentions, then using consumption and/or the meaning of consumer goods to sustain lifestyles or to create social change, matches well with the idea of using one's consumption to exercise political opinions on e.g. sustainability. Therefore, it also makes sense to adopt this approach to consumption as being a cultural phenomenon.

Having established consumption as being a cultural phenomenon in the section above, we can return to the point; what is it that makes otherwise sustainability-preoccupied political consumers make non-sustainable consumer choices? As it has been established, it is now clear that this paradox should be regarded a phenomenon of cultural character. Littler states the following about culture as a phenomenon:

"(...) cultural intermingling and constant shifts are the historical norm, and (...) any idea of non-intervention is an impossibility. (...) For we are always making 'interventions', however banal or significant, in one way or another, consciously or unconsciously: the interventions of the ordinary, the everyday, our being, talking, moving, doing and not-doing, collide to construct the world"
(Littler, 2009, p. 4)

Littler underlines how human being means intervening, influencing and in the end the construction of the world around us. She mentions culture, and how this phenomenon too is beyond any idea of non-intervention, which makes sense when reality and the world is socially

constructed. This specific ontological perspective underlines the importance of context. As the world, reality and culture too is socially constructed, the context in which it is constructed is of great importance, as this influences the social construction. To elaborate, in this case it means that the context in which the political consumer culture unfolds is relevant, as it contributes to the composition of its nature, and thus its manifestation. Therefore, the context also influences the way we talk about different subjects, such as for instance sustainability and sustainable consumption. As Rydin (1999, p. 468) points out, the variety of ways in which terms like "sustainability" is being constructed are plentiful. It makes sense that the way we talk about things, and the way we construct our reality, affects the way we understand and reproduce our reality through our actions. Thus, the way the term "sustainable consumption" is constructed, is of great importance to the way we act in relation to sustainable consumption, as it simply makes up our foundation of action. Clearly, this poses an issue in the development towards sustainable behavior, as the reality around sustainability is constructed in so many ways. And to make matters worse, the many different interests and values involved in constructing these discourses about sustainability end up conflicting one another, meaning that individuals are left to decide which way to act, in a landscape of varying portrayals of reality (Rydin, 1999, pp. 468-470).

It suddenly makes a bit more sense, why political consumers may make non-sustainable consumer choices from time to time, as navigating the field of sustainability, as demonstrated in the section above, can be rather confusing.

Yet, even though it might be hard to navigate in the field of sustainability, many people attempt their best every day to do so, without much guidance in the shape of for instance laws or rules about what it will say conduct sustainable consumption and live sustainably in general. For example, the countries of the North are considered to be pioneers concerning sustainable behavior, and many people of the North take pride in this (Natur, klima og miljø i Norden, s.d.; Nordea Invest, 2017, February 23rd). Still, every single Northern country[1] produce more fossil CO_2 emissions per capita than the world average (Crippa et. al., 2018, pp. 23-235). Still, it was earlier established that Denmark had experienced consumer activity that would indicate a greater interest in sustainable consumption. Similarly, political consumption has become one of the most popular forms of political participation in Norway (Strømsnes, 2005, p. 165), and who has not heard of the famous young and Swedish climate change activist

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[1] Key information and numbers are missing from the calculation of fossil CO_2 emissions of the Faroe Islands, and therefore this country is not included in this specific statement.

Greta Thunberg? Much seems to indicate that the Northern countries want to get involved in the fight for sustainability. Then, why do the numbers not reflect this?

Especially the Scandinavian countries of the North all share a lot of history, culture and language. The languages are actually so similar that many Scandinavians do not find it necessary to switch to a common language, like for instance English, when communicating (Skovbjerg, 2014, May 29th). And it makes sense that the languages are similar, because, as mentioned, then the three countries have shared a lot through time. For more than 130 years these three countries were even tied together by the Kalmar Union, meaning that the three countries joined together under the same crown (Gustafsson, 2006, pp. 205-206). Besides from their shared past, the Scandinavian countries also share a lot of similar social and societal structures today: For instance, the countries are known for " The Scandinavian model", which refers to the Scandinavian welfare model. The Scandinavian welfare model is built on universalism, which means that all citizens of the countries are offered a level of services such as health care, education and social security insurances (Abrahamsen, 2008, pp. 133-136). Thus, having been part of each other's history for so long, and being so similar in so many ways, the Scandinavian countries also share a lot of the same presuppositions for acting in relation to sustainability. Therefore, it also seems reasonable to raise the question of why unsustainable consumption is still an issue in these countries, which are otherwise very concerned about sustainability. As it has already been mentioned, what defines sustainability and sustainable consumption today very much depends on the social construction of these concepts. Having no official rules or laws that dictates what is sustainable or non-sustainable, and therefore only socially constructed laws about concepts of sustainability makes it confusing to navigate the field, especially when not all conceptions harmonize or are contradictory. And with the lack of laws on sustainable behavior, and the presence of a great deal of personal freedom in the Scandinavian countries, it is very easy to make unsustainable consumer choices. Meaning, if Scandinavian consumers choose to commit to a sustainable lifestyle, it must be an indicator that they really wish to make a positive impact on sustainability with their lifestyle. Therefore, it is highly relevant to investigate the Scandinavian political consumers further, as the ones that commit to making a difference through their lifestyle and consumer choices, do it completely voluntarily. And when making such a commitment voluntarily, why would they break then break it? To get closer to an answer to this question, the foundation of which Scandinavian political consumers base their actions needs to be investigated first, as this makes up the framework for logical reasoning about actions and consequences. Because what is actually sustainable consumption to the

Scandinavian political consumers? In this study I will open this topic and explore what the Scandinavian political consumers base their actions on, by investigating their conception of sustainable consumption, as well as what causes the evident paradoxical and contradictory aspects of sustainable consumption through the following problem formulation:

"How do Scandinavian political consumers construct the concept of "sustainable consumption", and what possible paradoxes does this construction of sustainable consumption pose?"

Delimitation

To clarify the scope of this project, the limitations of the project should be elaborated. Firstly, it should be definitively clarified that the aim of the study is to describe the Scandinavian political consumers' construction of the concept of sustainability, as well as the paradoxes of the construction. As the problem formulation indicates with the word '*construct*' the study investigates a social construction of a phenomenon, which is going to be analyzed through discourse analysis.

Furthermore, it should be made clear that the definition of Scandinavian in this project, includes only the three countries Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Some definitions of Scandinavia include countries like Faroe Islands and Iceland, but in this project these countries will not be included in the definition because of the different historical as well as cultural factors that bind Denmark, Norway and Sweden together, and which have also been explained in the introduction.

It should also be established that it is the *contemporary* Scandinavian construction of the concept of sustainability, which will be investigated in this paper. The Scandinavian construction of the concept has undoubtedly changed through time. Yet, the paper is concerned with the contemporary construction of the concept, since it is the contemporary conception of sustainable consumption which makes up the foundation of our future conceptions of, and actions towards, sustainable consumption. Therefore, only the contemporary Scandinavian construction of the concept of sustainable consumption will be dealt with in this study.

Additionally, a couple of notes should be added about the actors who are included in this paper. This paper does not deal with the part of the Scandinavian population which is not on social media. The methodological reasons for this will be elaborated in the methodology chapter, but put shortly, since so many people are now on Facebook[2], it has been found that this was the best way to find the right informants for the interviews. This means that the part of the Scandinavian population which is not on Facebook is excluded from the study. It also means that none of the groups or organizations that should exist outside Facebook, are not included in this analysis. The same goes for other media- and social media platforms.

Finally, it should be emphasized that this study includes LEGO, but only for the purpose of choosing informants for the interview and to challenge the informants' argumentation and construction of sustainable consumption. Thus, LEGO is only included to achieve a deeper and more reflected

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[2] For instance, no less than 70% of all Danes between the age of 16 and 89 was on Facebook in 2018 (Jakobsen, Nielsen & Tassy, 2018, p. 21).

understanding of the Scandinavian construction of the concept of sustainable consumption, and the discourses that are being drawn upon in the construction of the concept. This means that the study is *not* a study on LEGO, and neither is it made in collaboration with the company, but it is on the contrary an independent study and analysis of the subject of interest.

Theory

This chapter will introduce the theoretical framework and foundation of this study. Firstly, an introduction will be given to the theory which is also the base of the as the main methodological tool for analysis, namely discourse theory. The broader introduction to discourse theory will lead to the presentation of the theory of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, as this is the specific kind of discourse analysis, which this study is inspired from. Lastly, Guattari's theory of The Three Ecologies will be introduced, with a focus on the paradoxes and contradictions within and between the different spheres of the ecologies. The introduction of the theory will be followed up by an explanation as to how the theory of the three ecologies will be included in an analytical discussion in combination with the discourse analysis.

Discourse theory

As it has been mentioned before, the analysis of this study will include a discourse analysis, to be able to provide a description of the way the concept of sustainable consumption is constructed by Scandinavian political consumers. Therefore, this chapter will present discourse theory, initially in general terms, but also in a more specific manner, which pays attention to the specific approach to discourse analysis, which the analysis will be inspired from.

Overview of Discourse Theory

Today an overwhelming number of different kinds of theory and approaches regarding discourse exist. Yet, some branches have been subject to more research, activity and development than others (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 1). If one were to use the most developed branches of discourse theory as a starting point for outlining the general aspects of discourse theory, some common ground can be found between the different approaches, in spite of them being different versions of the theory. But before beginning to explain these, a definition of the term discourse should be introduced, in order to move on and discuss the theoretical aspects behind the term. In this the term discourse should be regarded as a particular way of talking about and understanding an aspect of the world (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 1). This means that all the different ways that people present reality can be regarded as discourse. Having established this, some of the general aspects of discourse theory can be presented.

A general aspect of discourse theory is that it is broadly regarded as being of a social constructionist (or constructivist) nature (Jørengen & Phillips, 2002, p. 1). More specifically, discourse

theory is often of a post-structuralist philosophy, which is regarded a subcategory of constructivism (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 6). The post-strucutralist element of discourse theory is founded in the language theory, which is included in discourse theory, and which is originally inspired from the structuralist linguist Saussure (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 9). Yet, regarding the more general assumption of the world and reality, the ontological position of discourse theory takes on a constructivist approach, as it considers the way we talk about does not actually "*neutrally reflect our world, identities and social relations but, rather, play an active role in creating and changing them*"(Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.1). This means that knowledge of the world is not to be considered objective or as a reflection an absolute and true reality, and that truth is not something which is to be 'discovered out there'. Knowledge is rather a product of discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 5). In addition to this, it is implied in discourse theory that humans are beings of culture and history, and so are our views of knowledge and the world, as this is likewise historically and culturally situated by interchanges between people (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 5). In other words, it means that our understanding and representations of the world is contingent, which also makes change possible (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 5). This is one of the ways in which discourse theory separates itself from some of the structuralist theoretical currents, which it is inspired from (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 11). Thus, the theory matches well with the general approach of this study, as the overall conception of the world and the knowledge which can be obtained about it is the same.

Discourse is also regarded a form of social action, which is an active contributor to producing the social world. The social world includes knowledge, social relations and identities, which means that discourse is also considered to play a part in maintaining social patterns (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 5). Furthermore, knowledge is considered to be created through social interaction, where common truths about the world is constructed, and where consensus about what is true and false is being constantly challenged (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 5). This fits very well with the situation of the concept of sustainable consumption, since, as it has been argued earlier, the concept itself is very confusing because of the many variations of it. Therefore, discourse analysis also seems like the natural choice to apply to the analysis of this study. Moreover, then "*Different social understandings of the world lead to different social actions, and therefore the social construction of knowledge and truth has social consequences*" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 6). Exactly the 'fight' between the discourses to be accepted as true, is a key concept of discourse theory. Discourses are constantly struggling to in the 'battle' between other discourses, which represent different ways of talking about the social world, to

achieve hegemony, or in other words, to become the dominant understanding of a particular perspective (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 6-7). This underpins the claim to the importance of the investigation of the concept of sustainable consumption, as way we understand the concept has important consequences to the way we act in relation to sustainable consumption.

Discourse analysis is special, because it cannot be divided into theory and method with the intention to use, for instance, the method without the theoretical foundation. This cannot be done, as the method cannot be separated from the theory, as discourse analysis is a theoretical and methodological whole. Discourse analysis can therefore not be used with just any kind of theoretical framework (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 3-4). Still, even though the discourse analysis comes as a complete package with philosophical premises of the role of language, theoretical models, methodological guidelines and specific techniques for analysis, it does not mean that a researcher cannot design his/her own 'package'. It is completely legitimate to combine the different elements of discourse analytical perspectives, as well as to apply non-discourse analytical perspectives, if this is appropriate in relation to the specific study (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 4). I will return to a discussion of what kinds of choices I have made in this regard and explain the motive for making these decisions in the methodology chapter.

Another reason for choosing discourse theory and discourse analysis in this study, is because of the focus on the role of the language. According to discourse theory, our only access to reality is through language, as it is with language that we create representations of reality, which are contributing to the construction of reality (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 8-9). In other words, it is the ascription of meaning through discourse which constitutes and changes the world (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 9). This theoretical conception of language can be very strongly linked to the problem and the problem formulation of this project, which implies that the way that we talk about the concept of sustainable consumption is crucial to how we understand and therefore behave in regards to this. It means that the construction of the concept of sustainable consumption is constituent of the way sustainable consumption is carried out by Scandinavian political consumers.

       In discourse theory language use is also considered to be the what creates, reproduces and changes structure (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 11). This is because language is believed to be structured in several systems of discourses and meaning differs from discourse to discourse. Therefore, the structure should not be regarded as a general system of meaning, but rather as a structure in which the discursive patterns are constantly being transformed or

maintained through discursive practices (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 12). This is also why discourse analysts believe that the transformation and maintenance of these patterns should be investigated through "*the specific context in which language is in action*" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 12). Adopting this theory in the study, the same approach will be taken to the analysis, where the Scandinavian political consumers' construction of the concept of sustainable consumption will be explored. The Scandinavian political consumers are thus considered to be active players in creating the reality around the concept of sustainable consumption and should be explored as such in the context of Scandinavian political consumerism.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Having explored the general features of discourse analysis, the specific approach to discourse analysis, from which this study will be inspired, will be elaborated. The study uses critical discourse analysis, which differs a little from other approaches to discourse analysis. The focus will mainly be on Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, as this approach is considered to be the most developed theory and method for research in culture and communication (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 60). Additionally, Fairclough puts emphasis to some specific aspects in his approach to critical discourse analysis, which benefits the analysis of this study. These aspects will be explained and elaborated through this section.

One of the bigger differences that exists between the different branches of discourse analysis, is what practices are considered as discursive. For instance, Fairclough argues that discourse is just one aspect of social practice, and that there are other social practices, which are non-discursive. Fairclough claims that there is a dialectical relationship between the discursive and non-discursive practices, where discursive practice reproduces and changes other dimensions of social practice, and these non-discursive dimensions of social practice also works to shape the discursive dimension (Fairclough, 1992, p. 66; Fairclough, 2015, pp. 67-68). Thus, Fairclough argues that it is this dialectical relationship between the discursive and the non-discursive social practices that constitutes the world. This also means that Fairclough reserves the concept of discourse for semiological systems such as text and talk (Fairclough, 2015, p. 8). Laclau and Mouffe on the other hand, argue that all social practices are discursive. Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory does not entail a dialectical interaction between discourse and something else. Discourse alone is considered to be fully constitutive of the world (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 19). This distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices is central to the practical method of critical discourse analysis, which Fairclough represents. Both

because Fairclough focuses on semiological systems as subjects for discourse analysis, which means that his method to critical discourse analysis is very developed and applicable in this area, and because of the way he distinguishes analytical levels in relation to the practical conduction of the discourse analysis. How this benefits the analysis of this study, and how this study specifically draws inspiration from this approach to conducting critical discourse analysis, will be elaborated in the methodology chapter. Yet, the theoretical implications of this, highlights the importance of context, as it has been established that the non-discursive elements of the context shape the discursive practice and vice versa, which legitimizes a central claim of this study; that cultural context is important in relation to the construction of discourse, and in this case the Scandinavian political consumers' construction of the concept of sustainable consumption.

Another central aspect of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis is the focus on the investigation of change. According to Fairclough, all language users build on meanings, which have already been established, which means that whenever language is used, it draws on earlier discursive structures (Fairclough, 2015, p. 69). Fairclough means that change happens through this kind of intertextuality, which is when text (language use) is drawing on discourses and elements of other texts. Thus, by mixing and changing these different discourses and elements the specific language use can actually create change by changing the different discourses, and thereby the cultural and social world (Fairclough, 2015, p. 69). In other words, through this focus on change, reproduction or change of discourse can be investigated. This is one of the reasons why the analysis of this study is inspired from the critical discourse analysis, as it would be interesting to see if the discourse about sustainable consumption changes and varies between the different informants' statements, since this study has made a claim about the concept and its meaning as being confusing. Therefore, the critical discourse analysis' focus on change is a good tool to investigate the instability of the concept of sustainable consumption, which has been discussed in the introduction of this paper.

Finally, a central aspect to critical discourse analysis, is that it functions ideologically (Fairclough, 1993, p. 135). Critical discourse analysis claims that discursive practices take part in the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations (Fairclough, 1993, p. 135). This creation and reproduction of unequal power relations is what should be regarded as ideological effects. This is actually the 'critical' part of critical discourse analysis, as critical discourse analysis aims to reveal the role of discursive practice in the reproduction and maintenance of

the social world, and especially focusing on the social relations which involve unequal power relations (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 63). This aspect is a central part of critical discourse analysis. Still, in this study the focus is not to detect any imbalances in power relations, which is why the big focus on power relations will not be included in the analysis of this project. Yet, it is recognized that language use and discursive practice is a tool of power, in the sense that discursive practice is constitutive of non-discursive practices (and vice cersa), which in other words means talking about aspects of reality contributes to shaping reality. So even though the focus on power relations will not be at the center of the analysis, it is theoretically accepted, and it may be included in the analysis, if aspects of the construction of the concept of sustainable consumption seem to embed some unequal power relations. Still, I will emphasize that it will not be the main concern of the analysis.

As it has been mentioned, the discourses' struggle for accept and legitimacy means that meanings are constantly being contested, developed and recreated. This instability can also provide situations where meaning is conflicted. The struggle of meaning, among other things, contributes to create contradictions and paradoxes within the field of sustainable consumption. Therefore, this is a very relevant aspect to investigate, as it may also very well be partly this that makes the concept of sustainable consumption so confusing. This is also one of the reasons why the problem formulation includes this aspect. To be able to provide the problem formulation with a proper answer, as to what possible paradoxes the Scandinavian political consumers' construction of the concept of sustainable consumption can entail, the next section will treat this aspect theoretically.

The Three Ecologies – An Ecosophy

The second part of the problem formulation seeks to understand what paradoxes are present within the Scandinavian political consumers' construction of the concept of sustainability. The whole foundation of the study is that the concept of sustainable consumption is a tricky one, wherefore many also understand the concept in different ways, and act differently according to it. Detecting some of the paradoxes within the Scandinavian political consumers' construction of the concept may help understand, and thus act on the aspects of sustainable consumerism, which are confusing consumers and complicating their efforts to consume sustainably. To shed

light on the paradoxes, Guattari's theory of The Three Ecologies will be applied to engage in an analytical discussion of the results of the discourse analysis.

Guattari's 'Ecosophy' The Three Ecologies, is a theory which is especially suitable for theorizing contemporary green consumption, to use Littler's (2009) words (p. 92). As it was established earlier, green consumption is one of the radical consumption practices which in this study is part of the term 'sustainable consumption'. Even though green consumption only represents one aspect of sustainable consumption, the way that Littler applies Guattari's theory to contemporary green consumption, can definitely be useful to replicate. Because even though Guattari's theory can be applied to green consumption, it does not mean that it cannot be applied to a more general conception like sustainable consumption. I argue that the core of Guattari's theory of The Three Ecologies is applicable to any kind of sustainable consumption. Interrelation between different spheres or ecologies may exactly be what is making sustainable consumption confusing to consumers, regardless of it being in relation to green, ethical or otherwise radical consumption.

The theory of The Three Ecologies emphasizes three different environmental, social and 'mental' systems, described as ecologies. The theory highlights the need for these three ecologies to be 'thought together', as discrepancies between these can be counterproductive to the cause of sustainable consumption, especially regarding sustainable consumption which includes concern for the environment (Littler, 2009, p. 4). This set of complex interrelations between the three spheres is what Guattari calls the *ecosophy* (Lankshear, Olssen & Peters, 2003, p. 279). According to Guattari, it is the Integrated World of Capitalism (IWC), which has caused the planet to be at the brink of ecological disaster, due to its technoscientific transformations (Lankshear, Olssen & Peters, 2003, p. 279). Especially the expansion of world telecommunications, he argues, has contributed to a new kind of passive subjectivity which is "*saturating the unconscious in conformity with the demands of global market forces*" (Lankshear, Olssen & Peters, 2003, p. 279). Therefore, Guattari argues that new paradigms are needed to bring change to the world's current state, as the IWC is clouding all spheres, both the mental, the social and the environmental ecologies. Mentally, the IWC has trained us to feel pleasure and happiness when consuming (Littler, 2009, p. 107). Socially, we organize our world, our societies, around the philosophy of IWC and environmentally, the IWC is a weighty actor as to what, how and how fast environmental progress can be made. The mental ecology can thus be considered as human subjectivity, the mindset we think with. The social ecology includes what regulates human social activities. For instance, is it profit-based market philosophy that should regulate social

activity? According to Guattari, this is how it currently is in the Western world, and he argues that "*other value systems ought to be considered*" (Guattari, 2000, p. 64). Finally, when considering environmental ecology, it involves what the environment is associated with (Littler, 2009, p. 99). For instance, Guattari writes, should environmentalism not be associated with "*a small nature-loving minority*" (Guattari, 2000, p. 52).

In relation to how Guattari's theory can be combined with discourse theory, and more specifically Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, there can be drawn some general lines where the two theories can find common ground.

Guattari also writes about paradigms (IWC), and how reality so to speak can be changed depending on the paradigm. He argues that the IWC, which can be considered as a cultural phenomenon, is a structure which influences how we think and behave. This claim is rather similar to the one made by Fairclough and the critical discourse theory, which says that discourse is in a dialectical relationship with non-discursive practices, which means that discourse is both constitutive of and constituted by the non-discursive practices. The IWC should not necessarily be considered a non-discursive practice, but it can be considered as a social practice which has been established as the main force for driving economy, growth and thus wealth and prosperity. It is a social practice which has become inherent in Western culture and which we organize our lives and societies around. This is what Guattari attacks in his theory, because he believes that it is this paradigm, which is influent of the way we think, talk and act, and which should therefore be rejected, so that the mental, social and environmental ecologies can be balanced again.

The way Guattari describes the IWC as influencing how we think, talk and act, and therefore brings mental, social and environmental ecologies out of balance, or in other words almost disconnects the three, is rather compatible with the critical discourse theory. Guattari does not engage much with how discourses influence structures or paradigms, but his theory is clearly concerned with how the structures influences what can be considered as discourse, namely the way we understand and therefore reproduce our social world. Fairclough proposes that to be able to analyze a wider social practice, discourse analysis should be accompanied by social or cultural theory, as the social practice consists of both discursive, but also non-discursive elements (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 69). Even though it is not the aim of this study to provide a full description or understanding of a social practice within sustainable consumption, it makes sense to include the theory as a framework for analysis of the social practice, which is part of the critical discourse analysis. This will enable the analysis to provide

information as to how the Scandinavian political consumers' construction of the concept of sustainable consumption may entail contradictions and paradoxes within and between the different spheres of mental, social and environmental ecology.

As Littler (2009) explains, the framework of Guattari's three ecologies is "*a suggestive one to 'think with' in the context of green consumption'*" (p. 100). I will attempt to do the same, by using the three ecologies, and the ideas of contradictions and paradoxes within and between the ecologies as a tool to spark an analytical discussion of the result from the analysis of text and discursive practice. The theory will thus be applied as the theoretical framework of the social practice in the discourse analysis. The theory will be applied with a focus on detecting contradictions and paradoxes, to discuss and to seek an understanding of which paradoxes and contradictions that exist within the Scandinavian political consumers' construction of the concept of sustainable consumption.

Methodology

This chapter will be dealing with the methodological considerations of this study, philosophical as well as practical, to ensure the maintenance of the scientific standards of the study. Initially, the philosophical consideration will be described and discussed, since this is what makes up the foundation for the following methodological choices. Following the philosophical considerations, an elaboration of reflections on and choices made regarding research strategy and -design, data collection and quality of empirical material will be made. Finally, the choice of analytical tools and strategy of analysis will be elaborated, followed by a brief overview of the practical strategy to approaching the analysis.

Philosophy of science and constructivism

The aim of this paper is to describe a phenomenon, which is the Scandinavian construction of the concept of sustainable consumption, and the paradoxes embedded in this construction. This means that the problem formulation is of a descriptive nature, as it is intended to provide in depth knowledge of the phenomenon. Even though the analysis may include interviews with multiple informants, this is not because it is supposed to sustain some kind of statistical analysis of the phenomenon, but rather because the aim is to get as deep understanding of the phenomenon as possible, which means that the inclusion of a number of different informants will make the description of the phenomenon that much more reflected and detailed. Additionally, the problem formulation includes the word "construction" which proposes a discourse analysis as the analytical tool that shall provide the description of the phenomenon. Since the purpose of the study is to provide in-depth knowledge through a detailed description of the phenomenon, and since the problem formulation entails the proposal of a discourse analysis, this research emphasizes words, and not quantification, when collecting and analyzing the empirical material. Therefore, the research strategy of the study takes on a qualitative character (Bryman, 2016, p. 374).

Having established that the research strategy is qualitative because of the nature of the problem formulation, and especially because the analysis will include a discourse analysis, the ontological and epistemological considerations of this study can be discussed. The discourse analysis entails words since the analysis will be based on interviews. Therefore, it also makes sense to apply a constructivist approach to the study, as processing the empirical material this way

entails the assumption that the way that people respond to the questions in the interview is in no way objective or independent, but rather a product of the context which they have been socialized into, which speaks well into the discourse theory (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 186). Additionally, the whole premise of the study builds on the argument that there are so many different conceptions of sustainable consumption, which is what makes it hard for people to navigate the field, which is why the study is even relevant. Because if there was one objective truth about sustainable consumption, and it had no influence how people interpret the concept in the process of understanding it, and when reconstructing it, I argue that there would be no issue in the first place. Thus, it makes sense to recognize reality as such; a social construction (Gibbs, 2018, p. 9).

In continuation of this, the constructivist approach assumes that the meaning and social phenomena, which are created by social actors, are continually created. In other words, it means that meaning and social phenomena are in a constant state of revision (Bryman, 2016, p. 29). And much like discourse, the dynamics of constructivism revolve around concept of negotiation and battle of determining content and social meaning (Ingemann, 2013, p. 139). This means that "*through social negotiation processes the social reality can be reinterpreted and thus reconstructed*"[3] (Ingemann, 2013, p. 139). This matches very well with the problem of this study. As it has been described in the introduction, sustainability is communicated in so many different ways, and it makes it a confusing concept, which consumers attempt to conform to, but may not succeed with. Actually, the concept of sustainable consumption exemplifies the social negotiation process of reality rather well, as the only thing consumers can do when wanting to consume sustainably, is to look to the different discourses about sustainable consumption and try to navigate from there. Furthermore, should someone ask for tips or help regarding sustainable consumption, and someone else answers, reality regarding sustainable consumption is being negotiated and constructed.

It has been established that the ontological assumption of constructivism is that reality is socially constructed. Therefore, the epistemological assumption of constructivism is that the knowledge we can obtain about the world is socially constructed too, and that it should be understood as such (Ingemann, 2013, p. 162). To elaborate, this means, for instance, that the knowledge created from this study is still considered legitimate, even though it by some would be described as subjective, because it cannot be anything else, as it is a product of my

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[3] My own translation

interpretation. Still it is acknowledged that knowledge is so, and that is what makes it legitimate. Researchers who have raised criticism against constructivism tend to highlight that the constructivist approach includes accepting partiality and bias, which weakens validity of the research (Gibbs, 2018, p. 9). Yet, the concept of validity itself only makes a lot of sense to include in realist approaches, since: *"(...) there is no simple reality against which to check the analysis, only multiple views or interpretations"*(Gibbs, 2018, p. 120), when taking a constructivist approach. Thus, a researcher can only present a version of social reality, which is specific to him/her (Bryman, 2016, p. 29). When taking a constructivist approach, this must be accepted. Still, it is not a carte blanche to leave out all scientific reflections and considerations, actually quite the opposite. To ensure that this study will meet the academic requirements, I will to the best of my abilities attempt to be fully transparent about analytical considerations, as well as about the various different methodological reflections included in the study. Furthermore, I will carefully establish how I consider myself in relation to the group of informants, as well as I will elaborate on how I believe this will influence the way I understand, analyze and interpret the statements of the informants. This will all be spelled out throughout the chapter.

Research Strategy- and Design

Some of the aspects of the study's design has already been touched upon. Yet, in this section will be concerned with at deeper elaboration of the design related reflections, considerations and ultimately decisions, to provide an overview and a better understanding of how the study is structured.

Inductive Approach

Firstly, as it has been mentioned before, this study has a qualitative aim, and therefore the study can be considered a qualitative one. In line with the qualitative design of the study, an inductive approach has been found most viable in terms of strategy. To elaborate, the inductive approach is the best fit for the study, since the aim is to provide new empirical data and knowledge to the research field. The aim is not to test a hypothesis or a theory or have any such things guide the study, but on the contrary to explore and describe the Scandinavian construction of the concept of sustainable consumption. The free framework of the inductive approach will in this case ensure a better chance of a reflected, deep description of the phenomena in question, as it will not be forced by one specific theoretical perspective, but rather be the result of a more free and reflected interpretation (Bryman, 2016, p. 21).

Case Design

To be able to provide the in-depth knowledge about the phenomenon, which is being investigated, a single case design will be part of the study's research design. Using a case design is typical for qualitative studies, as it allows the researcher to conduct a detailed and intensive analysis of a phenomenon (Bryman, 2016, pp. 60-61). It allows all the complexities of the unique case to unfold, which means that I will be able to provide the in-depth knowledge about the phenomenon, which the study aims for.

The Case

A case study can be defined as an empirical analysis, which investigates a historical or contemporary phenomenon in the social context of which it unfolds (Antoft & Salomonsen, 2007, p. 32). It should be established that the phenomenon of interest is the Scandinavian construction of the concept of sustainable consumption, which is thus the contemporary phenomenon of the study. This means that the case is a case of Scandinavian construction of the concept of sustainable consumption. This means that the social context in which the case unfolds, is within Scandinavian political consumer culture. In continuation of this, it is important to underline that even though the study includes multiple informants, the design should be regarded as a single case study. It should be regarded as such, since all the informants identify as Scandinavians, which means that all the statements of the informants are not considered to be multiple different cases of constructions, but rather a collective construction of the concept, and therefore one case. The case itself consists of three Scandinavian informants which I have recruited from sustainability Facebook groups.

A Theory Interpretive Single Case

Furthermore, this case study is designed as a theory interpretive case study. In theory interpretive case studies, the theory does not necessarily play a part in selecting the case itself (Antoft & Salomonsen, 2007, p. 39). The theory, which in this study will be used in the analysis as the instrument for interpretation is discourse theory. The discourse theory has not controlled the selection of case in this study, and neither has it been used to decide any crucial guidelines in relation to criteria for selection. Yet in theory interpretive case studies, theory is instead to some extent utilized to select the case-elements, which are relevant to put emphasis to in the study (Antoft & Salomonsen, 2007, p. 39). Therefore, discourse theory has naturally been part

of my awareness when selecting the case because the problem formulation itself is built on discourse theoretical elements regarding the construction of a phenomenon. Thus, it was part of the consideration, when selecting the case, that the case should be able to shed light on the Scandinavian construction of sustainable consumption. That is also one of the reasons why verbal data was chosen for the analysis. Additionally, what should be paid attention to in the case is the social and cultural context, as the maintenance or transformation of discursive patterns should be explored through these, in order for the analysis to achieve meaningful results (Fairclough, 2015, p. 57).

Strategy for Case Selection

The selection of the case in this study has been based on an information-oriented approach. Flyvbjerg (2006) describes the purpose of information-oriented selection as follows: *"To maximize the utility of information from small samples and single cases. Cases are selected on the basis of expectations about their information content"*(p. 230). In relation to this study, it means that a single case has been selected and that it consists of a rather small group of three Scandinavian political consumers. The information which can be derived from this case is expected to be especially rich, since the consumers are all part of different sustainability groups on social media, by which they keep themselves updated, debate and share information regarding sustainability with others. Furthermore, to be sure that I would recruit the informants which were most appropriate in the case of maximizing the utility of information, I defined three criterions which all of the three informants meet. Thus, these criterions were designed with the expectation that it would aid in the enhancement of the information content. These criterions, as well as the selection of informants will be elaborated further in the subsection about interview and sampling.

Generalizing from a Case Study

In qualitative case studies, it is not the primary concern to generate knowledge or theory, which can be generalized across cases or populations, as the center of interest is the case in question (Bryman, 2016, pp. 60-64). Yet, even though it may not be the primary concern of a qualitative research to provide a numeric generalizable result, it is still relevant to discuss the potential for generalization beyond the study itself. To begin with, generalization can be distinguished as two kinds of generalization: Internal and external generalization (Flick, 2007, p. 6) . Where the external generalization refers to a kind of generalization which goes beyond the setting or group

of the study, the internal generalizability is about generalizing the conclusions of the study to the groups or settings within the study (Flick, 2007, p. 6). As it was just established, qualitative research does not emphasize the importance of a wide cross setting or -group generalization, which means that the external generalization is not coveted. On the other hand, internal generalization to the setting or group at hand can be sought and should be reflected on. As this study is of a qualitative character, the internal generalization is what is most relevant to discuss in relation to the results of the analysis. In this study, a rather small group of informants has been selected from a group of Scandinavian political consumers. Thus, if generalization of the results seems eligible, generalization to the rest of the group of Scandinavian political consumers, is what will be attempted. Further reflection and discussion of generalizability will be reviewed in the discussion and assessment of the analysis' results.

Interviews – design and method

As it has been mentioned before, it has been decided to include interviews as a method for this study. In this section, the details about the interviews and the decisions and considerations regarding these will be elaborated. Transcriptions of the interviews can be found in appendix 1, 2 and 3.

Interviews in Qualitative Research

As the first part of the problem formulation refers to the purpose of investigating a socially constructed concept, the empirical material which is to be used for the analysis, should be able to shed light upon this. Since the construction of discourses is (primarily) built through linguistic statements, the empirical material should be able to capture this, in order for the analysis to be able to provide a proper result. Therefore, qualitative material that consists of language or text has been found to be the best fit for this study.

Interviews can provide rich information, because the informants, or interviewees, have the opportunity to easily put their thoughts into words, ask for clarification of a question, and openly reflect on their thoughts about the subject. As Brinkmann (2013) puts it: "*Interviews can (…) be used to study language and communication, since human beings use the interview situation itself to communicate through language*" (p. 47). Additionally, then the fact that the informants can ask questions, and that the researcher can ask the informants to elaborate on certain statements, makes this method especially efficient in creating rich empirical material.

It has been decided that since the members of the Facebook groups are independent actors, who all have their own interpretations of the concept of sustainable consumption which they act according to, the study will benefit from single interviews. The members of the Facebook group may e.g. gather inspiration or discuss different topics, but when they are offline and perform sustainable consumption, they are single independent actors with their own interpretation of sustainable consumption. Therefore, it has been decided to pay attention to individual political consumers' construction of the concept, as it is assumed that this is what the individual political consumers act on. Additionally, the informants will be offered anonymity, which may encourage more people to come forth and to speak freely. This is also one of the reasons why single interviews were chosen, instead of for instance focus groups.

The focus of a qualitative interview is to seek qualitative knowledge and does not aim for quantification of this. It rather aims to create a scene for the different, nuanced aspects and accounts of the interviewee (Kvale, 2007, p. 3). Therefore, this method to obtaining empirical material is ideal for this study, as it is of great importance that the empirical material is ensured to provide rich information, in order for the analysis to result in a thorough description of the construction of the Scandinavian political consumers' construction of the concept of sustainability.

Yet, it should be underlined that the purpose of the interview, is not to retrieve information from the informants, which will be regarded as an absolute truth. This instrumental perspective on interviews clashes with the social constructivist approach of this study (Talmy, 2010, pp. 131-139). Neither is it the point of including the interviews. The interviews, and the knowledge that these can provide will be regarded as social constructions, where the knowledge is the result of an interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. This also means that it should be recognized that the results of the interviews may be different if another researcher were to attempt to replicate the study, as the outcome of the interview is the result of reciprocal influence between the interview and the interviewee in the specific situation (Kvale, 2007, p. 5). I will not purposely attempt to influence the interviewees' statements in any specific directions, but it is important to underline that the reciprocal influence between interviewer and interviewee is considered to be present despite of this.

Usually the aim of conducting interviews, is to have the interviewees describe "*as precisely as possible what they experience and feel, and how they act*" (Kvale, 2007, p. 3). Yet, in this study, the aim is not to have the interviewees describe a certain situation or experience. It is to

have them reflect on their thoughts about sustainable consumption. Therefore, instead of asking about certain experiences related to the subject, the interviewees will be asked six questions (without elaborating questions), which are supposed to make them think and reflect, and then describe in detail, why they have certain opinions, think certain things or do certain things. Additionally, the aim is to be able to capture the immediate reflections and thoughts of the informants. If the informants were to e.g. receive the questions in advance, they would be able to prepare answers, and think through their processes of consumption. This could result in rehearsed, "polished" and consistent answers, which is not the point. The point is exactly to capture whatever insecurities, reflections, contradictions and ambiguity of the statements, to see what the struggle of the conception of sustainable consumption really is. This also means that the interviewees may be inconsistent in their statements, as they during their reflection and contemplation may discover new aspects, relations or themes which they had not been aware of before the interview. Still, inconsistency is a risk no matter how the interview unfolds, as this can be caused by a number of different things, such as faulty communication, the interview person's personality or because of genuine ambivalence, contradictions or inconsistencies of the interview person's life situation which are being mirrored in the interview statements (Kvale, 2007, p. 4). Yet, inconsistency is not really a problem in this study, as it is just another layer of information about the construction of the concept of sustainable consumption. On the other hand, if statements are ambiguous, the interviewer is responsible for clarifying, if needed (Kvale, 2007, p. 4). Even though the interpretation of the statements in the interview will always be a presentation of the reality specific to the researcher, the overall message can come off as ambiguous, and in this case it will be appropriate to ask for clarification.

Another aspect which may influence the outcome of the interview is the power asymmetry of the interview, and how the interviewee responds to this. The interview situation includes an inherent power asymmetry, as it is not a normal everyday conversation between equal partners, no matter how much the interviewer may attempt to make it so (Kvale, 2007, p. 6). The interviewer is the one who determines how the interview is to be carried out, what questions should be answered and as well as when the interview is over. This means that the interviewer has more power over the situation than the interviewee, which can cause several issues. For instance, the interviewee may withhold information, talk around a subject or may even start to question the interviewer (Kvale, 2007, p. 6). This should of course be avoided if possible, to make the interview as fruitful and pleasant for all parts as can be. How this has been attempted

will be discussed in the section about the practical execution of the interviews and the reflections hereof.

Lastly, it is important to point out that, since the informants are Scandinavian, Danish, Swedish and Norwegian, it means that some of the interviews were conducted in my first language Danish, and some were conducted in English. It was chosen that if the interviewees were Danish, the interview would be conducted in Danish, so there would not be a barrier of language, meaning that I as a researcher would have a better chance of understanding the interviewee, as well as the interviewee would not feel limited by their linguistic skills (or lack thereof). To be able to understand, and for the sake of transcription, the interviews with the Swedish and Norwegian informants were conducted in English. Here they were told that if they could not communicate what they wished to say in English, they could temporarily switch back to their first language, as this may enhance their possibility of expressing their thoughts, as they would be able to put their thoughts into words, and I would be able to understand those few simple glosses. Yet, it should be underlined that when translating and transcribing the interviews, there are a lot of things to be considered. Firstly, when transcribing an interview, going from one linguistic modality to another, it should be decided how the transcription should be performed, since the change in linguistic modality brings up several questions and challenges regarding e.g. the different features of spoken and written language (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 85). In this case, it has been decided to make a rather 'clean' transcription, which leaves out most of the "Uh"s and "Hmm"s and other communicative sound elements, which are not words. This has been decided, since some interviewees use a lot of these sounds, and when it is not part of a spoken sentence, the many sounds came to be more an element of confusion and distraction, than it was a factor that contributed to the construction of meaning. Yet, they have been included when deemed necessary in relation to understanding the full meaning of the statement, such as when emphasizing a longer reflection break, doubt or nervousness. It should not be regarded as a deliberate manipulation of the material, but rather as one of the interpretational features which I as a researcher inevitably will pass on to the empirical material in the process. The same thing goes for the translation of the Danish interviews. I have to the best of my abilities attempted to translate the interviews as truly to the original wording as possible. Still, some Danish words, idioms or phrases do not translate well into English, and will therefore be a product of my interpretation of the meaning in the statement and how I choose to try and express this in English.

The Interview Guide

An interview guide has been developed for the interviews of this study[4]. The interviews are semi-structured interviews, because this way the interviewer will be able to prepare some questions which the informant is to answer, so that it is ensured that the interviews will provide material which can contribute to answering the problem formulation. Yet, when the interview guide is semi-structured, the interviewer can also ask elaborating questions. These questions cannot be prepared in advance but can be very useful to include in some situations (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 21). Especially when the study aims at providing a detailed description of the informants' construction of a concept, it makes sense to have the informants be able to freely answer the questions, and for the interviewer to be able to ask elaborating questions which occur the specific interview situation. According to Brinkmann (2013) this approach to interviewing makes better use of the knowledge production potential than structured interviews (p. 21), which is also why this approach fits well with the study, as the interviews are the only empirical material that is to be used for the analysis. Thus, it makes sense to maximize the potential of the knowledge production by choosing the semi-structured approach.

The interview guide consists of six questions as a starting point, and it takes approximately 30 minutes to conduct the interview with both the six general questions, responses and elaborating questions and answers. To begin with, an open question is used to open up the conversation about sustainability and the interviewee's thoughts on sustainable consumption. Actually, the interview guide mostly consists of open questions, since these can be used to have the interviewee decide what dimensions to bring forth and what themes are relevant in relation to the question (Kvale, 2007, p. 4). Question number three and four revolve around LEGO and whether the informants would describe a purchase of LEGO as sustainable consumption. These questions are included to challenge the informants a bit. All the informants have confirmed before the interview that they have bought, or would be willing to buy LEGO, as this was a sampling criterion. The sampling criterions will be elaborated further in the section about sampling. In the introduction it was established that LEGO, as a business that produces several tons of plastic brick toys every year, is thriving where others are falling apart, meaning that lots of people buy LEGO; even the political consumers buy it from time to time, albeit the immediate impression of an oil-based plastic toy may not be "sustainability". To ensure that the interviews will include a more reflected picture of the discourses about sustainable consumption, I have

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[4] See appendix 5 and 6 for copies of the interview guide in English and Danish.

recruited informants who consider themselves to be political consumers, but who have also made what may appear as an unsustainable consumer choice, when buying or being willing to buy LEGO. The logic is that it is rather easy to describe all the sustainable choices that we make. But how do we defend the consumer choices we make that may not seem sustainable at first glance? By challenging the consumers regarding this specific consumer choice, the informants will either respond that they do not think that it is a sustainable consumer choice which they have made and they will explain why they do not think so. They will also explain, why they have or would buy it anyway. Or they will respond that they do think that the choice to buy LEGO is a sustainable choice, and then they will elaborate on, why they think that. Either way, the informants will provide answers which will be able to shed light on the wonder of the study, which was founded in the question: What makes political consumers, who are enlightened and make conscious choices, make consumer choices which may seem unsustainable? Even though it is not the main aim of this study to investigate, what makes political consumers make unsustainable choices, the questions about LEGO forces the informants to reflect, and it adds to the construction of the concept of sustainable consumption in a different way, than if they were just asked to describe the things they do to perform sustainable consumption.

Conducting the interviews

To enhance the transparency, the practical framework as well as ethical issues regarding the conduction of the interviews will be explained and elaborated in this section. To read the interviews see appendix 1-3.

As it has been mentioned in the sections above, there are many different factors which should be taken into account as well as be reflected on, when carrying out interviews. In this study, the interviews were carried out online. It was chosen to do so, because the informants who were to participate in the interview would be Scandinavians, meaning that they could live anywhere throughout Denmark, Norway and Sweden. As this study is not funded and has a limited time frame, it would not be possible to either travel to visit the informants at their respective homes, nor to have them visit here.

It has been decided to carry out the interviews online instead of via telephone, mainly for practical reasons. As the interviews must be recorded somehow, I have been using my phone as a recorder, since I did not have a dictaphone at my disposal. Therefore, it would not be possible

to use the phone for interviewing, as it would have to be the device that records the interview. Yet, it would have been decided to conduct the interviews online either way, because the online interviewing provides a lot of opportunities, in terms of for instance flexibility in interviewing. To generate empirical material for the analysis which had the best conditions of providing the problem formulation an answer, online video call was used to conduct the interviews. Video call was chosen as method for collecting the empirical material, because both the informant and the researcher would be able to see each other, which means that the communication would have the best conditions, as both researcher and informant would be able to see each other's facial expressions, some body language (limited to the thorax and up) and gestures. This may enable both researcher and informant to better understand each other, and I as the researcher, have a better chance at sensing the informant, by watching their reactions to my questions. While doing the video call, my phone would lay beside the laptop and record the audio from me and the laptop, which the audio of the informant would be come out through. This means that only the audio was recorded, as it has been decided that the video material should not be subject to analysis. Thus, the analysis has been limited to the construction of the concept of sustainable consumption through language. It might have provided the analysis with extra rich empirical material if the analysis were to analyze the video footage as well the same as the audio. For practical reasons however, the video footage is not included. As the interviews had to be online, attempting to videotape a livestream on a screen is not ideal, and the limitations to the dimensions of the study means that this was a necessary opt-out to make.

Reflections on Interviewing

One of the biggest concerns of the interviews were to make the informants feel comfortable during the interview, so that they would be able to speak openly and freely. Some may feel a bit anxious about the interview situation; talking to a stranger via live stream while being recorded. Therefore, I wrote a private message for each of the informants, when they had expressed interest in the interview, explaining to them all the details and conditions of the interview as well as the set-up for the actual execution of the interview. After this, I would ask them if they were still up for it. This was a precaution to make sure that all the informants knew what they could expect, so that there would be no bad surprises during the interview. In the interview session itself, I started out by thanking the informant for participating and then small talked for a short while to get the informant comfortable. I made sure to take control of the situation and still make sure to give room to the informant whenever he or she wished to say something. Yet, I wanted to make sure to guide them through the interview, so that they could feel safe and

comfortable with the situation. I would tell them again what the aim of the study is, as well as what the aim of the interview is, and I would reassure them that they could speak openly and freely, as there was no right or wrong answers to my questions. I also made sure to emphasize that they could ask me anytime if they wanted me to rephrase or repeat the question or if they wanted to ask me something. Finally, I made sure to tell them that if they could hear me typing, then it was not because I was writing something like an evaluation or notes on the interview, but rather because I was writing down a question about something they had said and which I wanted to ask them, or because I would be looking up a word or something like that. These precautions were taken to try and help relieve the power asymmetry of the interview situation a little, as connecting a bit on a human level might take off the edge a little.

During the interview I attempted to express my interest and attention as much as possible through frequent nodding, smiling and confirming with subtle "Yeah"s and "Mmm"s, so that the informants were aware that they had my undivided attention. Besides this, I tried to not talk too much, as I wanted to give the informant space to talk. Yet, if the informant did not talk very much, I would try to ask them elaborating questions, which could get them to talk. Still, I would attempt to not say too much myself, as I did not want to risk putting words into the mouths of the informants.

The precautions described in this section seemed to be enough to most inform-ants, as they all ended up providing me with great full answers, which reflect honest and re-flected constructions of sustainable consumption, which is exactly what was aimed for.

Ethical considerations

When working with interviews, it is important to give some thought to which precautions should be taken in relation to current legislation and to protect the informants. Measure should especially be taken in relation to the general data protection regulation. When interviewing people, I have to have their consent to both record the interview, use the interview in my thesis as well as to processing their personal information (Aalborg Universitet).

For several reasons, which have already been described in this chapter, the inter-views had to be conducted digitally. This meant that I never physically met the informants. This has influenced how I collected the consent from the informants. Since it would be a rather elaborate process to have the informants print out a consent form, sign it and then e-mail it back. Especially if they do not own a printer. It would also be a lengthily process to physically mail the consent form, rely on the postal service to mail the consent form quickly enough, and

then rely on the informants to mail it back in due time, and even have the informant pay money for this. Therefore, I decided to collect the consent orally instead, as this would be much easier for everybody involved, which means that there was a bigger chance that I would get the informants to give their consent this way. Additionally, an oral consent is just as legally binding as a written one according to the law (Datatilsynet, 2019, p. 5). So, to begin with, I informed the informants that I would need an oral consent, which I would audio record. I informed the informants when I would turn on the audio recorder and ask them if they were ready for me to do that. When I had turned it on, I made sure to say out loud that I had turned on the audio recorder now. I described the conditions of participation (see interview guide in appendix 5 and 6) as well as the purpose of the study and the interview. Finally, I then asked the informant if he or she would consent to the interview being audio recorded. I made sure to mention both the informant's name, my own name and the date of which the interview was taking place. I then asked if they would consent to the interview being used for my thesis. Before the interview had started, we would have discussed anonymity and if that were something they wished, and none of the informants felt the need to be anonymous. After asking the informants to confirm that I could use the interview in my analysis, I asked the informant to confirm that they did *not* wish to be anonymous. After the informant had confirmed his or her consent, I would ask them to confirm that that meant that I could present their name, age, nationality and gender in my thesis, if necessary. Thus, I have all the orally collected consents from the informants in audio recorded files.

Even though none of the informants wish to be anonymous, and that the personal information which I have gathered about the informants is just normal personal information, and not in any way sensitive or confidential, I have done my best to protect the information. For instance, I have been mindful about my use of cloud-based solutions and storage of the information.

Sampling

To make sure that the study would be able to provide the problem formulation with a satisfactory answer, attention had to be paid to the sampling. The sampling of the case for instance was, as it has been mentioned before, sampled based on an information-oriented selection, which aims to maximize the utility of a case, even though it may be relatively small or consists of small samples (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 230). To find the subjects of the case, it did not make sense to try to define a an "average standard" of a political consumer and then sample for

representativity, as this both clashes with the constructivist approach and the qualitative orientation of this study. In this regard it makes more sense to not just aim for a representative answer, but to aim for a fuller answer of the problem formulation. Therefore, it was decided to sample the subjects of the case from a group, which holds an interest in sustainability, as there would probably be some rather active or committed political consumers, who are looking to individually make a change, amongst these people. On the social medium Facebook it is possible to start a group about almost anything. Therefore, there are also a huge amount of different kinds of sustainability groups there. Today a lot of people are of Facebook, and a lot of different kinds of people are on Facebook. In fact, to take an example, then more than 70% of Danes between the ages of 16 and 89 are on Facebook (Jakobsen, Nielsen & Tassy, 2018), which also means that a lot of information and meaning is constructed here. Thus, Facebook actually plays a role in how meaning is constructed to many people today, as it takes place in this arena. Therefore, it also makes sense to sample people who are on Facebook.

When looking for sustainability groups on Facebook, what I did was to type in the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish word for sustainability in the search bar, one at a time. I also sorted for groups, so that persons and pages etc. would not appear in my search. I opted for groups, as a group signals more engagement. They often encourage people to participate in the group by sharing and discussing topics for instance. A page is only one-way communication, which means that the page owner distributes all the information alone. When the hits appeared I would investigate the groups, look at the number of group members, read the "about" sections and I would look into the activity of the groups, to see if the group was still "alive". I decided to go with groups that had a lot of members, as there would be a bigger chance that one of them would want to participate in my interview. When investigating the "about" sections, I opted for groups that did not have any fixed purposes and dedications, such as for instance certain topics withing sustainability like recycling or composting etc. It should rather be groups which had a rather broad description of sustainability, so that the members of the groups were not dedicated to a more specific branch of sustainability themselves. For instance, the first part of the about section of the Danish group, which was chosen, reads like this: "*Group with tips, ideas, questions, sharing of knowledge and debate on sustainable consumption and lifestyle on a down to earth level with no preference to "religions""*[5](Bæredygtig Livsstil). This does not imply any special dedications within the field of sustainability and sustainable consumption, and therefore the group seemed to be a good fit. I repeated the

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[5] My own translation.

procedure to select a Norwegian and a Swedish group as well, so that I would be able to recruit both a Norwegian, a Swede and a Dane for a mixed Scandinavian group of informants, and thus a mixed Scandinavian construction of the concept of sustainable consumption. The three groups, which I ended up sampling and which I ended up recruiting my informants from are the following: "Bæredygtig Livsstil", "Globala målen för hållbar utveckling" and "Bærekraftig, grønt folkevett!".

I joined the groups and made a post, where I explained the aim of this study in general terms and defined three criterions for participation. The first criterion was that the volunteer informants would have to identify as Scandinavian, because if the informants would not identify as Scandinavian, then their statements would not be a part of the Scandinavian construction of the concept of sustainable consumption. The second criterion was that the informants would have to identify as a political consumer on some level. Here I gave a short and simple explanation as to what a political consumer is, which read like this: "*means using consumption to exercise a personal political agenda – in this case regarding sustainability*". The last criterion was that the informants should have bought or be willing to buy LEGO toys. I made it clear that the informants would of course not be forced to buy anything, and that the important thing was the willingness to buy LEGO, not the actual practice of buying in itself. As it has been explained in previous sections, the inclusion of LEGO was important for the sampling, because of what it would bring to the interview in terms of reflection.

By sampling the informants, and thus the case this way, I am sure to interview some Scandinavian political consumers, who have bought LEGO, or would at least be willing to, meaning that they have already, or would be willing to consume a product which may not seem very sustainable at first glance. By having these people, who are actively educating themselves on sustainability through their memberships in these Facebook groups, describe their thoughts and reflections on the topic of sustainable consumption, is assumed to provide especially rich empirical material. By challenging one of their consumer choices (purchase of LEGO) the argumentation and reflection on the concept of sustainable consumption is expected to become even more detailed, and it is the hope that it will highlight some of the complexities of the construction of the concept.

Reflections on Sampling

One thing that may have influenced the sampling is the linguistic barrier. As I do not speak neither Norwegian or Swedish fluently, I wrote the recruitment post in English in the Swedish

and Norwegian groups. This means that only the members of the Norwegian and Swedish groups who understand English, could participate in the interview. This may have excluded certain segments of the population. Yet, today most Scandinavians speak English rather well. Actually, in 2019 the three Scandinavian countries Sweden, Norway and Denmark were ranked as the best English speakers of the world, just after the Netherlands[6] (Education First, 2019). Thus, it should not have that big in influence that I did not write the post in their first respective first languages.

Another aspect which should be considered in relation to the sampling, is my position as a researcher in relation to the informants. As I myself identify as a Scandinavian, I will likely be able to understand the messages of the informants in a way that is close to how the informants wish them to be understood. There may be some sub-cultural variations within the group, especially across countries, which I am not a part of, but on a general level, I should be able to understand and/or recognize any customs, courtesies or traditions they may refer or adhere to, and be able to behave within the spectrum of what is considered normal, respectful behavior when interviewing the informants. Therefore, it is assumed that there will not be any major challenges regarding the social and cultural circumstances of the researcher in relation to interviewing and interpreting the statements of the informants.

Tools and strategy of analysis – Critical Discourse Analysis

As it was described in the theory chapter, this study will include a discourse analysis, which is inspired from Fairclough's critical discourse analysis. In this section some of Fairclough's own methodological guidelines for critical discourse analysis will be described. The exact strategy for appliance of the method for the analysis of this study, will be explained continually throughout the section, as Fairclough's different methodological guidelines for critical discourse analysis are being described. Furthermore, this will include the considerations of the choices made, regarding the specific use of the method.

As it was mentioned in the theory chapter, Fairclough's critical discourse analysis is considered one of the most developed forms of discourse analysis (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 60), which therefore also comes with rather detailed guidelines and suggestions as to how a critical discourse analysis should be conducted. The analysis will not include all of these guidelines

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[6] The best English speaking countries, which do not have English as the official first language.

and suggestions, because it has been found that the analysis would not benefit from all of the features. Therefore, as it has been mentioned before, the analysis of this project will only be *inspired* by Fairclough's critical discourse analysis.

One of the reasons why Fairclough's critical discourse analysis is a good fit for this study's analysis, is because it is a text-oriented form of discourse analysis (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 65). As it has been decided to use interviews for this study, it is an advantage that the critical discourse analysis is focused on textual analysis. Fairclough's text-oriented critical discourse analysis also attempts to unite three traditions (Fairclough, 1992, p. 72). This is because Fairclough argues that all instances of communicative events (language use) consist of three dimensions. These is the text, which involves elements such as speech, visual images or writing. There is the discursive practice, entailing the consumption and production of texts and lastly there is the social practice, to which the specific communicative event belongs (Fairclough, 1992, p. 73). These three dimensions make up an analytical framework for empirical research in relation to communication and society. According to Fairclough, all the dimensions should be included in an analysis of a specific communicative event (Fairclough, 2015, p. 57). The framework can appear to be separating the different dimensions very distinctively, yet Fairclough points out that the text analysis inevitably will include analysis of the discursive practice, as well as analysis of the discursive practice requires a level of textual analysis (Fairclough, 1992, p. 73). This means that the different dimensions sometimes overlap when it comes to the practical application of the method.

Text analysis focuses on the concrete formal, textual features and how these aspects contribute to constructing the discourses (Fariclough, 2015, p. 57). Among these Fairclough highlights features such as vocabulary/wording, syntax, sentence coherence, logical connectors, ethos, interactional control, metaphors and grammar as being interesting aspects for investigation (Fairclough, 2015, pp. 129-153). In relation to the text analysis, not all of these specific features will be included in this study's analysis. Fairclough points out himself that his method to textual analysis is "*a guide and not a blueprint*" (Fariclough, 2015, p. 129). Furthermore, he suggests that some researchers may find that some parts of his method are "*overly detailed or even irrelevant to their purposes*" (Fairclough, 2015, p. 129). In this case, the focus is to investigate more than just the details of the specific discourse(es), which means that the textual analysis of this study will not involve the same level of detailed focus on the linguistic features. This study's approach to discourse analysis is still inspired from Fairclough's critical discourse analysis though, and therefore textual analysis will be conducted, but with emphasis on features like vocabulary/wording, logical connectors and metaphors. It is

primarily these features, which will be investigated as it has been found that in relation to this study, these linguistic features are the ones that provide the most information about the discourses and the discursive practice independently from other linguistic features. Furthermore, it would not make much sense to pay a lot of attention to e.g. syntax and grammar in general, when two of three interviews were not conducted in the informants' first language. There may be instances, where the informants have formulated sentences differently than they would have, if the interviews had been conducted in their first language, as they can be limited by their English skills, even though they can make themselves perfectly understandable in their second language. Still, these aspects are not excluded from the analysis, as there might as well be instances, where it makes sense to include analysis of these aspects, and therefore it has been chosen to keep the possibility open, if such an instance should occur. Yet, it should be underlined that these aspects will not be the main concern of the text analysis.

When analyzing the discursive practice, the focus is on how the 'authors' of a text (in this case the informants) draw on already existing discourses and genres to create a text. It is an analysis of intertextuality. When the authors of a text combine different elements from different discourses, the authors can change the individual discourses, and this way change the cultural and social world (Fairclough, 1995, p. 56). In other words, if the informants are combining elements from different discourses and expands them when describing the concept of sustainable consumption, this can be considered as change of the discourse. It should be noted again that the informants, according to the discourse theory, will always draw on already existing discursive structures when constructing their statements. Therefore, when informants are drawing on already existing discourses, this will be considered as reproduction of the discourse, and when the informants are combining elements from different discourses of sustainable consumption, this will be regarded as change of the discourse. In practice this will entail loose comparison of the discourses between the informants' interview statements.

Finally, when analyzing the social practice, focus should be on including the results of the analysis of the discursive practice. It should be considered if the discursive practices reproduce or restructures the current order of discourse, as well as it should be discussed what consequences this could entail for the social practice (Fairclough, 2015, p. 59). In this study, this part of the analysis will be performed as an analytical discussion where the theory of The Three Ecologies by Guattari will be included as the analytical framework of the social practice. This means, that the results from the textual analysis and the analysis of the discursive practice will enter an analytical discussion, where it will be analyzed how the results fit into the framework of the social practice. Concurrently, it will be discussed what possible paradoxes can be found

from the results of the textual analysis and discursive practice analysis, as well as what consequences this will imply.

Practical approach to the analysis

As a last note in relation to the practical conduction and structure of the analysis, I will briefly go through the practical approaching to the analysis.

The analysis will be performed by analyzing one interview at a time. This means that I will begin by parallelly performing textual analysis and analysis of the discursive practice of one interview. After having done this, I will move on to analyzing the text and the discursive practice of the next interview. When starting to analyze the next interview, I will start out by briefly analyzing and exemplifying the discourses which are being reproduced in the interview, meaning that that the analysis of the second and the third interview start out with examination of the already mentioned discourses, which reappear in the interview in question. After introducing the reproduced discourses, I will move on to analyze and demonstrate the expansion of discourses as well as the new constructions. I may compare the findings between the analyses of the different interviews as I go, if I find that it makes sense to draw parallels between the findings. I will continue like this throughout the interviews, which means that I will finish the analysis by performing a collective analytical discussion of the social practice, which includes the findings from the analysis of text and discursive practices of all the interviews at once. The analytical discussion of the social practice is saved for last because it has been found that this makes the most sense in relation to discussing the implications and consequences of the discourses constructed in the different interviews. By saving this part of the analysis for last, the analytical discussion can make use of cross referencing and discuss the more general implications of the analyses.

Regarding the individual analyses of the interviews it should be mentioned that not every single statement of the interviews will be included, for the sake of avoiding too much repetition, and to keep within the formal limitations of this study. Furthermore, it has been found that including every single statement of the interviews in the analysis, would not provide the analysis with a fuller result, as not every statement adds a new layer to the discourses. Some of the statements in the interview will be rather similar, and therefore I will attempt to the best of my abilities to include all the statements, which can provide valuable information in the analysis, and leave out any, which would be functioning as superfluous.

Analysis

In this chapter a critical discourse analysis of the three interviews will be presented. All the chosen statements from the interviews have been categorized in examples, which are presented in appendix 4 along with an overview of all the discourses which were found in the analysis. Examples are grouped on the basis of what discourses they sustain. Thus, an example can both contain one or several statements. Moreover, the examples are linked to when new discourses are illustrated, meaning that when some of the discourses are reproduced in the second and third interview, this will just be briefly exemplified with references to the actual transcript of the interview in appendix 2 or 3 instead of the examples of appendix 4. As it can be seen in appendix 1, 2 and 3 all the statements of the interviews have been numbered, starting from 1 with the first statement. The number of the statement is referred to with the symbol #. Finally, the chapter will be concluded with an analytical discussion of the social practice which is performed by cross referencing of the already presented examples.

Frida Interview

The first question of the interview was a question which was supposed to make the respondents reflect on their thoughts on the meaning(s) of the concept of sustainable consumption. The following examples will present extracts from her answer to the question.

Example 1, appendix 1, Example 2, appendix 1 & Example 3, appendix 1:

Frida describes the concept of sustainable consumption as being kind of self-contradictory, be saying that "*the two words in themselves are rather contradictory*". By this she divides sustainability and consumption into two different categories, whereas sustainability means one thing, and consumption means something completely different. It can be interpreted as if the concept of consumption is equal to the opposite of sustainable. Yet, she moderates this by adding that ""*(...) as humans* (…) *it is necessary to perform consumption on some level*". This hedging legitimizes the consumption-part of the concept a bit, and starts to define the meaning of consumption, thus constructing a discourse about consumption as being term of contrasts, as it is "bad but necessary".

Moving a little beyond the definition of the meaning of consumption, Frida elaborates on her thoughts on the concept of sustainable consumption. In example 2, Frida argues that sustainable consumption can be kind of abused in relation to marketing by saying: *"(...) it can be a very easy way for corporations to.. Like market themselves. And then like, try to brand this thing as sustainable consumption"*. By using the word *brand*(ing) about corporations' sales

activities regarding sustainable products, Frida constructs the corporations' actions as rather having a commercial focus, than a sustainable one, when marketing these products. By saying that it is an *easy* way for the corporations to market themselves, it can be interpreted as if Frida suggests that the corporations are not really making an effort in the fight for sustainable consumption, but rather that they are "greenwashing" to be able to sell more products and earn more revenue. She underlines this by making the argument that consumers may be more likely to consume, if they can just tell themselves "*Well, but this is sustainable*". This sustains a discourse about sustainable consumption not being an "easy" option, and that it takes work to achieve. It also adds a layer to the discourse about sustainable consumption not being compatible with the philosophy of capitalism, or ideas that are driven by commercial interests.

Lastly, statement 6 again underlines Frida's ambivalent relationship with the concept of sustainable consumption. She does not really care for the fact that people, in her opinion, "(…) *throw* [it] *around a bit too much*". Frida's choice to use the metaphor of people "throwing it around" (or in a more direct translation "sprinkling it around themselves") emphasizes Frida's opinion of the term being one which is used too lightly, and it adds to the discourse of sustainable consumption being hard work, instead of an easy option. The ambivalence is expressed as she makes clear that she still does consider herself a sustainable consumer though. As Frida points out the ambivalence of her relationship to the concept of sustainable consumption, a discourse about sustainable consumption forms, which highlights self-contradiction as well as ambivalence as a confusing aspect of sustainable consumption.

The next examples are related to the second question of the interview. This question is supposed to make the informants reflect on their behavior as political, sustainability-concerned consumers and make them explain how their actions belong to the concept of sustainable consumption.

Example 4, appendix 1, Example 5, appendix 1 & Example 6, appendix 1:

In these examples, new discourses are introduced. In example 4, a lot of different things are expressed at once. To begin with, Frida says about her general consumption habits, that she tries to "*keep it to a minimum*", which can be interpreted as a consuming less-discourse. This discourse implies that it is sustainable to generally consume less than you otherwise could do.

Though she hedges this statement a little by adding "*as much as possible*", which can be interpreted as if there are *some* limits to her attempts of consuming less. Another discourse which is formed in this example is an economy discourse. For instance, when Frida talks about acquiring new things, she uses the phrase to *invest in* a new product, which has a certain financial connotation. This constructs meaning linked to sustainable consumption, which involves a financial aspect. Additionally, it can be interpreted from the wording that a certain financial capacity is needed to be able to perform sustainable consumption. Since new products are "investments", it can indicate that new products can be pricy, but that they return the value, which was spent, be it money or carbon footprints.

This economic discourse is developed further in the example by the sentence "(…) *I think a lot like, in circular economy*". Using words like *circular economy* creates a certain professional discourse in relation to economy. Thus, the economy discourse becomes a discourse that adds a level of meaning that includes professionalized knowledge and financial capacity. The meaning of sustainable consumption therefore is expanded to include this. The discourse is also sustained by statement 16, where Frida explains how her economy has limited her sustainable consumption, because sustainable make-up is "*extremely expensive*". She underlines that with her limited income as a student, she cannot afford sustainable make-up. She hedges her statement by saying "*that I have probably moved a bit away from again*" about her consumption of sustainable make-up. This hedging can indicate hesitation to admit that she feels more or less forced to prioritize differently, because she belongs to a culture where economy is regulative for behavior. This expands the economy discourse with a socioeconomic aspect.

A major part of this example is also the construction of recycling, reuse and second-hand as being sustainable consumption. By pointing out that it is important to her, even when she buys new products, that the product "*can be recycled somehow*" or that it is "*already reused*". This means that recycling and reuse is being defined as sustainable consumption. By adding "*thinking the entire resource*" into mix, Frida draws a parallel from product to resource. It can also be interpreted as drawing a line from nature to the specific good, as the word *resource* can have a connotation of a natural reference. This creates an image of natural resources being converted into products, and by recycling the products are changed back into natural resources again. This provides the recycling discourse with a touch of a natural tone. Thus, sustainable consumption is constructed to be focused around nature and natural resources, which are part of a cycle.

The statements of example 5 amplifies one of the discourses which were mentioned earlier. Frida points out that she feels an urge to buy things from time to time, which may not be exclusively founded in actual need: "*I buy a lot of second-hand clothes, because I am a.. Luxury-person*". She links this habit with her cultural background which she calls "*consumer society*". She adds that she is "*a damn materialist*" but laughs gently while saying so. Something is lost in translation here, as she uses a conjunction which in Danish is "da" and means something more or less equivalent to "of course" or "naturally". It expresses a matter of course in relation to her being a "*damn materialist*". This again highlights the what can be interpreted as a discourse that expresses a disconnection between capitalism and sustainable consumption. To elaborate, Frida's explanation for having an urge to consume materialistic things such as clothing, without having an actual need for new clothes, but to "*get that luxury-feeling of something new and exciting*" is founded in the fact that she grew up in a *consumer society*, which is based on capitalist philosophy and values. The fact that she laughs when calling herself *a damn materialist* could be interpreted as her finding it comical that she identifies as both a sustainable consumer and at the same time a *luxury person* of the *consumer society*, and that this is funny, because she thinks that there is a comically absurd contrast between the two worlds of sustainability and capitalism. Thus, a discourse of sustainable consumption which is comically incompatible with capitalism forms.

Finally, example 6 adds a completely new layer of discourse to the concept of sustainable consumption. In example 6 a hesitation can be detected, as if Frida initially seems reluctant to say what she actually means to say: "*Uhh, and.. So, I.. It sounds a bit strange, but* (…)". What she means to say is that she uses second-hand make-up. Frida's initial hesitation to speak freely can be interpreted as her having an assumption that it is somehow socially unacceptable that she uses second-hand make-up. It may be because she is worried that people would think that it is unsanitary to use "old" make-up or "someone else's" make-up. Or that others would think that she may not be able to buy new make-up and therefore she gets hand-me-downs from her friends. Whereas second-hand or up-cycled clothes have become fashionable, this might not really be the case for second-hand make-up (yet). Instead, there might be other connotations to buying second-hand make-up, which are not so desirable. Therefore, Frida makes sure to explain that you can often get products which "*haven't ever been used or anything*", when buying products in second-hand shops, and that her friends did not like the products which they pass on to her, and that that is why they offer them to her. Frida even uses the phrase "*like if you go to second-hand shops you can often find shampoo*" which distances the statement from herself,

and makes the statement a more general one, which means that it is not linked to her personally. This can be interpreted as an indicator of fear of being judged. Frida does not want to be associated with someone who is unresourceful or poor because of her sustainable consumer habits, as this has been culturally conditioned as shameful. This constructs a discourse of sustainable shame which constructs sustainable consumption as being socially unaccepted to some extent.

Halfway through the interview the respondents are asked to take a stand on whether they think that a purchase of LEGO can be regarded as sustainable consumption.

Example 7, appendix 1, Example 8, appendix 1 & Example 9, appendix 1:

Example 7, 8 and 9 expands some of the discourses, which have been discussed earlier. For instance, example 7 adds to the discourse about sustainable consumption as being incompatible with capitalism. Frida says that she does not think that LEGO is doing enough to help improve sustainable consumption and elimination of environmental issues. By using the wording "*an unreasonable amount of resources*" about the LEGO corporation, she is emphasizing that it is without reason that they have so many resources, as they are not being put to good use. Frida rationalizes that it must be because of the competitive market, and that with the amount of money and resources which LEGO have you "*could have easily made a product*" which is more sustainable than the oil-based LEGO brick. But since "*it has to be relatively cheap for them*" to produce such a solution, they are not taking it seriously enough. When Frida uses the words *easily* and *cheap* she constructs a reality which can be interpreted as if the LEGO corporation is part of a capitalist conspiracy which has the power to do more or less what they want, because they have the money to do so. She also uses the phrase "*Well, it is not rocket science, is it?*". This formulation is a little sarcastic, as both Frida and I know that LEGO has nothing to do with rockets. Yet, the metaphor is an expression which is used when something is not hard to figure out, as opposed to actual rocket science. This metaphor really highlights Frida's point and contributes to the construction of a discourse that establishes that LEGO is driven by commercial interests over sustainability related ones.

Frida expresses that because of the capitalist structure and philosophy, it is not a competitive advance to produce sustainably, and therefore LEGO do not do as much, as they could have. Frida's accusation against LEGO can actually be interpreted as an expression of the capitalist culture which she is part of as a citizen of a Scandinavian country. It forms a

capitalistic discourse that expresses that money and plenty can provide anything, even knowledge and new sustainable solutions. When Frida makes this point, it puts an even bigger emphasis on the construction of capitalism or capitalistic philosophy as not doing anything beneficial for sustainability or sustainable consumption.

Yet, even though Frida seems to express an aversion towards capitalist philosophy, she is inevitably a product of its presence. This is also expressed, as Frida ascribes a great deal of responsibility to LEGO because of their resources. Frida seems to expect, that with the amount of money that LEGO has, it should be possible to do almost anything. Therefore, Frida says that because the LEGO corporation has so much, they are doing too little. This supports a discourse which articulates that a corporation is not sustainable unless they really deliver something. To Frida it is not enough that LEGO has invested money in research to find a solution, because she is certain that if a company like LEGO "*actually really meant it*" they would have already provided a permanent solution. Thus, it can be interpreted that Frida is articulating a discourse that expresses big capitalist corporations as being non-sustainable. This means that Frida does not define a purchase of LEGO as being sustainable consumption, hence buying products from capitalist corporations is not sustainable consumption.

In example 8, yet another layer of meaning is added to the discourse of sustainable consumption being non-capitalist. Here Frida focuses on a culture of capitalist society which she calls the *buy-and-throw-away culture*. Frida elaborates on why she thinks that this specific consumer culture is not sustainable, and explains it by the statement "*Because dear God, there are so many sets which are just being thrown away because you lose just one or two pieces*". Frida uses the word *God* which almost symbolizes a prayer in which she invokes help from a higher power, because she thinks it is that hopeless, what is happening. The hopelessness is linked to the fact that sets of perfectly fine toys are "*just being thrown away*" because a few bricks or pieces are missing. This adds to the discourse of sustainable consumption that it is not sustainable to throw away good and functioning things, just to buy new ones.

Lastly, Example 9 introduces a discourse of quality. Here Frida says that LEGO has been able create an identity for their toys, which makes consumers consider their "*plastic crap*" as something "*which is really nice, and something which is durable, and something which you want to invest a lot of money in, really*". For starters, by using the words *plastic crap* about the LEGO toys, Frida is constructing a discourse about plastic, which is that it is most definitely not sustainable. But she also describes how the branding of LEGO has created an identity which

promotes the plastic toys as *really nice* and *durable* something that one would like to *invest* a lot of money in. Again, Frida uses the word *invest* which has earlier been tied to a financial discourse. In this context, the investment is linked to something which is supposed to have high value because it is *really nice* and *durable*. That Frida mentions the durability of the product, and that durability is something which can legitimize a high price, adds to the meaning of sustainable consumption. That durability is valued, is because the lifetime of the product is extended, which was also discussed in relation to example number 8. Extending the lifetime of something thus becomes sustainable, which means that durable products are sustainable. At the same time, Frida equates quality product with something that is durable. This means that quality products are constructed as sustainable. Finally, Frida points out that it is the quality of the product which makes one want to *invest* money in the product, which adds to the financial discourse that quality products are expensive, therefore it costs money to consume sustainably. Yet, it is also emphasized by exactly the word *invest* that even though it may cost some money to consume sustainably, it pays off in the end.

Example 10, appendix 1:

Firstly, it is focused around what can again be interpreted as a materialistic need, founded in a capitalist culture. Frida likes the product, and she does not feel like there are other products that provides the same joy and entertainment as LEGO, which is why she succumbs to her urge to buy (appendix 1, p. 7, statement 68). It yet again expresses a discourse of how the capitalist philosophy and market structure leads to unsustainable consumption (at least by Frida's own words), as there are no other "sustainable players" in the market that can compete with LEGO on this area.

   Yet, it could also be interpreted that Frida's willingness to buy LEGO and, according to herself make an unsustainable consumer choice, stems from confusion of priorities. She points out that LEGO is usually "*not for one-time use*", and that it is something which is "*appreciated several times through the course of a life*". She adds that compared to all the plastic that is part of our everyday lives and which is for one-time use (appendix 1, pp. 11-12, statement 104, line 4-12), LEGO is "*not a gigantic problem*". By using the word *gigantic* Frida is kind of hedging her statement which diminishes her affinity to her prior statements about LEGO being unsustainable, but without completely rejecting them. A sense of confusion can be interpreted from this plastic aspect, as Frida attempts to create a hierarchy of importance

within her understanding of sustainable consumption. As she compares the one-time use plastic to plastic which can be used several times, a discourse forms about both plastics, and the use of resources. It expresses that plastics if plastics can be used several times, which extends its lifetime, it can be considered a more sustainable consumer choice than the plastic which is only for one-time use. This kind of ability-grouping of the resources may also be what is confusing to Frida, as she also links *how* the resources are used to the level of sustainability. This expands a discourse, which has also been mentioned before. Namely, the discourse of reducing, reusing and recycling. In this case it is added to the understanding that regardless of the resource, how it is used is important, and the more times it can be used, the more sustainable.

Example 11, appendix 1:

In relation to the last question, many of the discourses which have already been mentioned and elaborated are expressed in relation to this question throughout statement 78 to 104 (appendix 1, pp. 8-12). In general, the discourses constructed here can be interpreted as concerned with how capitalist culture and market influences everyday life, such as in how one-time use plastic is almost everywhere, and therefore hard to avoid (appendix 1, pp. 11-12, statement 104). Frida also emphasizes how she, as a product of capitalist culture, has a taste for luxury and therefore enjoys buying expensive coffees with a plastic lid (appendix 1, p. 9, statement 82). Furthermore, the economy discourse, which has also been discussed already, is also present. Frida underlines how her economy limits her ability to consume sustainably, as she for instance cannot afford to buy all her everyday produce as wrapping-free options, because these simply are too expensive. This again constructs sustainable consumption as having a socioeconomic lopsidedness.

What is new about her answers to the last question, however, is the focus on knowledge. As it can be seen in example 11, Frida criticizes the general lack of education on how things are produced, and what they are produced from: "*I believe that we are not being schooled enough to think about where the oil actually comes from*". Using the word *schooled* can be interpreted Frida expressing that it is not easy to see through the life cycle of a product such as oil. This forms a discourse about sustainable consumption, which expresses that it requires some education in relation to manufacturing and production. Additionally, the discourse comes with another layer of meaning. Because if it is only well educated people, or people who are

resourceful enough to educate themselves, who have a proper chance of being able to perform sustainable consumption, this too has a social lopsidedness, just as well as the economic aspect. The discourse thus expresses that sustainable consumption is for resourceful individuals. Furthermore, there is a last discourse which is being introduced in relation to Frida's answer to the last question of the interview. Frida expresses her aversion towards an extraction method of shale, and the impact this method has on nature. The use of the words "*they just wreck*" can be interpreted as Frida implying that the Americans *just* with ease and without thinking, thoughtlessly, are wrecking nature. The use of *wrecking* underlines the seriousness of the action. They are not just breaking or damaging the geological strata, they are wrecking it beyond repair. And to underline how rash she thinks this is, Frida uses the words *teeny tiny* about the amount of oil which is achieved in relation to the cost. Frida's clear aversion towards this extraction method can be interpreted as an expression of a discourse that conservation of nature is sustainable, and that *just wrecking* it is definitely not.

Lastly, a discourse about oil and the oil industry is articulated by Frida. In statement 92, she says that the oil industry is "*kind of nasty*", as well as the "*guys who are sitting on it*" are nasty. Using the word nasty about the general oil industry, who is running it and how it operates assigns meaning of the industry and its products as being unsustainable. The metaphor of the *guys who are sitting on it* underlines Frida's feelings about the industry, as this metaphor can be interpreted as expressing that the industry, besides providing some unsustainable products, represents an unfavorable culture. A culture with a few nasty guys on top, which can be interpreted as Frida constructing the oil industry as being a chauvinist industry, as it is *guys* who are "sitting on top of the empire". Additionally, the metaphor implies a sense of imbalance or inequality, as there are a few people *sitting* on the industry. It can be interpreted as if these guys are just sitting around on top, while employees are running around doing the actual work. It also indicates some kind of closed culture, where it is only the few nasty guys who can be allowed in. It can thus be interpreted that Frida by this statement articulates a discourse about the oil industry being unsustainable in several regards. Both that they use extraction methods which destroys nature, but also that it is socially unsustainable because of the imbalance or inequality which was mentioned. As Frida is constructing this discourse about the oil industry, which is linked to the resource of oil, oil comes to represent the same thing. Moreover, when Frida constructs oil and the oil industry this way and distances herself from these kinds of meanings, it is at the same time expressed that she does not regard oil as a resource, or anything that it stands for, as sustainable.

Xenia Interview

To begin with, Xenia draws on a discourse which was also very present in the interview with Frida. Thus, when asked what comes into mind when hearing the words "sustainable consumption", Xenia says: "*We are more than just consumers*" (appendix 2, p. 1, statement 2, line 2-3). By using the word *just* Xenia underlines that she identifies as something else as well, and that her consumerism is not all that she is. She adds that the conception of people as being political agents through consumerism is "*an often too highlighted conception*" (appendix 2, p. 1, statement 2, line 2). This can be interpreted as a criticism of the capitalist culture and philosophy, where individuals' value is founded in their function as consumers. Finally, Xenia adds: "*In true sustainability, we are more than just consumers*" (appendix 2, p. 1, line 3). By underlining that *true sustainability* is not equal to consumerism, Xenia distances sustainable behavior from capitalism, and, just like Frida, sort of separates consumption from sustainability. This can be interpreted as the construction, or rather reproduction of the discourse (example 2) that expresses a conflict between sustainable consumption and capitalism. There are several cases of the presence of this discourse in the interview with Xenia as well as it was the case in the Frida interview.

Xenia also reproduces the discourse about consumption being bad, but necessary. In statement 14 (appendix 2, pp. 2-3, line 2), Xeina says: "We need to.. We need to eat". It has already been established that Xenia too constructs consumption as opposed to sustainability, but she also admits that it is necessary to consume sometimes. By using the word *need* it is underlined that it is not something which is voluntary. Thereby Xenia expresses that she recognizes that consumption is part of human survival, but she still considers consumption as a term as unsustainable.

Another discourse which is reproduced in the interview with Xenia, is the discourse about the use of the resource. In statement 16 (appendix 2, p. 3, line 4) Xenia highlights "*Reusing*" and "*fixing*" items, as one of the things she does to perform sustainable consumption. Frida also emphasized the importance of extending the lifetime of resources (example 8). Thus, the focus on lowering production by extending the lifetime of resources is being reproduced as a discourse of sustainable consumption. Xenia also points out that she attempts to completely "*avoid consumption*", in order to consume sustainably (appendix 2, p. 3, line 4-5). This can be

interpreted as a construction of sustainable consumption as involving less consumption (consuming less), as consumption in general means using more resources. This consuming less-discourse about sustainable consumption was also mentioned by Frida (example 4), which means that the discourse is reproduced through Xenia's construction of sustainable consumption.

Xenia also explains that she avoids plastic (appendix 2, p. 5, statement 32, line 2-3). It can be interpreted as a discourse about plastic not being sustainable, because she follows it up by saying: "*but I have seen that they're doing better things*" (appendix 2, p. 5, statement 32, line 3), with a reference to LEGO's new (by LEGO's own words) sustainable initiatives. By contrasting *plastic* with *better things*, which represents more sustainable solutions, Xenia constructs a conflict between plastic and sustainability, which expresses that plastic is not an option in sustainable consumption. Additionally, Xenia reproduces the discourse about oil not being sustainable (example 11) (appendix 2, p. 6, statement 42), but expands it a little as she equates oil-based with fossil-based (appendix 2, p. 5, statement 36), meaning that she, by renouncing fossil fuels, thus constructs them as not being sustainable to consume.

Still, Xenia says about buying second-hand LEGO: "*There's no reason why I couldn't do that*" (appendix 2, p. 9, statement 76). This can once again be interpreted as if Xenia values extension of the lifetime of a resource. This focus on how things are used, even resources and materials, which are not regarded as sustainable in the first place, was also articulated in the Frida interview. Thus, both the discourse of plastic not being sustainable and the discourse of sustainable use of resources can be linked back to the interview with Frida (Example 10), which further underlines interdiscursivity.

Yet, after opening with some, by now, familiar discourses, Xenia introduces new aspects in the construction of the concept of sustainable consumption.

Example 12, appendix 2:

Generally, Xenia seems to have a social focus in her construction of the concept of sustainable consumption. This can for instance be interpreted from statement 8. Xenia says about values that: "*hopefully that is, to not harm other people or the environment*". First of all, it has not been articulated very clearly before that protection of the environment is something which is sustainable consumption. Yet, here Xenia talks about protecting the environment from harm,

in relation to her values of sustainable consumption. This constructs what may to many be a very central discourse that sustainable consumption is about protecting the environment. Secondly, the social focus of Xenia is really expressed in this statement. By putting the words *people* and *the environment* in the same sentence right next to each other, Xenia juxtaposes people and the environment in relation to sustainability and sustainable consumption. This expands the discourse about sustainable consumption in relation to the environment, so that it also includes people. Protecting people becomes as important as protecting the environment. It can also be interpreted as if Xenia interrelates the two, as she juxtaposes people and the environment. It could thus be interpreted that Xenia implies a reciprocal connection between people and the environment. This link between people and the environment is reinforced by the following sentence: "*Rather to contribute to people and the environment and everyone's prosperity*". Here, Xenia creates a chain which starts with contributing to *people* then *the environment* and lastly *everyone's prosperity*. It can be interpreted as if this line actually is a "course of action"-line, which means that contributing to people, contributes to the environment, which in the end contributes to everyone's prosperity. This discourse further expands the construction of sustainable consumption to entail a connection between people's prosperity and the environment's prosperity. Additionally, Xenia uses phrases and words like *not to harm* and *contribute to (…) everyone's prosperity.* Using these rather mild expressions such as *harm* and not for instance *destroy*, as well as *contribute to* instead of for instance *fight for* Xenias statements can be interpreted as expressing a kind of peaceful patience. This adds another layer to the discourse that sustainable consumption requires both peace and patience.

Statement 14 of example 12 continues to expand the discourse about the social aspects of sustainable consumption. Xenia explains how she does not wish to be completely self-sustainable, as she wants "*the community to earn from us being here*". The business that Xenia has in Nepal could possibly be more or less self-sustainable, but they do simply not wish to be so, because they want the locals to benefit from their presence. This includes that Xenia buys 50% of her own as well as her business' food from the locals. Here, the link between the locals benefitting from Xenia and her business' presence in the community becomes Xenia's voluntary financial support to the local community. Since Xenia could probably be self-sustainable, but voluntarily chooses not to be to be able to support the local community, it can be interpreted that Xenia considers social support as important in relation to sustainable consumption. This construction of meaning underlines the social aspect of sustainable consumption.

Furthermore, Xenia explains that she always buys from local farmers, also when

she is home in Sweden. Xenia does not emphasize the social aspect of buying from locals in Sweden, as she does in relation to buying from locals in Nepal. This could be because the Swedish farmers are not in the same way dependent on the local sales, as the Nepalese community is. Yet, Xenia still emphasizes the importance of buying from local farmers, even when it does not have a strictly social purpose. This can be interpreted as an expansion of a discourse which have already been discussed. By emphasizing that it is really important to buy local, it could be interpreted as if Xenia prefers that the travel distance from nature and to her shopping basket is minimized as much as possible. This could again be interpreted as an expression of a discourse about sustainable consumption and nature. The lesser it is commercialized and the more it is "close to nature", unprocessed, not transported or wrapped up, the more sustainable it is to consume. Buying local thus becomes equal with buying "natural", and as Xenia prefers this in relation to sustainable consumption, buying local is not only constructed as natural, but also as sustainable consumption. Therefore, buying local becomes part of the nature discourse, which was also articulated by Frida (example 4). However, even more meaning is added to the nature discourse, as Xenia also highlights the importance of buying organic produce, because it "*then benefits nature*". That organic produce *benefits nature* can be interpreted as Xenia expressing that it is beneficial to nature to spare it from for instance pesticides. This again suggests that this unmanipulated, unprocessed approach to produce is considered as sustainable, because it inflicts nature less. By linking organic produce, and maybe unmanipulated produce in general, to nature, Xenia expands the nature discourse, which means that organic produce also becomes a sustainable consumer choice.

Sticking with the discourses that involve food, Xenia also creates a new discourse about which lifestyle choices that involve sustainable consumption. In statement 82, Xenia describes her journey through different lifestyles regarding food. Starting as one who ate meet, becoming a vegetarian and finally becoming a vegan. The description of how "*it grew*", her interest and own investment in sustainability and thus sustainable consumption, she also implies that vegetarianism is more sustainable than eating meat, and again that eating fully plant-based without any animal products is more sustainable than both vegetarianism and eating meat. Xenia says: "*So in the beginning when I started several years* ago". The historical or anecdotal touch that Xenia includes in her explanation of her journey from meat-eater to vegan by creating a time-line, ads an extra sense of distance because Xenia puts *several years* between her contemporary, vegan self, and her "old", meat-eating self. She thus distances herself from her previous lifestyle choices. This distance that Xenia creates to the lifestyle choice of eating meat, implies

a discourse about meat and meat-eating lifestyles as being unsustainable. This implication thus constructs a discourse about plant-based diets being sustainable as opposed to diets that include animal products.

The last statement of example 12 was also mentioned in relation to the reproduction of discourse. Yet, this statement not only reproduces discourse, it also constructs a new one. Xenia consequently uses the word "*we"* in the statement, which creates a sense of unity. By saying *we* instead of for instance *I* it can be interpreted that Xenia constructs the cause of sustainable consumption as a collective one, which cannot be fought by one individual. The responsibility of achieving sustainable consumption is thus also being moved from the individual to the collective. This again constructs a rather social discourse about sustainable consumption as being a collective responsibility.

Example 13, appendix 2:

In continuation of exploration of the expansion of the nature discourse by including local produce, it is expanded even further in relation to example 13. Here Xenia under lines that if she buys a book then "*maybe the book is from recycled paper, but it has to be transported to me somehow*". This sentence creates a contrast between the recycled paper and the transportation of the book. It can be interpreted as if the recycled paper represents what Xenia considers to be sustainable consumption, and by creating a contrast to transportation with the word *but*, transportation comes to represent unsustainable consumption. Xenia explains that it is hard to find a sustainable delivery method, but that the delivery service DHL has bike delivery nowadays. Xenia again creates a contrast between certain kinds of transportation by emphasizing bike delivery as a sustainable option for transport. This could be because riding a bike does not produce any CO_2 emissions, as opposed to other kinds of transportation such as shipping by sailing, driving or flying. Thus, going back to the previous section, local produce becomes even more sustainable, as this involves less transportation.

Moving a little beyond the nature discourse, example 13 also expresses other discourses. Another discourse, which is being reproduced by Xenia, is that sustainable consumption is not easy. It is hard work, as it is hard to see through. This can also be interpreted from the statement "*maybe the book is from recycled paper, but it has to be transported to me somehow*". This

sentence illustrates how Xenia constantly thinks about several aspects of her consumption, and that even though a book might seem sustainable, as it is produced from recycled paper, the sustainability of the book is reduced if it has to be transported to her from far away, as this will usually involve polluting transportation methods. It expresses the complexity of sustainable consumption, which Frida also expressed (example 11). Yet, this discourse is also expanded in this case, as Xenia also links the complexity of sustainable consumption to limited access. Xenia says: "*trying to find delivery methods*". By using the word *trying* Xenia underlines that it is something which she attempts to do, but that she may not always be successful in finding these delivery methods, which she regards as sustainable. Therefore, the discourse of sustainable consumption being hard work is expanded to include limited access.

The lasts aspect of both reproduction and expansion of the sustainable consumption is hard work-discourse in this analysis, involves educated actions and compromises. In statement 92, Xenia highlights "*Not having enough knowledge*" as one of the reasons for people to perform unsustainable consumption. Xenia elaborates and explains that "*That's why a lot of people don't make certain choices*". By saying this, it can be interpreted that Xenia expresses that a certain level of knowledge and education is needed for people to be able to make sustainable consumer choices, the same way Frida expressed it (example 11). However, Xenia combines this hard work-discourse with a new aspect. Xenia argues that it can also be difficult to make sustainable consumer choices, "*When you're not the only one making the decision*". She exemplifies this referring to the her and her husband's decision of what car to drive (appendix 2, p. 11, statement 90). When having to agree on a car, it was Xenia's husband's wish that they would drive a gasoline car. And as buying a car might be something that Xenia and her husband had to financially do together, they both need to agree on the decision. This ads a construction of meaning which involves that if one is not completely in control of the decision making themselves, or if one has to make compromises, it is hard to make fully sustainable consumer choices. Thus, Xenia constructs sustainable consumption as uncompromising.

Example 14, appendix 2:

Going a little back to Xenia's social focus, when constructing sustainable consumption, Xenia actually adds another layer to this. In example 14 it can be seen how she constructs the concept of sharing as sustainable consumption. It can be interpreted that the reason why Xenia is "*looking forward to sharing more things*" has a social aspect, as she mentions how she shares her

business' outdoor gear with friends but also the sports community. Outdoor gear can be rather pricy, so sharing it means that the sport community will not have to spend a lot of money on outdoor gear themselves, in order to be able to exercise their sport. Additionally, she mentions that the community shares e.g. tools, and that they want to start an electrical carpool, which again means that the community is enabled to do thing in a sustainable way, for instance repairing something with tools, instead of buying new, or driving somewhere together instead of in several separate cars. Thus, sharing becomes part of the social discourse, which means that sharing is constructed as being part of sustainable consumption. Yet, sharing can also be interpreted as being part of the consuming less-discourse which has been expressed earlier by both Xenia and Frida (example 4), as sharing things means reducing the total consumption.

Another aspect which is linked to the consuming less-discourse, is that renting things out is sustainable. In statement 44, Xenia proposes that LEGO "*should be looking into buying in all LEGO, and remaking it into new, or renting it out*". It can be interpreted that Xenia suggests that, by making it an option for people to rent used LEGO instead of buying new, the total need for production of new LEGO would decrease, which leads to consumption of less resources. Thus, Xenia construes renting and borrowing as opposed to consuming, which makes it a sustainable consumption solution.

In the same statement, Xenia uses a metaphor which articulates a new discourse. Xenia suggests that LEGO should be "*maybe taking the bigger picture of sustainability themselves*". Using the metaphor *the bigger picture* can be interpreted as an expression of two different things. Firstly, the metaphor has a certain connotation of "looking beyond something" and is often used in relation to looking beyond one's own needs, which again constructs this social element of discourse. Secondly, looking at the bigger picture suggests "zooming out" and taking the whole picture into account, instead of just focusing on the corner of the picture. In other words, it can be interpreted that Xenia through the metaphor again suggest thinking more holistically about sustainability. Hence, by suggesting that sustainability demands holism, a discourse is constructed that sustainable consumption as well needs to be approached holistically.

Example 15, appendix 2:

Example 15 illustrates the reproduction, but also the expansion of some of the already mentioned discourses. In statement 28, by using the word *resources* Xenia sets the tone for the nature discourse. She expands the discourse by linking resources to *renewable energy*. In

statement 88, it can be interpreted that Xenia prefers some resources over others, when it comes to sustainable consumption. She "*really wanted to have a shared electrical car*" and emphasizes that it should be *electrical* as opposed to for instance the gasoline car, like the one she already has. This emphasis on the car being electrical can be interpreted as if Xenia suggests that an electrical car is more sustainable than e.g. a gasoline car, because the resource which is needed in order to make the car drive, is a renewable one. Additionally, when using the words "*renewable energy*" in statement 28 the discourse about nature and resources is sort of expanded since the word *renewable* again refers to the lasting and lifetime of resources, but here also entails the aspect of lasting in the sense of it being reproduceable.

Yet, the complexity of sustainable consumption is once again expressed, as it is not always any kind of renewable energy which is favorable. In statement 28, Xenia explains that they have renewable energy right now, but that "*it's hydrology, and we don't want that because that's destroying the river we are working on*". By using the word *destroying* Xenia puts emphasis to the negative consequences that using hydrology has to their ability consume sustainably, as the hydrology, in spite of et being a renewable energy resource, is *destroying* the nature of the river. This creates a conflict between two discourses that renewable energy supports sustainable consumption and that protection of nature is sustainable. This again supports the discourse that sustainable consumption is not easy to perform, but that it is rather hard work.

Example 16, appendix 2:

Xenia articulated a last new discourse in relation to sustainable consumption. In example 16, it can be seen that Xenia makes a distinction between the ambition of being sustainable, and actually being sustainable. By using the phrase *even if they had a huge ambitious plan*, Xenia firstly raises doubt about the fact that LEGO has a *huge ambitious plan* to become sustainable, as the words *even if* suggests that this might not be the case. Secondly, it can be interpreted that Xenia kind of sarcastically exaggerates the actual extent of LEGO's (now) supposed plan to go sustainable, as she uses the word *huge*. This combination of linguistic actions creates an impression of Xenia not quite believing in the intentions behind the ambitions of LEGO's plans to become sustainable. This also supports the next part of the sentence, which is that "*the company itself would not be sustainable yet*". Xenia thus distinguishes ambition of sustainability from actual sustainability, on the basis of the ambitions not *yet* being met. This creates a

discourse that expresses that in sustainability and sustainable consumption, actions and actual results speak louder than words.

Børre Interview

Following the same procedure is in the Xenia interview, I will in this section start out by briefly exemplifying the cases in which Børre reproduces discourses, and then I will move on to a more elaborated analysis of the new discourses that Børre articulates, as well as the ones he expands by combining different elements from already defined discourses.

One of the discourses that once again is being drawn on and therefore reproduced, is the discourse of sustainable consumption being hard work. Generally, Børre tends to use the phrase "*I try to*" a lot (e.g. appendix 3, p. 2, statement 14, line 1). The use of *trying* was also analyzed and discussed in relation to example 13, in the Xenia interview, which means that Børre reproduces the same uncertainty about his sustainable consumer habits that indicates that he may not always be successful in complying with his own ideals in this regard. The same discourse can also be interpreted from statement 58 (appendix 3, p. 6, line 2-3), when Børre is asked what makes him break his own sustainability principles: "*To keep peace, well to make life easier*". By saying that in order to be able to keep the peace in his household, he sometimes breaks his sustainable consumer habits. By creating this contrast between *peace* and sustainable consumption, it can be interpreted that Børre articulates a discourse which expresses that it can be quite a fight to consume sustainably. This amplifies the meaning of the hard work-discourse. The exact same concept applies to the use of *to make life easier*. This also indicates that sustainable consumption, as opposed to not consuming sustainably, can be a struggle.

Børre also reproduces the discourse that emphasizes the importance of how resources are used, and that extension of lifetime on resources is favorable. In statement 12 (appendix 3, p. 2, line 4-5) and statement 14 (appendix 3, p. 2, line 1-2) it can be seen that Børre emphasizes reducing, reusing and recycling as a *"main rule"* of which he tries to live by in relation to consumption. The focus on, resources are used also becomes clear in statement 28 (appendix 3, p. 3, line 1-2), as Børre points out that: "*in itself buying something that is made of 98% fossil products, it's not really sustainable in itself, but then again, it depends what you do with it afterwards*". Here, Børre, like Xenia and Frida (example 10), reproduces that aspect of the discourse that focusses on the use of unsustainable resources. This aspect of the discourse expresses that the consumed resource itself, for instance *something that is made of 98% fossil products*, may not be

sustainable, but one can still consume it sustainable, depending on how it is used. Additionally, in the same statement, Børre reproduces the discourse about fossil fuels not being sustainable, which both Xenia and Frida articulated (example 11), by pointing out that a product based on 98% fossil fuels is not sustainable.

Furthermore, by also highlighting *reducing* as one of his key concepts, Børre also reproduces the consuming less-discourse. In statement 12 (appendix 3, p. 2, line 2) Børre adds to the discourse by mentioning his focus on: "*how often or in what quantities I buy stuff*". By saying that the frequency and quantity of which he buys things, is something that he monitors, Børre at the same time expresses that buying too much or too often is not sustainable. Børre also introduces and thus reproduces the discourse about the concept of holism (example 14), as he highlights the importance of considering the different aspects of a product such as origin, production, manufacturing and how far it has traveled in order to be able to assess whether it is sustainable to consume or not (appendix 3, p. 1, statement 8). Thus, Børre also reproduces the discourse of long travel, or in other words transportation, being unsustainable (example 13), as he suggests that "*the distance it* [a product] *has traveled*" (appendix 3, p. 1, statement 8, line 3) should be taken into account when considering sustainability, which implies that a certain level of transportation will make a product unsustainable.

The different discourses about sustainable consumption and economy which were especially constructed by Frida (example 9), is also being reproduced by Børre. Børre points out that some solutions which he regards as sustainable, are more expensive than the solutions that he considers less sustainable: "*It is more expensive, still on the short term, to take the train for instance to the nearest big city Oslo, instead of using our car*" (appendix 3, p. 6, statement 60, line 2-3). At the same time Børre reproduces the discourse about sharing being sustainable, as he is contrasting public/shared transportation with driving your own car (example 14). But in relation to sustainable consumption being constructed as expensive, it can be interpreted that Børre also, like Frida (example 9), indicates that even though a sustainable solution may be more expensive here and now, it can pay off in the long run. Børre reproduces this discourse by saying about repairing things instead of buying new: "*I've done that more and more lately even though it's, in the short term it's more expensive for us*" (appendix 3, p. 2, statement 16, line 1-2). By saying *"in the short term"* Børre emphasizes that the decision to repair something instead of buying new, is not actually more expensive in the long run. For instance, a high-quality winter coat may last for several seasons after being repaired, whereas a cheap, low quality coat

may be more likely to break or become worn out in the course of a few seasons, after which it will have to be replaced with a new.

Børre reproduces one more discourse without altering it or combining it with new elements. In statement 64 (appendix 3, p. 7) Børre explains how he tries to think sustainably when going into the toy store, but that it is not very easy to do this. Børre's struggle to think sustainably when trying to find a present in the toy store can be interpreted as if Børre feels like the sustainable options are limited, just like Xenia expresses it in relation to example 12.

Børre reproduces two more discourses, which have both been produced before, yet in Børre's case they are sort of being linked together. Børre says in statement 62 (appendix 3, p. 7, line 1-2): "*And also peer pressure. Being with other adults as a group and the group agrees on something that I may not be.. That I wouldn't do alone because of sustainability*". Firstly, this reproduces the discourse, that there are social structures which influences sustainable consumption negatively. Frida constructed the discourse of sustainable shame in relation to example 6. It can be interpreted from Børre's statement that he reproduces this discourse, as he calls it "*peer pressure*". The use of *peer pressure* strongly suggests a social dimension, as people around him around Børre are pressuring him to do something, which he dos not really wish to. When Børre uses the term *peer pressure* it is probably not in the sense that one would first think; the playground culture of children daring each other. Yet, this meaning still influences the expression of the discourse, that there might social aspects that limits one's successfulness in consuming sustainably, since we as humans do not wish to be "left out", for not "playing by the social rules". Thus, it can be interpreted that Børre sometimes does things, which he normally would not do, because he finds it hard to back out. This expresses the sustainable shame, which Frida also expresses in example 6, constructing a discourse which implies that sustainable consumption is not always socially acceptable.

Furthermore, the statement can also be linked to the discourse that Xenia constructs, about sustainable consumption being uncompromising in relation to example 13. Like Xenia, Børre indicates in the statement that sometimes one is not completely in control of making decisions alone, and when others are involved in making a decision, at may be hard to act according to one's own sustainability principles. This reproduces the meaning of sustainable consumption being uncompromising.

Lastly, Børre reproduces a discourse that Xenia constructed in relation to example 12. In statement 4, line 2 (appendix 3, p.1) Børre, like Xenia, uses personal pronouns which expresses a sense of collective responsibility in relation to sustainable consumption. By using words such as "*our planet*" and "*That we don't overspend or overconsume*", it can be interpreted that Børre underlines that it is not his responsibility alone, but rather a collective, shared responsibility to achieve sustainable consumption.

Moving on to looking into the discourses which Børre expands, one of them is the consuming less-discourse.

Example 17, appendix 3:

By describing how he tries to think about reducing his consumption, Børre notes that it is mainly in relation to things that are "*a bit more expensive than everyday items*". It can be interpreted that what Børre means by *things that are a bit more expensive than everyday items*, is the things that are not necessarily needed in everyday life, meaning that he focuses on reducing the "nice to have"s and not the "need to have"s. This again can be interpreted as Børre articulating the importance of practicing reduction of the not necessary purchases. It can be interpreted as an expression of consuming linked to materialistic desires or luxury items should be reduced, and that it is this, the desire for possession of things, which is unsustainable. Thus, Børre expands the meaning of the consuming less-discourse, to involve less consumption of non-necessary things, and emphasis on minimizing materialistic desires.

Example 18, appendix 3:

Børre also expands the hard work-discourse, by adding new meaning to it. In relation to answering what makes him break his principles regarding sustainable consumption, Børre answers that sometimes he and his family sometimes take "*shortcuts*" to make life easier. The use of the metaphor *shortcuts* about the non-sustainable consumer choices, can be interpreted as construction of meaning related to sustainable consumption, which constructs it as being a lengthy process, and something that requires time. Whereas non-sustainable consumption represents the easy, time-saving *shortcuts*, sustainable consumption comes to represent taking the (long, more complicated and difficult) high road, to use another metaphor.

Finally, Børre constructs some new discourses which have not already been analyzed from the two previous interviews.

Example 19, appendix 3:

When asked about what he thinks about when he hears the words "sustainable consumption", Børre responds a bit differently than Frida and Xenia. Instead of distinguishing consumption from sustainability, Børre focusses on *balance*. Thus, consumption in this case is constructed as not automatically equivalent with something profoundly unsustainable, as long as it is "*in balance with what the planet can take*".

Børre also articulates another new discourse, which actually stems from a statement which has already been discussed.

Example 20, appendix 3:

By emphasizing that the solution of repairing instead of buying new is more expensive "*in the short term*", but that this is still the preferable solution in relation to sustainable consumption, Børre also expresses that he expects some kind of value from the decision in the long run. This may resemble the already mentioned expansion of the discourse of hard work, namely that sustainability is a lengthy process which takes time. Yet, this discourse has a little bit of a different dimension to it, as this discourse is not concerned with the how time-consuming sustainable consumption and behavior is in itself. It is a discourse that constructs the process of sustainable consumption as a process that does not reveal the "results" of sustainable consumption instantly. There is no quick fix to results, and it is rather something which can be seen over time. Thus, Børre constructs committing to sustainable consumption as something that pays off in the long run.

Example 21, appendix 3:

When Børre explains why he does not consider buying LEGO as unsustainable consumption, he underlines the fact that he has been "*aware*" of his consumption, in the sense that he has been reflecting on how much he plans to consume something, where the product stems from, how it is produced etc. This argument can be interpreted as the construction of meaning that includes awareness of consumption as sustainable consumption. Yet, this discourse conflicts a bit with some of the discourses, which have already been presented, and also a discourse that

Børre himself has articulated; that "*buying something that is made of 98% fossil products it's not sustainable in itself*" (appendix 3, p. 3, #28, line 1-2), since it was established that he does not regard fossil products as sustainable. This conflict of the two discourses further underlines the complexity of sustainable consumption.

Example 22, appendix 3:

A last discourse that Børre constructs about sustainable consumption is constructed through example 22. Here, Børre constructs a discourse about the feature of creativity as sustainable consumption. Børre describes how value can be measured in something else than money: creativity. By saying that creativity is "*a factor to consider, when weighing the pros against the cons*" related to sustainability, Børre at the same time constructs a discourse about creativity being a sustainable feature. Thus, if an item for instance can teach creativity, it can still be a sustainable item to consume.

Analysis and discussion of social practice and paradoxes

This section will present an analytical discussion of the social practice of sustainable consumption on the basis of the findings of the text- and discursive practice analysis. The social practice will be analyzed and discussed in relation to Guattari's theory of The Three Ecologies.

Starting by summing up the general findings of the textual- and discursive practice analysis, the informants are both in agreement and not in agreement about what they conceive as sustainable consumption. Yet, some general themes can be linked to the discourses which the Scandinavian political consumers produced about sustainable consumption. In this section, I am not attempting to do a thematic analysis, but simply to create some headlines for the different kinds of discourses produced, as the informants produced a total of 40 discourses about sustainable consumption. The discourses can roughly be divided into seven headlines. Still, it should be underlined that in relation to discourse, it can be rather hard to divide the discourses into different categories, because they are often interrelated and can express several things at once. Therefore, these headlines of the discourses should not be regarded as sharp separations of distinguishing of the discourses as it would often not make sense to make such distinctions in practice. The dividing of discourses into separate categories is strictly for the purpose of creating an overview.

Consuming resources sustainably

First of all, a theme which is part of all the informants' constructions is that it matters, how resources are used. As it has been illustrated by the analysis of the text and the discursive practice many discourses are linked together somehow, but a number of the discourses constructed can be linked to the importance of *how* resources are used and consumed. For instance, both 'Extension of lifetime', 'Consuming sustainably' and 'Consuming less' are concerned with how resources are consumed. Using resources in a way which somehow extends the lifetime of resources, sustainable or not, or ultimately reduces the use of resources is a theme that all the informants touch upon, and they all produce this kind of use of resources as sustainable consumption.

Economy

Furthermore, an aspect of sustainable consumption which was also represented and constructed in different ways across the interviews, was that there is an economic dimension to sustainable consumption. Discourses such as 'Economy discourse', 'Expensive sustainability', 'Quality is sustainable' and 'Sustainability pays off' all revolve around the financial and economic aspects of sustainable consumption. A common trait for the constructions about the economic dimension of sustainable consumption, is that sustainable solutions can be expensive. There is also a common understanding that, even though a sustainable solution may be expensive, it usually pays off. Still, the emphasis to sustainable solutions being expensive, at least to begin with and in the short term, is widely applied. Xenia does not seem to put a lot of emphasis to this, and there can be different reasons for that. Xenia might have more resources than the other informants, or she may simply have a different conception of value and money in relation to sustainable consumption. It is worth to note, that not all the informants put equal emphasis to the economic dimension of sustainable consumption, but it should at the same time be highlighted as one of the more conspicuous discourses about sustainable consumption of this analysis.

Social aspect

The economic focus leads to the social aspect of sustainable consumption which was also a general theme of the constructed discourses. Especially Xenia constructed discourses about sustainable consumption with an emphasis on the social aspects. Discourses such as 'Social lopsidedness', 'Social sustainability' and 'collective responsibility' underline the social aspects of sustainable consumption in different ways, but a general way to define the core of the social

aspect of sustainable consumption could be that there is a connection between people and the environment, and also a connection between the prosperity of people and the prosperity of the environment. This aspect is often constructed in a way that is linked to economy, which again leads to the next headline.

Systemic critique

A number of the discourses constructed across the interviews are concerned with some structural, systemic and cultural aspects of sustainable consumption. The focus seems to be especially focused around how capitalistic and materialistic culture and systemic structures influences sustainable consumption. Discourses like 'Anti-capitalist', 'limited access', 'sustainable shame' and 'Minimizing materialistic desires can all be linked to the construction of capitalistic culture and systemic structures influencing sustainable consumption in a negative way. These discourses are constructed and reproduced throughout all of the three interviews.

Requires resources

This critique of the capitalism as an inherent part of society and therefore also consumerism, can also be linked to another aspect which is highly articulated in the interviews as well. Discourses like 'Hard work', 'Hard to see through', 'Complex sustainability', 'Holism', 'Takes time' and 'In the long run' are all discourses that express how sustainable consumption is not just something you can easily do. These discourses construct sustainable consumption as something which requires resources. Not just financially, but also mentally. It requires the individual to be able to make educated decisions, think holistically about consumption and taking the time to do so.

Conserving nature

Another general trait of the discourses produced across the interviews, is that it is sustainable to conserve nature. For instance, 'Nature discourse', 'Organic/unmanipulated nature', 'Renewable energy/resources' and 'Transportation' links to the construction sustainable consumption as being something which sustains conservation of nature and the environment. Many of the discourses of course links to this somehow, but these discourses have a rather emphasized focus on nature as being unmanipulated, unpolluted, conserved and natural, and on this being sustainable.

Unsustainable resources

Lastly, a general headline for some of the discourses produced in the interviews, is that even though all resources can be consumed in more or less sustainable ways, there are some resources, which are not sustainable. Discourses like 'Plastic is not sustainable', 'Oil is not sustainable' and 'Fossil fuels are not sustainable' construct some kind of consensus about specific resources being unsustainable to consume. Generally, the informants are in agreements as to which resources are unsustainable in themselves.

In some regards the informants seem to agree as to what sustainable consumption is. Many of the same discourses were reproduced throughout the interviews, which represents a circulation of meaning about sustainable consumption. Some of the informants put more emphasis to some aspects of sustainable consumption than others. As it was mentioned, Xenia puts more emphasis to the social aspect of sustainable consumption than the other two respondents, for instance. Still, some agreement about sustainable consumption can be identified, as it can be seen from the overview of discourses (appendix 4), all three informants produce and reproduce discourses which has been exemplified as belonging to the headlines of 'Requires resources', 'Consuming resources sustainably' and 'Unsustainable resources'. This indicates a collective consensus in relation to some of the aspects of sustainable consumption, hereunder that it is not something that you just do, as it is complicated and hard work. It also includes that how resources are consumed is very important, no matter if the resources consumed is sustainable in itself or not and it includes certain resources being constructed as definitively non-sustainable.

Yet, sometimes the discourses that the informants produce conflict internally, meaning that the individual informants from time to time may construct different discourses that may be in conflict with each other. The informants also from time to time construct discourses across the interviews which conflict with each other. The conflicts can, according to the critical discourse theory, indicate social change. It makes sense that this is the case, as one of the arguments for conducting the study was that the concept of sustainable consumption is very diffuse. As mentioned, there seems to be some common ground in the Scandinavian political consumers' construction of the concept. Yet, the instability that the conflicts of discourse could mean would be that the social practice of sustainable consumption will keep being inconsistent in some regards. This could be in relation to the question of consuming resources sustainably. Xenia constructs sustainable consumption as being rather *uncompromising* (example 13), whereas Børre constructs sustainable consumption as being more flexible in relation to his *awareness* discourse (example 21). The same contrast as to how flexible sustainable

consumption is, can also be detected in the construction of consumption as *bad, but necessary*, which is a discourse that both Frida and Xenia produce (example 1). Frida and Xenia both separates consumption from sustainability to some extent and articulate a conflict between the two words of the concept. Here Børre constructs sustainable consumption as *balance* (example 19), instead of separating consumption from sustainability. These contrasting, yet coexisting constructions of sustainable consumption may result in confusion as to how sustainable consumption should be performed.

The paradoxes of sustainable consumption as social practice

One thing is, whether the construction of the concept is consistent or not, but another thing is what paradoxes and problems may be embedded in the constructions themselves, as this also has consequences to the social practice of sustainable consumption.

Using Guattari's framework for thinking the ecologies together, helps highlighting some of the problems and paradoxes that may be present in the social practice of sustainable consumption, on the constructions which were interpreted from the text- and discursive practice analysis. One of the paradoxes, which can be analyzed from the Scandinavian political consumers' construction of sustainable consumption, is related to the *anti-capitalist* discourse. Frida not only articulates a discourse about capitalism being incompatible with sustainable consumption. She also underlines how she considers herself to be a product of capitalistic structures of society, as she states: "*I grew up in this whole consumer society*" (example 5). Moreover, it can also be interpreted that Frida actually demonstrates this with statement 14, example 5, where she says that she "*loves shopping*" and that sometimes she gives in to the urge to buy something, but that she instead of buying new then buys second-hand "*so that you still get that luxury-feeling of something new and exciting*". This can be interpreted as a disjunction between the environmental and the mental ecologies at play, as the way that Frida feels an urge to consume because it gives her a *luxury feeling* to buy something *new and exciting* can be understood as an expression of capitalistic and materialistic culture influencing Frida to find satisfaction in consumption. In the meantime, this kind of mentality makes it harder to resist what Frida herself defines as unsustainable consumption and enhances the risk of the individual making consumer choices which are harmful to the environment. Because, even though the Scandinavian political consumers are aware of the potential harm that their actions may inflict on the environment, like

in Frida's case, it can still be analyzed that the social structures of capitalism are influential. This problem, or paradox is one of the central ones in the Scandinavian political consumers' construction of the concept of sustainability.

The same issue can be found in relation to the discourse 'Sustainable shame' (example 6). It can be interpreted as if Frida feels the need to explain why she uses certain second-hand items, because social structures of materialism disregards financial incapacity, and that Frida fears to be judged as financially incapable. This is the same kind of disjunction of ecologies, as in the first example since the paradox consists of this kind of mentality's influence on the environment. That the materialistic and capitalistic structures have such an influence on the mentality of consuming sustainably is problematic in relation to the environment because it may keep people from consuming sustainably. Børre actually describes this phenomenon, as he talks about peer pressure in relation to consuming sustainably, and how he, because of this, sometimes ends up acting against his own sustainability principles.

Another paradox of the way that the Scandinavian political consumers construct the concept of sustainable consumption, is in relation to conservation of nature and the environment. It has been mentioned how things such as buying local and organic produce are being constructed as sustainable choices (example 12). Yet, especially organic produce tends to be more expensive than non-organic produce, which means that consuming exclusively organic may not be an option to all people. This results in not all people being able to consume sustainably, according to the construction of sustainable consumption which has been articulated in this study. It falls back to how society is designed in relation to liberal market principles and capitalistic supply and demand philosophy, since this influences how prices on produce is regulated. Thus, a disjunction between social and environmental ecologies can be established, as the option to buy organic (and thereby consume sustainably) paradoxically is regulated by principles and philosophy which value profit as the superior goal, meaning that the environment pays the price.

It is the same case in relation to for instance the discourses emphasizing the economic and financial aspects of sustainable consumption (example 4), as well as with the discourses that underline the requirement of resources. As it was exemplified in the analysis, an expensive, high-quality winter coat may last for a longer time, and therefore be more sustainable, as that means that one will not need to buy a new winter coat for years. This means that the money spent will earn themselves back in time, and that the resources used in relation to one's consumption of winter coats will be proportionally reduced. Still, even if it is actually

economically lucrative to invest in a high-quality winter coat in the long run, not everyone has the economy to do this. When it is winter and it is cold, you need a winter coat, and cannot necessarily just wait and buy a new one, when you have put aside enough money to buy an expensive, high-quality coat. Therefore, some may feel forced to buy a less expensive coat in a poorer quality, even though it means that they may have to buy a new one within a shorter time frame, compared to a high-quality coat. This again would mean a proportionally bigger use of resources related to the purchase of winter coats, and thus a proportionally bigger pressure on the environment. Additionally, not having a lot of resources besides money, which could be for instance mental capacity and headspace, education, social network which can help you etc. can also reduce your chances of consuming sustainably, because this may limit one's ability to put in the hard work and self-educate in relation to sustainability. This again means that a social premise affects the environment.

Lastly, a paradox which is also founded in a disjunction between social and environmental ecologies, is related to the discourse of 'Limited access'. Xenia points out, how there is sometime limited access to sustainable consumer options and exemplifies this in example 13 by pointing out that she might want to buy a book from sustainable, recycled paper, but that she might then also it delivered. Firstly, this shows that the sustainable items may not always be nearby. Secondly, Xenia mentions the issue of transportation, because one thing is that the sustainable book is not within immediate reach, but then how is it transported? Xenia explains that it can be hard "*trying to find delivery methods*" that are sustainable in her opinion. The lack of options that involve sustainable delivery, which could be for instance bike delivery, as Xenia suggests, or maybe the delivery company driving electrical cars when delivering, can once again be interpreted as an implication of the way society is regulated by capitalism. The fact that Xenia has a hard time finding sustainable delivery services can be caused by sustainable delivery methods not yet being a regarded as a competitive advantage, which means that the corporations do not provide it. Yet again, this means that societal structures come to negatively influence the environment, as people will then need to use the unsustainable delivery methods, if they need something delivered.

Discussion and assessment of analysis results

First of all, it should be briefly established what the analyses showed. To summarize, then the analysis of the text and the discursive practice showed that the discourses which were

constructed about the concept about sustainable consumption could be divided into seven headlines or themes, these being: 'Consuming resources sustainably', 'Economy' 'Social aspect', 'Systemic critique', 'Requires resources', 'Conserving nature' and 'unsustainable resources'. It was also found that not all the respondents produced all the different discourses equally much, but that some of the respondents put more emphasis to some of the discursive themes than others. For instance, Xenia puts more emphasis to the social aspect of sustainability than the other two informants. Yet, it was found that three themes of discourse were reproduced throughout all three interviews, these being 'Consuming resources sustainably', 'Requires resources' and 'Unsustainable resource'. It was also found that there are inconsistencies and conflicting discourses produced internally, and across the interviews. Furthermore, five paradoxes of the Scandinavian consumers' construction of the concept of sustainable consumption were identified and exemplified.

In relation to the paradoxes, it could be interpreted that society's inherent capitalistic and materialistic culture could somehow be linked to all the paradoxes. This is an important finding, as these social structures, even though it may not be easy, nor happen overnight, can be changed by humankind.

Even though there can be found paradoxes within the Scandinavian political consumers' construction of sustainable consumption, it should also be noted that there are other aspects which fit well together and are not paradoxical. For instance, then Xenia constructs a plant-based lifestyle as being part of sustainable consumption (example 12). Buying non-animal products tends to be less expensive than buying meat for every meal, which means that the choice of a plant-based diet is both sustainable, but also an option for those who do not have a big budget. Additionally, repairing things, if you can do it yourself, can cost next to nothing, which means that this option is also something which can be used by anybody, independent of personal budgets.

Some parts of the construction of sustainable consumption may be inconsistent or even paradoxical and self-contradicting, but it should be underlined that it does not make it wrong or bad. It just means that there are some dimensions of social practice as things are right now, which may make sustainable consumption difficult or confusing. Additionally, the inconsistency of the construction of the concept in relation to the discursive practice can be regarded as the social practice around sustainable consumption changing. Therefore, it does not have to be a bad thing that the construction of the discourse about sustainable consumption is inconsistent, as it might just be a sign that the construction of the concept is evolving, maybe even as a result of the concept being subject to more and more attention.

Because the theory of the study considers knowledge as social construction, it allows some room for internal generalization of the results of the analysis of this study. As it has been mentioned before, the critical discourse theory considers discourse as both constituted and constitutive. In this study, the structures that constitute discourse are in many ways alike, since the Scandinavian societies share many cultural traits and a lot of history as well. This also becomes evident in the analysis, where a lot of the explanations for the different paradoxes have been found to be rooted in the capitalistic, materialistic culture and social structure. This means that, since many of the constitutive structures are very similar throughout Scandinavia, the Scandinavian political consumers have many of the same premises for understanding as well as constructing the concept of sustainable consumption. Therefore, the results of the analysis can be carefully generalized to the case, meaning that the results may apply to some extent with other Scandinavian political consumers. Especially, it is likely that the discourses which were reproduced by all the informants could be found to be reproduced by other Scandinavian political consumers. It may also apply to a bigger group of Scandinavian political consumers that their construction of the concept of sustainable consumption is inconsistent and in some ways paradoxical, as this too can be highlighted as a general trait of the Scandinavian political consumers of this study's construction of sustainable consumption.

Conclusions

This study has investigated the question of how Scandinavian political consumers construct the concept of sustainable consumption, and what paradoxes could be embedded in this construction.

Several things can be concluded from this study. To begin with, it can be concluded that the total of 40 discourses which were produced about sustainable consumption could be divided into seven general discursive themes. These themes are: 'Consuming resources sustainably', 'Economy' 'Social aspect', 'Systemic critique', 'Requires resources', 'Conserving nature' and 'Unsustainable resources'. It can also be concluded that not all of these general discursive themes were expressed equally by the informants, meaning that there were inconsistencies to the way that the informants constructed the concept of sustainable consumption. It can also be concluded that the inconsistencies of the informants' construction of the concept of sustainable consumption included contradictions and conflicts within the individual informants' constructions of the concept, as well as the across the informants' constructions of the concept. Furthermore, it can be concluded that these contradictions and inconsistencies can be considered as an indicator of change in the social practice of sustainable consumption in the context of Scandinavian political consumer culture.

Even though there were inconsistencies and contradictions to be found in the constructions of the concept of sustainable consumption, it was also found that there were some of the discursive themes which were constructed and reproduce throughout all the interviews. The three general discursive themes of 'Consuming resources sustainably', 'Requires resources' and 'Unsustainable resources' were constructed by all three informants, which means that it can be concluded that there is also some kind of consensus related to the Scandinavian political consumers' construction of sustainable consumption, especially regarding the importance of how resources are used and consumed, how complex and how much work it is as well as what resources are unsustainable.

Moreover, it was analyzed from the Scandinavian political consumers' constructions of sustainable consumption that some of these constructions had paradoxical aspects to them. Five different paradoxes which illustrated disjunctions between the mental, social and environmental ecologies were identified and exemplified. It was concluded that all of the paradoxes could somehow be linked to implications of capitalistic and materialistic culture and social structures. Additionally, it was pointed out that the paradoxes of the Scandinavian political consumers'

construction of the concept of sustainable consumption should not be regarded as permanent or unchangeable, as culture and social structures are phenomena which can be influenced, changed and altered by humans over time.

As it has been explained in the methodology chapter, then it is not the aim of this study to produce a result which is always generalizable and applicable in all cases. The aim of the study is to provide knowledge which provides insight as to how the phenomenon of the contemporary construction of the concept of sustainable consumption unfolds in the context of Scandinavian political consumption, as well as what paradoxes could be embedded in this construction. Thus, the study provides in-depth knowledge about the discourses constructed about the discourse of sustainable consumption in the specific context, and the paradoxical aspects of these constructions. The research design does not allow the study to generalize its results of the analysis to all Scandinavians or all political consumers, but that does not mean that nothing more general can be concluded based on the design. As it has been explained earlier, the design and the theory of the study allows for cautious internal generalization of the findings of this study. Therefore, it can be concluded that the constructions of discourse which were reproduced by all the informants, hereunder the discursive themes of 'Consuming resources sustainably', 'Requires resources' and 'Unsustainable resources', will most likely be a part of other Scandinavian political consumers' construction of the concept as well. In other words, the findings of the study can be carefully generalized to the case to some extent. Furthermore, the findings regarding inconsistency and contradictions of the constructions may also apply to the wider group of Scandinavian political consumers, as it was rather clear from the analysis that the informants generally emphasize different aspects of sustainable consumption. Finally, it can be concluded that the paradoxical aspects of the Scandinavian political consumers' construction of sustainable consumption may also possibly be present in similar constructions of sustainable consumption in contexts which have the same kind of inherent capitalistic and materialistic social structures as the ones that were examined in this study.

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