"SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL" OR HOW TO REDEFINE GOOD LIFE – TINY HOMES IN FINLAND

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to introduce people living in tiny homes in Finland and their consumption practices. Housing and household consumption are among the major contributors of greenhouse gas emissions in Finland. Housing itself, energy consumption, furnishing, household equipment, consumer goods and services contribute significantly to climate change and environmental degradation. Tiny homes, on the other hand, can offer a more sustainable solution to housing. Despite their recent popularity, the academic literature on the topic is scarce and limited, especially on tiny homes in Finland. While some of the research shows how energy use and construction materials decrease in smaller dwellings, there is limited research on tiny home dwellers' experiences and their consumption practices.

The thesis uses Bardhi and Eckhardt's (2017) framework of liquid consumption to understand dwellers' relationship to possessions and their homes and why they choose to live in tiny homes. The framework is often used to explain how and why modern consumption has changed. For the study, six people from different households in Finland were interviewed and the data was presented with the help of narrative analysis – a method of qualitative research. An observation was conducted to support the primary data.

The analysis showed that despite some challenges faced, the tiny home dwellers narrated their experiences as a positive housing solution. The tiny homes freed the interviewees from a big loan and decreased their expenses; provided possibilities for mobility; allowed the dwellers to be more creative; reduced the amount of material possessions and provided the dwellers with feelings of safety and security. The results also showed that the dwellers' relationship to possessions and their homes were in the middle point between liquid and solid consumption, and even though their attitude to their home was enduring and for some interviewees ownership-based, tiny homes still provided them with a lifestyle they might not have been able to access otherwise. Tiny homes can offer a more affordable way of living, which may be better for people and the planet. More research on tiny homes could help in learning how to make tiny spaces more attractive, more functional and more sustainable. Increased knowledge on the carbon footprint of tiny homes and their dwellers would help to develop a more sustainable approach to housing and household consumption.

Keywords	
Tiny homes, tiny house phenomenon, liquid consumption, narrative analysis, Finland	
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1   INTRODUCTION

Modern man does not experience himself as a part of nature but as an outside force destined to dominate and conquer it. He even talks of a battle with nature, forgetting that, if he won the battle, he would find himself on the losing side.

Ernst Friedrich Schumacher (1973)

In 2019 the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that human activities have caused global warming in a likely range of 0.8°C to 1.2°C above pre-industrial level. We are likely to reach 1,5°C between 2030 and 2052 if we do not cut the emissions. According to Finnish Environment Institute (2019), 66 percent of consumption-based emissions in Finland, or emissions from domestic final use, are generated by households. The biggest source of household emissions is housing, which includes housing itself, energy, furnishing, household equipment and services (Finnish Environment Institute, 2019).

There are many reasons why consumption is responsible for high levels of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs). One of the reasons is the size of dwellings. The construction industry succeeded to sell the idea that "big is beautiful", which resulted in the continuous growth of floor area (Saxton, 2019; Wilson & Boehland, 2005). For example, the average size of a new single-family house completed in the US in 2019 was 214 square meters (United States Census Bureau, 2020). It has more than doubled since 1950, even though the average family size has been reduced (Wilson & Boehland, 2005). The trend is similar in Finland, the floor area per person has been increasing, while the number of dwellings for three and more people has been decreasing (Official Statistics of Finland, 2018). Another reason why consumption is responsible for GHGs is that we have more belongings than ever before and that is where big homes become handy. Our homes have become fortresses and offer us anything we might possibly need instead of being a simple shelter (Wilson & Boehland, 2005). The "American dream" of having life better and richer (Adams, 1933) has spread to other countries and changed the meaning to having more and faster. Possessions have become a status symbol and even something what defines our happiness and success. Consequently, it all has led to high household debt, unnecessary possessions, and high environmental burden (Wilson & Boehland, 2005).

Downsizing can be one way to decrease consumption by reducing space and thus materials used and energy needed for heating and cooling (Sandberg, 2018). A smaller house provides only limited amount of space, thus, possibly reducing the number of belongings one can fit and, consequently, decreasing the environmental footprint even more. This thesis will hereby focus on the experiences of several people living in tiny homes in Finland.

Tiny homes are not a new phenomenon. People have always been living in small dwellings (Shearer & Burton, 2019). However, tiny homes as a movement started in 1980s and became especially popular after the housing market crash

in 2008, when people had to revaluate their housing situation because they could not pay mortgages (Meissner, 2019; Wu & Hyatt, 2016). The financial crisis also revealed the negative consequences of excessive accumulation of consumer goods not only related to households' debt-financed overaccumulation but also issues such as global warming and environmental degradation (Meissner, 2019). As a result, the ideas of minimalism when "less is more" were spreading (Wu & Hyatt, 2016). Today tiny homes have spread around the world and especially in countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Various TV-shows, streaming services and YouTube videos such as *Tiny House Nation* and *Living Big in a Tiny House* increased the interest in tiny homes (Saxton, 2019; Shearer & Burton, 2019). The tiny home movement has rebranded small homes making them more desirable and aesthetically pleasing than, for example, trailer parks (Anson, 2014).

Similar ideas that we need to do better with less can be found on the United Nations (n.d.) website. There it is specified that unsustainable production and consumption lead to climate change and degradation of natural resources, what affects our wellbeing. Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (2019) highlights that changes in consumption patterns and lifestyles are needed. The European Environmental Agency (2018) adds that we need to spread the alternative vision of good life.

My motivation for this thesis is twofold. First, I am interested in the topic of tiny homes and possibly building my own tiny home in the future. Second, I am interested in exploring tiny home living as an alternative way of living and whether it can be more environmentally friendly and perceived positively by tiny home dwellers themseves. The idea of consuming less sometimes can feel like a loss because we often communicate our success and happiness through possessions such as homes, cars, expensive phones and wardrobes full of clothes (Jackson, 2009). However, when we consider the negative impact of consumption on our planet and consequently on our heath and overall wellbeing, one might start wondering whether there is another way. Can tiny homes, while probably pushing people to consume less, be an alternative to conventional housing and still be considered as a desirable change? This thesis is related to Corporate Environmental Management, the program I study, because it allows us to look deeply into consumer culture and understand why some people choose to have less. It is also related to my studies because it investigates the more environmentally friendly ways of living and consuming, thus possibly offering new solutions such as more sustainable housing. The topic for this thesis was chosen because of my strong interest towards tiny homes, alternative lifestyles and consumer culture and allowed me to combine my personal and professional interests.

Even though tiny homes are widespread, there is a limited academic literature on the topic of tiny homes (Anson, 2014; Ford & Gomez-Lanier, 2017; Saxton, 2019) and especially, tiny homes in Finland. Much of the information on tiny homes can be found on the websites on tiny home movement and blogs. In Finland, newspapers and online sources provide stories and examples of tiny homes, however, the information is limited and scarce. Therefore, this presents

a gap in academic literature on tiny homes. While there is research on how energy use and construction materials decrease in smaller dwellings, there is limited research on consumption practices when living in a tiny home. Therefore, the goal of this research work is to learn more about people living in tiny homes and how they interpret their experiences of living in tiny homes. Moreover, this thesis attempts to investigate consumption practices of people living in tiny homes. Based on the research goals, two research questions were identified:

(1) How do tiny home dwellers perceive living in a tiny home?

(2) To what extent can the framework of liquid consumption by Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) explain tiny home dwellers' relationship to possessions and their homes?

In order to answer the research questions, a semi-structured interview was chosen as the primary data collection method. Six people living in tiny homes in Finland were interviewed. Both apartments and houses were included into this study to widen the sample. For the simplicity reason, both apartments and houses will be called *tiny homes* in this study. In addition to the interviews, an observation was conducted to support the primary data. I participated in a course on building tiny homes and observed the course participants, which helped me to dive into the topic of tiny homes and understand the motivation behind the wish to live tiny.

For the purpose of this study, the theoretical framework by Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) on liquid consumption is used. The theory helps to understand how and why the nature of modern consumption has changed. The theory of liquid consumption takes its origins from Bauman's theory of liquid modernity where Bauman describes modern times as being unstable, uncertain and rapidly changing. Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) follow Bauman's logic and claim that consumption, technological development and global market affect what consumers value, what and how they consume. According to Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017), todays' consumers value temporality, the speed with which they get access to objects and experiences and the variety the modern market offers. Thereby, Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) introduce a new dimension of consumption as solid and liquid. They state that modern consumption has changed from solid to liquid, or in other words, from being enduring, ownership based and tangible to ephemeral, access based and dematerialized. While Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) do not claim that all consumption has become liquid, their theory investigates why consumers sometimes do not want to own things or be identified with their possessions. In this thesis, the framework of liquid consumption was chosen because it can help to explain why tiny home dwellers choose to live in tiny homes. More information on the theory will be presented in Chapter 3.

By developing the framework of liquid consumption, Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) contribute to the consumer culture theory, which is based on the idea that social practices and cultural values, ideas and identities are derived from consumption (Slater, 1997). Hence, human beings become who

they are in relation to others, objects, and experiences (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Borgerson, 2013). The next chapter will discuss the topic of consumption.

1.1 Consumption

While consumer culture appears universal because it is depicted as a land of freedom in which everyone can be a consumer, it is also felt to be universal because everyone must be a consumer: this particular freedom is compulsory.

Slater (1997, p. 27)

The topic of consumption can be extremely complex because it touches many parts of our everyday life such as culture, lifestyles, technology, business models, markets and institutions (Brown & Vergragt, 2016), but also it leads to a discussion of environmental and societal impact of our consumption. It is built on the idea of infinite growth (Brown & Vergragt, 2016; Jackson, 2009) and limitless resources. In the discussion on consumption one might go as far as discussing western ways of living and why it might feel sometimes universal or natural or the only way to live (Martusewicz, Edmundson & Lupinacci, 2011). It can also lead to the discussion of economic growth and the fact that we measure the success by indicators such as gross domestic product (GDP) and salaries, not by people's wellbeing. We also measure our own achievement by what we are able to buy. As Brown and Vergragt (2016) put it, to reduce the ecological costs of consumption would mean to question the whole complex system, including consumer culture. This chapter will shortly cover the topic of consumption and its impact on the environment and wellbeing. It will also shed a light on alternative lifestyles which prioritize more simplified living in terms of consumption.

1.1.1 A brief introduction to the topic of consumption

Consumption is a social phenomenon that encourages people to consume products and services in great amounts (Mutakalin, 2014). Even though consumption is needed to satisfy our basic needs for food and shelter, it is not only limited to our survival. It is based on the idea that social practices and cultural values, ideas and identities are derived from consumption (Slater, 1997). Consumption has become an important part of who we are, how we differentiate ourselves and how we fit into society (Schor, 2001). We use a powerful "language of goods" to communicate with each other about our status, our identity, social affiliation and even about our hopes, our dreams and about our feelings for each other (Jackson, 2009).

Consumption is an essential part of higher GDP index, thus successful economic development. The more the population consumes, the better it is for the country. Mutakalin (2014) refers to consumption as a paradox: some

economists worry about underconsumption which can lead to depression, others are concerned about overconsumption.

However, prosperity is not the same as economic growth (Jackson, 2009). The European Environmental Agency published a paper "*Perspectives on transition to sustainability*" in 2018, where it was reported that the indicators of economic performances such as GDP and salaries are misleading and failing to inform on peoples' wellbeing and quality of life. These indicators exaggerate the importance of material goods and underrepresent human values such as people's health, education, personal activities and environmental conditions (European Environmental Agency, 2018). "Governments are locked-in to the economic growth paradigm that is known to be socially and environmentally harmful, partly because of the need to maintain employment levels and finance the welfare state" (European Environmental Agency, 2018, p. 12). The market can be blamed for many problems of today such as "environmental degradation, hedonism, economic insecurity, social exclusion and the loss of social bonds" (p. 75).

Everything we consume has been produced somewhere by someone. Therefore, we need to consider labor, environment and other conditions under which products are made (Schor, 2001). For instance, in case of bigger homes, more building materials and more energy is used; they destroy natural environment where they are built; they cause higher levels of air pollution; toxic chemicals can be used during construction; they cause ecosystem fragmentation which leads to reduced diversity of species and other negative impacts (Saxton, 2019: Schor, 2001). We fail to include the environmental damage, which a product can cause, into the final price (Schor, 1998).

Here we come to an important question: why do we consume so much? Some academic literature offers a simple explanation: we believe that it brings us happiness (Jackson, 2009; Kasser, 2002; Makant, 2010). When we purchase something, it gives us a feeling of novelty, which explains why retail therapy works (Jackson, 2009). We have the freedom of choice to buy anything we want and if we are not happy with the choice, we can choose again (Makant, 2010; Bauman, 2005, 2007a, 2013). Another reason is that we might be trapped into a cycle of "work and spend" which ultimately prevents us from working less hours (European Environmental Agency, 2018; Shor, 2001). We live busy and stressful lives because we want to earn a lot, yet we end up going into debt and fail to have free time (Shor, 2001). Jackson (2010) believes that more is not necessarily better. He notices that people are encouraged "to spend money they do not have, on things they do not need, to create impressions that would not last, on people they do not care about". Hansen (2015) found out that higher productivity of Swedish people was used for consumption not shorter work hours. Scandinavian countries are often ranked as "happy" countries; however, the mental health or carbon footprint are not taken into account (Hansen, 2015). In the study by Berg and Hukkinen (2011), which was conducted on the Finnish economic growth debate, some of the members of the Finnish Committee on sustainable consumption and production (Kestävän kulutuksen ja tuotannon toimikunta, KULTU) criticized growth economy for environmental degradation,

for eroding important societal values and also for prioritizing throughput not well-being. They believed that additional material goods in countries like Finland do not make people happier.

If it is not goods, what brings us happiness? Brown and Vergragt (2016) found several common determinants of happiness across different cultures. First ones are more obvious: stable marriage, health, community and friendships but also social trust and personal autonomy. Second, people judge their material wealth in relation to others. It is more important to have more than others around us than to have more (Brown and Vergragt, 2016; Jackson, 2009). Third, people adjust extremely fast to new life situations whether it means increase or decrease in income (Brown and Vergragt, 2016). Therefore, Brown and Vergragt (2016) define *wellbeing* or *happiness* as an emotional state of pleasure/contentment/joy but also as satisfaction arising from comparing one's life. Hansen (2015) found that better balance of work and leisure time can lead to more sustainable everyday practice. Experiences and relationships with others have been identified as the most significant factor in increasing happiness (Haidt, 2006; Stirling, 2014). The European Environmental Agency (2018) suggested that people's use of time can be a useful indicator of quality of life. Therefore, as it is stated in the report by the European Environmental Agency (2018), changes in values and lifestyles are needed, and we need to spread an alternative vision of good life.

1.1.2 Alternative lifestyles

Originally, the idea that "small is beautiful" was introduced by Ernst Friedrich Schumacher in his book "*Small is beautiful: Economics as if people mattered*", which was published in 1973. Theodore Roszak writes the following about Schumacher in the introduction of the aforementioned book. Schumacher combined two sides: on one hand, he was a German-British statistician and economist and served as an economic advisor to the British Control Commission in postwar Germany and Chief Economic Advisor to the British National Coal Board (Roszak, 1973). At the same time, he was the president of the British Soil Association, an organic farming organization; he was a founder and a chairman of the Intermediate Technology Development Group, which specialized in small-scaled machines and methods of production in developing countries; he was a close student of Gandhi, nonviolence and ecology, to name a few of his achievements (Roszak, 1973). Schumacher was spreading the ideas of peace, social justice and qualities of life such as "health, beauty and permanence" (Roszak, 1973).

> He [Ernst Friedrich Schumacher] reminds us that economics has only become scientific by becoming statistical. But at the bottom of its statistics, sunk well out of sight, are so many sweeping assumptions about people like you and me – about our needs and motivations and the purpose we have given our lives. […] And what sort of science is it that must, for the sake of its predictive success, hope and pray that people will never be

their better selves, but always be greedy social idiots with nothing finer to do than getting and spending, getting and spending. (Roszak, 1973)

Today, the ideas that *small is beautiful* and *less is more* can be seen in different movements and lifestyles, for example, tiny home movement, minimalists, downshifters, voluntary simplifiers and others. Some find their origins already in the 19th century, when David Thoreau spread the ideas of living simply and deliberately in small homes in order to oppose the politics of accumulation (Anson, 2014). Others became known recently from books, magazines, social media and TV shows such as a Netflix movie called "Minimalists" (Meissner, 2019).

Meissner (2019) finds two common characteristics between these lifestyles. First, these people reject the ideas of accumulation and/or labour productivity. They are against the world of too much and they support simplicity. Second, each lifestyle offers a certain way to decrease consumption and business. The techniques vary from Marie Kondo's decluttering home to reorganizing own space to reducing work, commuting, social commitments and prioritizing what matters (Meissner, 2019). The title of Sarah Knight's book provides a good example of the idea of a lifestyle minimalist: "The life changing magic of not giving a F*ck: How to stop spending Time you don't have, doing Things you don't want to do with People you don't like".

One example of such lifestyles is abovementioned Marie Kondo's method, which is also known as KonMari method. This method seems to be one of the most popular and recognised methods in terms of lifestyles against accumulation. It was founded by Marie Kondo, a Japanese tidying guru, and grew even more in popularity after a Netflix series "Tidying up" (Schmidt, 2019) . She also published a book in 2011 "The life-changing magic of tidying up: The Japanese art of decluttering and organizing", which sold over 1,5 million copies worldwide (Marie Kondo Books, n.d.). Her series of three books on the same topic have been sold in 42 countries and reached 10 million copies (Marie Kondo Books, n.d) In the books and series, she teaches how to organize and declutter the home. Kondo does not use the word "declutter", though; she calls it *tidying up*, which sounds more appealing (Orange, 2019). Tidying up should be done by category, starting with clothes, moving to books, papers, komono (miscellaneous items) and then sentimental items (KonMari, n.d.). If your belongings "spark the joy" (the often-used expression), you should keep them. If you do not want to take them into your future, you ought to thank and to discard them. It is not mentioned what happens with the discarded items, whether they are simply thrown away to a landfill, sold or given away. The main emphasis of the method is put on what stays and on the space that frees up in the house and in people's lives. Kondo believes that space should be for actual people, meaning their spiritual selves (Matthew, 2019). Indeed, for most of the people who went through decluttering their home, the attention switched from tiding to reflecting on their own life and what makes one happy (Callmer, 2018). After all, as Matthew (2019) puts it, in the era of lacking sacredness (such

as religion) and declining marriage rates, domestic order can be something to believe in.

There are certain downsides to this and other methods. First, books on these lifestyles are meant to sell, thus leading to more consumer goods (Meissner, 2019). Second, these lifestyles put emphasis on personal experiences and air travelling is often one of them (Meissner, 2019). Moreover, many methods, such as the KonMari method, do not offer a way to discard the goods and one can only guess what happens to those. If all households in the West decluttered, it would lead to huge masses of garbage (Meissner, 2019). As Callmer (2018) notices, it is hard to imagine how some possessions like a plastic lunch box would spark the joy, but its function might.

This study begins by introducing the phenomenon of tiny homes, how tiny homes have spread around the world and why people choose to live tiny. The situation in Finland regarding tiny homes is covered at the end of the section 2. Section 3 introduces the theoretical framework of liquid consumption by Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) and explains why consumers want to have less. This is then followed by chapter on data and research methods. Qualitative approach was chosen for the purpose of this study and the data was collected through six *interviews* of people living in tiny homes and *observation* of people participating in a course for planning tiny homes. Narrative analysis was used to analyse and present the data which is covered in section 5. Finally, the discussion and conclusion chapters are presented together with the ideas for future research and limitations of the study.

2 TINY HOMES

In this section, the phenomenon of tiny homes is explained, followed by the description of a typical tiny home and the discussion of why people choose to live tiny. In the end of the section, the insight on the tiny homes and, in general, housing situation in Finland is provided.

2.1 Tiny home phenomenon

> *Imagine living free from rent, mortgage and utility bills. Imagine living in a home that generated its own electricity and captured its own water. Imagine you could build this home yourself all for a very affordable price. Now imagine how your life would be different if you were free from debt?*
>
> Living Big in a Tiny House (2000c)

These words belong to one of the most famous YouTube shows on tiny houses. Living Big in a Tiny House show started in New Zealand in 2013 by Bryce Langton and currently has reached over 480 million views from all over the world (Living Big in a Tiny House, 2020a). The show documents the way people build and live in tiny homes, their smart solutions on energy and use of space and, most importantly, their expenses. The show brings to attention the need to slow down, to revaluate the way we live and use resources, and encourages the shift to sustainable living. It also claims that living small brings freedom.

Living in small homes is not a new phenomenon. People have always been living in small spaces and it is still normal in most of the world (Shearer & Burton, 2019). For instance, the Vardo wagon was used in Europe by Romani people already in 1500s (Shearer & Burton, 2019). In the 1800s living in house trucks and the establishments of trailer parks started to appear, however, it was not considered trendy at a time and was described as trailer trash, slums, shacks (Shearer & Burton, 2019).

Henry David Thoreau is often mentioned as a founder of the tiny home movement (Anson, 2014; Ford & Gomez-Lanier, 2017; Shearer & Burton, 2019). Thoreau's wish to live simply and deliberately led him to building a small dwelling next to Walden Pond in Massachusetts, the US. He lived there for two years and put his experience into a book "Walden", which was published in 1854. According to Anson (2014), Thoreau desired to live deliberately in order to oppose the politics of accumulation. Thoreau's "Walden" was published in the 19th century, but one might find it even more relevant today since people, especially in the West, tend to work more, spend more "foolishly" and thus be more in debt (Diguette, 2017). In "Walden" he writes:

> [Is it necessary for a young man to provide] a certain number of superfluous glowshoes, and umbrellas, and empty guest chambers for empty guests, before he dies?

> Most men appear never to have considered what a house is, and actually though needlessly poor all their lives because they think that they must have such a one as their neighbors have.
>
> (Thoreau & Fender, 1999, pp. 33 - 34).

And indeed, Thoreau's words can portray today's consumer society and also our homes, where some rooms might almost never be used. In a New Yorker article, Wilkinson (2011) called modern homes "aside from being wasteful and environmentally noxious", "debtors' prisons".

As it was mentioned in the Introduction of this thesis, the modern tiny home movement started in the 1980s. It was booming in the beginning of the 21st century especially after the US housing market crash in 2007 and 2008, when people were not able to pay mortgages (Wu & Hyatt, 2016). These reasons, in addition to various TV shows such as Tiny House Nation and abovementioned Living Big in a Tiny House and architectural movements such as Tumbleweed Tiny Homes, Rolling Tiny House (Germany) and La Tiny House (France), have increased the interest in tiny homes (Saxton, 2019; Shearer & Burton, 2019).

Today's tiny homes appeal more to the public because of the way they are built and/or organised. They are attractive; therefore, they get more attention on social media. Saxton (2019) claims, that it is also due to a new architectural movement which tries to "mimic" the modern home. Tiny home movement has changed the attitude towards small spaces and made them desirable and aesthetically pleasing unlike trailer parks which often get negative attention (Anson, 2014). In the next chapter, I will describe in more detail what a tiny home is.

2.2 What is a tiny home?

The definitions of what tiny home is vary throughout the internet. For some, a tiny home is a mobile house as, for example, described in Murphy's article (2014, p. 54), "a house built on a wheeled trailer that conforms to the maximum trailer sizes". Small House Society (2020) defines it as *a small home under 46 square meters*, whereas New Atlas, the website on technology, science, architecture and design, describes it as *an art of extreme downsizing* (Williams, 2018). To put simply, a tiny home is a house or an apartment of a relatively small size, where people may choose to live simply. Tiny homes are either on wheels (built onto a trailer bed) or on foundation (Brown, 2016). An example of a mobile home is demonstrated in the Figure 1. Some have external utilities such as electricity, water and sewer, while others do not (Brown, 2016). Tiny houses can look similar to traditional houses or vary significantly from them since they can be

self-designed and/or self-built. As Murphy (2014) puts it, tiny homes are beautiful expressions of people's aesthetic and values. They are also empowering (Murphy, 2014), since one is capable of building and decorating it by him or herself.

FIGURE 1. A parked mobile tiny home (Treanor, 2020).

There is no agreed size how small a tiny home should be. The size depends on a family size and personal preferences. The tiny life (2020) website, which is one of the most popular websites on tiny homes, describes a tiny home as a home of a size between 9 to 37 square meters. Shearer and Burton (2019) define *mobile tiny homes* as about 20 square meters (excluding lofts and decks) and *homes on foundation* as bigger than that often with extensions and additional premises. Small house society (2020) suggests that a home of under 46 square meters should be called micro, small, tiny, mini, compact or little. As it is seen from the abovementioned statements, it depends on people's views and their culture what can be considered as a tiny home. In this thesis, I will define tiny homes as homes, the size of which does not exceed 20 square meters. I will include all types of homes into this category, same as it is presented in *Living Big in a Tiny House* (2020b) show: "tiny houses on wheels, micro apartments, cabins, treehouses, earth homes, shipping container homes, busses, vans and everything in between".

To continue the description of tiny homes, I will use Kilman's (2016) illustration: a typical tiny home usually consists of a room which combines a kitchen, a living room and a sleeping loft to maximize the use of space. Sleeping

loft converts unused vertical space into a liveable bedroom (See Figure 2). Kilman (2016) continues that there can be convertible couches, foldaway tables, and clever shelving solutions inside the home. Bathrooms are usually smaller in tiny homes, however, many still might have proper-sized toilets and showers. Efficient design is of highly importance in a tiny home since the owners do not want to sacrifice their comfort (Kilman, 2016). These types of dwellings usually have a higher room height to make them feel more spacious and larger windows to let in the natural light (Sandberg, 2018). As Sandberg (2018) puts it, "efficient use of the small space enables fitting the same functions of a home in a smaller space and maximizes the use of the small space, thus arguing for its sufficiency". She adds that tiny homes can be called functional and also multifunctional as they can serve multiple functions.

FIGURE 2. Interior of two tiny homes. Both pictures show sleeping lofts. The picture on the left shows kitchen utensils and the entrance to the toilet (Davis, 2020a). The picture on the right shows the entrance to the shower room (Davis, 2020b).

Tiny homes are either single structures for an individual or a household or surrounded by other tiny homes and create a community or a village, where residents can share bathing facilities, a laundry and/or a kitchen (Brown, 2016; Murphy, 2014). On one hand, tiny homes can be referred as "upsizing" for people who move from less stable housing conditions, while for others tiny house means "downsizing" (Brown, 2016). According to Brown (2016),

regardless of the meaning, tiny homes offer opportunities for affordable, sustainable and independent way of living.

2.3 Why tiny?

There are many reasons why people choose to live in tiny homes. First, as it was already mentioned previously, one of the biggest reasons is financial (Kilman, 2016; Murphy, 2014). Tiny homes are usually more affordable to build, buy or rent in comparison with the bigger homes. Less land is needed for their construction, whereas larger homes require more resources during both construction and maintenance (Wu & Hyatt, 2016). Tiny homes can cost less to heat up and cool down if they are built efficiently (Wyatt, 2016). In case of *tiny houses*, it is possible to be off-grid by using solar panels and wind turbines, which can make them even more affordable in the long-run (Wu & Hyatt, 2016). It also helps to reduce their ecological footprint.

Second reason for living in tiny homes can be a simplified lifestyle, when people want to have fewer possessions, which at the same time might mean fewer expenses, less working hours and more time for family, friends and hobbies. People are also pushed outdoors more because of the scarcity of their living space (Kilman, 2016). Kilman (2016) compares it to conventional homes, where owners can stay in the comfort of their own homes for several days, which makes many people disconnected from the outside world. Since tiny homes provide only limited amount of space, they can encourage their dwellers to have less possessions, thus keeping them from excessive consumerism and materialism. At the same time, as Ford and Gomez-Lanier (2017) note, tiny homes have become a new trend in consumerism because of popular TV shows such as "Tiny House Hunters", "Tiny House Builders", "Tiny House, Big Living" and "Tiny Luxury", which might encourage people to invest into more property and consumer products.

According to Ford and Gomez-Lanier (2017), some owners of tiny homes do not live in those permanently. For example, they might be saving for a new more traditional type of a place and use it simply as a transitional house before they move to a bigger home. The authors continue that a tiny home can also be used as a recreational home or a rental home to generate extra income. None of these adopts a long-term change in lifestyle. Especially when used as another property, it becomes one more form of accumulation opposing the initial idea on which the whole movement was built (Ford & Gomez-Lanier, 2017). Ford and Gomez-Lanier (2017) add that another difficulty is that in some tiny houses there is no proper food storage or bathing facilities, what makes the owners travel more for food shopping, dining out and using showers in a gym, for instance. These increase carbon footprint.

On the other hand, some tiny home dwellers choose to live in communities and share the space and various facilities. In community setting, there might be several tiny homes which can include a common kitchen, a sauna, a storage and a garden, which allows people to socialize more. Since

communities provide possibilities for sharing, it helps to reduce environmental footprint. However, a tiny space also means less privacy if a dweller shares it with someone else.

Environmental reason is often mentioned as one of the main reasons for living in a tiny home. Bryce Langton from the abovementioned *Living Big in a Tiny House* show on YouTube talks about tiny homes as sustainable living. In the tiny life (2020) website it is mentioned that the most important reasons to join tiny home movement are "environmental concerns, financial concerns, and the desire for more time and freedom" with environmental reasons being the most important. Saxton (2019) found that environmental reasons were one of the top four reasons to downsize for her study participants, together with financial reasons, an urge for simple life and the ability to be mobile. She also found that people who downsized for environmental reason had smaller environmental footprint than the ones who downsized for other reasons. However, all her participants reduced their ecological footprint after downsizing regardless of the initial reasons. Therefore, for some tiny home dwellers, environmental reasons can be in the top priorities to live tiny, while for others decreased footprint happens as a side-effect.

2.4   Tiny homes in Finland

Small dwellings have always existed in Finland. Being situated in the north and surrounded by forests and lakes, Finland has a strong culture of cottages (small and big). Spending time at a cottage in nature far from the cities, especially during summers, is what unites Finnish people. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland (2016), Finnish people spend on average 79 days in cottages per year and drive 91km from home to a cottage. There were about 600 000 cottages in Finland in 2014 but only 12 900 were inhabited permanently (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland, 2016), meaning that a cottage in Finland can be considered more as an additional property rather than a permanent place of residence.

According to Berg and Hukkinen (2011), Finland can be considered as a high consuming country since Finns have a large environmental footprint in comparison with other countries. Housing and, especially, heating during the winter season can partially explain high energy consumption: the residential sector accounted for 36.6 percent of final energy consumption in Finland in 2016 (Eurostat, 2018). However, it is also worth bringing up other aspects related to the environmental footprint and housing in Finland. The Official Statistics of Finland (2018) provides the following trends regarding Finnish dwellings. First, almost a half of all dwellings, 44 percent, in Finland are single-person units. The number of single-person and two people household-dwelling units has been constantly growing since 1970 while the number of dwellings for three and more people has been decreasing (Figure 3). Second, the floor area per person has been increasing from 28.9 in 1985 to 40.8 in 2018. The average floor area of

any dwelling was 81 square meters in 2018. Therefore, the floor area is growing while a lot of people in Finland choose to live alone or with one more person. Moreover, the carbon footprint of a Finnish household has increased from 2000 to 2016 by 12 percent (Finnish Environment Institute, 2020). Sandberg (2018) advocates for the need to have smaller size apartments in Finland due to their decreased energy consumption and the use of construction materials.
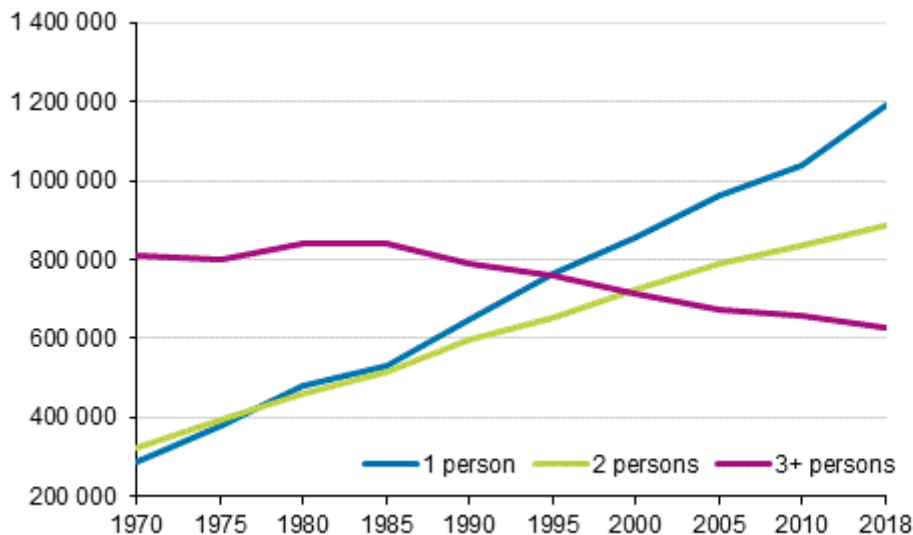

FIGURE 3. Number of household-dwelling units by size, 1970 – 2018. Source: The Official Statistics of Finland, 2018.

Even though smaller dwellings can be a way to lower the environmental footprint in Finland, different regulations can hinder the downsizing. Tiny homes on wheels have to be registered as vehicles and they have restrictions on where they can be parked and for how long; as a consequence, they can be parked semi/illegally in areas where they will not be noticed and/or complained by neighbours (Shearer & Burton, 2019). Tiny homes on foundation can be considered as legal dwellings but require land ownership and are subjected to zoning restrictions (Saxton, 2019; Shearer & Burton, 2019). Sandberg (2018) finds that current building regulations in Finland hinder downsizing by limiting the minimum dwelling size to 20 square meters. Moreover, they might require water and sewer connection, which can make it financially infeasible to build a tiny home and, thus, lead to illegal constructions (Saxton, 2019).

Nevertheless, there have been trends in building smaller dwellings. For example, a Finnish housing investment company Sato offers apartments the size of which is 15.5 square meters (Sandberg, 2018). There are also companies such as Luomukoti and minihouse.fi which specialize in building small dwellings, taking care of building permissions and other legal regulations. On the internet, one can find stories of people in Finland who build their own tiny

homes, however, their number is limited. The cost for self-built homes vary from 5000 to 70000 euros and more.

3   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

"Consumer society rests its case on the promise to satisfy human desires in a way no other society in the past could do or dream of doing"

Zygmunt Bauman

This section introduces the theoretical framework by Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017), which was used as a foundation for this thesis. On one hand, tiny homes can lead to a certain lifestyle, thus, define dwellers' relationship to possessions; on the other hand, tiny homes themselves can be seen as another possession and represent a consumer product. This theoretical framework helps to understand the nature of relationships modern consumers have to possessions. In short, Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) distinguish solid and liquid consumption. By developing the framework of liquid consumption, they contribute to consumer culture theory.

Consumer culture theory is not one unified theory but a family of theoretical perspectives which are based on an idea that human beings become who they are in relation to others, objects, and experiences (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Borgerson, 2013). Slater (1997) defines consumer culture as "a social arrangement in which the relations between lived culture and social resources, and between meaningful ways of life and the symbolic and material resources on which they depend, are mediated through markets". Slater (1997) adds to this definition that in consumer culture, social practices and cultural values, ideas and identities are derived from consumption, not from, for example, religious or military culture. Thus, he continues, our modern society can be described as materialistic and money-based; we are concerned with having instead of being; life is commodified; we are hedonistic and narcissistic but at the same time we have choice and consumer sovereignty.

Slater (1997) notes that consumer culture is often regarded as mass culture which can sound contradictory. The word culture means "social preservation of authentic values that cannot be negotiated by money and market exchange" (Slater, 1997, p. 25). However, he continues, the goods are designed and produced for the general public, not for one person, one household or community. It means that a product can be sold to anyone, anywhere. It also means that anything can be consumed as commodities, including relations, activities, services, images and lifestyles (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Slater, 1997; Steenkamp, 2019). And yet consumption adds meaning to our lives; even our experiences are gotten through consumption (Slater, 1997; Steenkamp, 2019). Consumer culture provides us with choice and individual freedom (Slater, 1997).

This section starts with the theory of liquid modernity by Zygmunt Bauman, which describes the consumption in modern times. It is then followed

by the theoretical framework of liquid consumption. The relationship between liquid and solid consumption is presented in the end of the section.

3.1 Liquid modernity

The theoretical framework, which will be used for this thesis, takes its origin from Bauman's theory of liquid modernity. Zygmunt Bauman (2013) uses the metaphor of liquids to describe the modern times as being unstable, uncertain and rapidly changing. He compares our times to fluids, which cannot hold their shape and are constantly ready to change. He mentions that they occupy space only for a moment unlike the solids. Liquids are mobile and inconstant. Time is what matters the most for them. When they meet solids, they do not seem to change while they succeed to change solids. The same is true for modern times, according to Bauman (2013). They rapidly change and bring a lot of uncertainty. Bauman (2001) claims that the word "now" has become of the utmost importance in liquid modernity. He continues that, in this constantly changing, therefore insecure and unpredictable world, we cannot postpone anything for tomorrow. When "future is full of dangers, any chance not taken here and now is a chance missed" (Bauman, 2001, p. 156).

In his book "Liquid times: Living in the age of uncertainty" (2007b), Bauman explains that liquid modernity is a condition where social structures are not stable and therefore cannot be a model of behavior for humans. He continues that society becomes a network of random connections rather than a structure. Life becomes fragmented and consists of short infinite projects, where past successes do not lead to the future victories and where information becomes outdated fast. Bauman (2007b) adds that it is also a life where responsibility for the societal issues is put upon individuals since they are free to choose. The best way to live is to be flexible, to be ready to change, not to comply with rules and to follow the provided opportunities (Bauman, 2007b).

Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) describe liquid modernity as a shift from production towards consumption: consumption together with technological development and global market affect what consumers value, what and how they consume. Indeed, for Bauman (2005), today's society is a society of consumers. It is a society which evaluates its members by their consumption. The same way as liquid life was described as rapidly changing life, the consumption ought to happen fast. Bauman (2007a) finds that consumerism is all about enjoying and having fun, getting rid of old things and obtaining new ones, followed by discarding those later. It is a life full of experiments, life of satisfying all wishes and desires which would be replaced by other wishes and desires soon after (Bauman, 2007a).

Bauman (2001) explains consumption as something that helps us to avoid frustration by not being attached to objects. The author illustrates it through pieces of clothes which should be replaced every season or even faster; cars and gadgets should be changed so we do not appear old-fashioned in

someone else's eyes. "Men and women are thereby trained (made to learn the hard way) to perceive the world as of a container full of disposable objects, objects of one-off use" (p. 156), all objects, including other human beings. Even relationships, according to Bauman (2001), are seen as things to be consumed. he adds that it is not anymore about making compromises or even sacrifices for the sake of keeping the union; relationships are for enjoyment and satisfaction. And if they do not deliver the promised joy, one should "shop" for something better. Therefore, the only way to solve one's problems is to shop again. However, consumerism does not imply satisfaction of desires, it is about "arousing desire for ever more desires" (Bauman, 2005, p. 92). Consequently, "what starts as a need must end up as a compulsion or an addiction" (Bauman, 2005, p.80).

The following quote by Bauman can sum up what liquid life is:

> This is a free country means: it is up to you what sort of life you wish to live, how you decide to live it, and what kind of choices you make in order to see your project through; blame yourself, and no one else, if all that does not result in the bliss you hoped for. It suggests that emancipation is closely intertwined with the horror of defeat. (2007a, p. 87)

3.2   Liquid consumption

For this research, I am going to use the theory of liquid consumption by Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017), which originates from Bauman's work on liquid modernity described above. They follow Bauman's logic and claim that the nature of consumption has changed. Consumers value temporality, the speed with which they get access to objects and experiences and the variety the modern market offers. Therefore, they introduce a new dimension of consumption as solid and liquid. The authors describe liquid consumption as *ephemeral, access based* and *dematerialized*, while solid consumption is defined as *enduring, ownership based* and *tangible*. Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) do not claim that all consumption becomes liquid, but it challenges more traditional consumer behavior such as the importance of possessions and ownership and relationships to things. The authors add that liquid consumption may explain why consumers do not want to own items and be identified by their possessions. It is worth noting here the liquefaction of consumption is not necessarily a positive change since it can bring the feelings of insecurity and instability (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2017).

The characteristics of liquid consumption are explained below and followed by comparison of liquid to solid consumption.

Ephemerality

The Oxford English dictionary defines ephemeral as being "in existence, power, favor, popularity, etc. for a short time only; short-lived; transitory". According to Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017), due to the development of technology, the life cycle of products is shortening rapidly. In other words, the value of products, services and experiences for consumers can be temporal. Bellezza, Ackerman and Gino (2017) claim that consumers might become careless with certain possessions when they desire a new upgrade. According to the authors, the carelessness may not occur deliberately, but it affects the way the consumers treat their possessions. If the product gets damaged, it helps to justify a new purchase. As Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) put it, consumers desire ephemerality to support their cravings for new technological updates.

In their article "Liquid relationships to possessions", Bardhi, Eckhardt, and Arnould (2012) give an example of global nomads and their attitude to possessions. For nomads, possessions bring only temporal value. They believe that objects cannot define people and any possession can be replaced. Many informants in the article claimed that they never owned anything big such as a car, an apartment or even a refrigerator. As the authors explain, the life of global nomads is uncertain and unpredictable, therefore, they "liquefy" their relationships to possessions and resists the solid ones.

The lifestyles of consumers in this constantly changing liquid life is described well by Eckhardt and Bardhi (2020). Consumers have to be flexible, that is to adapt to new possibilities and offer the skillset which can be adjusted accordingly. Work would not necessarily happen in an usual environment, but can be done from home, a café or a co-working space, nor is it done for one particular company. Instead, consumers move from one project to another, from one start-up to the next. Eckhardt and Bardhi (2020) add that consumers value temporal places and events, such as pop-up restaurants, food markets and art galleries. They enjoy multifunctional spaces like cafes which serve as bicycle repair shops and stores that become bars at night. However, their lifestyle can also be described as accelerated due to the constant technological development, which leads to high pace of social and daily life (Eckhardt and Bardhi, 2020).

Access

In liquid consumption, consumers prefer to have access to goods and services, instead of purchasing and owning objects, and they are willing to pay for it (Albinsson & Perera, 2018; Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012, p. 881) define access-based consumption as "transactions that may be market mediated in which no transfer of ownership takes place". Consumers can participate in it via sharing, renting and/or borrowing (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012). The traditional forms of access-based consumption such as libraries,

children playgrounds and public transport have existed long. However, new services appear in the market: clothes sharing or clothes libraries (Albinsson & Perera, 2018), car sharing such as Zipcar (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012), ridesharing such as Lyft and Uber, homes for travellers such as Airbnb (Lamberton, 2018) and others.

As Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012, 2017) find out, consumers engage in access-based consumption for several reasons. One of them, for instance, is that they want to avoid economic, physical, emotional and social obligations of ownership. It is not always that consumers are motivated by anticonsumerism but rather by "downshifting of the obligations" (2012, p. 895) that come from ownership. Ownership can be burdensome, whereas access-based consumption can feel simpler and less troublesome. Second reason is that consumers do not want to be associated with brands or more particularly with one brand. Access offers variety. Consumers can use different types and multiple brands instead of owning one. The authors continue that access also provides economic means for something that otherwise could be out of reach. Therefore, access gives an opportunity to be flexible in identifying oneself and offers freedom of lifestyles (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012, 2017). Finally, some consumers engage into access-based consumption for environmental reasons since sharing means using less materials (European Environmental Agency, 2018)

Dematerialization

Eckhardt and Bardhi (2020, p. 88) define dematerialization as using "fewer or no materials to deliver the same level of functionality". Dematerialization includes digital products, experiences and consumption practices, such as digital art. Some of the biggest drivers for dematerialization is the constant development of consumer electronics, its connectivity and online services (Eckhardt and Bardhi, 2020).

Dematerialization means that consumers need less possessions (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017). The mobile phones have replaced physical phones, cameras, physical calendars and to some extent computers. Personal computers have become smaller and made it possible to earn one's living without leaving home. Many design processes can be done digitally without any traditional tools. Technology also reduced the amount of equipment for sports, leisure times and personal hobbies such as watching video stream services like YouTube or Netflix. Esports have become extremely popular. Watching or playing esports requires less equipment than more traditional types of sports. Listening or even creating music is in the grasp of everyone who has access to a computer and internet. Books can be bought by one click and consumed digitally.

Eckhardt and Bardhi (2020) find that dematerialization allows to change social position, in contrast to solid consumption, where status is determined by hierarchy, family and/or education. In liquid consumption, the status is acquired through knowledge and practices (Eckhardt and Bardhi, 2020). The knowledge can come from multiple sources from famous bloggers on social

media like Instagram and Reddit to academic journals and online educational platforms like Coursera. However, as Eckhardt and Bardhi (2020) note, it is not easier to move up and down of social hierarchy since one needs to invest a lot of time to develop the right type of knowledge and consumption practices. For instance, popular on social media plastic free life requires changes in habits and even lifestyle but it also needs enough knowledge on how to do it. Nonetheless, the rise of social media made possible for common people to become microcelebrities (Eckhardt and Bardhi, 2020). They can become famous in the digital space via followers, likes and shares and can convert their attention to economic capital through websites such as patreon.com and others.

3.3   Relationship between liquid and solid consumption

The previous subchapter described liquid consumption through characteristics of ephemerality, access and dematerialization. Here I will describe in more detail the differences between liquid and solid based on abovementioned article by Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017). As mentioned before, solid consumption can be defined as enduring, ownership based and tangible (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017). Solid consumption is more traditional type of consumption, when consumers value ownership and possessions. Table 1 illustrates the differences between liquid and solid consumption at two levels: at the product level and at the consumption practices level.

At the product level in liquid consumption consumers choose flexibility and adaptability over security and commitment. In solid consumption, the value of products comes from the size and weight, whereas in liquid consumption consumers choose their products to be light, detached, fast and mobile. In liquid consumption, consumers are attached to fewer objects and are not usually loyal to brands. They put emphasis on access and intangible things, whereas in solid consumption the more the possessions, the better.

At the consumption practices level, ownership and possessions are of utmost importance in solid consumption. Consumers are engaged into long-lasting relationships with brands and companies, which apart from stability and consistency, also provide them with identity. Belk (1988) suggests that consumers regard their possession as part of them *selves*. He claims that possessions can symbolically extend self, when we believe that we become a different person with those possessions than we would be without them. At the same time, as mentioned before, there are burdens to possessions (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017; Belk, 2007). In liquid consumption, consumers can avoid the burden and free themselves from these financial, emotional and social obligations, but they will have to face instability and uncertainty as can be seen in Table 1 below.

It is important to highlight here that Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) do not state that all consumption becomes liquid, but rather that consumption can be either solid or liquid and it can also be a combination of both. They claim that

we can witness the liquefaction of solid consumption (such as digital photos instead of printed) together with the solidification of liquid consumption (such as creating a community in the social media groups), therefore, as the authors state, the solid can coexist with liquid.

In order to find out more about people living in tiny homes in Finland and their relationships to possessions, including their tiny home, I conducted six interviews and an observation, which will be presented in the following chapters. I will apply Bardhi and Eckhardt's (2017) framework to investigate whether their consumption practices can be seen as liquid or solid.

TABLE 1. Comparing solid and liquid consumption (Adapted from Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017, p. 587).

	Solid	Liquid
Definition	Extent to which consumption is enduring, ownership based and material	Extent to which consumption is ephemeral, access based and dematerialized
At the product level		
Consumer value	Value resides in size, weight, fixity, security, attachment and commitment	Value resides in being flexible, adaptable, fluid, mobile, light, detached and fast
Nature of attachment	Long-standing possession attachment/loyalty; stronger attachment to identity related objects	Fluid possession attachment/lack of loyalty; attachment to fewer objects; however, may be higher to particular products if they provide access
Benefits	Identity and linking assume greater importance	Use value assume greater importance
Level of possession	Emphasis on ownership and possession of material objects; more possessions are better	Emphasis on access and intangible objects; fewer possessions are better
Meaning	Consumption meaning is stable across context	Consumption meaning varies by context
At the consumption practices level		
Consumer value	Centrality of ownership and possession	Centrality of access, sharing and borrowing
Stability	Practices are stable across contexts	Practices vary by context
Temporality	Enduring types of consumer involvement and relationships	Ephemeral consumer involvement and relationships
Benefits	Consumers value consumption for the identity and linking value it provides	Consumers avoid emotional engagement and identification with the marketplace (not a form of consumer resistance or market alienation)
Nature of attachment	Emphasis on object attachment aspects of consumption	Emphasis on consumption practices, experiences and networks
Downsides	Burdensome	Instability/Uncertainty

4   DATA AND RESEARCH METHOD

The purpose of this research is to learn more about people living in tiny homes and how they interpret their experience. It is best done by the means of qualitative research. Qualitative approach to data collection and analysis was chosen for this research because it focuses on human beings in social situations and allows to understand and assess their behaviour, attitude, opinions and feelings (Tracy, 2013). According to May (2002), qualitative research involves a direct encounter with the world and, in contrast to quantitative approach, is not only concerned with the measurable facts, but also with the way people interpret and give meaning to experiences.

For the purpose of this study, the primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews with people who were permanently living in tiny homes. The additional data was also gathered through observation to support the primary data and investigate in more detail the motivation behind the wish to move to a tiny home. The data collection contributes to answering the research questions and provides a wider picture of people's experiences of living in tiny homes. More on interviews and observation will be covered in chapters 4.1 – 4.3.

Qualitative approach was also used for analyzing the data. For this research, both inductive and deductive analysis were used. In deductive analysis, researchers start with a general theory, then a hypothesis or an educated guess is formulated on the basis of this theory, after which the research is conducted and the theory is confirmed or disconfirmed (Tracy, 2013). During the early stages of this research, I planned to analyze my findings with the help of the Bardhi and Eckhardt's (2017) theory, which was presented in the previous section. The framework helps to answer the second research question on tiny home dwellers' relationship to possessions. During the data collection stage, some unexpected findings started emerging from the data which consequently lead to creating new themes for analysis. Therefore, the approach to analyzing data became inductive, in addition to the deductive. In an inductive approach, a researcher discovers common patterns, themes and categories in one's data (Patton, 2002; Tracy, 2013). In other words, in inductive analysis findings emerge from the data through the interactions with the data, while in deductive analysis, the data is analyzed according to an existing framework.

As Patton (2002) notes, the challenge of qualitative analysis is to make sense of massive amount of data. The amount of data should be reduced, the most significant parts identified and a framework for communicating what the data reveals should be constructed and/or applied (Patton, 2002). Since the primary data in this research was collected through six interviews with the help of which I wanted to understand how this group of people perceive their lives in tiny homes, and because humans tend to understand their lives in narrative

form (Ganoe, 1999), I chose narrative analysis as the means to analyze and present the findings. Narrative analysis will be covered in chapter 4.4.

4.1 Interview

The main set of data for this research was collected through interviews. The purpose of an interview is to ask questions and lead the conversation in order to understand, discover, reflect and explain various social phenomena and attitudes (Tracy, 2013; Walliman, 2006). For this study, semi-structured interview was chosen as the interview type. According to Robson and McCartan (2016), in a semi-structured interview an interviewer has a list of topics, which should be covered. The list shows an order and wording of questions; however, they are often modified depending on the flow of the interview (Robson and McCartan, 2016). Robson and McCartan (2016) mention that additional unplanned questions can be asked to clarify and follow up on what the interviewee says. In this research, the focus of the interviews was on tiny home dwellers' experiences, consumption practices, personal possessions and the relationships to possessions.

For this research, six people from different households were interviewed. The interviews were conducted during May-August 2018 in person, over Skype and over the phone. Three visits to the interviewees' homes were conducted, which was a valuable experience because I could see how the space was arranged and observe the interviewees in their familiar environment. The interviews over the phone were the most difficult since I could not see the respondents, their emotions and body language, which often helps to create a more relaxed atmosphere between interviewer and interviewees.

The interviews lasted approximately one hour and followed a conversational format which ensured a natural flow of interviews and allowed me to ask follow-up questions. In the beginning I explained briefly the research topic and asked for permission to record the interviews. I ensured the anonymity of the interviews. In total, there were 21 questions (See Appendix 1), however, since semi-structured type of interview was used for this study, some questions were modified during the interviews and some were covered by the interviewees without being asked.

The interviews were made in English due to my insufficient knowledge of Finnish. However, it did not hinder the results of the interviews since all the interviewees were fluent in English. Following a semi-structured framework, the interview had six main parts: housing arrangement, reasons for moving, attitude to personal possessions, lifestyle, wellbeing and experiences (See Appendix 1). All the interviews were recorded.

4.2 Selecting the interviewees

Eligible respondents included any person who was living in a tiny home in Finland for the moment of the interview. The interview was conducted only with people who lived in different households to broaden the variety of answers. The respondents could be living in an apartment or a house regardless of whether it was owned, rented, self-built, situated outside of or in a city. The interviewees were also chosen according to the size of their homes, which did not exceed 16 square meters per person as demonstrated in the Table 2 (See the explanation below). Small apartments were included in the research to widen the sampling as the number of interviewees would have been too small. The last criterion for choosing the interviewees was their voluntary wish to live in tiny homes. This criterion helped to ensure that respondents' reasons were other than forced or out of necessity, for example, in case of refugees and homeless people. Since one of the interests for this study was to understand whether tiny homes can impact the consumption practices and even help to decrease consumption, interviewing middle class suited the purpose better because middle class and the wealthy people are the ones who consume the most.

The search of interviewees was made through the internet, "word-of-mouth" and through snowball technique. Snowball sampling is a technique when a researcher asks study participants to recommend other participants who fit the study's criteria (Tracy, 2013). The interviewees were contacted via email, messages and phone calls. Besides, bloggers found on the internet were contacted through their email addresses, however, they did not respond.

During the interviewee's selection phase, I faced several challenges. First, since there was no official tiny home movement in Finland, there was no website, Facebook group or anything corresponding where people meeting the sample criteria could have been found. The snowball technique was the most efficient way to look for interviewees. First person found on the internet recommended three other people, who recommended someone else.

Second challenge in selecting the interviewees was related to the size of the dwelling. Types of the houses and, consequently, the size of the houses vary a lot. There is no official number which would regard a tiny home as tiny. Different internet sources provide different information on the matter. Since many internet sources on tiny homes originate from the United States where the average size of a house is bigger than in Finland, a tiny home could be considered tiny even if it was 50 square meters. However, as it was mentioned before, the size of a tiny home in this research did not exceed 16 square meters per person, which fit well into the criterion of tiny homes.

Table 2 shows the number of interviewees and the size of their homes. It also includes the number of people living in the same household. The smallest home was 15 square meters while the biggest was 27,5, however the biggest home was shared by a family of five. The table includes the length of stay, that

is how long they have been living in that particular home, which varies from two months to nine years. The second last row shows whether the home is rented or owned. In all cases when it was owned, it was also self-built. The last row of the table informs the date when the interview was conducted.

TABLE 2. Overview of the interviewees and their homes

Interviewees	Home size, square meters	People in the household	Length of the stay	Owned or rented	Date
#1	24	2	1,5 years	Rented	19.5.2018
#2	15	1	3 years	Owned, self-built	5.6.2018
#3	20-22	4	1 year	Owned, self-built	21.6.2018
#4	16	1	2 months	Owned, self-built	9.7.2018
#5	15	1	5 months	Rented	31.7.2018
#6	27,5	5	9 years	Owned, self-built	16.8.2018

The sample consists of three females and three males. All interviewees lived in Finland permanently, three out of them were Finnish citizens by birth. Four interviewees were living in self-built mobile homes and two in rented apartments. The ones who lived in the mobile homes were living in communities. Three interviewees were self-employed, two were employed and one was a student for the time when interviews were taken. All of the interviewees were in a different marital status: one was single, two lived alone but were in relationships, one lived with a partner, two lived with their partners and children. Since all interviewees were guaranteed anonymity, they were assigned a code number from 1 to 6, which are used later in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.3 Observation

One part of my motivation to conduct this research was my personal interest in tiny homes and a dream to build my own. To me building a home, even if it is tiny, sounds as almost an impossible idea or at least the one which needs a lot of dedication and effort. I had been constantly looking for the ways which would help me in this journey and found one: the course on planning a tiny home *"What if you planned a mobile tiny home?"* ("Mitä jos suunnittelisit oman liikuteltavan pienkodin?" in Finnish). Since the course was held in summer 2018, exactly when I was collecting the data for this thesis, I decided to include observation into the methods. In that way, I wanted to gain more insight into

the tiny homes phenomenon and to understand the motivation behind the wish to live in small dwellings.

Lofland (2006) defines an observation as a process in which an investigator observes the behaviour of a human association in its natural settings for the purpose of scientific understanding of that association. The data analysis is occurring at the same time with data gathering (May, 2002). Observation does not only include studying people, but also learning from and with them (Tracy, 2013). During the course, I wanted to achieve two goals: to observe other course participants and to learn from them, but also to learn with them on how to plan and build a tiny home.

Academic literature distinguishes different types of observation according to the extent to which an observer is engaged into a setting (Patton, 2002; Tracy, 2013). The extent varies from complete immersion to complete separation. As Patton (2002) notes, the extent of participation can change over time, for instance, the researcher can start as a complete observer and later become a participant. For this study, I played a role of a complete participant for the following reasons. First, this role provided me with an access to readily available data such as a course content. Second, other course participants took me as a colleague not as a researcher and, therefore, were possibly more open. Third, the role allowed me to be part of the group. As Tracy (2013) explains, a complete participant gets an opportunity to learn about group's motivations and insider meanings, which were the most important parts of the observation for my research.

Going more into the details of the course, it was aimed at those who were interested in building a mobile tiny home and wanted to plan the construction path in advance, thus avoiding the possible mistakes during the construction period. The course was held in July from Friday to Sunday 27.-29.7.2018 by Kotosen Rakennuskoulu (More information on the course can be found in Appendix 2). The course was organized in Kokemäki, Finland. The course offered valuable insight into the legislation, architectural options and layout of tiny homes. The course participants could see two finished tiny homes and two that were being built. The course was held at a farm where some tiny homes were located. The course participants were staying in tents or in the main building of the farm. The meals were provided by the organizers and there were only vegan options. In total there were 22 people, out of which 9 were female and 13 were male. Most of the participants were around 30 years old, the youngest participant was around 22 and the oldest participants were in their 50s. All participants were in different stages of their lives and represented different professions (from farmers to IT specialists). However, none of them were professional builders. All of them came from different areas of Finland such as Espoo, Turku, Oulu and Jyväskylä.

During the course, I was trying to learn more about the course participants and their reasons to live in a tiny home. First, while observing and participating in the course, I made notes regarding participants' motivation and interests. Knowing more about their motivation can help in understanding what things are important to them and what they value the most. Since the

group consisted of 22 people, we were often divided into smaller groups to do various tasks. Nevertheless, I could create an overall idea of their interest in tiny homes. The results of the observation, i.e. the reasons to live in a tiny home, were similar to the interviewees', thus they supported the findings from the main data.

There are many advantages of doing an observation, some of which were already mentioned in the previous paragraphs. One of the most important ones, in my opinion, is that an observation allows the researcher to use personal knowledge during the formal interpretation stage of analysis when the researcher's impression and feelings become part of the data in understanding a setting and people in it (Patton, 2002). I believe that during the course I became a part of the group because I was the same member as any other course participants, which allowed me to be fully absorbed in the course and the surroundings and ponder about the lives we lead somewhere else. We all came to the course because we felt that something could be done better.

Even though the course was a perfect place to emerge oneself into the lives of people who wanted to live in tiny homes and find out their motivation on doing so, there were several downsides to it. First, an observation is a challenging task because, as it was mentioned earlier, data analysis is happening at same time with data gathering (May, 2002), therefore, it needs a lot of preparation in advance and a lot of concentration during the observation. The course was full of activities where I had to be an active participant but at the same time an observer, what demanded a lot of my attention. Second, the course was held in Finnish and the spoken language during that weekend was Finnish, what presented an additional challenge for me as a non-native speaker. Nevertheless, the course was one of the most valuable experiences because of my personal interest, but also for this research because I had the chance to observe, understand and connect to others.

4.4   Narrative analysis

Humans tend to interpret their environment and impose meanings on experiences (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004; Ganoe, 1999). Narratives can be seen as opportunities to view what a group of people sees as important and how they communicate its meaning (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004). Narrative analysis was chosen for this thesis because it allows to explore the experiences, perspectives and ideas of tiny home dwellers. Narrative analysis takes into account the time and place in which the research participant is involved (Heikkinen & Lämsä, 2017) and it is best applicable for relatively fewer research participants (Riessman, 2008). Riessman (2008) believes that this method is not appropriate for studying "large numbers of nameless, faceless subjects". Considering the aforementioned, the narrative analysis suits the purpose of this thesis.

Narrative analysis has become popular in various disciplines, such as literature, sociology and political science, because it helps to understand the

complex world of people, entities and events through the language of stories (Berg & Hukkinen, 2011; Ganoe, 1999; Holstein & Gubrium, 2012). The narrative analysis usually focuses on "cases" or, in other words, on individuals, identity groups, communities, organizations or even nations (in political narrative), thus the focus is on certain actors in certain places in certain times (Riessman, 2008). In this thesis, my focus is on people living in tiny homes in Finland and how they narrate their experiences from living in tiny homes.

Although narrative analysis focuses on cases, it can still generate categories, common themes or general concepts (Riessman, 2008). In this study, there were six cases, or six people living in tiny homes. All of the interviews were transcribed and read carefully several times in order to discover common topics. Then the texts were divided into different themes such as attitude to possessions, reasons to live tiny, lifestyle and wellbeing. Each part of the text were put into the tables with the corresponding names. More topics were determined within each table. For example, in the table "Attitude to possessions", the following parts were highlighted: long- or short-term attitude, dematerialization, access, ownership, change in consumption patterns and attachment. There was also a table with the title "Other" that included parts of the text which were interesting but did not get into the previously mentioned categories.

As I wrestled with how to find common themes between tiny home dwellers and read the transcriptions of the interviews again and again, two main features appeared, both of which were thoroughly covered by the interviewees: freedom and "safe corner". Later an interpersonal narrative was added, which allowed to cover the interviewees' relationships with others. Therefore, the findings were presented through these narratives, what allowed to show the interviewers' experiences and thoughts on tiny living.

Even though this method fits well for the purpose of this thesis, there are several downsides to it. First, Daiute and Lightfoot (2004) suggests that researcher's task is not so much to tell the story of the narrator but to construct "a story of his or her own making" (p. 3). Thus, as a co-narrator in the data creation (Riessman, 2008), it was not always easy for me to stay objective and not to promote the idea of tiny homes. It is also possible that the interviewees felt my positive attitude towards tiny homes during the interviews and brought up more positive sides of living in tiny homes, thus, slightly influencing the findings of the research.

Second, narratives vary, for example, they can be heard in interviews or in a conversation; they can be short or extended; some can cover short period of live, others – the entire life (Holstein & Gubrium, 2012). They can be considered as stories, with the beginning, the middle and the end, or nonstories such as critiques, hopes or arguments (Berg & Hukkinen, 2011). Giving this variety, narrative analysis can become a challenging task. It can also be slow and require a lot of attention to details. Truly, doing narrative analysis was not an easy journey for me. Mostly because there is so much information about it and so many ways on how it can be done, and yet only limited examples for disciplines such as environmental management, the program which I study. In

other words, there is no correct way or set of rules (Riessman, 2008) and it is up to the researcher to decide on how to proceed.

After mentioning the downsides of the narrative analysis, I would like to point out something what I found interesting regarding interviews *and* narratives. Czarniawska (2004) mentions that for some, interviews can be viewed as an interrogation, an inquisition or a manipulated conversation. Therefore, she continues, interviews might not lead to narratives, or they might lead to answers the researcher prefers to hear. However, Czarniawska (2004) questions this point of view. She finds that people often have more thoughts than they can share with others and even the most loving family can bear only a limited amount of "thinking aloud" during the dinner hour. Therefore, she believes that interviews often provide an opportunity for interviewees to try out their thoughts without practical consequences. The author adds that "an interview is not a window on social reality, but it is a part, a sample of that reality" (p.49), therefore it can become a place to construct a narrative. The narratives are presented in the following chapter.

5   RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this section, the findings from the interviews are presented by using narrative analysis. The section starts with the general description of the interviewees and continues with two main narratives of *freedom* and *safe corner*, two themes which were brought up a lot by the interviewees and which demonstrated what tiny home dwellers valued in living tiny. The last chapter in the section presents an interpersonal narrative, which covers how tiny homes influenced interviewees' relationships with others, including people they share the tiny space with. Observation findings are also presented in the same narratives because the main interests in living tiny correspond to the ones of the interviewees. However, narratives are mostly built on the results from the interviews.

5.1   Descriptions of the interviewees

As it was mentioned in the chapter 4, the interviewees were selected regardless of whether they were living in an apartment or a house. Out of six interviewees, four lived in self-built mobile houses in the countryside (later referred as *mobile dwellers*) and two lived in rented apartments in Helsinki.

For the simplicity reason, I will start with the description of the mobile dwellers and then continue with the interviewees who lived in apartments. The first group lived in a mobile house, which they also called a wagon or a house on wheels. Two interviewees shared the space together with their partners and children. The houses were self-built and differed in size, however, did not exceed 16 square meters per person. All four houses were located in communities and designed to be a part of a bigger space, where they could have access to other facilities provided by a community such as sauna, laundry facilities and communal space (for cooking, working and/or gatherings). All of the houses were connected to the electric grid. Two of the interviewees owned the land, where their houses were situated. For the first group of the interviewees, moving to a tiny home was not a radical change in life. They had lived in communities previously and building a house was simply the next step for them.

The second group of the interviewees lived in rented apartments in Helsinki with an easy access to the city centre and a workplace. For both interviewees, the location of the apartment was one of the most important criteria. One shared her apartment with a partner; another one lived alone. The size of their apartments did not exceed 15 square meters per person. Both of the apartments had a small kitchen, a shower and a loft for sleeping, thus freeing up space in the living area. They also had a storage place, a common sauna and laundry facilities in the building. Both interviewees moved to their *tiny* homes

from bigger places which meant that they could not bring all their possessions with them. They had to get rid of most of what they had in the previous apartments, including furniture, kitchen appliances and clothes. Figure 4 demonstrates the living space of two tiny apartments.

FIGURE 4. Tiny apartments. The picture on the left shows the sleeping loft, the living room area and the corridor. The picture on the right shows the kitchen and the ladder to the sleeping loft.

There were differences in how these two groups narrated their experiences from living in tiny homes for evident reasons since four of them built own homes and lived in a countryside and two lived in apartments in a city. At the same time, they expressed common narratives, which I am going to cover next.

5.2   The narrative of freedom

The narrative of freedom was the most discussed throughout the interviews. It touched different topics such as costs, mobility, creativity and possessions. Therefore, in this analysis it was divided into four parts: financial freedom, the freedom of movement, freedom to be creative and freedom from possessions.

Financial freedom

The narrative of financial freedom was presented by all interviewees in one way or another. It was also widely covered by the observees. First, living in a smaller place usually means that the expenses are reduced whether it is an apartment or a house. The rent can be lower for smaller apartments, especially, in comparison with bigger apartments in the same area. Due to the smaller space, the need for heating and lighting is lower. For the mobile dwellers, in addition to energy consumption, the cost of building materials and upkeep can be lower. Second, tiny home implies that its price is lower than for the similar

bigger type, therefore, tiny home dwellers need smaller or no loan, thus providing the possibility for them to be debt-free. The topic of loan, or mortgage, was discussed a lot by the mobile dwellers and the observees. The topic was expanded with the idea that our society depends too much on loan, thus we develop a loan mentality which directs us in life. In other words, the loan "decides" for us that we want a bigger house with all the "necessary" things in it, when in truth we can do better with less. This idea continued with the thought that bigger loan also meant longer working hours and less freedom, including less time for family and hobbies. The following two quotes from the interviews summarize the narrative of financial freedom:

> Big mortgage… because you have this loan, you need to work a normal job. My idea was this kind of loan mentality directs your life too much. You have to make sure that this kind of decisions… Just because you have this loan, you have to live in a house that is expensive. From the point of view of my generation, nation and the world, I think that is not the best situation. People would do better, they would innovate more, they would be more loving, and they would do better things with their time if they were loan free. (Interviewee 2)

> I'm not tied to some system or I don't need to make big investments to live somewhere. […] [I value the most] **freedom** and independence… I need less, I need to work less and slave my time less. (Interviewee 4)

On the other hand, not having a "*normal*" job, as quoted above (interviewee 2), might mean less stable income and more struggle with money, thus not being able to invest into more effective or ecological solutions at once and therefore, the necessity to plan one's purchases ahead.

> Living with my family, we built this together, me and my partner. It has been a lot of frustration, when we were building, because we cannot continue. We don't have a lot of money. Every time we have more money, we could buy more material. (Interviewee 3)

Freedom of movement

Freedom of movement was a popular narrative among the interviewees and observees. For the course participants, even the title of the course "What if you planned a *mobile* tiny home?" implied that one of the main emphases of the course was put on the mobility feature of homes, including covering the regulations for vehicles. Therefore, mobility was one of the reasons, which attracted participants to the course. However, it is worth mentioning here, that the course was also valuable for the ones who intended to build a tiny home on foundation and it included people who were not interested in mobility feature of homes.

Clearly, having a mobile home provides an opportunity to travel and move one's home from one place to another. Besides, one can make it relatively fast without more traditional and necessary arrangements such as packing and unpacking, moving furniture and other belongings and getting rid of the unnecessary. Mobile dwellers can choose where to place their home. For instance, they can be close to a city or next to the sea, if the situation allows. The mobile homes are called *mobile* because it is possible to move them. One might assume that this perception of freedom of movement might be relevant only for mobile dwellers. However, interviewee 1 also saw themselves (her and her partner) as being mobile because they could fit everything they had into a small van and go travelling. The freedom of movement was of high importance for the tiny home dwellers because it allowed them to be mobile, also in case they wanted to change the area of residence, they could choose their surroundings but also it ensured that their home, the *structure* of it, would follow them. Interestingly, the freedom of movement narrative was expanded into spending more time outside. The tiny space pushed them *to go out and explore*. The following provides an example of how freedom of movement was narrated:

> I can choose my environment; I can put it [the house] in a place where you couldn't build. I can choose where I put it, the location… I'm not tied to some system or I don't need to make big investment to live somewhere. I can experiment. Life is now here, I can have sea life, I can live in winter closer to the city, which might work, and more countryside in the summer. (Interviewee 4)

> In wagon living, it is easy to move it, to change and choose place where you want to live. Of course, you can change an apartment, but then… My son was born in this wagon. I still have the memory with me even if I live in other country now because I have the same structure that followed us. […] I think my relation to my surroundings is different and material understanding of surrounding is more complete or deep now. We are spending a lot of time outside because of the tiny space. And also all the materials which are built around us are more connected to that. (Interviewee 6)

At the same time, being pushed outside did not always feel good as it was mentioned by two interviewees. For example, for the ones who were not connected to the water grid, they had to go outside to fetch water even if the weather was unpleasant: "More work, more time consuming. It is not so efficient nor easy sometimes" (Interviewee 6). Besides, small space in winter in the North when it is dark, it is more challenging also because there are less opportunities to do something outside.

"Freedom to be creative" narrative
"Freedom to be creative" narrative was one of the most interesting and surprising findings out of all. It is hardly the first thing that comes to one's mind when thinking about living in a tiny home. Certainly, a future tiny home dweller needs to plan and build their own home (unless it is built by someone else) and that is where one needs to be creative. Probably, the easier way would be to copy someone else's home and build one's own according to that person's

blueprints, which might seem a less time and energy consuming task. Contrary to this idea, the interviewed mobile dwellers described the experience of planning and building something as "liberating" and "self-empowering", something what makes one feel more confident about own skills. The home pushed them to be more creative in designing, building and decorating it. It was described as a living sculpture which can be changed at any moment while an apartment was described as "four walls" or "a box". The "freedom to be creative" narrative was presented mostly by the mobile dwellers for the reasons mentioned above, i.e. the need for building the house.

Mobile dwellers can and do influence what kind of materials their home and furniture would be made of. It was evident from the interviews and observation that chemical-free and natural materials were of high importance. Some observees narrated that they wanted to breathe clean air, thus they wanted to know their walls, what they were built from. Indeed, unlike most of the people living in apartments, the ones who build their own houses have the possibility to choose *healthy* and *breathable* materials. One of the interviewees told that he wanted to create an example of a natural building, which would be plastic and toxic-free. Another one pointed out that when you buy a mainstream made house, it might be already moldy when you move in. They also could choose what furniture to have and make it according to own needs, preferences and even their own height because they built it themselves. One interviewee mentioned that he wanted to arrange furniture, so it would be easy to access it, everything would have own place and would be "*working with the natural cycle I have in my daily routine*" (Interviewee 2). Some observees were interested in creating a space which would be both functional and minimalistic. However, some of interviewees mentioned that one need to put more thought and time into arranging the space because it is tiny, and it has to work. The following shows how mobile dwellers narrated freedom to be creative regarding their homes:

> [I value the most] the freedom of building your own home and making solutions that you can actively make an impact how your home is, how it looks like, the size, of course in a small scale but still. […] It is like a living sculpture, but apartment is more like four walls, more static. (Interviewee 6)

> I have never built something before, a complete house… It was a thought of freedom that we could take that liberty of building something. (Interviewee 3)

> Building my house and having a house, it is quite existential, it goes quite deep, to be able to do it, very self-empowering. It brings into seeing what are my limits. (Interviewee 4)

Interestingly, the freedom to be creative was expanded into other parts of life such as more freedom for children to express themselves with singing and shouting and follow their impulses because the homes were situated in the countryside. It was compared to living in apartments where one is more restricted to what is seen as acceptable. Yet even for the apartment dwellers,

living in tiny place enriched their lives because it pushed them to spend more time outside and explore. One interviewee narrated the difference that she felt after moving to a tiny home as living in a *bigger place* can make a person closed-minded, whereas tiny space pushed her to be more curious and explore:

> The space of living became smaller but the space in my head became bigger. It is really… I think me, myself… I've gone through personal change because of that in a good way because I just have this image in my head: my head is a universe and I'm living in a tiny space. It replaced it. Living in a big place sometimes you become closed-minded. And it happened the other way here. Maybe it is because getting older and still experiencing life. Living in a small space made me more curious about visiting and experiencing new places. It may sound that I'm trying to escape from a small place, but it is not an escape, it is just a tiny push that this apartment gives us, to go out and explore. (Interviewee 1)

> It is much more reach with children; they are freer to express themselves and follow their impulses. If they want to go out and come in. We live on this field, no danger of cars. In the apartment you couldn't… It was more restricted what you could do. And the sounds… they are free to express themselves with shouting or singing. As a parent, it is much more free and inspiring. (Interviewee 6)

Freedom from possessions

For the interviewees who moved from bigger places, it was very clear that they needed to get rid of most of their belongings since it was not physically possible to fit everything into a small place. Both apartment dwellers had to get rid of most of their furniture, kitchen utensils and even clothes. They narrated this process as being positive experience for them because they realized that they needed less and they could manage with less. One of them mentioned that everyone should try and get rid of almost everything: "*You can get rid of things you don't need and then it is much easier, lighter to live*" (Interviewee 1). On the other hand, some mobile dwellers, though having less, admitted that they still owned too many things. Especially the ones who shared their place with others narrated that there was a constant inflow of things from relatives and it was more difficult to control what they owned. Nevertheless, in one way or another they all narrated that we (humans) have too many things while we can do better with less. The difference between living in a big or a small place was narrated by one interviewee as not being stuffed, while another one described big homes as being "storage for void, storage for air". The following presents how tiny home dwellers narrated the freedom from possessions.

> And immediately I realized that I owned so many unnecessary things that I can be without. For us empty space, personal space is more important than some furniture in it. Freedom of movement. At that point I realized that I spend so much time and money and space for things I don't need. […] At least for me, if I'm in a room which is stuffed with different goods, it feels depressive and messy. (Interviewee 1)

> I wanted to have space that has clarity, it doesn't have mental consuming tasks that are not dealt with all the time. I wanted to create a space and style of life that would allow me to do it. (Interviewee 2)

> Some people have much more [stuff] and they are not using even half of it. Why do you have all of these? The longer you keep it through your life, the harder it will be to get rid of it because it has been with you for so long. (Interviewee 5)

Regardless of the number of possessions, most of them expressed attachments to only very few things such as things from their childhood or certain things that create coziness in winter. One interviewee narrated that he wanted to create stories that would connect him to the building through different items; he wanted to know where each item came from (see more in the quote below). Another one told that her son was born in the same wagon where they were living now and these memories traveled with them anywhere they went as demonstrated below:

> My son was born in this wagon. I still have the memory with me even if I live in other country now because I have the same structure that followed us. (Interviewee 6)

> My roof is from the shed that my granddad built in the 60s and it has been taken apart. But now I took the old roof and made it the new and now it protects me from the rain, it is in my house. Many stories that I wanted in this building. I had this philosophical idea about connecting to the space through the personal connections. I used different personal items and materials. (Interviewee 2)

The freedom from possessions was also related to how much one needs to clean. Interestingly, all interviewees mentioned cleaning their homes even though I did not ask them about it. The interesting part in this finding was how differently the interviewees narrated it. For some, cleaning their home was fast and efficient and could be done in 5 minutes since there were less things to take care of. Others specified that they had to constantly clean the place to keep it organised, otherwise it could become a mess. This person's narrative combines very well both opinions:

> The downside is that it can be crowded, you easily have a chaos, you need to keep it neat if you want to make it work. The upside is that it takes one or two minutes to hoover my floor, to wash my floor. It is voluntary simplicity, if you have less things, you have less space, you have less to take care of. Bigger scale house has a lot of space that is storage for void, storage for air, you don't really use it. (Interviewee 4)

5.3 "Safe corner" narrative

"Safe corner" narrative was another narrative which was presented by the interviewees. It was narrated that their homes provided them with safety and security. Clearly, simply having a home or a place to live ensures some kind of safety regardless of whether the place is rented or owned because it provides a roof over one's head. A tiny home was also described by one dweller as a place of belonging where they (their family) felt more rooted. Interestingly, "safe corner" narrative was expanded to "knowing your walls" and "how to fix" something in case it breaks. In the quote below, interviewee 3 narrates that knowing how to build the house makes him feel more secure and confident in his own skills. The following provides an example of how "safe corner" narrative was presented:

> I'm just proud of myself that I can pay for this myself, that I came here all by myself and done everything by myself, even if it is a small place, it is mine. Even if I don't own it. It just feels so good to know even if it is small, it is mine, it is my safe corner. […] When I had my first night here, I was thinking this is my home, I felt like home. It was good for me. (Interviewee 5)

> I feel much more secure that I can do things, that I can build my own home, even though I have never built anything. There are so many questions, so many steps to figure out. It gave me so much confidence. It comes with me. It feels in that sense liberating. You don't need to be a specialist; you don't need to study for many years to do something. This is how this society works: oppresses people's strength by dividing people in specialists while we are capable of doing everything. Of course, you can become very good in certain things. By building this house, I feel more aware and more secure that we can do it. (Interviewee 3)

In the "safe corner" narrative, the interviewees also described how long- or short-term solution tiny home can be for them. It is worth reminding here that two of them were living in rented apartments, therefore, the duration of stay was limited by a rental agreement and a possible sudden decision of the owner to terminate the agreement. One of them expressed that she would like to live in the apartment as long as she can afford it and as long as her marital status does not change. The second one thought about buying the apartment she was living in but she could not afford it, admitting at the same time that she is planning to move to New Zealand for half a year. Regarding the mobile dwellers, none of them mentioned selling or getting rid of their mobile house in the near future. Two of them owned the land their homes were located on and were planning to develop a bigger community there. The other two were going to move to another community in Finland. However, they did not reject the possibility of their life situation changing such as getting a family and moving to a bigger place. One interviewee wanted to build one more house in Spain.

The "safe corner" narrative was also presented through the topic of community by the mobile dwellers since they all lived in communities. Living

in a community was important for them because their homes were small and communities provided them with the opportunity to share common space such as a bigger kitchen, sauna and laundry facilities, but also necessary equipment. Their homes were not designed to stand alone far from any neighbors, they were supposed to be a part of a community which would also ensure safety and security. Through the topic of community, they also touched the idea of people being separated from each other, being too individualistic. To my question of whether they were using service provided by sharing economy, they either were not aware of any or the services were not in close access. The following extracts from the interviews present their views on communities and sharing space:

> [It is] very high value for me, communal process, how to bring people together. There is such a strong notion of individualism and separation. I think that separation and that fear, that jumbo and being so hyper and the whole society being so hyper… There is no much space to ground oneself and see what is that I value, what is that I need and this kind of more and more and more mentality. A lot of people are missing something in that, missing sense of connection to their surroundings to other people, togetherness, daily valuing your livelihood that you would have a direct contact with the warmth, that you create in your livelihood. (Interviewee 4)

Sharing space was also narrated through environmental concerns in the way that, for example, not everyone needs their own washing machine; sharing makes more sense in terms of resources. Besides, bigger space consumes more energy for heating which is bad for our planet. One of the interviewees said that we need new solutions and alternatives to the old system because of the environmental crises we are facing. The same idea was widely discussed among course participants: due to the global warming and environmental degradation, we need new ideas, we need to decrease carbon footprint and improve air quality. Most of the interviewees expressed some concerns towards environment either through excess of plastic, goods, energy use or through toxic materials we use. The interviewees' views can be seen in the extracts below:

> It is still a challenge what the ethical way of living is. Everybody buys own land and builds a house far from each other, quite big… and then I see these big houses around with one or two elderly people. A lot of work, and energy whether it is from fire and electricity. If everybody is doing that, in the end we might destroy our planet. It doesn't make any sense. There is a lot of sense that we are happy with less or that we share infrastructure. Not everybody needs own space for a washing machine. You can share workspace, makes more sense, and creates more social dynamics between people. I think in Finland it is necessarily that people meet each other, talk to each other, there is more… if we work together. I can still figure out something. In UN… we made promise, 95% less carbon dioxide by 2050. Finnish government need to figure out all the answers. (Interviewee 3)

You are much more conscious about using electricity when you have limited amount of it. I think this downshifting and when we need to cut down emissions, we need to get out of this paradigm that we have endless resources. It is coming from somewhere. When you have limitless water, limitless electricity, you don't really think of it, there is so much extra use. [...] We don't really value the environment as such, we externalize it as asset. (Int. 4)

5.4 Interpersonal narrative

There can be a need to negotiate the amount of personal space one gets when living in a tiny home. Clearly, sharing a tiny space with someone else lowers the chances of hiding in another room. For three interviewees, who shared space with their partners, it was not an option to go to another room in case of difficult situations. One of the interviewees told that sometimes there can be too many things happening in a small space: your partner is trying to work while you are cooking and children are playing, then neighbors come and want to talk, one of the children needs more attention; and it all happens in one small space. However, in their community, they learnt how to deal with difficult emotions:

> "We have a social tool which is called co-counseling, common space for each other to discharge the emotions that come up in our lives like frustration; that we don't have to keep them inside" (Interviewee 3).

Another interviewee mentioned that with her partner they figured out how to handle difficult situations:

> When I need my own time, I let him know, I go out or stay here, sit here. I'm not really limiting my area but just letting know that's my time now. And he does the same. [..] This space helped us to be more comfortable with each other. (Interviewee 1)

Regardless of these challenges, most of the interviewees narrated that their social life has not changed much since they started living in tiny homes. They continued being friends with the same people as before and they did not widen their circle of friends just because others also built tiny homes. The same is true for the use of social media: they did not share their experiences of tiny homes on social media, nor were they particularly interested in following others. However, some mobile dwellers informed that their homes did attract attention and someone would come to ask about their homes out of curiosity and interest but sometimes because of legal issues. One of the interviewees told that they can shock people for being different.

> I don't [follow other people's experiences]. I'm in contact with some people, because they are my friends, not because they live in tiny houses. To me or them, it is nothing that special. I'm not that enthusiast of tiny homes. It is a good solution

for how you wanna live but to me… I don't need to be posting stuff to fb about my morning coffee. Some people do and it is ok but I don't bother following. (Interviewee 2)

I stopped social media for not any specific reason but it is so much noise. I do check, I do have my fb account because I have so many friends there and it is an easy way to message with them but it is so much of this sharing a lot of noise, links, kinda nice things but for me it has lost the sense of intimacy, the sense of connection. (Interview 4)

The next section will discuss the findings and will apply the framework of liquid consumption to understand the dwellers' relationship to possessions.

6   DISCUSSION

In the previous section, the research findings were presented through two narratives: the narrative of freedom and the "safe corner" narrative. In this section, I will discuss the findings first from the freedom and safety point of view and later using Bardhi and Eckhardt's framework on liquid consumption.

6.1   Freedom and/or safety?

As demonstrated in the previous section, all of the tiny home dwellers narrated their experiences of living in tiny homes through freedom and safety. Tiny homes simultaneously provided them with these two feelings where one did not cancel the other. When thinking about living in a tiny home, many reasons can come to mind – from financial to having an access to a certain lifestyle or to becoming a part of the tiny home movement and their world community. All cases can be described as freedom. And indeed, freedom was one of the most discussed topics among the dwellers. Tiny homes were their means to getting this freedom. Interestingly, the data demonstrated that freedom was not the only important part of tiny life; tiny homes also provided them with safety and home, with their "safe corner". And in the case of the mobile dwellers, communities were even enhancing the feeling of safety and belonging. The fascinating part about these two values, freedom and safety, was that they were brought up by each of the dwellers although these topics were not mentioned in the interview questions. Therefore, these values were of utmost importance for the dwellers. And as the data showed, both of the values were successfully provided by the tiny homes.

Going more into the details of the narratives, the interviews and the observation showed that one of the main reasons to live in a tiny home was financial. Due to its size, a tiny home can reduce expenses in comparison with a bigger home. And it can also provide the freedom from a big loan. This finding is similar to academic literature on tiny homes (Kilman, 2016; Murphy, 2014; Wu & Hyatt, 2016; Wyatt, 2016). Tiny home dwellers preferred financial freedom over a big house and the abundance of possessions in it. For them, this freedom was more important than the comfort of a big house which often equals a financial burden. In the previous section it was demonstrated how some of them did not support the so called "loan mentality", working too much and having too much. Some of them believed that this "loan mentality" directs people too much; people might decide to live in an expensive house because they have a big loan. This might be similar to what Brown and Vergragt (2016) found, that for some of us, it is more important to have more than others around us than to have more. That might be a reason why sometimes we choose too expensive houses and too many possessions.

Academic literature on alternative lifestyles finds that this kind of minimalist lifestyle has recently become popular (Anson, 2014; Meissner, 2019). For example, Meissner (2019) claims that alternative lifestyles, such as minimalism, support simplicity, cutting down on everyday consumption and busyness and are against the world of too much. From the data, it became evident that simplicity was the dwellers' choice of living, whether it was presented through voluntary simplicity, KonMari principles, connectedness to nature, plastic-free life or in general having less. Regardless of how it was constructed, the interviewees opted for simplicity. Likewise, various websites on tiny homes promote the same ideas.

The findings of this thesis are similar to Saxton's (2019), where she found that financial reasons, striving for simplification/minimalism/reduced material possessions, environmental reasons and mobility, or ability to travel more, were four main reasons for downsizing. The European Environmental Agency (2018) encourages to work less and buy less in order to strive for a higher quality of life. Clearly, for many people working less might not be an option if they struggle to survive with the bare minimum. However, here more attention is put on high consuming countries and people's priorities in life, when people are trapped into a cycle of "work and spend" (European Environmental Agency, 2018; Schor, 2001).

Being less burdensome in financial terms, tiny homes can be an answer on how to increase quality of life: "The owner of a tiny house, while living intimately indoors, has a larger life outside, and a lighter conscience" (Wilkinson, 2011). The interviewees' homes did not only push some of them to be outside more, they also allowed them to be mobile, or free to move to another place and, consequently, have access to different landscapes and surroundings, and take their homes with them (in case of mobile dwellers). All of the abovementioned freedoms could be a reason why some of them believed that they were more creative. However, it is also possible that initially more creative people pursue a different way of living, an alternative living, and they would be creative in almost any settings. In any case, I would like to conclude this chapter by using Murphy's (2014) words: tiny homes are beautiful expressions of people's aesthetic and values.

6.2   Liquid and/or solid?

Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) divide consumption into solid and liquid as it was demonstrated in section 3. Their framework helps to understand how and why the attitude to possessions changes in modern times. At first, tiny homes can be considered as an example of liquid consumption because of a different attitude to possessions such as wanting to have what is necessary and not willing to spend much for a place of living, and increased access to mobility. However, other aspects of their consumption have to be taken into consideration before

making any conclusions. In this chapter, I will attempt to describe what kind of consumption tiny home dwellers engaged into by using the characteristics of liquid consumption: ephemerality, access and dematerialization.

6.2.1 Ephemerality

Ephemerality is one of the conditions for liquid consumption. In chapter 3 ephemeral was defined as short-lived and transitory. For Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017), ephemeral refers to consumers' relationships to products, services and experiences. I would like to start here with the most important possession for the interviewees and for this thesis – their homes. From the data, it became clear that tiny home dwellers' relationship to their homes was enduring, thus solid. They all valued their homes and considered them as a long-term solution. Their homes were not a simple shelter or even a place where they lived but they were meaningful for them and even represented their lifestyles. In their framework, one of the conditions of solid consumption, which Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) identify, is high relevance to the self. When the possessions are meaningful, as tiny homes are for their dwellers, they become a part of us, or as Belk (1988) called it, a part of extended self. Self-extension can happen, for example, "through creation of an object" and "through knowledge of an object" (Belk, 1988, p. 160). And indeed, the mobile dwellers *created* their homes themselves and they *knew* their walls. They had a clear idea on how to fix something if it breaks. The home was also meaningful to them because it had the memories which would travel with them wherever they went. One example of it was mentioned in the findings, when a child of one interviewee was born in the same tiny home where they were living now and they still had memories with them even though they were living in another country. Another one mentioned his grandfather's roof which he used for building his new home.

The abovementioned demonstrates the dwellers' connection to their homes and how their homes can remind them about something from the past. It is again similar to Belk's (1988) extended self when possessions can become our museum which shows our past and who we are and sometimes even where we are going. It is worth noting here that even though the dwellers who lived in the apartments they had not built or were not their own, they still showed that the apartments were meaningful to them by describing how proud they were living there and managing with less. Considering the abovementioned, tiny homes can represent solid consumption. At the same time, tiny home dwellers accepted a possibility of some changes in life when they would need a bigger home in case of getting a partner and/or a child. Since two of them owned the land, they had more intention to stay in the same place, while two others were planning to move their homes to a new location and one was going to move to another country and terminate the rental agreement in the near future. Therefore, even though they valued their homes and they were meaningful to them (solid criteria), they still were open to any changes in life and were flexible in where they could live (liquid criteria). Considering all this, a mobile home can be seen as a combination of both liquid and solid consumption. Indeed,

Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) acknowledge that in consumption there can be middle points and both liquefaction of solid consumption and solidification of liquid consumption are possible.

The data demonstrated that the attitude of tiny home dwellers to other possessions can also be in the middle point between liquid and solid. First, the finding did not show that tiny home dwellers were particularly attached to certain possessions (apart from few important ones from the past). Moreover, mobile dwellers had to develop a skillset in order to be able to fix their belongings in case something breaks, which shows their enduring attitude to possessions (solid criteria). On the other hand, their skillset allowed them to change styles, change their furniture and even home. This flexible skillset also allowed them to be less dependent on traditional markets by building what *they* wanted, which is a criterion for liquid consumption: "You don't need to be a specialist, you don't need to study for many years to do something" (Interviewee 3).

Ephemerality can also be applied to relationships with others. According to Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017), in solid consumption, relationships are reliable, trustworthy, durable, time resistant and secure, while in liquid consumption, people might not want committed relationships. The data suggested that, for most of the interviewees, social life did not change much even though sometimes they got more attention because of their homes. In addition to that, active presence on social media, which is one of the criteria for liquid consumption, was not supported by the findings. The interviewees did not advertise their homes, did not follow other tiny home dwellers and were not in any online tiny home communities.

One of the consequences of ephemerality in liquid consumption is uncertainty and unpredictability as argued by Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017). On one hand, living in a rented apartment, for example, can be considered as uncertain since the landlord can terminate the rental agreement. However, none of these uncertainties were expressed during the interviews with the apartment dwellers. On the other hand, owning a place would be a more secure choice as in the case of the mobile dwellers. However, some of them expressed uncertainties concerning legal practicalities such as spatial norms, or more specifically the minimum size of a dwelling, and the complications with officials regarding this issue. I find that the topic of uncertainty is more complex and needs more research in order to make any conclusions. In discussion on ownership, safety and stability are often brought up as a reason to owning a dwelling. It is a very arguable point, especially in the light of the past events with the pandemics when people can lose their jobs and are not able to pay the mortgages for their home (which can perhaps be unnecessarily too big). Even if the pandemics did not happen, can anything be considered certain and stable? Some interviewees have also mentioned occasional struggles with money and even though it is their choice to value free time over money, working less or being a freelancer can still create uncertainties. However, it brings us back to the findings, when the feeling of safety was highlighted by all of the tiny home dwellers regardless of the ownership.

6.2.2 Access

In liquid consumption, access is valued over ownership and possessions (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017). Here access is understood as access to places, services and networks, but also to housing, when access-based acquisition via renting, sharing and borrowing is more important than ownership (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017). As it was already mentioned, four interviewees owned their homes, two out of which also owned the land their homes were situated on. According to Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017), ownership can be burdensome, therefore in liquid consumption consumers try to avoid ownership. In case of tiny home owners, it is difficult to make any conclusions based on the fact of them owning their homes. On one hand, it is a traditional ownership, where dwellers live in their self-build homes and own them, which is a criterion for solid consumption. It becomes even more solid when they own land. On the other hand, owning a mobile home differs from owning a more traditional home or even an apartment since one can move the whole house. Therefore, the mobile dwellers get access to other places, where they can move relatively fast whether it is another area in Finland or abroad. Since the homes are tiny, the costs are also lower. Considering all abovementioned, a mobile home can be seen as a combination of both liquid and solid consumption. It is also worth mentioning here, that owning a tiny home can increase dwellers' possibilities to have access to what liquid consumption offers from access to various places of living to sharing. It can also facilitate variety seeking (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2017). Therefore, ownership of a tiny home provides more possibilities in liquid consumption.

The case of the tiny apartments would be an example of liquid consumption, where the dwellers do not own the place but get an easy access to the city center and a workplace because of the location of the apartments but still pay less because of the size of the apartments. Access to these apartments plays as an important facilitator for their lifestyles which provides them with something they might not have been able to afford otherwise (Bernthal, Crockett & Rose, 2005).

Access can also be provided by sharing economy which offers variety and, thus, reduces the need of fitting possession into a small home (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017). However, the data showed that the tiny home dwellers did not rely on sharing economy and some of them were not even aware of such possibilities. One of the reasons can be that these services are not commonly available in Finland or not yet developed enough. Even though they were not using the services provided by sharing economy, the mobile dwellers were actively sharing items and common space between themselves which is a characteristic of liquid consumption as defined by Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017). Since their homes were designed to be part of a community, they could reduce the space of their homes by not having, for instance, a shower room. They could also avoid owning possessions by sharing them such as a washing machine or repair tools. Belk (2007) suggests that by sharing we leverage our lifestyle without increasing our expenses. "Rather than distinguishing what is *mine* and

yours, sharing defines something as *ours*" (Belk, 2007, p. 127). Indeed, the data showed how important communities were for the mobile dwellers and some of them criticized individualism and separation, when people lose connection to others and nature.

Sharing can be easier achieved in communities. Interestingly, belonging to a community was mentioned as an example of more traditional solid life by Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017). One reason for that could be that the authors put a broader meaning to the word "community" such as *a group of people living in the same area* instead of *a group of people sharing the same place of living*. Regardless of the meaning, I find that communities to which the mobile dwellers belonged can be regarded as a middle point between liquid and solid consumption because they provide a sense of security (a solid criterion) but at the same time decrease expenses and offer variety by providing access to shared items and space (a liquid characteristic).

6.2.3 Dematerialization

Dematerialization was defined in chapter 3 as "using fewer or no materials to deliver the same level of functionality" (Eckhardt & Bardhi, 2020, p. 88). Clearly, building a smaller home needs less materials. It also needs less energy for keeping it warm. Moreover, a smaller home provides less space for belongings, thus forcing dwellers to keep only what is necessary. Following this logic, it would be easy to conclude that the tiny home is a base for liquid consumption. However, the data also showed that the dwellers had storage places where they kept their possessions thus increasing the possibility to own more. Since understanding of what is *too much* or *not enough* is very relative, it is difficult to make conclusions whether they have less based only on people's narratives. I would need to compare the amount of possessions tiny dwellers have to people living in bigger homes or borrow Saxton's (2019) idea of ecological footprint compared to the national average since ecological footprint can include some parts of consumption.

One of the initial goals for this thesis was to find out whether consumption practices change after moving to a tiny home. The idea behind it was to see whether people have to get rid of stuff before moving to a tiny home and whether they reduce their consumption in general. Saxton (2019) in her work on ecological footprint of downsizers did just that and found that all of the downsizers in her study reduced their ecological footprint. However, even though in general their behaviour was found to be more environmentally friendly, she discovered that for example, having less clothes can lead to washing them more often which is more energy and water intense. She also found that some of the participants drove more than before thus increasing their footprint. Therefore, more research is needed to understand the impact of certain behaviours.

In my research, it became obvious during the data collection that the initial goal cannot be applied to mobile dwellers since they did not move to

their tiny home from a much larger place, therefore it did not affect their consumption practices. Even though I cannot make conclusions based on two interviewees who moved from bigger places, it was still interesting to notice how their attitude to possessions has changed and how they found it unnecessary to own too many things as compared to what they used to own.

> I felt excited. I don't think that everybody feels that excited about getting rid of things. But for me it was a new beginning starting from clear page. And immediately I realised that I owned so many unnecessary things that I can be without. […] Everybody should try it once just to get rid of almost everything you have. At that point I realized that I spend so much time and money and space for things I don't need. (Interviewee 1)

The last sentence in the quote above highlights this type of mentality of the tiny home dwellers regardless of whether they moved from a bigger place. The idea that *we can do better with less* is seen in other interviews and supported by academic literature and various websites on tiny homes. For instance, Thoreau, who is considered to be the founder of the tiny home movement and who was mentioned in section 2, writes: "Shall we always study to obtain more of these things, and not sometimes to be content with less?" (Thoreau & Fender, 1999, p. 33). Murphy (2014) talks about limiting purchases to "things we truly need and want to have in our lives". The UN highlights that we need to do more and better with less. Kilman (2016) brings up the notion of "home theatre syndrome", when homeowners insulate themselves from the outside world by bringing everything they possibly need inside their homes. He argues that unlike conventional homeowners, who can stay inside for several days, people living in tiny homes are pushed outside because of the scarcity of their living space. Indeed, the interviewees tend to spend more time outside as it was demonstrated in the findings. The reason for this mentality and way of living has been covered thoroughly in this thesis from environmental consciousness to financial freedom but the simplest explanation portrays in this interviewee's short quote: "It is much easier, lighter to live" (Interviewee 1).

Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) only briefly mention environmental reasons for having liquid attitude to possessions, or in other words, having less possessions. However, various literature on tiny homes (Saxton, 2019; websites such as thetinylife.com and livingbiginatinyhouse.com) finds it as one of the most important reasons for having a tiny home and less possessions. The data in this research showed that even though environmental reasons were not primary for moving to tiny homes, five out of six dwellers mentioned sustainability related issues such as plastic-free life, sharing instead of owning, toxic-free materials, carbon footprint and high energy consumption of big homes, among many others. Contrary to this finding, Maria Sandberg in her study (2018) found that downsizing in Finland was not related to environmental issues. Therefore, downsizing for environmental reasons presents implications for more research.

7   CONCLUSION

The European Environmental Agency (2018) believes that more opportunities should be created for people to move towards different lifestyles and consumption models, which would be based on the ideas of good life and immaterial needs. Today's environmental degradation, excessive consumerism and high debt show that more attention should be put towards quality of life and away from consumerism (European Environmental Agency, 2018).

This Master's thesis introduced the experiences of six people living in tiny homes in Finland. Through six interviews and an observation, I attempted to explore what attracts people in tiny homes and how they narrate their experiences of living in tiny homes. Moreover, I discussed what relationship they have to their homes and their belongings.

One of the initial research questions was to find out whether consumption decreases when moving to a tiny home. However, during the data collection stage, it became clear that most of the interviewees did not change their lifestyle drastically, meaning that they did not possess much more before moving to a tiny home than what they possess now. For most of them, moving to a tiny home was not a radical change in life, it was simply a next step in their lives when they wanted to build a house. Therefore, I cannot make any conclusion whether their consumption has decreased except for the two people living in tiny apartments, whose possessions decreased significantly. Hence, the initial goal transformed into focusing more into tiny home dwellers' experiences and their attitude towards possessions.

The analysis of the interviews and observation was done with the help of narrative analysis, which helped to explore how tiny home dwellers perceived their experiences from living in tiny homes. Using Czarniawska's (2004) words, narratives provide *a sample of reality* and show what is meaningful for people. In this study, two main narratives appeared, which showed what tiny home dwellers valued in living tiny: *freedom* (such as financial freedom, freedom of movement, freedom to be creative and freedom from possessions) and *safety*. The interviewees believed that tiny homes provided them with these feelings simultaneously. These findings help to understand how tiny home dwellers perceive living in a tiny home. The idea behind this question was to see whether they see tiny homes as a positive housing solution and whether this approach can be an alternative way of housing/living. Based on the findings, even though there were some challenges in living in tiny homes, overall, the interviewees narrated their experiences as a positive housing solution because it freed them from a big loan and decreased their expenses; it provided possibilities for mobility/to travel more; it allowed them to be more creative; it reduced material possessions; and it provided them with feelings of safety and security.

Another research question in this thesis was to find out to what extent Bardhi and Eckhardt's framework (2017) can explain the tiny home dwellers'

relationship to possessions. In other words, whether the framework of liquid consumption can explain why tiny home dwellers choose to live in smaller homes and own less. For this purpose, I analysed their consumption practices using three characteristics by Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017): ephemerality, access and dematerialization. I attempted to analyse their attitude to possessions at two levels: at consumption practices level and at a product level (towards their tiny homes).

At the product level, the two cases of an apartment and a mobile home differ from each other, because apartments were rented, thus less permanent, whereas mobile homes were self-built and owned by the mobile dwellers. However, both of the cases can represent the middle point between liquid and solid consumption. First, tiny homes were meaningful for their dwellers for reasons explained in the previous chapter. They also provided them with safety. Regardless of the ownership, most of the dwellers' relationship to their homes was enduring because they were planning to stay in their dwelling as long as it was possible. Enduring and meaningful attitude are both characteristics of solid consumption. On the other hand, all of the dwellers were open to any changes in life. They were flexible and accepting the possibility to move somewhere else. It was brought up mostly as a positive thing because they could choose where to live; they could choose their surroundings and move their home, as in case of the mobile dwellers. Even for the ones living in the apartments, moving fast would not take long because they did not possess much and could fit everything into a van. This flexible attitude to life represents liquid consumption.

Second, in terms of ownership, two cases of the apartments and mobile homes were different. In the first case, rented apartments represented liquid attitude to home because the dwellers did not own the place but got an easy access to the city center and/or their workplace. They could afford to live in the area because their homes were tiny. In this case, their apartments can be considered as an important facilitator of their lifestyle (Bernthal, Crockett & Rose, 2005). In the second case of the mobile dwellers, owning a house and/or land represented solid consumption. At the same time, owning a mobile house differs from owning a more traditional home since one can move the whole house to get an access to other places in Finland or abroad. And again as in the first case, mobile home also enables them to have an access to a certain lifestyle.

Third, the tiny home can be a good example of dematerialization, when less materials and energy is needed for construction, decoration and/or upkeep. That is another criteria of liquid consumption, according to Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017). Consumption becomes even more liquid in communities, because the mobile dwellers do not need to own things.

At the consumption practices level, in most cases the tiny home dwellers' attitude to possessions can also be in the middle point between liquid and solid consumption. Continuing with the same topic on dematerialization, since only certain amount of possessions can fit into a tiny home, tiny home dwellers prefer to have access to some things via sharing, renting or borrowing instead of owning them. However, all of the dwellers had an additional storage space,

thus increasing the room for their belongings. The data showed, that tiny home dwellers were not particularly attached to certain possessions (apart from few important ones from the past) and some of them liked the idea that they could change the style of their homes and furniture in it, which shows more of a liquid attitude. While having less, living in a community was of high importance for the mobile dwellers because it provided a sense of security (a solid criterion) but also it decreased their expenses and offered access to shared items and common space (a liquid characteristic). In conclusion, the framework by Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) can be regarded as a valuable framework for assessing the tiny home dwellers' attitude to possessions and helps to better understand why and how consumption practices change in modern times. Since the framework by Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) was not applied to housing, this thesis contributes to the theory on liquid consumption.

There are many reasons why tiny homes can be considered a good housing solution. First, the climate change and environmental degradation that we face today, together with the housing being one of the main sources of household emissions in Finland, do create the need for alternative housing solutions, such as tiny homes because of their lower environmental footprint. Second, tiny homes can encourage people to have less possessions, since it provides only a limited amount of space. However, tiny homes have to be designed to be functional and the use of space should be efficient, otherwise as Sandberg (2018) found and as demonstrated in this thesis, some living functions can be moved outside of home such as in case of additional storage space. More research should be done on whether people in Finland reduce their consumption when moving to a tiny home. Third, financially, tiny homes can be more attractive because they lower the need for a big morgage and decrease the dwellers' expenses while providing what is necessary. Since tiny homes are less burdensome financially, they can enable people to work less and dedicate more time for immaterial things, which can possibly increase quality of life. Since small-size dwellings are often not perceived favourably, we need to change how we think about living spaces and make them functional and efficient (Sandberg, 2018). Sandberg (2018) points out that the current Finnish regulations hinder downsizing by limiting the minimum dwelling size of 20 square meters. Considering that 44 percent of all dwellings in Finland are single-person units, but the average floor area of any dwelling was 81 square meters in 2018 (The Official Statistics of Finland, 2018), there is a need to shift from bigger homes to smaller ones. Less materialistic ways such as a sharing economy and mutual aid economy can help to shift to different lifestyles and consumption models (European Environmental Agency, 2018). Developing communities and possibilities for sharing among community members can help to decrease consumption, lower people's expenses and increase feelings of security and support. Even though tiny homes are not a silver bullet which would help to solve all of the environmental and social issues, they can offer an alternative and more affordable way of living, which can be better for people and the planet. Since the academic literature on this topic is rather limited, increased knowledge on tiny homes could help in learning how to make tiny

spaces more attractive, more functional, effective and more sustainable. Increased knowledge on the carbon footprint of tiny homes and the carbon footprint of the lifestyles of the dwellers of tiny homes would help to develop a more sustainable approach to housing and household consumption.

7.1 Limitations

There are some limitations to this study. First, even though a qualitative approach fits well to the purpose of this study, the interviewer almost always has more control over the conversation in terms of topics and the directions of the dialogue (Tracy, 2013). The same is true for the narrative analysis, where a researcher becomes a co-narrator in the data creation (Riessman, 2008), which can slightly influence the findings of the research. Nevertheless, I aimed to stay as objective as possible in the research process.

Second, the number of interviews might not be sufficient to make any conclusions or generalizations, thus more research is needed in order to understand a tiny home phenomenon better. However, the fact that I visited three homes of the interviewees and, in addition to that, supported my findings by conducting an observation, helped to broaden the understanding of their lives and contributed to the data collection. Moreover, as it was mentioned in the data and research methods section, finding people who live in tiny homes in Finland is not an easy task, what leads to the third limitation: finding dwellers through the snowball technique means that some of them knew each other, thus may have shared a similar attitude to tiny homes. Unfortunately, even though the tiny home movement has been spreading around the world, Finland does not have many tiny home dwellers to make a broad research. Perhaps, focusing on tiny apartments can be one option on how to increase the number of participants since there have been more apartments built, for example by Sato, a Finnish housing investment company.

Third, the results presented people who were living in tiny homes, thus succeeded in living tiny. For them, tiny homes were a positive housing solution. However, this work did not include voices of people who tried to live in tiny homes but chose to give up for one reason or another. Future research on challenges of living in tiny homes can help in developing the tiny home living.

And lastly, limited academic literature on tiny homes in terms of quantity and quality (Anson, 2014; Ford & Gomez-Lanier, 2017; Saxton, 2019) means that no practical comparison could be made. Therefore, it presents a gap in knowledge and a need for future research to understand tiny home dwellers' experiences, consumption practices and their environmental impact.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview questions template

No.	Questions
	Starting questions
1	Could you please tell me a little bit about yourself?
	Tiny home
2	How long have you been living in your current place? Where is it situated?
3	What kind of place is it? Could you describe it, please? Is it rented? Does anyone else live with you?
4	What kind of place did you live in before you moved here?
	Reasons for moving
5	How did you become interested in this kind of living?
	Attitude to personal possessions
6	What kind of process was moving to a tiny house? Did it require any special arrangements? Did you have to give up on something (furniture, clothes, and services)?
7	How did you feel about getting rid of stuff? How did you feel after it was done/how do you feel now?
8	Did you bring any of your old possessions from your previous home? Is there anything special, something that you value the most?
9	What did you have to purchase for your new home, if any?
	Lifestyle questions
10	What services do you use (laundry, gym, sauna, sharing services)? How often do you eat out?
11	How has moving to a tiny home changed your social relationships? Has it affected the way you meet your friends and family (and the frequency)? Do they visit you here? Has it brought new people into your life?
12	What kind of reception did you get when you told your friends, family and others that you are moving to a tiny home?
13	How much do you follow other people's experience on living in tiny homes? In social media? Do you share your experience on social media? Do you personally know anyone who lives in tiny homes? Do you think living in tiny homes is getting more popular?

	Wellbeing questions	
14	How has your life changed since moving to a tiny home (quality of life, free time, business)?
15	What do you value the most in living in tiny home?
	Tiny home experience
16	What are the main differences between living in a bigger and smaller place? Are there any challenges in living in a tiny home? What do you miss the most in living in a bigger place?
17	Going back to the reasons why you moved to the tiny house, how do you feel now living here? (Have those reasons been satisfied?)
18	What are your plans for the future regarding your house (to stay there as long as possible/to build a new one/to make it bigger/anything else)? (How long do you think you will be living in this house?)
	Final questions and closure
19	Would you like to tell anything more on the topic of tiny homes? Any other thoughts?
20	Do you know anyone who would be interested in sharing his or her experience of living in a tiny home?
21	Can I contact you via email if I have more questions?

Appendix 2. Course description

What if you planned a mobile tiny home?
The course on planning a mobile tiny home 27. – 29.7.2018.

A tiny home to suit your life
If you want to build a tiny home that suits your life the best, you should first visualize what kind of life you really want to live. That is why in the course a lot of focus is put not only on the planning of building and interior design methods, but also life planning methods which aim to clarify your own goals, needs and wishes.

During the tiny home planning weekend, the goal is to prepare the course participants thoroughly for the mobile tiny home building and to offer a broad understanding of what things to take into account in its planning and building. The weekend consists of various planning workshops, mini presentations, practical demonstrations and experimentations. Furthermore, the course participants have a chance to see the tiny homes in the course premises.

Course takeaways and benefits
- Affordability: you will learn how to plan and execute the construction process so you can build your own mobile tiny home as affordably as possible.
- Concreteness: you will visualize the necessary things in the construction process and its planning, its materials, its design and tools.
- Design skills: you will form a clear picture of your own plan and you will understand what the execution requires.
- Building information: In addition to the common building techniques, you will learn traditional and eco-building techniques and useful small space tricks that will enable you to build your home to be healthy, purposeful and a fun place to live. In addition, you will learn what useful machines you need to procure for building.
- An understanding of different building solutions: The tiny home course participants will have a chance to visit and get familiar with finished tiny homes and those still under construction. This way you will get a concrete idea of how a small space feels and how beautifully it can look.