



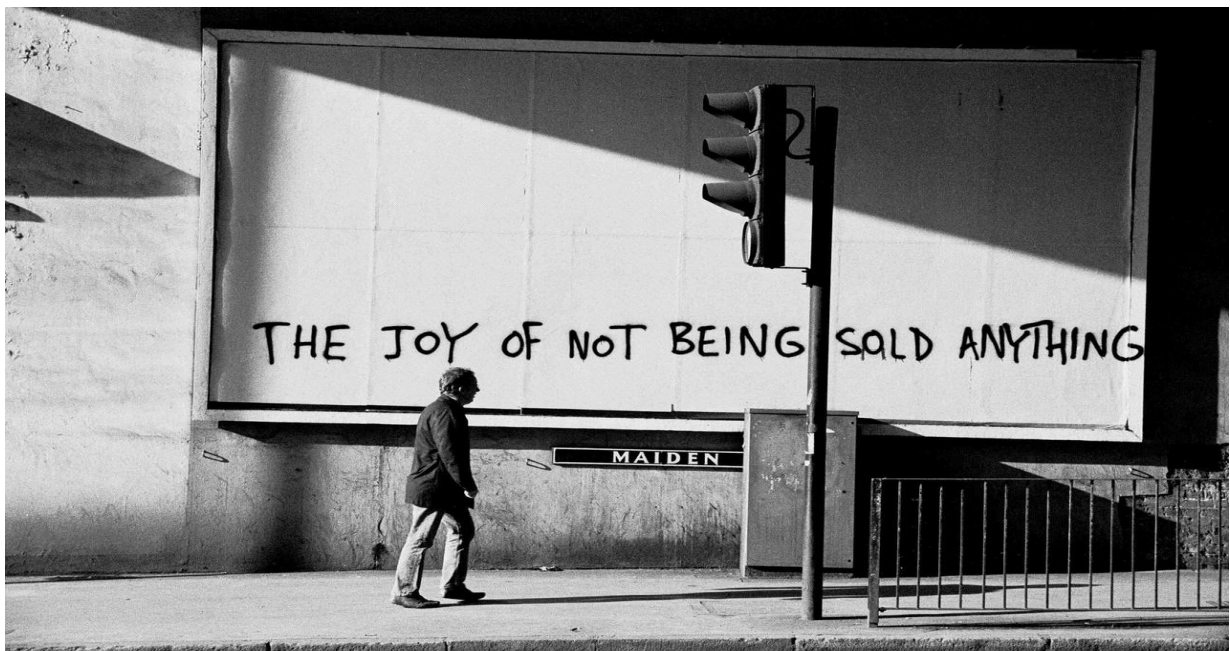
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CONSUMING THE CITY

How does non-consumers experience the city?

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Cover image: <http://elmolikethings.tumblr.com/post/29175109629/robotcosmonaut-the-joy-of-not-being-sold> retrieved 2014-05-18

ABSTRACT

We often speak of our society as a consumption society, a label that emerged after World War II. But the consumption society dates back longer than that, and can be deduced as far back as the colonialist era and the rise of luxury goods. One could say that the consumption society is the cultural answer to the transfer of the economy into capitalism as well as a consequence of industrial mass production.

Swedes' consumption habits negatively affect the environment, being part of the wealthiest 20% of the world's population that stands for more than three-quarters of total private consumption. More and more people consciously change their lifestyle into consuming less. This aversion from the capitalistic consumer society has been around for quite some time but continues to grow stronger. But how does these voluntary non-consumers experience the city that they live in? With major cities today being so focused around an ever-increasing consumption, this study aims to find out how Swedish non-consumers experience the city of Stockholm by the use of qualitative interviews.

The empirical result shows that the interviewed non-consumers primarily choose their lifestyle due to environmental concerns, and that they feel that Stockholm is too centered on consumption, not having enough mixed areas, and that they are missing greenery and cultural activities in the city. Non-consumers seem to influence friends and family to adopt a more sustainable consumption habit, something that could be useful for the further development of a more environmentally friendly and sustainable consumption behavior in Sweden.

Key words: non-consumption, voluntary simplicity, minimalism, shopping moratorium, capitalistic consumption, urban planning, sustainable development

SAMMANFATTNING

Vi talar ofta om vårt samhälle som ett konsumtionssamhälle, ett uttryck som dök upp efter andra världskrigets slut. Men konsumtionssamhället är äldre än så och kan härledas till kolonialismen och ökningen av lyxvaror. Man kan säga att dagens konsumtionssamhälle är ett kulturellt svar på omställningen av ekonomin till kapitalism, liksom en konsekvens av den industriella massproduktionen.

Svenskar är en del av världspopulationens rikaste 20 %, som står för mer än tre fjärdedelar av total privat konsumtion, vilket har en negativ miljöpåverkan. Fler och fler människor förändrar medvetet sin livsstil till att konsumera mindre. Det här avståndstagandet från det kapitalistiska konsumtionssamhället har funnits länge, men fortsätter att växa sig starkare. Men hur upplever dessa frivilliga icke-konsumenter staden de bor i? Med större städers fokus idag kring en evigt växande konsumtion, syftar denna studie till att undersöka hur svenska icke-konsumenter upplever Stockholm, med hjälp av kvalitativa intervjuer.

Det empiriska resultatet visar att de intervjuade icke-konsumenterna framförallt valt sin livsstil på grund av miljömedvetenhet, och att de upplever att Stockholm är för centrerat kring konsumtion och inte har tillräckligt med blandområden. De saknar även grönska och kulturella aktiviteter i staden. Icke-konsumenter verkar influera vänner och familj till att välja ett mer hållbart konsumtionsmönster, något som kan vara användbart för en fortsatt utveckling av ett mer miljövänlig och hållbart konsumtionsbeteende i Sverige.

Nyckelord: *icke-konsumtion, frivillig enkelhet, minimalism, köpstopp, kapitalistisk konsumtion, stadsplanering, hållbar utveckling*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The coming climate changes that we today face makes us aware of that there is a need for us to change the way we live. But neither politicians nor companies seem to take the needed responsibility. Some people therefore consciously change their lifestyle into consuming less. This aversion from the capitalistic consumer society has been around for quite some time but, even though statistics over the number of people who have chosen a non-consuming lifestyle is lacking, a number of scientists says there is indications that these lifestyles continues to grow stronger (Lewis 2013, Cherrier et al. 2011). But how does these voluntary non-consumers experience the city that they live in? With major cities today being so focused around an ever-increasing consumption, this study aims to find out how non-consumers experience Stockholm.

1.1 CONSUMER CAPITALISM

Low-price shopping rules! Not only in Sweden, even if we sometimes seem to be especially fixated with low prices, but the basics for this was set in the US. After the Second World War, advertisement promised the American citizens a consumption paradise. Credit cards became a reality for most people, and the modern consumption was seen as a prerequisite both for democracy and as a democratic right. In the 1960's, disposable fashion and disposable consumption became household in Sweden, in the same time as two of the most successful corporations in the world, IKEA and H&M, was growing and became synonymous with mass consumption. Suddenly everyone could afford it – the modern consumption gave identity and satisfaction to the masses. (Sommar & Helgeson 2012)

But today, *“doubts hover like storm clouds on the horizon”*, with a declining economic security, increasing debt, degradation of the environment and a small but increasing sense that the system – our system – that is based on continuous economic growth, is unsustainable (Lewis 2013:1). Is there perhaps a widespread sense of that our current way of life is not as good as it could be? The old notion that things could only get better seems to have been replaced with a sense of ‘is this all there is?’ (Lewis 2013).

Consumer capitalism is a theoretical economical and socio-political condition, where consumer demand is manipulated in a deliberate way. Consumer capitalism has had an amazing capacity of providing people with necessary everyday life goods, but perhaps it is its

capacity for production, for turning natural resources into immense amounts of consumer goods, that perhaps will be its undoing. Drawing on Lewis (2013), the optimism that was present during the post-war years has turned into a sense of our horizon being quite limited. As he was told by one man; *“The only chance of satisfaction we can imagine is getting more of what we’ve got now”*, that can be considered to be the core of consumer capitalism’s biggest created problem for the environment and the social sustainability – its inability to get to a moment when we have enough things (Lewis 2013:3).

1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF CONSUMPTION

Sustainable development, defined as *“development that meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs”* (WCED 1987), implies that the current patterns of consumption are a cause for concern, since they first of all does not meet the needs of all the people of our current generation, and second of all by damaging the environment and overexploiting resources. This might lead to an inability for future generations to meet their needs (Michaelis 2000).

But even if today’s excessive consumption makes us as happy as we can imagine being, there are immediate environmental problems created by consumer capitalism and mass consumption. These environmental problems tend to lie in the domain that the economists call ‘externalities’, i.e. the uncompensated environmental effects of both production and consumption that affect consumer utility and enterprise cost, outside of the market mechanism (oecd.org 2003). Or as Lewis (2013) puts it: *“The business of transforming raw materials into commodities, of distributing, selling and ditching them, has a myriad of environmental consequences. As the scale of our productive capacity grows, our ability to damage and destroy eco-systems grows with it. While we may be prompted to deal with the more conspicuous and manageable of these ‘externalities’ (reducing various forms of urban pollution in the developed world, for example) we tend to neglect those with less immediate effects upon affluent societies”* (Lewis 2013:6-7).

According to various reports, especially those from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), we are approaching or may have even passed by the point when we are able to prevent the most significant climate change and prepare for the following disruptions (IPCC 2007). But this is not that surprising, since consumer capitalism, as a system, is more or less unresponsive to longer-term threats. Indeed, it might switch from fossil fuels to

renewable energy, but as a built-in impossibility, it cannot recognise one of the solutions: less dependence on consumer goods and economic growth. The thing with the system of consumer capitalism is that it has a very basic and appealing form: it creates wealth, and wealth makes us happy, healthy, secured and fulfilled (Lewis 2013). But the success, stemming from its appealing form, has created problems ranging from environmental, social to economic problems. But it is today, with consumer capitalism being more or less unchallenged by the states and politicians worldwide, that the environmental consequences has reached a critical state (Lewis 2013).

Drawing further on Lewis (ibid.), seen on a global spectrum, the wealthiest 20% of the world's population stands for more than three-quarters of the total private consumption. Oil, gas, water and land appropriate for agriculture cannot tolerate an increasing demand for that much longer. The cost of production, use and disposal of consumer goods has, up until now, led to the degradation of 60% of the world's ecosystems. But even so, these environmental consequences are something that does not belong to the everyday operation of the market. They are 'externalities', or perhaps even 'eco-externalities'. But even if they do not fit into the systems way of managing everyday life, they are still real and everyday these issues grow ever more pressing. (Lewis 2013, Jackson 2010, World Bank Development Indicators 2008)

The UN World Summit in Johannesburg 2002 established that to reach a global sustainable development, large changes in how societies both produce and consume are needed (Naturvårdsverket 2004). Swedes' consumption creates an environmental burden both for themselves but also for other countries, and even if more and more 'environmentally friendly' products emerge on the market, we still need to change the way we consume, otherwise the environmental improvements might be eaten up by an increased volume of consumption (Naturvårdsverket 2004). The consumption of an average Swedish citizen results in around 10 tonnes of CO₂ emissions each year (Naturvårdsverket 2008). According to the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, Naturvårdsverket, 80% of these emissions come from private consumption (such as food, dwelling and travel), and 20% from public consumption. More than 10% of the private consumption covers 'shopping', where clothes and shoes stand for the biggest portion (Naturvårdsverket 2008).

It is obvious that we cannot continue to manage natural resources as we have been doing, Drawing on Sanne (2007), the Western world is responsible for the climate crisis while the

major part of people living in developing countries needs to consume more resources – and consume more material goods – to be able to live a good life. People in the Western world therefore need to lower their consumption in order for developing countries to have the opportunity to consume more, without their increasing consumption taking yet another toll on natural resources. Therefore Sanne believes that the ‘rich’ people, seen from a global perspective, needs to ask themselves what constitutes the core of today's lifestyle. To change one's lifestyle is something that both politicians and people think sounds ominous and sacrificial. But according to Sanne it could be possible to take some things away from today's lifestyle – the unnecessary (and ecologically unsustainable) – and that we even then would be able to maintain our lifestyle when it comes to work, social interactions, dwellings, health and leisure time activities, even if we chose to consume less (Sanne 2007).

1.3 NON-CONSUMPTION AND THE CITY

For a large part of the 20th century the growth of material consumer goods was matched by a growth in leisure time, but in the 21st century we face a new problem: the amount of time we have to buy, benefit from and use material goods are remarkably short. In many parts of the world, we use longer working hours as a way to afford as much consumption as possible. More and more products are being launched, which makes consumption more difficult since we no longer have the time to make informed choices regarding the products we buy. And too much choices can be a source of anxiety, psychological research are discovering, because the more choice we have the higher our expectations get, and when these are not fulfilled it leads to dissatisfaction and a lingering sense that we could have done better. (Lewis 2013)

This, combined with the emerging environmental problems connected to our consumption, might be one of the reasons to why some people decide that enough is enough, and tries to leave the norm of the consumer society. There are different approaches to voluntary non-consumption, and this study focus on three of these that will be explained in further detail in Section 4.7; voluntary simplicity, minimalism and shopping moratorium. Non-consumption is when a person decides to change and lower his or hers consumption to an amount that is in line with what they themselves consider as being ‘enough’, for reasons such as economical, environmental or amounts of possessions they desire to own. People who are willing to adopt alternative consumption behaviour do so with a variety of motivations, such as valuing nature, safeguarding future generations etc., but are also often concerned with their own health, saving money or avoiding waste (Moisander 1998). According to Moisander (1998) people

are more likely to adopt non-consumption and other more environmentally friendly behaviour patterns if they feel morally obliged to do so, such as by being part of an environmentally concerned community (Moisander 1998).

Retail areas have become a more influential part of the urban space in the last decades, and more activities and places than ever that formerly did not involve consumption, such as railway stations and museums, now inhabit places for consumption as well, and it has even been argued that shopping now is one of the few remaining forms of public activity (Kärrholm 2009). Consumption has not only changed the physical topography of the city – it has also altered the meaning attached to the city and its citizens. Non-consumers live, work and spend some of their leisure time in the city, but does not take an active part in the consumption. So how do they experience the city?

2. AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this thesis is to explore how voluntary non-consumers in Stockholm, Sweden, experience the city they live in. To get a better understanding of this, the thesis will also cover topics such as why these people chose to become non-consumers, what they personally feel are missing from the city, and the reactions they have gotten from other people. A theoretical framework covering different aspects connected to capitalistic consumption, urban planning and non-consumption will provide a context for the analysis.

The research questions for this thesis are:

- How does voluntary non-consumers experience Stockholm, Sweden, seen from the perspective of their own consumption habits and the layout and functions of the city?
- How does consumption affect the environment?
- How did the ‘consumption society’ come into being?
- What are some of the different lifestyles choices that are lessening consumption?

3. METHOD

The primary material for this thesis is qualitative semi-structured interviews held with five respondents that at the moment consider themselves being non-consumers. The interviews were held in order to understand how non-consumers experience the city. As secondary material, a literature review has been conducted in order to create a context and analytical

framework for the study. Relevant literature has been studied to comprehend the effect of consumption on the environment, an understanding of how the ‘consumption society’ came into being, to present the current patterns and behaviours regarding consumption, and to be able to give a presentation to the different lifestyles and/or life choices that are lessening consumption. The findings from the literature review have then been used both as an analytic framework, to be able to ask relevant question in the analysis of the interviews, and as a background and introduction to the broad field of consumption and what led us to the consumer behaviours we have today. Therefore not all parts of the theoretical framework have been used in the analysis of this thesis but should instead be seen as part of the thesis’s context.

3.1 RESPONDENTS

The respondents were identified and selected by advertising for people living in Stockholm and considering themselves being either minimalists, practitioners of voluntary simplicity or having a shopping moratorium. The advertisements were published on my blog about sustainable lifestyles¹ and on Twitter, where the advertisement reached thousands of people due to the multiple re-tweets the original tweet generated. The aim from the beginning was to find four to six respondents so that a proper mix between different types of non-consumers could be obtained. In the end a total of five respondents were found; three of them lived on a daily basis with voluntary non-consumption and two of the respondents had a shopping moratorium. This mix were good, since it gave the opportunity to obtain experiences from both people who had lived with non-consumption for a long time, and from people who only plan to try out non-consumption for a shorter period of time. The interviews were recorded, and notes were taken during the interviews. Four of the interviews were held at cafés, and one interview was held at the respondents’ work place. Each interview lasted for approximately an hour, and all of the interviews were held between April 1st and April 23rd. All the interviews were held in Swedish, so the questions and answers have been translated into English for this thesis.

3.2 QUALITATIVE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The empirical findings in this thesis is based on qualitative semi-structured interviews, which means that I have had a number of prepared topics and open questions (see Interview Guide) with room for an open dialogue and discussion with the respondents to give room for alternative topics, questions and point-of-views during the time of the interview.

¹ <http://ekoenkelt.se/2014/03/05/sokes-icke-konsumenter/>

To use qualitative interviews as a method has its weaknesses, where one can be the fact that the researcher has own opinions and experiences of the studied phenomenon. As well the risk that our so-called “common sense”, our prior knowledge and our assumptions makes us inclined to interpret phenomenons and dictums before we have even begun our work. Prior knowledge therefore plays an important part for the study’s results and is something that cannot be worked around since we never meet neither a text nor a human being empty handed (Bergström & Boréus 2005). Qualitative studies cannot be used for making statistical conclusions, instead the benefit is that the researcher goes deep down to find underlying factors since only a few interviews is conducted (Kvale 1997).

I have been using a semi-structured interview guide, where the interview guide’s purpose has been to give structure to the interviews without discouraging a free conversation (Kvale 1997). This partly unstructured interview method together with the personal meeting with the respondent has been chosen since it on the one hand gives the interviewer flexibility to gather information and on the other hand the personal meeting opens up for the possibility to ask follow-up questions (Thomsson 2002). The method is not without risk, since the interviewer is surrendered to the respondents’ willingness to answer the questions, as well as during the interview, it is easy for the respondent to overestimate tendencies and that it is generally easier to talk about contemporary tendencies and events than events that have occurred earlier (Kvale 1997). Both the respondents and I have interpreted the empirical material in this thesis since the respondents first interpret my question whereupon the answer then has to be interpreted by me. Here lays a risk for misconceptions that one need to be aware of.

The interview questions are based on the theoretical framework of this thesis, so that an understanding of how the city experienced by citizens who does not (primarily) consume, could be obtained.

3.3 INTERVIEW GUIDE

The interview guide was constructed so that the left column poses a question and the right column gives ideas and suggestions that can be use as guiding both the interviewer and the respondents towards the different topics and important aspects that the question (could) involve.

QUESTIONS	IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS
Do you define yourself as a minimalist, a voluntary simplifier or do you have a shopping moratorium?	A combination of any two?
For how long have you been a minimalist/voluntary simplifier/had a shopping moratorium?	If shopping moratorium: for how long will your shopping moratorium continue?
What was the biggest reason for choosing to practice minimalism/voluntary simplicity/shopping moratorium?	Environmental reasons? Private finances? More leisure time?
How do you experience the planning and design of Stockholm?	Good mix? Enjoyable to spend time in the city?
How do you experience the city's 'consumption areas'?	For example: Götgatan, Drottninggatan, Hamngatan, large malls such as Gallerian.
When you visit the city (city core/consumption areas), what is it you do then?	
Do you miss anything in the city that would be favourable or appreciated by you, when visiting the city without intentions to consume?	
When consuming, from whom/where do you prefer to consume?	Malls? Small shops? Local store (close to home)? Online? Second hand?
How has the lowered consumption affected you on a private level?	Better economy? Feeling of space/freedom/relaxation? Has people in your proximity reacted positively/negatively?
Other comments	The respondent is given the opportunity to reflect upon own experiences that they perceive to be relevant for the thesis.

3.4 DELIMITATIONS

The thesis has Stockholm, Sweden, as its case. Much of the background information is applicable to the whole of Sweden but the respondents all live in Stockholm. During the

interviews, another delimitation was added: the respondents were asked to primarily focus on the inner city and larger shopping complexes on the city's outskirts when answering questions connected to the city of Stockholm.

This thesis does not cover lifestyles of *involuntary* non-consumption, i.e. people who cannot afford to consume and take an active part in the consumer society. This is an important group to study in the context of urban planning and consumer societies, but since this thesis focuses on people who have *actively* chosen not to consume, involuntary non-consumers were not studied.

3.5 SOURCE CRITICISM

Whether talking about primary or secondary sources there is always some criticism that can be directed towards these. The primary sources used in this study are interviews held by the author herself, which has made it possible to avoid middle hands in the information gathering.

The secondary material consists of both scientific literature, which has been peer-reviewed, and literature that are more popular science or real-life stories, which has not been peer-reviewed.

The book '*Consumer Culture: History, Theory and Politics*' by Roberta Sassatelli, professor in cultural sociology, has been used extensively for writing the theoretical framework. Sassatellis' theoretical interpretations of other scientists has then been interpreted again and used in this study. Desirable would have been to go back to the original sources if the scope of this study would have been bigger.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 A SHORT HISTORY OF (CAPITALISTIC) CONSUMPTION: THE RISE OF THE CONSUMER SOCIETY

More than once you might have heard the claimed notion that our society is a consumer society, or that we live in a consumer culture. These types of labels showed up after the Second World War, and the use of these labels were to begin with a description of us living in a capitalistic society characterised by our consumption. But the label ‘consumer society’ was not used as a description of the society per se, but more used as a way to try to explain our actual consumer practices, the apparently growing passion for material things. At the time after the Second World War, the label was used as an attack on consumerism; or our “*search for new, fashionable but superfluous things*” (Sassatelli 2010:2, Csikszentmihaly 2000).

4.1.1 SHOULD WE BLAME PRODUCTION OR CONSUMPTION?

It is usually considered that the consumer society was a consequence of the industrial revolution, or more specifically the capitalistic pattern of production. The production patterns of the industrial revolution led to a spread of large quantities of commodities that was made accessible to a larger part of the population than ever before, and can therefore be said to be the cause of the revolution in demand (Sassatelli 2010). When looking at it from this point of view, the rise in consumption can be seen as a cultural response to a transformation of the economy. Having this view makes it hard to step away from the notion that consumption is utterly connected to production. Several historians has tried to steer away from this common point of view, and studies has shown that a growth in the material culture in Europe started as early as the second half of the 17th century. From this period a notable growth in consumption occurs, not only among the upper classes. Even so, a continuous growth did not occur evenly among all the classes, or even between the genders, but during this time an increase of consumption of household furnishings and personal ornaments grew across different classes and genders. This early growth in consumption was however not connected to the mass production of the industrial revolution. This implies an alternative understanding of the relationship between production and consumption, namely that it was demand, rather than production, that spurred consumption and therefore became a part of both economic and cultural processes. In other words, that it was our desire to consume that shaped the modern economy, production patterns and culture (Sassatelli 2010, Stander 2009).

The historian McKendrick places the consumption revolution in the second half of the 18th century in England. This is due to that the society in England at this time was becoming more flexible and less hierarchical due to the bourgeois classes strive for status. The lower classes saw a way to advance in the social hierarchies by consuming the same goods, and in the same way as, the upper classes. This occurred in combination with entrepreneurs who, yet not having the industrial production at hand, saw that what we today would call ‘modern’ sale techniques was useful in getting more social classes to consume (McKendrick 1982, in Sassatelli 2010).

When seen from this point of view, *“the process of industrialization is the effect and not the cause of new desires of consumption, and these corresponded with the possibility of displaying’s one’s status and were stimulated through promotional techniques”* (Sassatelli 2010:16). According to Sassatelli (2010), McKendrick treats demand as one of the historical processes that led to the development of capitalism, and places demand itself as a ‘natural human inclination’, a will to imitate those with more power and status (Sassatelli 2010). On the other hand, the economic historian De Vries (1975) offers another viewpoint. He describes how in Holland in the end of the 17th century, the amount of money spent on consumption increased, at the same time as the disposable income decreased. Even so, families in Holland did not behave rationally (with rationally meant as how one might have assumed at this point in time) i.e. saving and reducing their consumption of commodities, instead they consumed more, and to be able to afford this consumption they worked longer hours (many working with producing goods for the market). Therefore, according to De Vries, it was both the opportunity and the necessity to be a part of the monetary exchange that led to the beginning of the consumer society (De Vries 1975, in Sassatelli 2010). According to Sassatelli, the explanation offered by De Vries is useful to *“demonstrate that production and consumption are just two faces of the same coin”* (Sassatelli 2010).

The views of McKendrick, De Vries and other historians have been contested and criticized. Instead a multifaceted approach has been taken, showing capitalism as the result of multiple trajectories. According to Sassatelli (2010) *“the development of the consumer society is thus increasingly described as a long-term phenomenon with multiple geographies and a variety of particular object histories”* (Sassatelli 2010:20). During earlier research, particular value have been added to the establishment of new needs and to new means of attributing value to commodities, linked to international commerce, colonialism and gender and consumer

practises. According to the sociologist-historian Werner Sombart (1928), traces of a new type of society can be seen already in the 14th century, were an accumulation of capital increased, no longer based on feudal economy but instead based on the trade and exploitation of colonies. The exploitation of colonies is one of the basic developments of capitalism, since the international commerce linked to the use of colonies led to a growth of commodities in circulation and their much more frequent exchange. Even so, Sombart does not believe that capitalism can be explained this way, since the colonies and the international trade in fact started out by being linked to a very special type of commodity: the luxury goods (Sombart 1928, in Sassatelli 2010).

4.1.2 AND THEN CAME LUXURY

The luxury goods – or the non-essential goods – showed up for the first time in early modernity. Goods such as spices, drugs and perfumes were some of the first to appear, and in the end of the 16th century goods such as sugar, coffee, tea and cocoa made their appearance. According to Sombart it was these goods that spurred capitalism. He reasons that luxury goods *“have the capacity to create markets, essentially because it concerns goods of high value which promote and require capitalisation and economic rationalization, including a growing availability of credit-proving devices”* (Sombart 1928, in Sassatelli 2010:21). Sassatelli agrees with Sombarts conclusion, since the desire for having luxury goods pinpoints some of the basic factors of capitalism: materially by supporting consumption and favouring more efficient and large-scale production forms, and culturally as an indication of social status that spread from the upper classes to the bourgeoisie. As Sassatelli puts it: *“by stimulating commerce and production, the consumption of luxury goods contributed to the accumulation of capital which constituted one of the material prerequisites for the development of modern industry”* (Sassatelli 2010:21), while these new types of consumption also spread a more hedonistic-aesthetic attitude towards objects, leading to the development of a hedonistic attitude towards shopping. So when using Sombarts view, economics, culture and politics together developed capitalism – and in the end, our consumer society (Sassatelli 2010, Gram-Hanssen et al. 2013).

Sombart continued his reasoning with that a development of capitalistic luxury goods, if they are being produced in a continuously larger quantity and becomes available to continuously larger groups of people, the luxury goods does not only become democratized but also rationalized, that they are subjected to the dynamics of fashion and by that becomes

responsible for, not the needs from the 'rich', but rather for the intensive large-scale production. Sombarts reasoning reminds us of the situation of today, but added with the evolution of equality and democratization that anyone, given that they have the money, can buy any product on the market, and the entire fashion merry-go-round continues to stimulate people to consume (Sassatelli 2010). Sombarts theories have been helpful for modern scientist to understand the important aspects of a long process, both cultural and material, that help to form a new structure of consumption strongly connected with non-essential goods and social mobility which in the end catalysed the industry (Sassatelli 2010).

4.1.3 THE NEED FOR NEW NEEDS

According to the basic views of capitalism, seen through the eyes of Karl Marx, to make the system function one needs to form people to the needs of the production system. The individuals' possibilities to consume cannot become a hindrance to the economic development, and due to this the system continuously needs to force new needs upon people and manipulate her wish for new goods. According to Marx, individuals in the capitalistic society no longer knows which goods that are of use for her, and which are not. Due to this she starts to consume goods which only purpose is to make the producers richer (Karl Marx in *Das Kapital*, in Sassatelli 2010). The philosopher Herbert Marcuse saw, long after Marx, capitalism as a manipulation of real needs. The modern capitalism, through the entertainment and information industry, promotes a consumption ideology that generates false needs that in turn works as a control mechanism over the consumers. The economist John K. Galbraith had a similar view as Marcuse, and saw advertisement and marketing as extremely effective in their power to persuade, and that this is the reason that consumers are so far away from their physical needs that they impossibly can know what they truly want (Sassatelli 2010). To connect consumption to the argument of 'needs' makes us ask the basic question; what is a need? Is a need something we in a physical view cannot live without, or is only about our wants? During the 20th century, scientist from different disciplines have tried to define what a need really is, while others mean that a need is something that is culturally conditioned, something that can be connected to the capitalist economy (Al x 2007). According to Michaelis (2000), it seems as when we fulfil one need, another need takes its place, as if we feel more fulfilled when we are in the process of addressing our needs rather than when they have been met (Michaelis 2000). The modern lifestyle clearly 'demands' consumption levels that excess those needed to meet basic needs, but Douglas & Isherwood (1979) pose the question that this tendency might be a result from our mistaken hope that additional

consumption will help to displace feeling of dissatisfaction, a result from our failure to meet non-material needs? (Douglas & Isherwood 1979).

4.1.4 MORE GOODS, LESS FREE TIME

The economic recession that occurred during the end of the 21st century's first decade could be seen as an example of how consumer capitalism tends to over-reach in order to try to create prosperity. The system's constant need to grow led to an increased reliance on ever growing debts, to make sure that the cycle of production and consumption continued. The only reason to why the system actually survived the recession was that many governments decided to use public money to bail the system out, and according to Lewis (2013) this led to an increased public debt, that ironically led to an increased dependence on consumer capitalism to fill the gaps that had been left from the austere public sector. And in the developed world of today, we are faced with two very contradicting pressures: the amount of goods available at the market, making the choice of what to buy both difficult and immensely time-consuming, since we have so much more goods available than fifty years ago, but no more free time where we can make decisions. So we are left with the choice of either spending all of our free time trying to make good and well-informed decisions or put our hope in the system so that the system will guide us to the best available choices. Our independence that comes from our ability to make our own choices thus becomes more of an illusion than anything else. And, this lead to that the ever increasing amount of goods that the capitalistic system is dependent on, faster than ever is making use of the finite resources available on this planet. And due to these two contradicting pressures, the 'rational consumer' cannot act rationally anymore (Lewis 2013).

4.2 STATUS, FASHION AND 'FAST FASHION'

To understand the modern consumption society one need to have in mind the long historical process that led to the development of new types of consumption and that that slowly but steadily torn away from the social class distinctions and in the end, today, is run by fashion and experts that gives advise of what can be considered as 'good taste' (Sassatelli 2010). The tendency to want the 'new', something that is changeable and short-lived, corresponds well with the impatience that characterises today's society and indicate a wish for fast changes in life as well as the charm that lies in the 'new'. By being short-lived and determined to disappear fashion has become the 'new' and is seen as never-ending. The German scientist Simmel saw fashion as a way for the individual as an opportunity to have a 'temporary anchor'. Simmel also considered consumption as a culturally defined field of action, rather

than a threat to the social order. It is exactly in the chaotic and over-populated society that more and more people have the need to dress in clothes that signal their identity to others, both as members of a group and as individuals. According to Simmel, fashion is a perfect mean to achieve both these effects. By following fashion we can connect ourselves with certain people while we at the same time distinguish ourselves from others, and that by using fashion one can express one self in a language that is commonly understood (Bourdieu 1984, Schor 1998, Mont & Plepys 2008).

The anthropologist McCracken has indicated that in older societies a guiding principle for the value of possessions was its patina and the fact that the property had been used by multiple generations. In the modern society it is fashion rather than patina and the hunt for the latest that gives value. McCracken connects this shift with that the noble classes developed quickly during early modern times and therefore not had the time to let possessions ‘gather value’ (through patina) and due to this value started to become closely connected with something looking new, modern and original. A few centuries later in modern times we can instead see how fashion and patina can coexist. Patina has had a revival, although in a somewhat simulated form, by fashion itself due to that second hand and vintage trends is mixed with the latest design (Sassatelli 2010).

Already in the end of the 19th century the American economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen launched the concept ‘excessive consumption’ to point out that consumption that deviated from the logic of utility maximization to the lowest possible cost. Veblen observed that apart from the necessary and calculated consumption there existed a ceremonial sort of consumption that was closely connected to status (Stander 2009). With this point of view, there are goods whose value lies only in its capacity to make visible a social position. This is something that can be seen today as well, when a good become sought after just because of it being expensive, or right (for ‘green consumers’), since by showing off this costly purchase the individual can show his/hers good reputation and steer her future social position. Seen through the eyes of Veblen, it is by trying to imitate others, by a competition in status and jealousy, that ‘new goods’ serves its purpose, temporarily as it might be, as goals in the competition of the social distinctions and who has got the best taste (Stander 2009).

The large growth in ‘fast fashion’, mentioned earlier, have multiple causes. The amount of people that makes impulse buys, a growth in production being moved to low income countries

together with a change in attitude among the consumers are a few of the changes that are being connected to the 'fast fashion'. The stores that sell 'fast fashion' get clothes from the designer table to the stores in less than two weeks, something that earns the retailers large amounts of money when they can sell large quantities of cheap clothes to the consumers that every week seeks new clothes (Morgan & Birtwhistle 2009). The retailers of the 'fast fashion', such as H&M, Zara, Primark, sell their goods to very competitive prices. Besides, their design is made to be worn less than ten times, and it is this that has led to the term 'disposable fashion' (Morgan & Birtwhistle 2009). During an interview with BBC 2008 the fashion journalist Hilary Alexander said, regarding H&Ms disposable fashion, that: *"I'm not entirely convinced that it is such a good thing because some of the things in H&M are so cheap that literally you'd be lucky to get two or three wears out of it and then you'd chuck it away"*. (Morgan & Birtwhistle 2009:191)

4.3 THE CONSUMERIST PROJECT: HOW CAPITALISM BECAME MORE THAN JUST A WAY TO RUN AN ECONOMY

Even though consumer capitalism has economic, social and environmental shortcomings, it continues to dominate our field of vision. No matter the political ideology, politicians urge us to either believe that the market will bounce back, or that we should spend more money to stimulate growth, showing a shared desire for continuing with business as usual even if they have different opinions on how to achieve this. But there is dissent. An increase in both consumer activism and anti-consumerism has been seen, and these actions are more inclined to be on an individual level rather than on a societal level, i.e. based more on a sense of moral disapproval rather than on the systemic issues. Overall, there seem to be an increasing sense of disillusionment with the whole 'consumerist project' (Lewis 2013).

What is important to remember, is that an economic system *can* simply be only a way for us to organize production and distribution. Independent of which system we choose, we face that systems own range of possibilities. But, economics can play a central role in helping to shape what we understand to be a good life, and this might lead to that the way we shape our economy will sooner or late shape us. Today, our goals and values, even our opportunities, are shaped and influenced by consumer capitalism. The media we consume, the food we eat, the clothes we wear – all are influenced by consumer capitalism, and even if capitalism does not encompass everything we do, in many ways it do define us as a society (Lewis 2013). And why does it define us as a society? Well, we talk about capitalism as being something more that just financial arrangements. We talk as often about 'capitalist societies' as we do

‘capitalist economies’, giving the assumption that capitalism is both a social and an economic system. Or as Lewis puts it: *“Our enormously productive economy ... demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and the selling of goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfaction, our ego satisfaction in commodities”* (Lewis 2013:17). Ergo, we as humans may have created consumer capitalism, but it does not longer do our bidding and serve our interests, instead it is our economy that put demands on us, how we best could serve *its* interests (Lewis 2013). This can be seen in recent history with that the power of consumerism has expanded while the power of consumers has become smaller. Corporations grow while individual consumers ability to manifest their will becomes continually weaker. Boycotting a national or international chain because of, for example, their poor environmental record, does not even impact the chain since the individual actions are too small to make a difference. In the same way, the market is more or less oblivious to individual taste, and therefor does not necessarily provide it (Lewis 2013).

4.4 DOES A HIGHER GDP EQUAL MORE HAPPINESS?

There is an assumption in consumer societies that “money can buy happiness”. When you look back in history, there is much that testifies for this assumption, since apart from the latest generations, most people have lived closed to subsistence, so an increase in income brought an increase in material wellbeing. Being able to afford such things as food, shelter and health care has produced more happiness, but for many developed countries of today there has been a shift from “beyond subsistence” to “unprecedented abundance” (Elgin 2010). More and more research suggests that the correlation between a country’s gross domestic product and the quality of life of its citizens has an end-point. Once we as a society reach a certain level of affluence, economic growth no longer have an impact on neither our physical nor mental health (Lewis 2013). This does not mean that we do not find pleasure and value in material objects, nor is it a way to deny the advantages brought on by the growth of affluence in consumer societies, since there is a certain degree of comfort being surrounded by a diversity of goods, but the benefits are finite since our capacity to enjoy material goods are limited by both time and space. Lewis (2013) suggest that we now may have reached a stage where acquisition of more consumer goods now just risks cluttering up our lives rather than adding meaning to them (Lewis 2013). But the correlation between income and happiness is not as easily seen as in the example of GDP and quality of life. The World Values Survey of 2007 discovered that the citizens of Vietnam (5,000 USD per capita income) were just as happy as the citizens of France (22,000 USD per capita income), while the Masai people of Kenya

expressed levels of happiness that were equal to the happiness of American millionaires (Elgin 2010).

But still the image of what can be considered a ‘good life’ is based on accumulation of products. Consumerisms’ main selling point today is that it offers the (supposed) ability to improve one’s quality of life (Lewis 2013, Csikszentmihaly 2000). But at the same time, the value of goods and commodities becomes difficult to maintain since we have superabundance, since the actual empirical impact of each new object on our quality of life lessens with every new purchase (Lewis 2013). Even so, advertising keeps on telling us that our quality of life is connected to the purchases we make, and advertising together with many other media sources, continuously repeat to us that our only source of pleasure, popularity, status, security and meaning is in ‘the dead world of things’. Advertising and the media tries to make us believe that the social world, that we so much value, really only is an extension to the world of commodities (Lewis 2013). Here we are faced with a contradiction, i.e. that our desires are often rooted in the social aspects of our lives, while consumer capitalism mainly provides material things. Ecosystems have been depleted and many are in debt, in hope of an ever-growing economy, but the only thing we have from this is loads of things. We might have had a fun time using all these things, we might have had a good time purchasing them, but even so they tend to leave us with a lingering sense of being unfulfilled. The psychologist Oliver James diagnosed this new ‘disease’ as people having a case of the ‘affluenza’ (a word-play with affluence and influenza) (Lewis 2013). According to Segal (1998) we should go beyond ensuring that people have the ability to flourish – we should be concerned with whether they actually are flourishing (Segal 1998).

As mentioned earlier, increasing incomes and increasing GDP has shown to have little impact over the overall levels of physical and mental health and social problems. Or as Lewis (2013) puts it: *“People in the West have got no happier in the last 50 years. They have become much richer... But they are not happier. This shocking fact should be the starting point for much of our social science.”* (Lewis 2013:45). The obvious paradox here is that within more or less any given society, people that have more money seem to enjoy life much more than those that have less. There is research suggesting that this is due to the esteem that comes with a certain financial position, since we in society today tend to link income to status, and therefore people that have money get the feeling that they are doing well, due to their position, and not because they have (or have the opportunity to have) more belongings. At the same time, other research

suggests that people would happily earn less money if that would mean that their position in the pecking order was raised. But nonetheless, in our politics and in our culture, human progress is still linked to our ability to acquire stuff. Some governments have realised that it might be necessary to have another measurement for our quality of life than using GDP to measure it, but even so every government believe in economic growth and its assumed positive effects on aspects such as happiness, security and even human progress (Lewis 2013, Argyle 1987, Stander 2009). And it is quite easy to make the misconception that the happiness and pleasures that we get from the consumer culture, such as a meal with a friend, comes from the consumption aspects when it is really the social aspect that is the important part of that kind of experiences. But, as Lewis point out, it would be unfair to blame consumer capitalism for getting us to this point. Economic growth and environmental degradation could have happened either way, and the prosperity that consumer capitalism has brought with it should not be neglected. But to believe that the ‘invisible hand’ of the market system is capable of the planning that is needed to avoid the most severe effects of climate change is just naïve according to Lewis, since as long as consumer capitalism continues with trying (and succeeding) to stimulate consumption so that the economy can grow, it becomes a part of the problem instead of trying to come up with solutions. A system based on infinite growth obviously cannot comprehend the fact that we live on a finite planet (Lewis 2013).

4.5 WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING CONSUMPTION SUSTAINABLE?

Both economic prosperity and activities that has a negative effect on the climate are unevenly distributed both in states and in-between states. According to Tukker et al. (2008) developed economies house 20% of the world population, but are responsible for almost 80% of life-cycle impacts of consumption.

Since coming technical solutions will not be enough for the future sustainable society, we will need, according to Gram-Hanssen et al. (2013) a new consumption behaviour that is suited for the ecological boundaries of this planet. As stated earlier, it is not easy to see what exactly is driving consumption, and it is therefore much easier to for example define the supposition of the production than to understand consumption. This might be one of the reasons for why production has been one of the first targets for environmental measures driven by politicians. It is much easier to measure the emissions from a factory and come up with solutions for how to lower these emissions, than to make estimates on how much climate impact certain consumption behaviour has and how it might be corrected in to a sustainable direction. At the

same time, seen from the side of the politicians, it is easier to put the responsibility on the industry than on the citizens, but the fact that in the globalized world of today, much of our private consumption behaviours impacts the environment more and more, and therefore it is important to both study it and change it (Gram-Hanssen et al. 2013).

4.5.1 THE STATE

There have been examples in Sweden for how the state can act in favour of more sustainable consumption and usage of goods. During the 20th century, most apartment blocks were supplied with laundry rooms, and due to this laundry rooms became a social norm, and this sort of consumption behaviour were influenced by the then current ideological and political influences seen under the social democratic party, i.e. the construction of the Swedish welfare society. The state has the possibility to create the opportunities for new types of consumption where no individual ownership is needed, but still can be used by individuals. A more current example is car pooling systems, but the example with the laundry rooms show how the state actually can play a positive role in the creation of a more sustainable consumer society (Gram-Hanssen et al. 2013).

The state does from time to time try to affect our way of consuming, even if the motives vary. Commonly known is when the state wants us to consume more to spur the economy and gain more incomes from taxes, while it other times wants us to lower our consumption due to bad times and other times it wants to limit our consumption due to for example ethical reasons or health related reasons. For health related reasons there are many different ways for the state to act, such as taxes on consumption (as for alcohol and tobacco), prohibitions (as for drugs) or limitations of consumption, such as the Swedish '*motboken*' that during the 1920's limited alcohol consumption (Gram-Hanssen et al. 2013).

Other ways for the state to steer the consumption is to create changes in the consumers behaviours by making certain products or consumption patterns more expensive than others, another is to affect the consumption by forcing companies to adjust their production to a more environmentally friendly production following laws and regulations. But the hardest – and in the long term most important – way to affect citizens' consumption is to try to change the psychological, social and cultural factors that affects the way we choose to consume. Even though companies have their responsibilities, citizens their own responsibility, it is still the state that gives legitimacy to these types of questions. But so far, when consumers and

companies urge the Swedish state to show some leadership when it comes to questions about our consumption habits, nothing has happened (Gram-Hanssen et al. 2013).

Gram-Hanssen et al. (2013) believes that the state should place sustainable consumption as a sub target for the environmental objectives, and create concrete tools to support it. Sweden's environmental politics has a 'generation goal' that aims at, until the next generation hand over a society where the large environmental problems have been solved, without creating increased environmental and health problems outside of the Swedish border. An ambitious goal to say the least, since there still are enormous yet unsolved environmental problems. The Swedish government initially adopted this goal in 1999, but the current formulation of the goal was established in 2010, where the international perspective was added. But together with the international perspective, another perspective was added: a consumption perspective. According to this, the environmental politics should be steered so that the consumption habits for goods and services cause as small as possible environmental and health problems (Jiborn & Kander 2013). But what kind of changes is needed for the Swedes' consumption habits to, in one generation, contribute to a society where 'all the major environmental problems are solved'? (Jiborn & Kander 2013). The good thing about this new consumption perspective is that it makes it impossible for the politicians to go for a narrow national perspective of the emissions of climate gases, since it embraces emissions made abroad – where most of our consumer goods are produced. There are basically two different ways to measure emissions, and one of these is the consumption perspective according to which the average Swede emits 10 tonnes of CO₂ per year. This perspective takes into consideration all consumed goods, no matter if it is produced outside of one's own country or not, whereas most countries' official statistics is based on the production perspective, i.e. Sweden's production of goods – but not how our consumption affects other countries' production emissions. By using this perspective instead, the average Swede only emits 5 tonnes of CO₂ each year – only a tiny bit higher than the global average of 4,4 tonnes. The reason for why the consumption perspective was created was due to the fact that 'rich' countries could clean up their own emissions by importing goods instead of producing them (Carlsson-Kanyama & Kander 2013). The reasons to why the Swedish state chose to use the global consumption perspective can probably be explained by two reasons: first, the increasing globalization of the economy, and second that focus in the environmental politics are being more and more steered towards consumers and the question of if and how the state might influence them (Knaggård & Pihl 2013).

4.5.2 THE MUNICIPALITY

Municipalities are important for supporting and enhancing sustainable consumption in many different ways, especially since they create the physical opportunities to consumption through their planning monopoly, even though they have not got any formal power to work with consumption per se. But municipalities are also important since they, compared to the state, are closer to the citizen, and can create a lot of opportunities to work with consumption on a local level, such as encouraging citizens to live a more sustainable life. Examples of this that already occurs in Stockholm are Kulturhusets initiative to a ‘library of clothes’, that in 2010 were active during Stockholm Fashion Week. The premises were that people could borrow clothes – for free. The initiative was a success, with around 500 visitors per hour and 450 pieces of clothes were loaned, of a total of 900 pieces. Since the response were good, the library of clothes still exists, and uses the concept of ‘pop-up shops’ to continue with lending out clothes (Stadsmissionen 2010, Lånegarderoben 2014).

Concerning planning processes, Sweden’s Building and Planning Act requires all Swedish municipalities to produce a comprehensive plan, that serves as guidance for detailed plans and building permits within the municipality. Swedish municipalities have extensive authority over local land use, often referred to as ‘the planning monopoly’. For the City of Stockholm, the Stockholm municipality therefore has the exclusive right to draw up, and adopt, detailed development plans within its boundaries. However, through the County Administrative Board, the government has the right to overrule a municipal decision if certain aspects have not been considered in the planning process, for instance with regards to national interest and environmental quality standards. Due to this, the city has to show how their plan meets the environmental quality standards set by the government (The Walkable City 2010).

In Stockholm’s comprehensive plan ‘The Walkable City’, the city claims to have high ambitions to become a socially cohesive city with a “*vibrant, accessible and attractive urban environment*” (The Walkable City 2010:18). The Walkable City (2010) says that good spatial planning is key to achieving this goal. Regarding consumption, the plan states that in the retail area, there has been a concentration on large stores in out-of-town developments, the city centre and large shopping areas. The plan sees a potential to transform the larger city centres into dense cores with a more diverse range of shopping, since a study concluded that Stockholmers increasingly demand a ‘shopping experience’ in an attractive setting. The plan does recognize that the trend towards a larger portion of online shopping might affect the

future structure of services. But this ambition to create ever more attractive and diverse shopping opportunities does not rhyme well with the planning aim to ‘create a city for all’, where the everyday needs of various groups in society should be taken into consideration; the goal of being the world’s most accessible capital; and provide save and inspiring surrounding for children. These ‘various groups’ mentioned are based upon aspects such as age, gender, social status or background (The Walkable City 2010).

4.5.3 THE INDIVIDUAL

More than once we have heard the politicians say that ‘common people can make a difference’, and by this a large proportion of the responsibility to lower the environmental burden has been put on the citizens and consumers. But for citizens to be able to be drivers for change, more than just the responsibility is needed, which can be seen in the following quote on energy efficiency by the European Commission; “*only consumers who are aware of the benefits of energy efficiency and are empowered to make informed choices can be drivers for change*” (EC 2009:50). Both politicians and companies seem to expect consumers to create a sustainable development, mostly by changing their daily consumption habits. Governments around the world expect the consumers to choose a more sustainable lifestyle, but often the consumers find themselves locked in, in both the institutional and infrastructural systems that our capitalistic economy offers (Tukker et al. 2008). Therefore, people often see only a few available options to choose a tad bit more sustainable lifestyle, and these choices are often based on the idea of buying themselves free from the environmental burden by for example choose goods that has an ecolabel of some kind (Carlsson-Kanyama et al. 2013). Sustainable consumption is often used as an umbrella term for many different aspects, such as equity, resource efficiency, waste minimisation, life cycle thinking etc. There is still no consensus on the definition of sustainable consumption, and the more radical proponents suggests that what is needed is a reduction of consumption levels in developed countries, and simplified lifestyles (Mont & Plepys 2008). According to Mont & Plepys (2008) the vision of sustainable consumption needs individual action in both changing consumption habits and adjusting lifestyles according to the principles of sustainable development. For developed countries such as Sweden, this implies buying more environmentally friendly products and services while in the meantime finding happiness in a less material way of living. The problem lies in that private consumers tend to have a limited capacity for behavioural change, since they act within social, technological and market boundaries – and the boundaries of their own knowledge. According to Mont & Plepys (2008), there is also a lack of a clear link

between the individuals purchasing choices and environmental improvement, as well as there often are difficulties in changing habits even if both knowledge and understanding are present.

4.5.4 IS SHARED RESPONSIBILITY THE ANSWER?

It is clear that the responsibility needs to be shared, since no one can create all the needed changes for sustainable consumption on their own. The state has earlier shown that they are capable of being drivers for change when it comes to shared material goods, as well as that they have the power of implementing taxes, prohibitions, limitations as well as economic steering by, for example, making some consumer habits more expensive. The municipality has a unique advantage since they are closer to the citizens, and could be a driving factor for education and information, as well as providing local initiatives for loaning and sharing goods. The most difficult part is individuals, who need to find other qualities of life other than increased material possessions and having shopping as a leisure time activity. For individuals, education and understanding seems to be key aspects, even if these do not always help them change their behaviours, since they act within the social, technological and market boundaries that are present. It is important to note that there is a conflict for the state, on the one hand an important actor for sustainable (lowered) consumption, and on the other hand the state strives for a continued economic growth, which is closely connected to consumption of goods within the country.

4.6 THE PLANNING AND LAYOUT OF THE CITY

4.6.1 A SHORT HISTORY OF SWEDISH RETAIL

Major shifts have occurred in the geography of the Swedish retail system, varying from local areas and neighbourhoods being the core of consumption to car-oriented areas in the outside of the city and the ever-larger city centre districts. The revolution of Swedish retail started in the 1950's, when higher living standards became a reality for a large group of the population. During this period, lasting to the end of the 1970's, chain stores selling more specialized goods were introduced, such as IKEA and H&M, but most notable was the introduction of the department stores. During the beginning of the 1950's, the department stores increased, and in 1975 Sweden had a total of 378 department stores for a population of just 8.2 million, and at the time this was the highest density of department stores per capita in Europe. At the same time, small businesses decreased, and the first car-oriented shopping complexes was introduced outside the city centre of Malmö in 1962, and others followed. Suburban shopping malls started to be built in the 1970's. (Kärrholm & Nylund 2011)

Consumption rates grew to never before seen numbers in the 1980's and marked a change in the way we consumed. According to Bauman (2007, in Kärholm & Nylund 2011) the changes during the 1980's were of such a major importance that the development of the Western world could be defined as the transition from industrial societies to consumption societies. People now had more money, and a pedestrianization of central city locations escalated and continued to do so into the 1990's. During these two decades, Sweden as well as many other countries experienced a rise in consumption when people started to see shopping as a leisure activity and not only a necessity, but perhaps rather as a way to construct an identity, both within classes and beyond classes. Due to this, a decline in department stores occurred since the consumers wanted to use shopping as a means of social distinction. The centrally located department stores were turned into malls consisting of smaller shops instead (although chain stores) (Kärholm & Nylund 2011).

Between 1750 and 1850, the number of people working in the retail sector in Sweden is estimated to be around 10,000 people, 0,5% of the population. In the end of the 20th century, this number had reached 500,000 people, 18-19% of the population, and the retail sector amounts to almost 15% of the Swedish GDP (Kärholm & Nylund 2011).

According to Kärholm & Nylund (2011) "*contemporary research has documented how the process of commercialization has transformed the city landscape and the urban environment as well as dealt with the consequences of the proliferation of ever-new consumption spaces*" in the same time as the retail development now have started to be discussed from a sustainability perspective. Tim Jackson (2009) says that an economic growth based on the idea of ever-growing consumption will cause more waste and emission while in the same time lead to an overuse of non-renewable resources. So far regarding planning, the issue that Jackson brings forward has primarily been dealt with by creating policies regarding peripheral retail developments, but not addressing the emissions from the purchased goods and services per se, but rather the added transport it takes to go to and from these peripheral developments.

In his book 'Where I Come From' (2010) (in Swedish; 'Där jag kommer från', my translation), the writer Per Wirtén says the following about some of the planned consumption districts in Stockholm; "*Together with the newly renovated mall in Skärholmen, on the other side of the highway, lies Kungens Kurva, one of the city's largest shopping districts. The sales*

are on its way to exceed the total sale of the mall at Hamngatan and the large department stores in the inner city of Stockholm. Together with other similar but smaller areas the E4 motorway south of the inner city has become one of Stockholm's largest shopping areas. Unsentimentally the old patterns of the city crumbles apart, and during a few short years around the new millennia the stores square foot area increased with 50%. The idea that the stone town, being built outwards in concentric circles, where it step by step grows from an inner core, is not applicable any more. Instead it expands in large leaps where the pattern is decided by railways and motorways. From Kungens Kurva in direction towards the old city centre, new shopping conglomerates are being built daily, and the city now grows from the outside to the inside as well. The former peripheries have in some places become new centres.” (Wirtén 2010:17, my translation).

4.6.2 RETAIL AREAS: AN INFLUENTIAL PART OF THE URBAN SPACE

Retail areas have become a more influential part of the urban space during the last decades, and activities that formerly did not involve consumption, such as railway stations and museums, now have dedicated consumption areas. According to Kärholm (2009) it has even been argued that shopping has become one of the last remaining forms of public activity. What does this development do to public space? On the one hand, new commercial spaces together with city festivals and more entertainment venues has created a somewhat renaissance of the public life in many city centres. On the other hand the public life seems to be more or less reduced to consumption, while according to Kärholm (2009) social problems in the public space are often handled through strategies of displacement. Thus the renaissance of public life can be seen to be closely connected to an increasing privatisation and social homogenisation (Kärholm 2009). Previous research concerning the retail environment has been focused on aspect of territorialisation, and the *“tendency of shopping areas and malls to withdraw from the wider urban fabric”* (Kärholm 2009:422) or the creation of branded streets or enormous complexes. Both inside the city and on its outskirts retail areas have in the last decades have been built and are larger than ever, thus transforming the city into different territories of consumption (Kärholm 2009), i.e. when retail areas claim ever bigger city areas they are in fact producing large monofunctional areas, while retail in the same time overtakes some functions, such as cultural activities and spaces for travel, by spreading into different public places such as railway stations and museums. According to Kärholm (2009), *“retailers try to organise and synchronise commercial rhythms with important urban rhythms and mobilities of everyday life”* (Kärholm 2009:422).

A steady flow of people and public space are two of the most basic entities for any retailing business. Due to this, shops tend to be placed at spatially integrated city streets since it is here people walk by. The increasing importance of the car together with public transport has led to a more complex system of localisation since we today have many different flows of people, coming by foot, public transport or private car (Kärrholm 2009). According to Kärrholm (2009) the industrial society introduced its linear rhythms of production but today the rhythms of consumption, such as Christmas shopping starting in early November, are becoming important as well, and these differ from the industrial linear rhythm since they are more adjustable and flexible, and the rhythms of production seems to follow in this direction, i.e. adapting to the consumer society. Kärrholm (2009) writes that today it seems as if the rhythms of shopping are always present, and whatever we do it can be done to shopping's rhythm. This commercialisation of consumption rhythm perhaps create a sense of security, but as Kärrholm writes, this ubiquity is also a distraction that might lead to a slow down of an evolution of diversity, new experiences and cultures. These rhythms, present in almost every city, are not for everyone. First of all not everyone's daily life is synchronised to the retail rhythm, and there are also large groups of people that lives both far away from malls and city centres, not to forget the people that do not have neither the money nor the interest to make shopping a part of their leisure time. According to Kärrholm (2009) "*[...] in order to prevent the commercial rhythms from reigning freely and continuing a kind of mallification of public spaces of the urban landscape, these activities need to be balanced or at least acknowledged in planning, for example, by considering these aspects in urban time policies. The effects of retail synchronisation might look benign at first, but they are important to acknowledge, since they tend to influence the whole of the urban landscape*" (Kärrholm 2009:436). It is important to note that online shopping is missing from Kärrholms analysis, and with it continuous growth it might alter the rhythm of the psychical consumption structures.

4.6.3 'A GOOD BUILT ENVIRONMENT'

When taking a closer look at one of the Environmental Quality Objectives set by the Swedish Government, 'A Good Built Environment', it is said that physical planning and urban planning shall be built upon strategies that provides a varied supply of dwellings, work places, service and culture, so that car usage can be lowered. According to Boverket (2004) this demands a better overall vision and cooperation, and the goal is to as quickly as possible return to the 'mixed city', and it is said that this will affect the retail business, *but not what the*

affect will look like (Boverkett 2004). According to the web page of the Environmental Quality Objectives, “*Buildings and amenities must be located and designed in accordance with sound environmental principles and in such a way as to promote sustainable management of land, water and other resources.*” (Miljomal.se 2014), but in this quotation ‘other resources’ does not seem to be connected to overuse of resources that is connected to our (over) consumption of, for example, disposable fashion.

4.7 NON-CONSUMERS

According to Elgin (2010) there is a need “*...to confront the reality of unsustainable consumer societies, [to] bring this taboo topic squarely into our public conversation, and search for realistic alternatives. This is an extremely difficult public conversation because it challenges the underlying paradigm of materialism and the self-image of nations who are identified as consumer societies.*” (Elgin 2010:2). Developed nations – consumer societies – need to transform their levels and patterns of consumption and see if there is a possibility to create our sense of identity and seek our happiness elsewhere. But a turn into a lower level of consumption together with more sustainable consumed goods requires visions of the future that can act as beacons for our social imagination. According to Elgin, people of today do not in their imagination have a clear vision of how new forms of growth could look like, and instead of seeing how a material limitation could spur other things, such as an increased sense of community and more cooperation, many imagines a life of simplicity being a turn into sacrifice and regress (Elgin 2010).

Research about sustainable consumption is often connected to consumers’ preference for the more environmentally friendly choices available on the market, and since this is the type of (marketing) research conducted, non-consumption is often overlooked even though it plays an important role for sustainability. Most importantly perhaps is the fact that consumers can choose to not consume a specific product or brand that they know/believe are doing harm to the environment. Or, as noted by Cherrier et al. (2011), the non-consumption choice lies in that the consumers are concerned about the effects a certain product has both on themselves and the environment. According to Cherrier et al. (2011) the previous literature shows some kind of consensus by describing anti-consumption as a resistance to, or a distaste of, consumption. When applying a macro perspective, the term can be applied literally as ‘against consumption’, but when having a closer look into a more practical view and a micro perspective, many types of anti-consumption or non-consumption practices instead focuses on

rather specific aspects against consumption, and Cherrier et al. (2011) has noted that these are closely connected to a 'person's self-identity process', and that this should not be a hindrance when wanting to study anti/non-consumption as a lifestyle in the consumption society. Previous research on Voluntary Simplicity, a type of non-consumption and low-impact lifestyle, has shown that the non-consumption aspect of this lifestyle is part of the longing to live a 'good life'. And by that, voluntary simplifiers reject material items that do not improve their life or happiness. According to some research, the adoption of a non-consumption lifestyle such as voluntary simplicity taken within the consumption society is not applied to be used as a weapon (as it instead often is when regarding consumption resistance) but rather to be used as a way to fulfil ones own life on ones own terms (Cherrier et al. 2011). Another way to view how non-consumption can be a part of the sustainability discourse, and how non-consumption can be a part of sustainable living, can also be found in the earlier research. Non-consumption tends to be a practice of rejection, reduction and reuse for many, while it among others is seen on a broader spectrum and therefore also includes a rethinking of both the social and cultural functions we associate with material possessions and affluence. According to Black and Cherrier (2010), the idea of 'ecological citizens' involves the notion of radically downscaled consumption patterns, and that the notion of non-consumption might be a new and innovative motivational force for a sustainable development. The non-consumption lifestyle should not be mixed up with the notion of 'green consumption'. Green consumption – choosing climate friendly and eco-labelled goods – does not involve a lowered consumption per se. However, a combination of non-consumption and green consumption (i.e. choosing eco friendly goods when needing to buy something) might be the most sustainable consumption habit.

4.7.1 VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY AND MINIMALISM

In all societies there comes from time to time movements and ideas that challenge the dominating norm, and according to Carlsson-Kanyama et al. (2013) these meetings or sometimes confrontations can vitalize the society first of all when people start applying and evolving some of the 'alternative' norms. In the last decades, and even more so today, we can see tendencies that people are trying to break up with the current norms that are focused on materialism. In contrast, the norm of voluntary simplicity, or of minimalism, can be seen as an ambition to try to put forward other norms than the materialistic ones to be able to live a 'richer' life (Carlsson-Kanyama et al. 2013).

According to Carlsson-Kanyama et al. (2013) there are three main reasons that can be found in previous research to why people choose to live in a more simple way; 1) alternative hedonism, describing that people are becoming tired of the shallowness of the mass consumption, 2) ecologic motivation, describing that some people have realised the seriousness of the environmental crisis and the personal health risks connected to mass consumption, and 3) material motivation, describing that some people think it is too expensive to ‘keep up with the Joneses’ and that you get a higher material value by buying high quality but fewer, more expensive and carefully chosen goods and services.

The basis for these different kind of reasons can still be found in the fact that some, either consciously or unconsciously, feel that the over-consumption of today is an ineffective way to gain appreciation and self-realization. Some people find other values to be of higher importance, such as focusing on quality, working less and instead have the time to, for example, spending more time in nature. These other values are experienced as being a more effective way to reach a higher quality of life, but one should not take away the fact that some of the people choosing an alternative norm rather than the over-consuming actually are worried about the state of the environment, even if the previous research shows that people are finding mass consumption as something that are to be generally considered as ‘unhealthy’ (Carlsson-Kanyama et al. 2013).

In this study, both voluntary simplicity and minimalism are used as two different ways of living a life with less consumption. They are in many ways similar, and are possible to combine. While voluntary simplicity has been thoroughly researched, and will be described in more depth later, minimalism is a rather new approach that can be said to stem more from the minimalist idea of design and architecture. Living a life of minimalism, or to consider oneself to be a minimalist, can be defined as 1) a strive for owning less material possessions, and only keeping those possessions that contribute to ones life by being both functional and beautiful, 2) buying less material goods, and when buying something one chooses goods of the highest quality and have the intention to own the good for a long time. The main difference from voluntary simplicity is that frugality is never a basic of minimalism.

Voluntary Simplicity can be described in many different ways, but one major aspect of choosing to live voluntary simple is to transform ones levels and patterns of consumption. According to Duane Elgin in his book *Voluntary Simplicity* (2010), voluntary simplicity can

be defined in many different ways, but often mentioned by practitioners is that simplicity means that one is cutting back on spending that is not serving ones life, and by this frugality or careful financial management the person living in voluntary simplicity receives financial freedom, and also the opportunity to be more conscious about choosing his or hers path through life. According to Elgin (2010), there are many misconceptions about voluntary simplicity. Many believe it to be a sacrifice, to live a simple life, while many practitioners of voluntary simplicity on the other hand regards an overstressed, overbusy and overworked consumer lifestyle as a sacrifice. But since the mainstream media in most societies are driven by consumerism, there is not much interest in exploring alternative way of life, such as voluntary simplicity, as it threatens the economic growth (Elgin 2010).

A recent study conducted by Carlsson-Kanyama et al. (2013) provided some interesting aspects of voluntary simplifiers in Sweden. The study showed that the respondents had an overall scepticism against the principle of spending so much time (typically 8h/day) on formalized salaried employment, and that one of the main ‘problems’ of choosing a life of voluntary simplicity was how to get by economically and socially while not trying to be a part of and encourage the dominating economic norm and culture. Since one of the basic human strives is to achieve a higher social status, today manifested in achieving a high material standard, this is what is being both assumed and encouraged in todays society. This means that people who choose to live in voluntary simplicity goes against the current norm, and according to Carlsson-Kanyama et al. (2013) they then have to deal with the real or imagined fear of lowering their social status or loose some of their social connections, and the respondents of the study experienced a social pressure due to their choices. Carlsson-Kanyama et al. (2013) means that their respondents had a need to clarify that they had made a ‘free choice’ and that they were not ‘victims’, and that they followed higher norms than those people who blindly follow the materialistic norm of society. The respondents in this study claimed that the most considerable challenge for them was not to abstain from the comfort and ‘good life’ that material goods claims to provide, but that the challenge was more closely connected to consumption as a social norm, and that the respondents felt that they have to justify their choice of living voluntary simple since otherwise other people might perceive their worn-out clothes as a failure rather than an effect of an commitment and the strive to escape from the mass consumption.

4.7.2 SHOPPING MORATORIUM

In the recent years it has become more and more popular to do a shopping moratorium, i.e. not consume any material goods (or a selected range of material goods) for a specific period of time. The reasons for doing so are many; some feel that they does not need any more and might as well take a pause from consumption, other do it as a way to save money, while others do it as a challenge to their own consumption habits, to see if they are able to keep away from the continuous consumption pressures of everyday life. The amount of time people choose to stay away from consumption tends to differ from one month to a whole year, and sometimes involve all material goods and restaurant dinners etc., and sometimes only a specific type of goods, such as clothes. Many Swedes that has tried a shopping moratorium has blogged about it, as a way to come to terms with when they have a difficult time staying away from consumption, and how to handle many of the everyday social interactions, such as birthday parties.

4.7.3 DEFINITIONS USED IN THIS STUDY

In this study, the definitions of the different non-consumption lifestyles is:

- Voluntary Simplicity: respondent has voluntarily substantially lowered his/hers consumption, and prefers reuse/remake and second hand goods when making purchases.
- Minimalism: respondent has voluntarily substantially lowered his/hers consumption, and prefers products of high quality when making purchases. Respondents have, or tries to, lower(ed) their amount of material possessions.
- Shopping Moratorium: respondent has had, or is having, a shopping moratorium covering at least four months.

5. RESULTS: NON-CONSUMPTION IN PRACTICE

5.1 INTRODUCTION TO RESPONDENTS

Five respondents have been interviewed for this study. All the names used in the study are fictive since the respondents are being kept anonymous.

- Peter; male, age 40, who consider himself to be something in-between a minimalist and a voluntary simplifier.
- Alice; female, age 36, who consider herself to be a voluntary simplifier.
- Charlotte; female, age 33, who consider herself to be something in-between a minimalist and a voluntary simplifier.
- Elenore; female, age 34, who has a shopping moratorium.
- Sophie; female, age 28, who has a shopping moratorium.

Every time ‘the city’ is mentioned during the interviews, it is Stockholm that is referred to.

5.2 CHOOSING NON-CONSUMPTION

Peter defines himself as a minimalist that consciously does not consume more than he believes he needs. His non-consumption habits came gradually, firstly by being brought up in a family where environmental awareness was a part of everyday life, later on when he and his wife had children six years ago and the thought of what we were doing to the planet and to our society became more pressing. Back then he describes himself as a sceptic but not that conscious, but he started to choose more carefully and actively. When consuming, he continuously buys with an active consciousness, posing questions such as ‘what is it that I’m actually buying?’. Whether it comes to food or household appliances, he tends to choose more expensive but more environmentally friendly, energy efficient etc., and without exception buys organic food and deliberately abstains from harmful products such as scampi.

The main reasons for him to become a minimalist were his environmental awareness in combination with the opinion that one should not live above ones assets. He does not have any interest in putting himself in debt, and says that his opinion on consumption is that he does not want it, need it, and then it is not good for the environment either. He is worried about the economic development and the dependency on fossil fuels. He sees the environmental degradation, the economic development and the continuous use of fossil fuels as a three-folded threat.

Alice describes herself as a voluntary simplifier and not a ‘typical minimalist’. She does not buy newly produced goods except for consumables, and preferably buys organic or natural products. She does not mind goods being expensive, but not in the ‘traditional sense’ of branded goods. Her way toward voluntary simplicity started two years ago with a new years resolution to not buy anything newly produced. Her boyfriend who is very environmentally aware inspired her, and when he resolved to not fly she felt that she could not do that, but that she wanted to do something. She and her family live small, and describe it as economical while in the same time it feels good. They feel proud managing to live in 58 square meters while having two kids, when others move to bigger apartments. Instead they chose to adapt. They feel that they don’t need to make a lot of money, to move to a bigger apartment. Her boyfriend is studying, and she describes how they made their choice and then adapted to it – since they do not consume nor travel, what would they do with the money?

Charlotte defines herself as being in-between voluntary simplicity and minimalism. Her life is not characterised by minimalism in the sense of owning as little as possible, but rather of environmental aspects. She says that she as a person has a hard time when the supply becomes too big, and becomes calmer when she does not have to shop or when she cannot shop. She likes the idea of having a ‘clutter free’ life. In 2010 she had a shopping moratorium that covered clothes, but when she got pregnant she had to buy pregnancy clothes, and chose to do that second hand. The shopping moratorium got her thinking, and she started to read blogs about voluntary simplicity, minimalism and the environmental benefits of not shopping. Charlotte says that her choice of lifestyle today is *“a combination between the environmental aspects and having more time whilst getting rid of an addiction and the negative habit that I had. It was like I never got out of the door, due to all the stuff that interrupted me”* (Charlotte, interview, 140409). She says that personal finances did not inspire her choice. She continues talking about second hand, that has become trendy, and choosing to buy primarily second hand as an active choice is so much easier than some other aspect that you ‘have to do’, but even so she says that second hand has an ‘ugliness label’ if you buy it due to environmental reasons, but it has positive economic effects. So Charlotte chooses to buy second hand because it is better for the environment and cheaper, and instead spends the “saved” money on more expensive (organic) food.

Elenore has a shopping moratorium, and from the first of February to the first of June she is not allowed to buy any clothes. The reason for her shopping moratorium is her environmental awareness, and she says that she thinks a lot about consumption; ‘how many dresses do one person actually need?’ She has had shopping moratoriums before, and now does it to support a colleague who does the same thing. She finds it easier to not consume when having the support of someone else. She does not find her non-consumption to be that difficult, mostly because she lives a bit outside of the city and therefore do not pass display windows on a daily basis, and otherwise do not expose herself to temptations. She does admit that she managed to break her consumption stop after only a couple of weeks; *“I found the perfect black dress at H&M – it fit perfectly so I bought it”* (Elenore, interview, 140422). She says that she today thinks more about not going into stores, and that she sometimes really wants to buy something new, even if she know she does not need it. More than once she has gone in to a store, tried something on, and then left without buying anything. *“We cannot continue to consume like we do today, and it is important to find alternative pleasures”* (Elenore, interview, 140422).

Sophie also has a shopping moratorium on the same premises as Elenore and with the same time horizon. The decision was spontaneous, based on *“some sort of feeling of disgust. It’s a bit like an addict thinks – to try to break a bad habit. I had no ethical reasons for my non-consumption”* (Sophie, interview, 140423).

5.3 EXPERIENCES OF THE CITY

Peter feels that the consumption society takes up too much space in the city, saying that if you are not interested in consuming you do not enter the malls. He finds this saddening, since it could be in another way – a city that actually is for everyone. *“Everything is supposed to be profitable, just look at the market values and rent levels, but the city is supposed to be for those of us who live in it or visit it, but in the end it comes down to the common good versus the market”* (Peter, interview, 140401). He used to live in the city, but now lives in a suburb and only travels into the city for work.

Alice experiences the city as being very centred around consumption. She used to live in the inner city, and when she had her first child she went into stores when taking the baby for a stroll – since this was, as she felt it, what was expected from her, and what was available. She says that she was never a shopaholic, but shopping was a good way to feel better if you were a

bit down – and today the experience is the exact opposite. *“It is so focused on shopping: stores, display windows – the message is that you should look at products, buy products. The green wedges in Stockholm are somewhat of a relief, but there is too much distance between them”* (Alice, interview, 140401). Usually city visits is due to her work being there, and before she often went into stores on her workdays, something that never happens today. Other reasons for visiting the city is when she meets up with friends to have some coffee. She says that in the beginning she was very interested in second hand, but today finds it boring to shop, and the anxiety over shopping has extended to second hand as well to the extent that she does not shop unless it is something that is absolutely needed – usually for the kids. The anxiety over second hand came after visiting so many flea markets with huge amounts of stuff that people have bought, that lacks quality, and that no one buys at the market. *“It horrible how much stuff and, frankly, shit, people have and have bought. It used to be fun, looking for nice stuff, but today I just feel bad over everything that will be thrown away. Its overwhelming”* (Alice, interview, 140401). Being on parental leave, she feels that there is so much that you are supposed to buy, especially with online forums that excite consumption. She tries to find a lot of other alternatives, such as borrowing, especially since they live in a small apartment and do not want an excess of stuff. *“But the orientation towards consumption makes people believe that you cannot lead a different life, but you can and you will feel better. It becomes an entire lifestyle – lowered consumption, environmental awareness, what you eat, what kind of skin cream you use, not having a car... It almost becomes an entire new world, since new alternatives open up and another way of life feels unthinkable”* (Alice, interview, 140401). Today she feels that she can walk around in the dedicated consumption areas and instead experiencing other things than the consumption and the advertisements. She feels that she is not affected by them, and instead looks at for example the buildings, the water, and all those other things that are also there. She says that shopping streets such as Hamngatan and Drottninggatan has amazing old buildings that you do not see when you walk around looking into the display windows.

Charlotte says that she is positive towards all the greenery in the city and sees it as an antipole to all the consumption. *“Well, the city has been growing for a long time and the main idea when it was built was to meet a growing need, among that consumption. But I find mixed spaces, with dwellings, work places, entertainment and consumption, the most attractive, and therefore I am not such a big fan of the city”* (Charlotte, interview, 140409). Costs for housing and the renting market has made it more profitable to turn old dwellings into offices,

she says, and us Swedes seem to be quite shopping mall-centred, both from the view of the country as a whole and from a planning perspective, and we are encouraged to go to externally located shopping malls. But, as she points out, it is not difficult to avoid this – you just do not have to go there, and says that this is a leisure time hobby that she and her family has chosen not to do, but if you live in the city it is impossible to opt out of shopping. Charlotte herself rarely goes into the city to shop, but she works in the city. Regarding consumption areas, she finds it more attractive when it is not malls, since it per definition closes out other forms of consumption. *“I have actively chosen not to consume, so since there is nothing else in the city, I don’t go there. But I don’t feel stressed of the designated shopping areas, or I did it in the beginning, but not anymore. Today I can walk around looking into display windows and rather see that ‘oh, I’ve got a sweater that looks like that, and I can style it like they did’ or ‘that was a nice porcelain figure’”* (Charlotte, interview, 140409). But, as she point out, if she is just going to meet a friend for a cup of coffee, she prefers to go to places that is not in these dedicated consumption areas. This she believes have something to do with that she is not in a phase in her life where she meets up with friends to go shop, even if they sometimes might do that when needing to shop for their kids. Most of her friends also like to shop second hand.

Elenore enjoys the southern parts of the city, and says that they are quite nice with a lot of green areas and cafes. She does not find the central parts of the city appealing at all, and only goes there if she absolutely needs something that cannot be found anywhere else. *“Its just stores and chain stores everywhere: five H&Ms in one hundred meters and loads of cars”* (Elenore, interview, 140422).

Sophie says that she can miss a sort of ‘small town- feeling’, where there are smaller areas where you can find a bit of everything, compared to Stockholm where you sometimes need to move yourself quite far to reach a decent café. She feels that the city is very concentrated, like small isolated islands with either only dwellings or only consumption and if you want anything else you need to get moving. *“Before my non-consumption I enjoyed the consumption areas, they are quite joyful and they were a hobby of mine – I could walk around there as a pastime, as recreation – there is a lot of impressions, it’s zestful. Today I find the same areas frustrating, it takes a lot of patience to expose myself to something that I cannot be a part of – I mean, that’s the reasons for why it’s there! – now they don’t fill any function”* (Sophie, interview, 140423).

5.4 WHAT'S MISSING FROM THE CITY?

When asking the respondents what they feel are missing from the city today that would either be beneficial for, or appreciated by, them, they all became silent for quite some time, giving the question a lot of thinking. With all the respondents I came to an agreement that it is difficult to try to envisage something that could exist in our consumption based city core, since most of the respondents had found their hobbies and leisure entertainment someplace else. A few themes became common after a while – greenery and bike riding.

“I use the metro a lot, but I miss spaces for bike riding in the city. It needs to become easier to go by bike in Stockholm” (Peter, interview, 140401). He also talked about that the development of Stockholm focuses much on building dwellings, but that it is a shame that many of the green areas in the inner city is being built upon, since we all feel better by having them and the design of the city becomes to clinic with them gone. He thinks that a higher supply of cultural life could be beneficial for the city, since he – when not travelling to the city for work – usually goes there to visit museums or Kulturhuset with his kids.

Alice feels that she is missing places where you can breathe, and would like to see more parks and other green and/or open areas in the city where there is not any type of market or advertising going on. She describes how she once suffered from a burnout, and at that time she could not stand to be in the city due to the abundance of expressions and messages. Therefore she would like to see more places in the city where you do not have the constant impressions. Once she visited Tokyo where they had big parks in the middle of the city, much like Hagaparken in Stockholm, but these were places right in the inner city and the consumption areas, and the park, in comparison to Hagaparken, lacked any kind of consumption such as cafes.

Charlotte says that what she is missing from the city is rather all those things that come with the city whether you want it or not, which she would rather do without: the traffic, the noise, and the amount of people. Depending on where one live or work, it might be nice to get some ‘city pulse’ from time to time, but that has never been the case for her. Charlotte and her family prefer to go out of the city on their leisure time, preferably into the forest. *“I don’t really know what the equivalent of the forest would be in the city, since the point is that there’s not any people and cars, you know.”* (Charlotte, interview, 140409).

“Perhaps there need to be more green areas in the city,” says Elenore, *“’cause I went into Kungsträdgården to look at the cherry blossom trees and it was so crowded – there’s not enough space for everyone.”* She also mentions that fewer cars would be favourable, and wishes for more cultural activities, such as small art galleries and museums. She usually goes to museums with her kid; *“but most of them are at Djurgården, so it’s far away and everything is concentrated to the same place. It can be done differently, like in Amsterdam where small museums and galleries can be found next door to the stores”* (Elenore, interview, 140422).

Sophie feels as if she is not missing anything from the city, but rather that she due to her non-consumption has found other reasons to visit the city: theatres, the cinema and other things has made her move around in the city for other reasons than to shop.

5.5 CONSUMPTION HABITS AND HOW NON-CONSUMPTION AFFECTS PERSONAL LIFE

Peter prefers local stores (that is close to home) if the supply is suitable for his needs, but thinks that the local stores has a problem with keeping the supply that people in general are looking for. He prefers physical stores compared to online stores, and says that if there is something he is actually buying, it is books – a hobby of his.

Alice says that when she decided that she would not buy anything newly produced, she went to a stylist to get help to find her own style, and the places where she could find second hand clothes that suited her. She says that she, to some extent, did it to make other see that it can be done without risk lacking nice clothes. She thought it was fun, and got a lot of appreciation for it, people were surprised that she was able to buy second hand ‘and still look so good’. Today she rarely buys anything, and if she does she chooses second hand. For gifts she tends to give things such as dinners or services.

“Partly, I feel less stressed, because for me shopping was bad self esteem in the sense of ‘if I just buy that thing, then I will become so much better, more good looking, etc.’. That has disappeared, I don’t know what came when, but I have gotten a better self esteem with that insight, and non-consumption has given me time to focus on other things that strengthens me, ‘cause that other way of life was just not the way to go” (Charlotte, interview, 140409). For Charlotte, second hand is her priority when actually buying something, and buys second hand both online and in physical stores even if online stores are mostly used. *“I realized that we*

rarely go into physical stores when we this Christmas went into a mall and my daughter was completely caught up with all the display windows – she hadn't seen it in that way before since we so rarely go shopping” (Charlotte, interview, 140409).

Elenore also prefers second hand when she is not having her shopping moratorium; *“It feels more environmentally friendly, even if it's not that sustainable with all the quite new H&M-clothes that have been handed in there. But it's still a little less harmful to the environment”*. She also prefers small stores and local stores to the big chain stores or malls. *“That is what I prefer, but in practice, if I'm in a hurry it's easier to go to the big chain stores. It's standardised, so I know what size and model that fits me if I for example need a pair of pantyhose” (Elenore, interview, 140422)*. When shopping for her son, she prefers online stores where she can find organic items that are hard to find in physical toy stores.

“I shop everywhere. Whatever is available! I enjoy the variation; I think it fun, more or less like a sport. I don't want to exclude any part, but perhaps those kind of malls that are separated from everything else” (Sophie, interview, 140423).

5.5.1 PERSONAL FINANCES

For Peter, minimalism has provided a better personal economy, and he and his family has chosen to spend money amortizing on loans and renovating the apartment, things that they probably would not have been able to afford unless they had such a low consumption. But, he point out, this is something that has happened gradually, and today they experience a bigger financial freedom.

Alice says that her finances have become much better, and even though she admits that she never have had such good supervision over her economy, she sees that she is saving thousands of Swedish kronor each month.

Charlotte says that she, of course, have saved money on her non-consumption, but also on her transition into buying more second hand. On the other hand, she has become more willing to pay more for second hand objects than before, *“If it is in good condition, it does not have to cost just 10 Swedish kronor. And sometimes I buy stained clothes to my kids, since they will stain them even more anyhow, but I did not do that in the beginning. Now I don't need to feel*

that anxiety over a new piece of clothing getting ruined immediately” (Charlotte, interview, 140409).

“I have better private finances, and even if I think that I don’t consume that much when I’m ‘allowed’ to consume, it’s clear that I now have money left on my wage account” (Elenore, interview, 140422).

Sophie feels that her personal finances are more or less the same, mostly because she now spends money on other things. *“It’s not like I’m saving the money, but that was never a reason for my non-consumption. I do experience that I now have a more varied spare time, since I’m forced to do things that I used to exclude but that I actually appreciate, and that is a positive consequence. And the reason why I can do these things is that I actually have both the time and the money!” (Sophie, interview, 140423).*

Non of the respondents claimed that private finances were a motivation for non-consumption, even if they all feel that they have claimed some of the financial benefits that comes with a lowered consumption. Some of the money saved from not consuming material goods goes into consuming in other ways: home repairs, organic food and experiences.

5.5.2 FRIENDS AND FAMILY

The reactions from other people on the respondents’ non-consumption vary a lot. Peter says that a few people more or less have acted a bit irritated, saying thing such as ‘but of course you should get a new TV, you cannot have such a small one as you have got now’. He has not revoked any acquaintances, but he and his family tends to spend more time with people that has the same values as they have, quite naturally since one tends to choose to spend time with people that you have a good time with.

Alice says that most people she knows have been positive, and that they think it is fun being inspired by her, but as she says – she mostly spend time with like-minded. Some thinks it is problematic, such as her parents, who wonder what they should give as presents and how they should act. *“It is so inculcated in society that you should bring a gift, such as flowers, or whatever. I don’t want that, but society says that I should want it. With some generations it is impossible to have the discussion, as with my dad who tends to buy a lot of electronics, we can’t meet in this since we are so different” (Alice, interview, 140401).*

Charlotte says that in her line of work, this way of life is not common and people might see it as very odd, therefore she does not talk a lot about it at work. She sometimes works a bit with sustainability issues, and in those circles she can talk about it. *“When I had it as a thing to buy only second hand, my boss though I was a bit crazy – but hey, I still do that!”*. But in the meantime, she can see how people in her surroundings gets a growing interest for everything environmental, and these people have become inspired by her and both family and friends has also cleared the clutter at home and sold stuff second hand – feeling good afterwards.

“My family and friends tend to think the same way that I do, and I usually don’t go shopping with friends and since it hasn’t been such a big activity earlier there hasn’t been such a huge change” (Elenore, interview, 140422).

Sophie says that some friends have tried to create exceptions for her, offering to buy something for her if she wants to. She recently had a birthday and did not want clothes as gifts, but people did not listen to her. She says that it is like people understand her decision, but they really cannot see the reason why and that they feel as if it does not matter whether she consumes or not consumes (Sophie, interview, 140423).

5.5.3 SENSE OF SPACE

“Since I have always lived with environmental awareness, even as a kid, I might not have experienced that my non-consumption gives me more time or space. Rather it takes some time and energy to take care of ones belongings, to fix stuff, to buy good quality. But my wife, who from the beginning had a ‘normal consumption’, could feel some panic over all the stuff she brought home, and today she can feel the relief of not bringing things home with her, and the relief of not having enough room for everything. The gradual shift to minimalism for myself made that the sense of relief is not as tangible. But it is nice to have a home that is not filled with stuff”. (Peter, interview, 140401)

“Even though I’ve cleared out the clutter and do not consume, I don’t know if it is that visible in our home, but the time it takes to make our home acceptable for having guests over has been lowered and cleaning does not take as much time as it used to”. (Charlotte, interview, 140409)

“I hoped that I would experience this ‘voluntary simplicity- feeling’ or the benefits that people talk about, you know that I would feel that it was relaxing not to think about shopping or that it didn’t take up a lot of my time. But that hasn’t happened. I miss having a hobby, and I get annoyed not being able to do what I enjoy doing” (Sophie, interview, 140423).

The above quotes show that the respondents did not choose non-consumption as a way to avoid clutter or have more open space at home.

5.5.4 OTHER ASPECTS

Peter says that advertisement is something that really annoys him. When watching TV, he prefers to watch advertisement-free channels or pay-per-view movies to avoid watching breaks for advertisement. Peter says that *“I want to experience something without being interrupted, I want to decide for myself when I want a break. But I am not susceptible to advertisements anymore, since I’m not interested of what they are selling. It is the same with advertisement in the city – it is designed to raise attention, it screams at you to look at it, and it takes up too much space”* (Peter, interview, 140401).

Peter believes that non-consumption is a growing trend, and that more people are becoming aware. He says that even if people are reacting when you are talking about it, it seems as more and more people can understand – they listen instead of only questioning. He connects this to the growing interest from the societal debate regarding consumption, and that we probably only are seeing the beginning of a growing debate. This might be connected to the growing trends of self-sufficiency – cooking, making sausages etc., and that this as a phenomenon shows some sort of scepticism against mass production and that you cannot control what you buy or eat. He believes that this is connected to minimalism, and refers to himself since he wants to know about the materials in the products he buys, if they have been produced in a sound way – is the wood eco labelled? What about the chemicals in clothes? These aspects are good for people’s health, even if he himself tends to do it more due to the environmental benefits. *“I believe in the idea of low-scale production, without toxins, and I am happy to pay extra to make this a reality. We buy meat directly from a farm, and it brings a certain feeling of happiness to at least know that the pig had a good life. I can feel a certain anxiety when I see the mountains of meat with unknown origin in the food store. The amount of products in the oversized stores makes you wonder: how can it ever be possible to have all this produced*

in a sound way? How is the mountain of apples supposed to be sold before they go bad?” (Peter, interview, 140401).

Peter says that he and his wife have a deal on how to consciously try to avoid impulse buys. When they buy something, they have agreed to it beforehand. He says that he usually regrets a potential purchase before he even gets home to suggest it to his wife. *“Even if you are very aware as a consumer, you still tend to fall into the ‘I might buy this product’, but with some thinking you regret it. Instead I evaluate, look at different types of products, and instead of buying what is being advertised in the store I might end up getting a completely different product. This is because I am aware of how the stores – by the way they showcase their products – tries to make the decision for you, and I don’t want that. That is also why I don’t shop online, because I want to hold and feel the product before I buy”* (Peter, interview, 140401).

Alice says that since the national economy work in the way that it does, it does what it can to justify consumption, and that it perhaps it should try to create fulfilling occupations instead. She says that with this new mind-set that she has got, one start to think about everything in a completely different way. It is exiting and positive, the transition is quick and the mind-set cross over to other areas than just consumption. She likes to point out that is can be peaceful to walk in hysterical parts of the city when you feel that the display windows is not speaking to you, and it helps you to see and experience other things in your own city. *“It is often not as fun to be in the city, since everything is about consumption. When you are not consuming you don’t have that much to receive from the city, even if you still can go in there to get some coffee and look at people, I mean, that is still there, but it is so covered in consumption. It is the same thing when you are visiting a city with your friends – shopping is often the designated activity. It becomes boring. I mean there are cities with amazing nature, that are alluring, both in Sweden and abroad. These cities are compelling but with something else than consumption – the contrast between nature and city”* (Alice, interview, 140401).

Charlotte says that what she finds attractive both regarding city design and goods is the bit more genuine; *“everyone seems to prefer that, but no one is prepared to pay for it. They buy their Danish fillet of pork at ICA instead of buying organic”* (Charlotte, interview, 140409). She also says that when on parental leave, she tends to go to second hand stores more often, since she is already out with the stroller, and in some way she sees this as unnecessary

consumption, more like leisure consumption than anything else. She thinks it is difficult, the hysteria with thrifting, as if it would be okay to continue with a negative consumption habit just because it is second hand.

“The city is so directed towards consumption. Stockholm needs to continue its growth, we need to build more – but how big can a city get? Since we only produce a handful of the things we consume, we might need to have more – and smaller – cities and try to raise our degree of self-sufficiency. It’s like it’s a law of nature, everyone wants to move to the cities and therefore they shall be bigger and bigger and everything shall be more urbanized” (Elenore, interview, 140422).

Sophie talks about her non-consumption being sort of an experiment: how important is shopping in her life? How will she react? She says that the non-consumption is something that neither hurts herself nor the space in her apartment. Her hopes was to break a bad habit, and when she reaches the end of her shopping moratorium she hopes that she will not run to the nearest store right away, even if she right now feels as if she might do that. *“I hope that I can keep these new better habits, and it’s not that I’ve tortured myself through all of these new experiences, I’m actually glad that I chose to do all these other activities. In the same time I want my old hobby back, but find a healthier approach to it – I mean it can be a hobby among other hobbies and not my biggest interest (and my only interest)”* (Sophie, interview, 140423).

6. ANALYSIS

6.1 CHOOSING NON-CONSUMPTION

The reasons for choosing non-consumption varied among the respondents. Peter experienced a gradual shift, having been brought up in an environmentally aware home he started to think about these aspects again when he had kids, and started to choose more carefully and more actively making choices. Peter was the only respondent who clarified that he did not want to live above his own assets. Alice on the other hand took on a new years resolution not to consume newly produced goods, and was inspired by her boyfriend who is an environmentalist. She stated that they as a family adapted to their choice – by not travelling, consuming and living small, her boyfriend could study, something that would not have been done as easily otherwise. Charlotte started out with a shopping moratorium that got her thinking, and she started to read blogs about voluntary simplicity and minimalism, and found that the main importance of her choice is the environmental benefits of non-consumption. Elenore said that environmental awareness led to her first shopping moratorium, and that this time it is to support a colleague who does the same thing. These four respondents answers to why they chose non-consumption differs in many ways, but one theme emerged: environmental awareness. Sophie distinguish herself from the rest of the respondents, by stating that her shopping moratorium was a spontaneous decision based on, as she said, a feeling of disgust over the amount of clothes she had:

“I had no ethical reasons for my non-consumption”

(Sophie, interview, 140423)

6.2 EXPERIENCES OF THE CITY

When asked about their experiences of the city, Peter reacted on that he felt that the city was not for everyone and that spaces for consumption took up too much space;

“Everything is supposed to be profitable, just look at the market values and rent levels, but the city is supposed to be for those of us who live in it or visit it, but in the end it comes down to the common good versus the market” (Peter, interview, 140401)

Alice experienced the city in a more or less similar way, but phrased it as the city being centred on consumption. Alice mentioned the green wedges of Stockholm as being a relief from the constant messages of shopping with ‘the display windows telling you to look at products and buy products’. Also Charlotte was positive to the greenery, seeing it as an antipole to all the consumption. Elenore enjoys the southern parts of the city due to their greenery and that they have a lot of cafés, and rather detests the central part of the city;

“It’s just stores and chain stores everywhere: five H&Ms in one hundred meters and loads of cars” (Elenore, interview, 140422)

All of the respondents said that when practicing non-consumption, the main reasons for them to visit the city without shopping on their agenda were to either meet up with friends or visit cultural establishments such as museums and theatres. Three of the respondents also pointed out that they ‘had to’ go into the city for work.

Sophie on the other hand distinguishes herself again, by enjoying the consumption areas of the city before she took on her shopping moratorium. She described them as joyful, shopping was a hobby of hers, and she saw walking around in the city as recreational. The situation is radically different today when she is not ‘allowed’ to consume:

“Today I find the same areas frustrating, it takes a lot of patience to expose myself to something that I cannot be a part of – I mean, that’s the reason for why it’s there! – Now they don’t fill any function” (Sophie, interview, 140423)

These experiences of the city fill the respondents with mixed emotions. Alice felt that as if the focus on consumption in the city had expectations on her, rather than she having expectations on either the city or the consumption. She exemplifies with when she was on parental leave while living in the city, and that when going on walks she went into stores, because that behaviour was the kind of behaviour that everyone expected. She also mentions that she felt as if nothing else were available for her to do. But with her shift to non-consumption, she instead feels that she now can walk around in the dedicated shopping areas, experiencing other things than the display windows. Charlotte more or less opted out completely from

going to the city, saying *“I have actively chosen not to consume, so since there is nothing else in the city, I don’t go there”* (Charlotte, interview, 140409). Just as Alice, she does not feel stressed from the designated shopping areas, and can rather be inspired by display windows in the sense that she sees what she can do with what she already have.

All of these experiences of the city point to the same thing – there is a too big focus on spaces for consumption according to the respondents. Even Sophie, who previously enjoyed these areas, finds them difficult now that she has agreed with herself not to consume. Alice’s description of how she felt that shopping was expected by her, and that there was not much else for her to do while on parental leave, shows that there is a lack of mixes between different activities in the city and that the focus on areas for consumption might have taken over the city space to such a degree that those other things that actually are available become overshadowed.

6.3 WHAT’S MISSING FROM THE CITY?

As mentioned in Section 6.4, the respondents struggled a bit when asked what they are missing from the city. They all realised that it is difficult to imagine that something else – regardless of what it might be – could be a part of the consumption centred city. Most respondents directly came to the idea of moving their hobbies and leisure time interests into the city instead. Since they have found other places for these activities, their solution to the question instead became to just change the geographical locations of their leisure-areas, such as spaces for bike riding and green areas. Or as Charlotte put it: she rather does not want all those ‘extra’ things that come with a city; traffic, noise, the large amounts of people. She said that she for leisure time prefers to go to a forest, and that

“I don’t really know what the equivalent of the forest would be in the city, since the point is that there’s not any people and cars, you know” (Charlotte, interview, 140409)

Cultural activities were mentioned later on, since these types of activities was the most common reason for all the respondents to go into the city. Suggestions such as diversifying the city a bit more by adding art galleries, museums and other cultural activities in the areas dedicated for shopping came up, and would provide a more mixed supply of activities in the city, hopefully attracting a broader range of people.

6.4 CONSUMPTION HABITS, CAPITALISTIC CONSUMPTION AND THE CITY

Perhaps Karl Marx view of capitalism holds true today: to make the system function there is a need to form people to the needs of the production system. With today's production patterns, a habit of 'fast fashion' and to continuously discard purchased products are a must in order to keep the 'continuous' economic growth alive. Marx idea that individuals in the capitalistic society no longer knows which goods are of use for her, and which are not, holds true to the affluent consumption habits of today's individuals, as we purchase, own and discard. Connecting this to the discussion of 'needs' and what a 'need' really is, is important. Several of the respondents said that they do not 'need' the products, nor that they 'want' them. According to Aléx (2007) a 'need' is something that is culturally conditioned – and in that case; what has made the respondents taking a step away from this cultural habit? Perhaps it is the environmental awareness amongst most respondents that makes them non-affected by the 'excessive consumption' that Veblen talked about, i.e. the consumption whose sole purpose is to purchase (expensive) goods that can show off good reputation and therefore help steer a social position. But if the respondents view's of what constitutes 'good reputation' or social status rather is low material possessions, due to their environmental interest being of more importance than, for example, the ability or willingness to show off good reputation or high income by purchasing expensive goods. Some of the respondents focus on second hand in the beginning of their journey to lowered consumption might be seen as a way to try to combine consumption with environmental awareness (non of the respondents said that they consumed a lot of 'green products'). But it seems as if other aspects, such as the found joy in consuming less and interests and hobbies that does not centre around material goods took over while the respondents started to realize that the affluence of second hand goods were stemming from overconsumption of 'new' goods. Because today, most of the respondents choose second hand when they do need to buy anything. Both online and physical second hand stores are mentioned, and even if second hand is a priority when needing to buy something, they are not unaware of the problems connected to the second hand industry:

“It feels more environmentally friendly, even if it's not sustainable with all the quite new H&M- clothes that have been handed in there. But it's still a little less harmful to the environment” (Elenore, interview, 140422)

Most respondents experience a bigger financial freedom due to their non-consumption, seeing themselves saving thousands each month. Sophie, on the other hand, says she has not saved that much, mostly because she has exchanged shopping as a leisure-time activity to other activities, such as going to the theatre, that cost quite a lot of money.

No matter whether one believes that the capitalistic production system spurred our consumption, or that demand spurred production, it is noticeable that more and more people have had enough. All respondents except one mentions friends and family who have more or less taken the same step away from the materialistic consumption society as they have, while many others in their surroundings seems to have become more inspired to consume less. The reaction the respondents have gotten from people around them has varied a lot. According to Peter, some has been a bit irritated, more or less trying to convince the non-consumer to consume. But, as Peter puts it, today he and his family spends more time with friends that have the same values as them. Alice has experienced a lot of positive reactions, and people have become inspired by her. Charlotte also says that she can see people in her surroundings becoming more interested in the environment, being inspired by Charlotte and her family. Sophie experienced that people try to create exceptions for her during her shopping moratorium, offering to buy things for her if she wants to. She says that it feels as if people understand her decision, but really cannot see the reasons to why she is doing it.

Is non-consumption a growing trend? Peter believes so. He feels as if people are becoming more aware and that even if people are reacting when he is talking about non-consumption, it seems as if more people understand and that they have gone from questioning to listening. Peter thinks this change is connected to the growing societal debate about consumption and that this debate will continue to grow. The worldwide increase in consumer activism and anti-consumption as mentioned by Lewis (2013), although mostly being on an individual level, can be seen to show an increasing dissatisfaction with the 'consumer project'. This can be connected to the increased interest from peers of the respondents – suddenly non-consumption is not seen as such a bad idea when you see someone else doing it in practice. The same goes for the respondents who initially were influenced by others and then became non-consumers. Sophie, whose shopping moratorium differs from the other respondents intentions with non-consumption, can be seen as an example of how non-consumers are not only people with an

interest in the environment, but rather that – without any ideological prerequisite – more people tend to question their own consumption habits.

Alice says that since the national economy works as it does, it does what it can to justify consumption. But she feels that it could try to create fulfilling occupations instead. Her new mind-set has made her think differently about everything, and she finds it exiting and positive to see how quick the transition is to a new mind-set to cross over to other areas than just consumption.

“It is often not as fun to be in the city, since everything is about consumption. When you are not consuming you don’t have that much to receive from the city, even if you still can go in there to get some coffee and look at people, I mean, that is still there, but it is so covered in consumption. It is the same thing when you are visiting a city with your friends – shopping is often the designated activity. It becomes boring. I mean there are cities with amazing nature, that are alluring, both in Sweden and abroad. These cities are compelling but with something else than consumption – the contrast between nature and city” (Alice, interview, 140401)

When reading this, it is clear that the ideas of the Walkable City Plan (see section 5.5.2) do not correspond with some citizens’ visions of the future Stockholm. Even though the plan talks about making Stockholm a city ‘for everyone’ (mentioning aspects such as age, gender, social status or background) and that spatial planning is a way to achieve this goal, there is a lot of consumption being mentioned. First of all the access to services on a local scale is said to be needed, due to the previous (and continuous) focus on large stores in out-of-town developments, city centre and other large shopping centres. The thoughts and experiences from the respondents in this study also clash with a survey used as a basis for the Walkable City Plan, where it is said that Stockholmers increasingly demand a ‘shopping experience’ in an attractive setting, and that this is why the city of Stockholm plans on transforming larger centres into dense cores with a more diverse range. Regarding city layout and design, Charlotte thinks the more ‘genuine’ approach is more attractive, and Elenore takes the discussion about the future layout and planning of Stockholm even further:

“The city is so directed towards consumption. Stockholm needs to continue its growth, we need to build more – but how big can a city get? Since we only produce a handful of the things we consume, we might need to have more – and smaller – cities and try to raise our degree of self-sufficiency. It’s like it’s a law of nature, everyone wants to move to the cities and therefore they shall be bigger and bigger and everything shall be more urbanized” (Elenore, interview, 140422)

6.5 EMPOWERED BY NON-CONSUMPTION

In Carlsson-Kanyama et al.’s (see Section 5.7.1) study of Swedish voluntary simplifiers, they found that their respondents had to deal with real or imagined fear of lowering their social status or loose some social connections, and that their respondents experienced a social pressure due to their choice of practicing voluntary simplicity. Their respondents also pointed out that they had made a ‘free choice’ and that they were not ‘victims’. Comparing Carlsson-Kanyama et al.’s results with the results from this study proves to be interesting. The following three quotes from two of the respondents, clearly show how they instead experience their non-consumption as being empowering – something that they feel proud of, rather than as with Carlsson-Kanyama et al.’s respondents who apparently felt that they had to justify their decision:

“But the orientation towards consumption makes people believe that you cannot lead a different life, but you can and you will feel better. It becomes an entire lifestyle – lowered consumption, environmental awareness, what you eat, what kind of skin cream you use, not having a car... It almost becomes an entire new world, since new alternatives open up and another way of life feels unthinkable” (Alice, interview, 140401)

“Partly, I feel less stressed, because for me shopping was bad self esteem in the sense of ‘if I just buy that thing, then I will become so much better, more good looking, etc.’. That has

disappeared, I don't know what came when, but I have gotten a better self esteem with that insight, and non-consumption has given me time to focus on other things that strengthens me, 'cause that other way of life was just not the way to go" (Charlotte, interview, 140409)

"When I had it as a thing to buy only second hand, my boss though I was a bit crazy – but hey, I still do that!" (Charlotte, interview, 140409)

Most of the respondents spoke about their quality of life being increased when turning to non-consumption. Even if our consumer society still links human wellbeing and progress to the acquisition of stuff, the respondents give another picture. How come? It could be traced back to that the respondents obviously do not feel that a high material consumption raises their stance in the social hierarchy. Having jobs, educations, partners and/or kids, none of them seem to be of loss of anything that can be seen as being parts of a successful life. We do no longer live in the, as seen by McKendrick, 18th century England any more, where one could advance socially by consuming the same way as the upper classes did. But can we still see tendencies of this type of consumption among people? When hearing about some of the reactions the respondents experienced among their peers it seems as if a high – or at least steadily maintained – material consumption at least is what is expected by you, even if this per se does not mean that you will advance socially.

7. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to explore how non-consumers experienced the city of Stockholm, and through qualitative interviews with five persons, many interesting aspects appeared. The findings imply that the non-consumers feel that the city is too focused on consumption and that other values that could be obtained from having a mixed city has been left out of urban planning when the focus seems to be on continued economic growth through ever-increasing consumption levels.

7.1 CONCLUSIONS FROM EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Key conclusions that can be drawn from the empirical results are:

- All respondents except one had strong environmental incentives for their non-consumption.
- All respondents except one felt that the city was too centred on consumption. The one that did not feel this way on a regular basis did feel this way when on her shopping moratorium.
- All respondents expressed that mixed areas, whether in the city or in the suburbs, are more attractive.
- All respondents except one expressed a wish for more greenery and cultural establishments in the city.
- All respondents said that when visiting the city for purposes other than consumption, they met up with friends or visited cultural establishments.
- All respondents except one have influenced friends and family to step away from overconsumption.
- The respondents does not feel that they have lowered their social status in any way, rather they felt it being empowering, compared to the results of Carlsson-Kanyama et al.'s (2013) study showing the opposite result.

The chosen method for this study makes the empirical findings not useful for generalising about the all non-consumers in Sweden, although this was not a goal for the study. The findings still hold valuable information that first of all give insight into non-consumers and their view of the city that they live in, whilst also useful for inspiration to further studies both in the field of non-consumption and the field of urban planning.

7.2 CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

With retail areas becoming a more influential part of the city, shopping now takes place at spaces that formerly did not involve consumption, places such as museums and railway stations. With this growing trend of more places and spaces for consumption, perhaps Kärholm (2009) is right when saying that shopping is one of the few remaining forms of public activity. But if the city mostly is a place for consumption, what could then happen to the city if a majority of consumption moves to the Internet? This question needs to be further investigated so that urban planners can make sound decisions regarding the future planning of Stockholm. If retail areas are claiming even bigger areas of the city, we will end up with monofunctional areas that might overtake other functions of the city. Stockholm is in dire need of additional housing, but it would be foolish of the urban planners and politicians to think that people are moving to Stockholm for the new malls being built, as compared to work and study opportunities. Just by looking at the Environmental Quality Objective 'A Good Built Environment', one sees that physical planning and urban planning should provide a *varied supply* (of dwellings, work places, service and culture).

Developed economies are being responsible for almost 80% of life-cycle impact of consumption, and it is clear that actions need to be taken at most levels in society. First of all to lower our environmental impacts, but also to give developing countries the opportunity to consume material goods in order to achieve a higher quality of life.

The Swedish state have earlier shown their ability to make positive impacts on consumption behaviours as in the example of laundry rooms, but it is clear that further action is needed. Recommendations for further measures could be that the government, together with the municipalities, created more initiatives where no individual ownership is needed, with libraries being a good example, not only lending books but also DVDs, games, clothes, tools etc. Another alternative is to make certain products or consumption patterns more expensive than others as a way to make way for more sustainable consumption. Also, more regulations regarding loans and credits for consumer goods would be one way to steer the Swedes' consumption behaviours in a more sustainable direction. The problem lies in the need to change the psychological, social and cultural factors that affects how citizens' choose to consume.

With politicians and companies expecting consumers to create a sustainable development, primarily by changing their daily consumption habits, is a difficult task for the individual when living in a city so centred on consumption, with advertisement proclaiming new needs on a daily basis. Private consumers act within the social, technological and market boundaries that are present in our society, and these become obstacles for behavioural change together with the boundaries of our own knowledge regarding the possibility to make better choices.

It is important to note that the questions of non-consumers and the city is not an easy one with just saying that these people who choose this lifestyle could move somewhere else in the country. Stockholm has other aspects to it that cannot be found everywhere: work opportunities, family, friends, universities, cultural activities, nightlife etc. And even if voluntary non-consumers today makes up a small part of the Swedish population, these people are showing the way towards a way of living, without a lowered quality of life, that we all need to be a part of in order to reach a sustainable development and the goals set by the government, and cities therefore needs to be planned in a way that supports these kind of lifestyles. And even if some of today functions available in cities, such as shopping malls, may become obsolete, the opportunities to change these into new functions are limitless: second hand stores, up cycling stores, clothing libraries, swapping locales, locales where one can repair goods... Only the imagination sets limits to what our future cities could look like.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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9.1 INTERVIEWS

“Alice”, interviewed 2014-04-01

“Charlotte”, interviewed 2014-04-09

“Elenore”, interviewed 2014-04-22

“Peter”, interviewed 2014-04-01

“Sophie”, interviewed 2014-04-23