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Riikka Aro

Living Standards and Changing Expectations

Investigating Domestic Necessity and Environmental Sustainability in an Affluent Society

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

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ABSTRACT

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This study explores how the problematic relations of rising living standards and environmental sustainability may be better understood by investigating domestic necessity and daily going-on. These key subjects are looked at from two angles and through two kinds of research material: statistics and quantitative survey material constituting of a nationally representative longitudinal dataset of Finnish people (n=2,417 in 1999, n=3,574 in 2004, n=1,202 in 2009), and in-depth interviews (n=14) of a particular socio-economic group, the well-to-do who have higher-than average income and higher education, and those in their prime working age (30–45 years-old). The survey material provides a temporal change perspective and socio-economic and demographic dimensions while the interviews allows for the exploration of lived and experienced daily lives. A conceptual apparatus informed by theories of practice is utilised.

It is argued in this study that despite sustainability efforts to decrease consumption, levels of necessities and consumption are on a rise. The process is inseparable from socio-cultural and material surroundings that both constrain and construct consumption patterns and expectations. This study supports the view that people are entangled in daily 'musts', managing their daily lives which are scheduled by multiple intersecting practices with often conflicting demands. Therefore, organizing daily life is not necessarily rational or consistent. Obvious priorities are in the comfort and well-being of oneself and one's family. Therefore, despite the general knowledge and concern about environmental issues, and the leeway provided by the higher education and higher-than-average income, people perceived 'doing sustainability' as requiring money and time, both of which people consider they do not have, and familiarisation, perceived as inconveniencing daily proceedings. This study suggests that the space for sustainability in the organisation of everyday life lies in the intersection of, first, the historical and collective developments as societal sediments and leeway; second, personal histories and lived and experienced life creating predispositions (sediments) orienting the use of people's resources and engagement in practices (leeway); and, third, the environmental space set by natural limits. The findings highlight the need for changes in the overall frame of thinking and operating, including broader systemic changes in pursuing sustainability.

Keywords: necessity, sustainability, normality, daily life, standard of living

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FOREWORD

I begin these words with a confession: I never had any plans or intentions of becoming a researcher. Growing up, I only wanted to do what I love, to become a dancer and/or a singer. I came to the university rather late, at the age of 27, and the journey that then followed, particularly during my studies in Social and Public Policy, may be called an awakening to environmental issues and I began to hear a different kind of music to dance to. The associated 'world anguish' and the followed transformation of my own life has led to an enduring interest in 'dancing around' the problematics of the lives that we lead and our place in this puzzling and complex social and natural world. This journey of becoming a researcher in the substance matter I am passionate about in my personal life, as well, has been filled with numerous big and small lessons, most of which I owe my gratitude to the amazing and wise people encountered as colleagues, teachers in research and in life, and as friends. Importantly, in learning new and exploring the world, I have come to realise how little I (we) actually know – and that the journey never ends.

At the final steps of this project, I turned 40. There are many things in life and in research I would do differently knowing what I now know and having the experiences I now have. It is perfectly clear, however, that I would still take on this exploratory project, since the motivation for it is even more important and evident than it was in the beginning of the process: the future of our ways of life and the role and significance of environmental civilization in those.

For smoothing of my bumpy journey as a young scholar, I would like to thank my supervisors Terhi-Anna Wilska, Minna Autio and Kimmo Jokinen. Terhi-Anna "took me out" starting from the very beginning of this journey and socialized me to the scholarly world of consumption research(ers) and helped my integration to the lively group of ESA Consumption research network. My PhD research project would not have been realized without the funding of the (now late) Faculty of Social Sciences at University of Jyväskylä, and the scholarship rewarded to me by Emil Aaltonen Foundation and the assurance these provided me to continue my work. I want to express my sincere gratitude also for the thorough pre-examination of my work to Associate Professor Alice Grønhøj from Aarhus University and Professor Pekka Jokinen from University of Tampere. And for Professor Grønhøj, a warm thank you for agreeing to act as the opponent to this thesis.

I have had the delightful opportunity to work and to live this experience through with a group of amazing colleagues. For in and out of office discussions and escapism I thank my past and present fellow scholars at the Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy, particularly my home unit of sociology. I am also forever grateful to the amazing cross-disciplinary collegial group 'You're awesome!', Anna Haverinen, Eerika Koskinen-Koivisto, and Kirsi-Maria Hytönen, for the provided perspective and sparkling wine for whatever purpose needed. As it turned out, we really could do it! For what have often been life-saving sanctuaries of love, friendship, care, and good food, I thank my

friends, relatives and loved-ones: Eerika, Eliza Kraatari, Sini-Mari Lepistö and Sanna Vierimaa, my sisters Henna and Katri, and my parents who have always believed in me and supported me in whatever I have set out to do, and Markus, my fellow traveller in heart and soul in this craziness, thank you for the family that I have in all of you.

Eläpä hättäile…

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CHART

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1 INTRODUCTION

Our ways of life and consumption are far from being environmentally sustainable. Considering the challenges we now face with climate change at the forefront of unforeseen environmental threats, this is not a matter without significance (e.g. Durning, 1992; Urry, 2010; Spangenberg, 2014). Addressing the unsustainable consumption and ways of life, has proven to be difficult and sensitive issues to address in policy, politics, economics, and research. For one, this is because how we live, what and how we consume, in affluent consumer societies like anywhere else, is much more about mundane and ordinary practices such as moving ourselves and things about, doing housework, shopping for and preparing food and eating, communicating, and attending to ourselves and to others in various ways, than about competitive or conspicuous consumption *per se* (e.g. Gronow and Warde, 2001). Addressing these would mean questioning the social, material, as well as, political foundations of these unsustainable practices.

Also, irrespective of the *standard of living* people commonly consider living ordinary lives and doing normal things from their own point of reference. This is problematic, as what is perceived as 'normal', 'decent', and 'necessary' are under constant temporal change, varying geographically, and potentially having huge impacts on the environmental loading we produce. Adding to this complexity is the fact that positive attitudes towards environmental protection or concerns about climate change do not causally lead to accordant behaviour, but also, what may be framed as 'environmentally sound' or 'green', might not produce expected impacts (Csutora, 2012). This, among the critical voices in social sciences, such as proponents of *degrowth* (see Fournier, 2008; Jackson, 2009), is not least due to market mechanisms concealing environmental 'bads' (externalities) and relying on technological development to turn the tide, or because of inefficient and incoherent policy measures and the long-standing tradition of attributing agency to people mainly as consumers.

Economic and societal imperatives and ideologies, conditions and systems are in many ways mirrored at household and individual levels and in how people lead their lives (McNeill and Wilhite, 2010). Households do not function in a vacuum and therefore it is important to recognise the restricted, conditioned and governed nature of our daily lives, and the embeddedness with our various roles as citizens, consumers, householders etc. in those conditions as both reproducers of status quo and potential transformers (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014). Therefore, it is maintained in this study that households are in a key role to understanding daily life, what people do, and why people live the way we do (Scott, 2009).

Scholars in various fields widely agree that concerning our ways of life, the major contributors to environmental impacts are mobility, housing, and food. In aggregate, these domains account for up to 80 per cent of the life cycle environmental impacts in industrialised countries (Ivanova et al., 2016; Tukker et al., 2010.) illustrated by different indicators, such as GHG emission per consumption expenditures (Druckman and Jackson, 2010; Nissinen et al., 2012) and by combinations of emissions and material use indicators (Spangenberg and Lorek, 2002). Another question is what is required for reaching the limits of sustainability and by whom.

In Finland, environmentally and ethically sustainable attitudes have been gradually strengthening and people have expressed willingness to lower their living standards to protect the environment (e.g. Tulokas, 1998; ISSP, 2010: environment). However, socio-demographic factors (income, education, social class, age, gender, household type) strongly influence the ways we live our lives. However, the connections or relationships between attitudes and behaviours as well as the socio-demographic factors and behaviour are ambiguous (e.g. Kujanen et al., 2014). For instance, on the one hand higher income may result in high levels of (unsustainable) consumption and acquired knowledge of its effects on the environment without impact on daily goings-on, and on the other hand awareness along with extra income may result in investing in more environmentally sound alternatives, such as in heating systems (e.g. thermal power) or a biogas car. Not all sustainable choices require money, however; settling for less square meters, opting out of automobility and decreasing meat consumption may save money and help lower the environmental load (e.g. Kotakorpi et al., 2008; cf. Csutora, 2012), the latter two contributing to better health, too, both directly and through cumulative effects. Although there seems to be strong support for consuming less people may not live according to those rationales (see Assadourian, 2010; Hobson, 2010), and what are considered as possible, as true alternatives for their daily life plays a crucial role in organising of daily life.

It has been shown in previous studies that along with commonly having larger dwellings and increased travel, and relying more on private cars, those are also perceived necessary more commonly among people with higher income. In order to be satisfied with our consumption, we are also more likely to keep up with consuming more rather than to lower our expectations. (Guillén-Royo, 2010; Karlsson et al., 2004.) Accordingly, higher income has been claimed to entail greater (but less than proportional) environmental impacts (e.g. Tukker et al., 2010; Csutora, 2012; Kotakorpi et al., 2008; Spangerberg and Lorek, 2002). Furthermore, what have to be accounted for and are part of the operation of consumer societies are termed *rebound effects* (e.g. Brannlund et al., 2007; Jackson, 2005). These affect the actual environmental loadings of our activities: changing to a less petrol-consuming vehicle may result in driving more and money saved from energy bills may be used for more air travel (see also Gram-Hanssen, 2014 about 'prebound' effect). In a wider perspective, the overall development of living standards and the rising levels of consumption may negate the positive developments in energy and material efficiency.

We live in an inescapably material world, in built surroundings and technologies, desiring things, finding purpose for them and by them. Material goods are central to the inquiry as they play a particularly interesting role in the process of certain ways of doing things becoming matters-of-course: through the complex process of things becoming incorporated into the standard of living, and into the daily life considered 'normal' and 'decent', the standard has the capacity of constantly moving upward (Dwyer, 2009: 334-335; Wilk, 2001). This collective process of ratcheting has been understood as one of the dynamic reasons behind escalating volumes of consumption (e.g. Shove, 2003a). Thus, I take seriously the dilemma introduced above concerning sustainability efforts in affluent societies and the socio-economic configuration. Previous studies have shown that people in rich developed countries are aware of and concerned about environmental matters, as well as willing to lower their consumption on environmental grounds, while particularly the well-to-do are generally consuming more than people with less resources both globally and within countries (e.g. Fairbrother, 2013; Franzen and Meyer, 2010; 2010; OECD, 2014; Uusitalo and Oksanen, 2004; Markowitz and Bowerman, 2011). For these reasons, the dynamics of rising living standards and perceptions of necessities are crucial for studying households and in considering the endeavours for environmental sustainability. In this study, decent living standards are viewed to consist of what people consider necessary for daily proceedings and what is normal for people to have and how to normally live their lives. Unavoidably, the fact that this changing construction of 'normal' life is environmentally unsustainable (see e.g. Hirvilammi, 2015) must be taken into account, particularly with my focus here on the upper limit of 'environmental space' as the threshold between both unsustainable under- and overconsumption (ibid.; Spangenberg, 2014).

1.1 Setting the scene

1.1.1 Society and the environment

In talking about the future, people usually talk about issues related to their own and their family's life courses and wellbeing: renovating their homes, planning holidays, health and situations of loved ones, planning meals, etc. Rarely are topics such as economic growth, globalization, peak-oil, expansion of consumer culture, population growth, water scarcity, food crisis, and so forth, touched upon. These are all, however, assumed to be issues of relevance in the suggested *'anthropocene'* (orig. Crutzen, 2000) we are now witnessing, an era in which human impact on the natural environment is viewed as both crucial and devastating. Warnings about the potentially uncontrollable effects (as opposed to transformation by design, e.g. Spangenberg, 2014; Victor, 2008) of global climate change, such as drastically rising sea levels, increasing violence and poverty, and shortages of food (IPCC, 2014) are reported in the media like any other news[1]. The environmental crisis and our daily lives do not seem to connect.

Concerning environmental issues and society, there has been much debate about the limits of the natural world, specifically the biosphere as a finite system, and the economy as its sub-system (e.g. Daly, 1991; Jackson, 2009). In addition, some rather radical views have developed around 'naturalised' consumption as a function of the economy along with higher standards of living and routinized needs, wants and taken-for-granted ways of life (Redclift, 1996; Shove, 2003a). First published at the time of the first oil crises in 1972, the book, *Limits to growth* (Meadows et al., 1972) presents a critical view to economic growth and provides detailed information on effective methods to reduce associated energy use. Much debated, even in the new millennium, the work has been claimed as overly pessimistic, even unscientific and inaccurate, and doomed to the "dustbin of history" (e.g. Lomborg and Rubin, 2002). The book's grim prognosis of collapse of the natural basis of our systems of production was also largely ignored by policy makers and the pursuit of economic growth has continued, business-as-usual. While the debate continues, the current state-of-affairs has proven the prognosis correct (e.g. Lorek and Spangenberg, 2013; Speth, 2008; Turner, 2014.)

Aimed at responding to the threats revealed and uttered during the past decades, sustainable development, as an objective and as a concept, was formulated in the Brundtland Report *Our Common Future* by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987). It conceptualized *sustainable consumption* as *"the use of goods and services that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimising the use of natural resources, toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants over life cycle, so as not to jeopardise the needs of future generations"* (WCED, 1987: 23). In many ways, it also proclaimed a deepening linkage between ecology and economy (see Hopwood et al., 2005). This interpretation has been viewed as aimed towards the 'rationalisation of lifestyles' grounded in the ideas of efficiency (Hobson, 2010) conceptualized as and developed by several strands of ecological modernization (e.g. Mol and Sonnenfeld, 2000; Spaargaren, 1997). However, the original definition with meeting needs and respecting finite natural limits may still be viewed as robust, as for instance Sylvia Lorek and Joachim Spangenberg (2013) have stated.

Sustainability is composed of many interpretations, according to the extent to which they offer alternatives to our existing patterns of development, production, consumption, and governance having varying degrees of ecological orientation and social equity goals (Hopwood et al., 2005). To date, conceptual

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1 E.g. YLE 31.3.014, *"Climate change causes risks for the wellbeing of people and nature"*.

and empirical interpretations of sustainable development range from deep ecological premises and ideas of 'harm not' and of 'less is more' embracing frugality or moderation, to the idea of sustaining economic growth by way of green consumption, market mechanisms, technological fixes, and trust in human innovativeness, also referred to as green growth (see Wapner, 2010[2]). These are discussed as potentially creating new ways to deal with issues of 'more with less'. The 'less is more' ideology refers to what has been called 'strong sustainability', or the sufficiency strategy, and the latter as 'weak sustainability' or the efficiency strategy (e.g. Fuchs and Lorek, 2005; Hobson, 2013; Lorek and Spangenberg, 2013).

Policies dealing with sustainability have been discursively 'greening', but also strongly occupied with and relying on the latter (Hopwood et al., 2005). Along with the wider sustainability related development programs and trends (OECD, 2011; UNEP, 2011), policies (e.g. Salo, 2014 on energy policy in Finland) and sustainable consumption and production policy programs ("More with less, and better", YM, 2005; "Wiser from less", YM, 2012) are grounded on the 'efficiency paradigm' aiming towards 'green growth' (cf. Berg and Hukkinen, 2011), While these are considered crucial, the recently announced European Commission guidelines for member countries on emission reductions has created some challenges. Finland is required to reduce 39 per cent of the country's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the 2005 level by 2030 (European Commission, 20.7.2016). Consequently, alternate approaches to social change towards sustainability have been proposed by experts and scholars from various fields (e.g. Lorek and Spangenberg, 2014; Vihalemm et al., 2015).

Looking at the developments of social science with respect to environmental issues (e.g. Dunlap, 2010; Lockie, 2016), Dunlap (2002: 332-333) claims an implicit adoption of the assumption of technological development, economic growth, and progress as the normal state of affairs among sociologists. Among a number of scientists and other experts, however, a continued concern surrounds our contemporary consumer society that is viewed as an economic organisation geared toward maximising economic growth with the logics of production requiring constant and rising consumption from its members (Jackson 2009: 65; Ilmonen, 2007; Redclift, 1996). These critical views include various ideas ranging from the more lifestyle-oriented approaches to sustainability, such as voluntary simplicity (Alexander and Ushher, 2012) and down-shifting (e.g. Hamilton, 2003) to the more politically-oriented ones such as anti-consumerism (Black and Cherrier, 2010; Humphery, 2010) and degrowth (Fournier, 2008; Latouche, 2004). There are also those 'setting the environment aside' to have a better view of the developments of escalation and standardization of consumption (e.g. Shove, 2003a) among others.

Confronting the premises of sustainability, economist Tim Jackson (2009: 8) sees that "the failure to take the dilemma of growth seriously may be the single

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2 Human innovativeness as the promethean ethos is critiques by e.g. Wapner, 2010; cf. Fournier, 2008: 540.

biggest threat to sustainability that we face" due to, for instance, the overly optimistic expectations towards technological development (also Lorek and Spangenberg, 2014). Looking at this problematic relation, it has been claimed that the term 'sustainable growth' "should be rejected as a bad oxymoron" (Daly, 1991: 6) and sustainability should in turn be view as challenging the prevailing power relations and growing volumes of consumption. This view is shared by a number of scholars, including Meyer and Maniates (2010), Fournier (2008), and Southerton and colleagues (2004).

What makes the matter even more difficult to face is that consumption, daily life, and sustainability are inherently bound to questions of human wellbeing and good life. Economists and social scientists have viewed these questions in various ways in recent decades (e.g. Daly and Cobb, 1989; Easterlin, 1974; Max-Neef, 1992; Nordhaus and Tobin, 1973; Sen, 1985). As industrial societies have, according to Hoffrén (2011; 2012), failed to recognise and tackle the fact that wellbeing may not be enhanced only through abolishment of 'malbeing' or social problems such as unemployment, the structural and functional failings have likewise been overlooked: environmental problems, among others, are deeply rooted in the functioning of the societies and economy, and therefore investment of any amount of money, he claims, will not fix them. Furthermore, as economic growth measured in GDP and accompanied by the throughput of resources (see Speth, 2008) has been considered 'a default value' in development discussions (Daly, 1991), it has been particularly challenging to materialise what exactly 'sustainable development', 'sustainable consumption' and 'sustainable living' stand for.

The claimed 'oxymoronic' relations between growth and sustainability are thus also deeply rooted in discussions on what proper progress and development are. Since the early warnings of the Club of Rome and the Brundtland report, a lot has happened (e.g. Hopwood et al., 2005), but debate around the same dilemmas continues: how to define sustainability (with or without growth, efficiency or sufficiency), what is needed for the change towards it (attitudes, behaviour, structural change), and are those wrong questions altogether (see Shove, 2010b). What seems evident is that more attention should be paid to the notion that consumerism, that is, a social and economic order of the era of mass consumption that fosters growth in consumption (Bauman, 2007: 11), in relation to sustainability is a structural and an ideological problem of the whole of contemporary society (Peattie and Collins, 2009). This includes debating what we view as development (e.g. Dunlap, 2002; 2010; Escobar, 1995: Lockie, 2016), as affluence[3] (e.g. Sachs et al., 1998), and as normal.

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[3] Baudrillard's notion about growth producing both wealth and poverty, and growth being needed to maintain the system and contain the poor is interesting. According to Ritzer (1998) he claims that growth society is actually the opposite of affluent society: "*society is expanding part of its surplus in order to keep the public in line. Public munificence is seen as a kind of ideological constraint (engendering a myth of service rather than a view of the world where anything is bought and sold) and a kind of social control.*" (Ritzer, 1998: 2-3)

1.1.2 Consumer society: about developments and key actors

A journalist in the number one Finnish daily newspaper Helsingin Sanomat inquired in her column (HS, 3.8.2016[4]) about the ahostoricity of what we currently consider 'normal' in our mundane surroundings with an example of meat consumption and its position as the "default ordinary meal". The writer refers to a recent study[5] on food systems, and the heavy environmental load and negative health effects of our animal-sourced diets pointing out the benefits of (and wisdom in) considering meat (for one) as a rarity, a luxury. The posed question concerning our default choices and perceptions of normality is aptly put, as there seem to be normalities in our daily realities that may appear natural, some peculiar, and some irrational depending on the perspective. What is normal? How is normality made, constructed, or done? How does normality relate to possibility? How do those relate to sustainability?

For something, an item, a service, an appliance, or an idea to become perceived as normal follows various trajectories that involve action, and socio-cultural and material "inputs" of various sorts (e.g. Quitzau and Røpke, 2008; Lehtonen, 2003; van Vliet et al., 2005). For example, computers, the Internet and self-service, having a variety of fruits and vegetables available all year round, and having them in the same shape and form around the globe, super-sized soda bottles and bags of candy, having the same indoor temperature during summer and winter, flushing drinking-water down the drain, driving kids to school by car rather than sending them independently walking or by bike etc. These things, services and behaviours, once unknown or rare, are in the contemporary time a reality for a massive number of people, especially those in the affluent world, while other items, services and behaviours have vanished, become obsolete, unusual or rare, or may be re-appearing or re-gaining popularity. These trajectories are contextual in having different characteristics in different socio-cultural and technical settings, and the changing notions of what constitutes a comfortable house, for instance, and what is viewed as convenient, vary in time and from one region to another (Wilhite et al., 1996).

Perception and diffusion of novelties, and their normalization have been studied in humanities and in social sciences from innovation studies to ethnology (e.g. Ahlqvist and Heiskanen, 2006; Löfgren, 1996; Mikkola, 2006; 2009; Pantzar, 2000; Røpke, 2001). Ethnologist Seppo Knuuttila (1994: 40) claimed the explaining and writing about processes of the past from the perspective of the 'end-product' (that is inevitably the present day) is "conveniently uncontested and straightforward". This is while, for instance, the development of modern Finland has been anything but a straight line. From the perspective of 'ordinary people', new products and forms of production (e.g. ready-made vs. tailor-made) were contested and supported in various ways closing some paths, creat-

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4 HS: "Who decided that meat is our normal daily meal?" http://www.hs.fi/ruoka/art-2000002913964.html

5 Springmann et al. 2015.

ing 'processes of lost', while formulating new paths and trajectories (Mikkola, 2006: 170-171). The illusory straightforwardness and inevitability of development paths, have been and are being contested in research by looking at the ordinary, mundane, and contradictory lived and experienced lives of ordinary people (Ahlqvist and Heiskanen, 2006; Helsti et al., 2006; Lehtonen, 2003).

If we briefly look at normalities with a historical lens, we see that in post-war Finland majority of people lived simply, frugally; there was not much to 'consume' and a great deal of materials were used economically, recycled, and reused (Heinonen, 1998). Thus, frugality, though not viewed in the same sense in contemporary discussions on sustainability, was the norm. The important notion here is that when others were viewed as living according to same norms and ideals, it was more acceptable and thus easier for everyone to live in moderation (see Aro, 2010). Frugality was also seen to serve the interests of the society and Finland as a 'nation'.

According to Robbins (2004) a general departure from the culture of moderation and thrift towards what he names the 'culture of capitalism' was characteristic to the 1800s. In Finland, however, this departing has occurred at a much later stage and the remains of the 'ethos of thrift and moderation' are still alive (Heinonen 2004; Huttunen and Autio 2008; Jalas and Rinkinen, 2012; Lehtonen and Pantzar, 2002). In many respects frugal living was led 'by force', in the post II World War Finland, dictated by the unusual circumstances and scarce resources. People did not necessarily experience being 'deprived', but rather 'having everything they needed' despite living with objectively scarce resources (e.g. Aro, 2010; Huttunen and Autio, 2008; see also Hirvilammi, 2014). Looking at the current state of affairs, one might ask if the circumstances now are not unusual and special and the resources scarce (Spangenberg, 2014).

Alongside massive societal changes, such as urbanisation and the overall construction of the welfare state in Finland, general improvements in housing and living conditions, enhancements in services, and level and standard of equipment (e.g. Heinonen, 1998: 246-256; Karisto et al., 2008; Pantzar, 1997), living 'like others' has on the other hand, meant 'keeping up' in many ways (e.g. Frank, 2000; Schor, 1998) with the development, and pursuing the markers of a modern urban lifestyle, pursuing comfort and following the modern idea of a good life (Aro, 2010). For the majority of people, this has entailed pursuing more speed, more convenience and more comfort by acquiring the appropriate and desired tools, such as a car, a bigger apartment or house, a summer cottage, more and new technical appliances for efficient house-keeping, cleanliness and convenience, and for instance the enjoyment and comfort of flying for vacations abroad (Shove, 2003a).

Therefore, while people have benefitted greatly from the consumer society, and are enjoying the advantages (e.g. Heinonen, 2000), leading a normal life has led to dealing with its structural and normative restrictions, both consciously and unconsciously. For many it has meant ethical and moral contemplations and dilemmas (e.g. Heinonen, 1999; 2004; Lehtonen, 1999; Schor, 2000) along with realization that consumption and daily life alike are profoundly political in the sense that whatever one does or chooses, there are consequences (e.g. Massa and Ahonen, 2006). Wanting to be full members of a society, in wanting to belong and to live normally has meant being more or less entangled with consumerism, governing, managing and providing for us in various ways. In so doing, rather than looking at consumption as an end-point (use and purchase; see also Randles and Warde, 2006), it is viewed as inherently carrying along the overall life-cycle of environmental effects from extracting resources to disposal (e.g. Røpke, 1999).

If viewed as inscribed with capacity to influence peoples' lives, normality and propriety of certain kinds of consumption, of ways of desiring and using things and of living our lives, are important. In addition to the changing socio-material surroundings (e.g. Hand et al., 2005), those are produced directly or by way of the strategic actors of consumer society, the state, political class and businesses, as well as the media (Ilmonen, 2007: 252; Sanne, 2002; 2005). Power relations between different actors of consumer society may be seen as reciprocal in their aspirations to formulate, guide, and restrict one another (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006: 17). Thus, to some extent, consumers and other specified actors are accountable in the construction of consumer societies and are involved in the power structures shaping and renewing ideologies and socio-political structures.

Juliet Schor, a sociologist and an active critical voice in contemporary consumer research (e.g. 1998; 2010), has noted that these relations are not balanced. Considered the counterforce to businesses and production in consumer society and often referred to as 'sovereign', Schor (2007: 28) notes that individual consumers may be seen as 'off-power' when it comes to real freedom of choice and power to make a difference (Eräranta and Moisander, 2006: 17–26; Princen, 2010). Don Slater (1997: 28) refers to this in talking about the positive and negative sides of freedom inherent in capitalist consumer cultures: on the one hand, freedom from being interfered in the private sphere by policy, but on the other hand being confined to the privacy of the domestic and consumer sphere as "having no public significance". In the markets, however, consumers are seen to be guided by the marketers and businesses affecting consumption also by way of the government – the political class and businesses are linked, mutually dependent and have converging interests (see Sanne, 2002: 281–282; 2005; also Lehtonen, 1999). According to Schor, the growing corporate power over [American] consumers' lives has been accompanied by "the dominance of an ideology that posits the reverse" (2007: 28).

This consumer ideology, according to Kaj Ilmonen (2007), functions in discursive realities and in practice reinforces the normalities and thus the prevailing (power) relations within a society. While consumers are recognised as being constrained in various ways, some have even claimed that people have "little choice but to consume in unsustainable way if they are to participate fully in that society" (Southerton et al., 2004: 32 ref. Levett et al., 2003; also Bauman, 2007). This ideology is claimed to be accompanied by the (unconsciously) self-governing individuals as consumers whose choice-sets are interconnected acts of mostly routine consumption and conditioned by socio-material arrangements (Southerton et al., 2004: 33, 38-39). In this view, while the consumer enacts and reproduces the ideology, particular doings are ‘supported’ by related production and infrastructure.

Facing the entwined social and environmental problems described above, an inescapable question is, are people’s ways of life – how people conduct their daily lives – open for criticism? Another relevant question is where should the focus of this criticism lie? In discussing consumer society and research, Juliet Schor (et al., 2010) has argued for a moral stance – a critical evaluation of current state of affairs including dominant ideologies and ways of life with respect to environmental issues. From this perspective, the essential matter is that ‘growth’ as a macro-economic imperative, a regime as a set of conditions, and ideology as a worldview along with infrastructures and socio-technical systems, is mirrored at the levels of households and individuals, the practices they are engaged in, the competences required for the performance and the expectations thus generated (McNeill and Wilhite, 2010; Shove, 2010). The critique goes against the core meta-logics of our ways of life: ideas of freedom of choice, comfort, and normality. Asking difficult questions should, however, be the task of social scientists (e.g. Redclift, 1996; Shove, 2010b; Wilk, 2004). Then, the critical stance may also be viewed as not (solely) a moral issue, but a political matter as well, as it refers to people as both consumers and citizens (see Dobson, 2003; Fournier, 2008; Princen, 2010) with a perspective of looking at the possibilities and spaces for action. The objective of research is not to moralize or to criticize individuals or households, but as I have done here, to investigate and bring to the discussion some relevant features of the dynamics of consumption and daily life with respect to environmental concerns.

1.2 Aims and focus

The background presented thus far was my main incentive for doing research of this kind. The research task of this study is to investigate environmentally problematic and constantly evolving standards of living with the unavoidable linkages to economic growth and future developments of consumer societies. The objective was set in order to better understand the characteristics and entanglement of living standards, necessities, domestic life, and environmental sustainability in the context of an affluent consumer society. These key subjects are looked at from two angles and through two kinds of research material: with quantitative survey data and statistics and their advantages of sample size and aggregate information, and with qualitative interviews and their more detailed take on the research task.

The objective of this thesis is to explore *how the problematic relations of rising living standards and environmental sustainability may be better understood by investigating domestic necessity and daily going-on*. The research task is divided into three research questions:

1. How has the construction of decent living standard (ownership and necessity) developed in Finland and what are the key determinants?
2. How is domestic necessity constituted in daily realities of well-to-do households?
3. How is necessity constituted in mobility practices of well-to-do households and are there alternatives to the taken-for-granted thinking about and doing of mobility?

In the first article (Aro and Wilska, 2014) we utilized both a quantitative longitudinal dataset and official statistics, and investigated how ownership and perceptions of necessity have developed in Finland during the beginning of the Millennium, and how key socio-demographic factors affect perceptions of necessity of Finnish householders. Ownership and necessity perceptions were considered to construct an aspiration level setting new 'launching pad' for future expectations, and therefore of particular interest and relevant to the investigation of evolving living standards.

The findings of the first article raised further questions particularly concerning the nature of and relationship between expectations, necessity, and socio-economic configurations. This oriented the research project into the direction of the second angle: scrutinising a particular demographic and socio-economic group, namely the well-to-do in a well-to-do society. With their anticipated level of social and cultural capital, they were expected to be able to articulate and reflect their daily lives. Also, with higher income considered a generator of higher levels of consumption and therefore a heavier environmental burden, and accounting for the tendency of people to adjust to their circumstances and to adopt consuming patterns of their social contacts and peers, the well-to-do are considered to provide an interesting perspective to the investigation.

In the second and third articles (Aro, 2016a and Aro, 2016b) the focus was then set on people with higher income, with higher education, and people aged 30 to 45 years, commonly considered as living their rush-years, that is, having children and/or elderly parents to take care of, but commonly also, for instance, amid an active professional life. My particular interest and aspiration to investigate environmentally significant domains of daily life and consumption was thrust forward by studies with special interest in household practices and the evolution of living standards. With their significance in the environmental loading of households, and following the preconceptions of domestic necessity, two areas of daily life were then selected for further scrutiny: *household practices* with specific focus on doing and negotiating domestic necessities (Aro, 2016b) and *mobility practices* (Aro, 2016a) focusing on shared and taken-for-granted aspects in certain ways of carrying out and thinking of daily and leisure mobility. Utilising in-depth interviews, with this second perspective I aimed at better understanding the expectedly complex organizing of daily life of the households studied.

In the forthcoming chapters I will introduce the conceptual framework of my thesis, research materials and methods used, followed by summaries of the key findings and conclusions of the original research articles included in this thesis, including theoretical and policy implications. I will make final remarks by briefly returning to issues of economic growth and environmental sustainability with respect to domestic daily life, discussing the responsibilities and freedoms of what is possible and what is impossible, realistic and utopian (Meyer and Maniates, 2010).

2 THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL PREMISES

This thesis approaches the complexity of organising daily life, through social theories of consumption and daily life. Results of the negotiations of how to organise or coordinate the daily life involve individual rationalities as more or less conscious deliberations on available, unavailable, impossible, and possible modes of doing something, tools and devices, and multiple possibilities in their practical appropriations and utilisation. But importantly, those also include repetitive performances and declarations about the taken-for-granted aspects of ordinary life (e.g. Bourdieu, 1977; de Certeau, 1988; Gronow and Warde, 2001; Heller, 1984; Scott, 2009). The thesis views people as embedded and entangled in a complex socio-material ordering of daily life (e.g. Southerton et al., 2004).

2.1 Everyday life and sustainable consumption as research interests

> "[O]ur everyday life depicts the reproduction of a current society in general; it depicts the socialization of nature on the one hand, and on the other hand, the degree and manner of its humanization." (Heller, 1984: 4)

Investigating daily life or the everyday (see Gardiner, 2000; Highmore, 2002) is a task of aiming to grasp something that is easily escapable, ambiguous and ordinary to a degree of being viewed uninteresting for research (Ehn and Löfgren, 2009: 99; 2010). The study of daily life involves the investigation of precisely that, the 'ordinary' (what is mundane, familiar or unremarkable), 'normal' (as opposed to unconventional or deviant) and 'decent' (what is right, proper and sufficient). This means finding out what is going on in the daily lives of people and why (Scott, 2009: 4). Considering the routine, repetitive, rhythmic and habitual nature of this ordinary life it is important to recognise that beside these unremarkable, but intriguing and complex features, the everyday world is infused with power, politics and historical significance and thus it is crucial "to critically evaluate, for instance, the origins of social practices and the interests they may serve" (ibid.: 2 ref. Martin, 2003; also de Certeau, 1988; Morgan, 2011).

Through investigating and analysing the everyday we are able to grasp better understanding of our own lives, as we as researchers are unavoidably part of the domain of our study (see Hämeenaho, 2014). Philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1971; 1991) has suggested that by scrutinizing small scale happenings and through understanding of the structures and functioning of a society, we are able even to reveal the constitution and history of (capitalist consumer) societies (Jokinen, 2005 ref. Lefebvre, 1991; also Ehn and Löfgren, 2009). The concept of 'everyday' or the daily life was established to describe the unreflective, routinized and repetitive life in the modern industrial society and, importantly, along with its newly begun production of consumer products, clothes, utility products, etc. and further, their domestication and use (Heinonen, 2012; Jokinen, 2005; Ahlqvist et al., 2008). Although Lefebvre (Jokinen, 2005) recognised the force of alienated rhythms of modern life and the 'rise' of the individual as separated from the community bound to the roles, schedules, and ideas of efficiency in industrial production and market forces, he still considered the modern society as a path to freedom and to societal change through critical inspection of daily details.

For Agnes Heller (1984) alike, the everyday is about practicality and non-reflectivity and a place (or a space) for togetherness and habit formation, reproduction, and transformation. Another critical issue, the experienced and lived nature, is emphasised by sociologist Eeva Jokinen (2005: 29[6]), who writes that the daily life is "a process of lived routinization in which we adjust to expectations and assumptions, rules of conduct and to practices that appear to be self-evident, matters-of-course". Jokinen (2005: 27-28, 31-32) explicitly refers to Judith Butler's 'performativity' (1999) and Pierre Bourdieu's 'habitus' (1977; 1990) in maintaining that this entails both the idea of change and stagnation: the performance of daily life is constantly co-evolving with cultural, political, economic, and institutional circumstances and preconditions, but while it has the potential for transformation it may as well stagnate in reproduction or reaction (also Giddens, 1984; Heller, 1984).

Although this study is concerned with daily life easily and justly associated with the household and the home, the sites, places, and spaces of this reproduction and transformation are not narrowed to the domestic sphere as such. To better understand the contemporary daily life, (sustainable) consumption is recognised as a constitutive domain, the conditions of which are similarly crucial: as consumers people have to operate within the context of the '*consumer society*' (e.g. Schor and Holt, 2000) that may be viewed to represent a socially constructed bubble of normality, "of norms, values, lifestyles and assumptions", forming also a frame of reference for people writing and reading about

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6 Writers own translation.

(sustainable) consumption (Peattie and Collins, 2009: 109). What this means is, as we are bound to operate inside the bubble, the 'normality' may easily obscure the nature and preconditions from the observer, but with a critical eye it is possible to reveal something relevant regarding its elements and functions.

(Un)sustainable consumption

The basic premise of *sustainable consumption* is that it should be viewed as embedded in natural and social boundaries (Lorek, 2016*).* Still, sustainable consumption has been used as a concept for the actions encompassing various, even contrasting interpretations regarding the development of the consumer society (e.g. Cohen, 2005; Fuchs and Lorek, 2005; Guillén-Royo and Wilhite, 2015; Hobson, 2010; 2013; Jackson, 2005; 2009; Sanne, 2005; Southerton et al., 2004; Spangenberg, 2008). Lewis Akenji (2014), for one, makes a clear distinction between sustainable consumption (SC) and *green consumerism* (GC). The distinctive features he presents are consistent with the approaches discussed in detail by, for instance, Doris Fuchs and Sylvia Lorek (Fuchs and Lorek, 2005; Lorek and Fuchs, 2013), and Kersty Hobson (2013), weak and strong sustainable consumption. *Weak sustainable consumption* (wSC) approaches have their roots in market approaches and technological optimism. They may be framed as efficiency approaches focusing on consumer demand and on 'greening' of commodities, services and products, encouraging consumers to play active role in pursuit of both sustainable development and economic growth. While ethical and environmental standards entailing 'smarter consumption' and 'better products' have been widely implemented (Akenji, 2014), according to a number of scholars (e.g. Lorek and Fuchs, 2013; Hobson; 2013) there are notable pitfalls in the wSC approaches including the unfounded technological optimism, rebound effects contributing to the increasing absolute levels of resources use and overall level of consumption, and issues of social justice. The political acceptance of these approaches promoting 'green growth' is at high level and at present, they are supported by most IGO's (e.g. OECD, UNEP). *Strong sustainable consumption* (wSC) approaches, in turn, are grounded in social innovation and understanding of 'development' deeply embedded in societal, economic and political structures. They pursue risk-averse policies and strategically embrace technological pessimism, disinclination to 'wait and see' and to trust in technological fixes. Based on the sufficiency principle, key foci of this approach are levels and patterns of consumption with the objective of reduced overall consumption levels. sSC approaches have linkages to degrowth in for instance seeing people not solely as consumers, but also as citizens and in displacement of current policy focus in perpetual 'economic growth'. At present, both sSC and degrowth are politically highly controversial. (Akenji, 2014; Fuchs and Lorek, 2005; Hobson; 2013; Lorek and Fuchs, 2013.) The dividing line between the approaches may be useful in research, but it has also framed a variety of social change campaigns, initiatives, and policies as described above. These divergent approaches, though overlapping and intersecting conceptually as well as in aims and methods, lead policy and practice to different routes (Hobson, 2013: 1094) with significant effects on people's realms of possibility.

Demand for sustainability does not only concern consumption as the purchasing and using of items, but rather the overall life-cycle of environmental effects from resources extraction to disposal (e.g. Røpke, 1999). In fact, it is the practice of our entire way of life, and consumption as part of it, that carries the heavy environmental load (e.g. Assadurian, 2010). Here, the focus is on everyday household consumptive activities. In their investigation on the relation between domestic life and environmental damage, Angela Druckman and Tim Jackson (2010) have, in fact, named the daily life, (specifically leisure, recreation, technology, food, and private traffic) as the most environmentally damaging domains measured in GHG emission intensity. Both relative and absolute growth was revealed huge. Further, they claim, there is little effort to "restrain material throughput or income growth" considered as being key factors in the matter (ibid.: 1794). Tukker with colleagues (2010; also Ivanova et al., 2016) accordingly identified as the most critical domains of daily life from the standpoint of environmental sustainability:

- mobility, constituted by automobile and air transport, including holiday travel,
- housing including the use of energy-using products [EuPs],
- food, constituted by meat and dairy, and the other foodstuffs, and beverages.

The above domains account for up to 80 per cent of the environmental burden in industrialised countries. This holds for Finland, as well (e.g. Nissinen et al., 2012; Kotakorpi et al., 2008). Ari Nissinen and colleagues (ibid.) have in their studies of how the key domains of life contribute to the environmental burden, focused on the related 'key indicators' mainly based on climate effects. They note that there are difficulties in measuring and assessing environmental effects accurately due to the complexity of both daily life (and the key domains) and the life-cycles of, for instance, items and materials involved. What these measurements are commonly based on, then, are the average emission per item groups of expenditure[7] (cf. Spangenberg and Lorek, 2002). In Finland, these domains, particularly housing (living space) and mobility (including leisure travel) have in recent decades significantly increased (Ahlqvist, 2004) and the current levels are unsustainable (e.g. Kotakorpi et al., 2008).

There are significant differences between the environmental loadings of different types of households. Concerning housing the majority of those differ-

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[7] Kotakorpi et al. (2008) note that there are notable differences in using different measurements, such as the household MIPS (Material input per service unit) and emissions per item groups of expenditure (e.g. Nissinen et al., 2012): in the former, for instance, the infrastructures have been factored in mobility and housing, while in the latter those are factored in public expenditures. See e.g. Spangenberg & Lorek, 2002 about actors-centred perspective to household sustainability based on absolute measurements of environmental impact. They have utilized a combination of measurements and indicators and come to similar conclusions concerning the key domains.

ences are due to the varying size of lodging (an apartment or a house), including the living density per household, meaning the number of people living together[8]. These have significant effects on the total amount of natural resources consumed (Kotakorpi et al., 2008: 43; Spangenberg and Lorek, 2002: 137; also Gram-Hanssen, 2014). In Finland, to heat one square metre, on average an approximate 210kWh is used yearly (TEM, 2013). This highlights the importance of technological and structural aspects, particularly the mediating technologies and means of production (e.g. fossil-based, nuclear-based, renewables) (e.g. Nissinen et al., 2012; Järvelä and Juhola, 2011). Home appliances and other technical devices and items are important concerning their overall aggregate consumption of materials, water, and electricity despite the developments in efficiency (TEM, 2013). Some reductions have occurred concerning electricity and water consumption of large appliances, such as refrigerators and washing machines (ibid.). Particularly the contribution of the rapidly evolving category of electronic and electrical devices to the natural resource use in households is important due the significance in their *total material requirement* (TMR) as well as their electricity consumption. Therefore, what is important, too, is the rate of renewal and disposal. (Kotakorpi et al., 2008: 64, 66.)[9]

Finland is a country with a strong culture of detached housing (e.g. Ahlqvist, 2004; Juntto, 2004), but also a country of fairly long distances, and highly developed technology (e.g. Puro, 2002; Wilska, 2003). Finland is an affluent society, with relatively high levels of education and comparatively high economic wellbeing. The higher the household's income, the more common it is to live in a detached house and in suburbs in Finland. Moreover, the bigger the dwelling, the more common it is for a household to use a private car for transport and to have more energy using equipment (Purhonen et al., 2014: 227–228, 240; Kotakorpi et al., 2008: 66). Previous studies have also detected a positive correlation between natural resource usage and emissions, and gross earned income (Kotakorpi et al., 2008: 64; Spangenberg and Lorek 2002). High living standards in all Nordic countries, in fact, are related to abundant use of

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8 In addition to the recognition of the cumulative ecological effects of for instance growing living space and the inscribed energy consumption (e.g. Kotakorpi et al., 2008). At the same time, tight living density is commented with critical voices in the media (e.g. HS (May 26, 2015): "Living density of Helsinki homes does not ease off") while Finns are reported (Eurostat, 2015) to be content with living conditions (Taloussanomat: "Did you think living in Finland is tight and expensive" http://www.taloussanomat.fi/asuminen/2015/11/23/luulitko-etta-suomessa-asutaan-ahtaasti-ja-kalliisti/201515465/310). Tight living conditions mean, by definition, more then one person living in one room (kitchen excluded) (Statistics Finland, 2015; http://tilastokeskus.fi/til/asas/2014/asas_2014_2015-05-26_tie_001_fi.html).

9 There are different ways to categorize domains and items with respect to consumption of electricity, energy, water, and materials e.g. Gram-Hanssen, 2014, has categorized all appliances to electricity, while with Kotakorpi and colleagues, 2008, those were counted in the category of housing. These methods are dependent on, for instance, the energy provision systems and the measurements used in each country.), but the various measurements provide information adequate for the purposes of my study.

energy including both housing and traffic (Borup et al., 2008) along with the obvious significance of Nordic climate conditions (see Järvelä and Juhola, 2011).

Along with long distances, the high level of education and technology would be anticipated to entail high volumes of progressive transportation systems. In Finland, the low levels of public transportation exists with increasing levels of private car traffic (Liikennevirasto, 2012; also Ahlqvist, 2004). The organisation of and support for public transportation is problematic due to the scattered settlement of people as well as the suburbanisation of jobs and services. This predicts further increases in mobility related emissions despite the developments made in motor efficiency and vehicle specific emissions reductions as the penetration of electric cars was 0.045 per cent in Finland in 2012, of newly registered vehicles) (LVM, 2013; Trafi, 2012).

The general developments of private automobility have followed somewhat comparable trajectories in many industrialised countries. According to John Urry (2004), its' dominance stems from the path-dependent pattern laid down from the end of the 19th century; economies and societies have been "locked in" to the steel-and-petroleum-car. This historical path-dependency has meant that social life is generally perceived as irreversibly tied to the mode of mobility that automobility generates and presupposes. This is due to the self-expanding character of the car system that has produced and necessitated individualised mobility based upon instantaneous time, fragmentation and coerced flexibility. Despite this, Urry claims, the expansion of automobility is neither socially necessary nor inevitable although we cannot return the 'public transport' of the past centuries; neither do we exactly know the future after the steel-and-petroleum-car. In Finland, both air and private car travel have increased, and the former more than quadrupled since 1980 in distances travelled and more than 80 per cent of total passenger transport is done by private car (Statistics Finland, 2012: 167). According to previous research, the growing dependency on automobility (Kivimaa and Virkamäki, 2014) is due to multiple causes and inter- and path-dependencies: appeal based on the capacity to 'bring places nearer', flexibility, and association with freedom, and the emphasis given in traffic planning, for instance (Shove, 1998; Urry, 2004; Vaismaa et al., 2011).

Sustainability in social theories of consumption

Social theories of consumption may be categorised as ideal typical theoretical formations based on different theoretical traditions and orienting researches to different intellectual practices: utility-based, norm-based and cultural theories, the last including approaches ranging from mentalism to various praxeological accounts (Reckwitz 2002; Warde, 2005). The crucial dividing feature of these ideal typical theoretical formations is the source of social order, and thus the conceptualisation of agency and structure. First, in the utilitarian idea of social world and the idea of 'homo economicus', a purpose-oriented individuals' intentions and interests are the source of social order. Second, a traditional social-theoretical view on social order, that of 'homo sociologicus', is oriented by collective norms and values as the driving forces of action The third category of social theorizing is a variety of approaches named 'cultural theories' (mentalism, textualism, intersubjectivism and practice theories) in which individual agents (although viewed differently in each) are seen to interpret the world based on certain enabling and constraining forms (such as discourses) followed more or less by corresponding behaviour not causally, but through distinct processes. Social order is based on 'shared knowledge' "enabling socially shared way of ascribing meaning to the world" (Reckwitz, 2002: 246). Among the proponents, cultural theories are seen as to pinpoint the "blind spots" of other ways of theorising action by recognising the crucial roles of the implicit, tacit, and unconscious forms of knowledge to human behaviour. These are relevant in the evolution and constitution of what is (or has become) desirable and normal. Taking a rather pragmatic view and therefore closer to my own, key difference between these theoretical orientations, according to Kirsten Gram-Hanssen (2009: 155), is in the *degree* they consider individuals as independent and rational actors or "taking part in collectively shared structures of knowledge, engagements, or technologies". Consumers are here viewed as neither sovereign nor dupe, but understood as partaking in non-instrumental actions, observing and reflecting, but also to more or less unconsciously following routines and engaged in habitual behaviour in which emotions and desires play a role (Reckwitz, 2002).

Elizabeth Shove (2003), among others, has highlighted the importance of investigating the historical paths and trajectories of *comfort* and *convenience* practices, and has been keen to develop tools and methods for better understanding of unsustainable ways of life as well and creeping living standards. Originally for the purposes of environmentally informed sociology (of consumption) Shove, along with sociologists Kaj Ilmonen, Jukka Gronow and Alan Warde (2001), claimed the consistent investigation of normality to be required; it is normality that constructs the unsustainable *'conventional standard of decency'* (Shove and Warde, 1998). Warde and Dale Southerton (2012) likewise have pointed to the formation of habits as a reason for the ratcheting of consumption due to regularised behaviour and the interaction with and co-evolution of material objects and surroundings. In a similar vein, Morgan and Trentmann (2006: 345-346) join a number of scholars in the field of social sciences in maintaining that most consumption and our doings in general (e.g. Bourdieu, 1990: 66), are *routine*-like and *habitual* in nature and that consumers of the affluent west spend ever more on ordinary home utilities than on consumption aiming at purposeful or conspicuous display (Dwyer, 2009; Shove, 2003; Warde, 2005; Randles and Warde, 2006; Røpke, 2009). Accordingly, a significant proportion of consumption is then about 'ordinary practices' such as moving about and communicating. The proponents of this perspective rest on the notion that through this kind of investigation it is possible to reveal something relevant about what is perceived 'normal' in a society and why (Ilmonen, 2001: 23) and through that, unravel the 'bubble' we operate in. Proper or good consumption, right and accepted ways to consume and to live are reproduced, generated and transformed in the carrying out daily life in relation to socio-cultural and material surroundings.

Routines save energy in daily life in reducing uncertainty and preparing us for the new day with the means to cope and without a need to start anew before each situation (Ilmonen, 2007 ref. Dewey, 1958; Giddens, 1984). As individual, or individually performed (unique) acts, routines produce uniformity at a collective level that may be co-constitutive: routines produce feelings and experiences of normality as well as normality at a collective level that in turn condition possibilities of thinking and doing (Ilmonen, 2007; 2011). Social structure is in practice theoretical thinking fundamentally based on routinization as practices "occur in the sequence of time, in repetition", and therefore, social order is in fact social reproduction (Reckwitz 2002: 255; Watson, 2012: 492–493). Both Andreas Reckwitz (2002: 244) and Kaj Ilmonen (2007; 196-197, 199-200) refer to the fundamental role of Weber's (1964) thinking on our understanding of routines and practices. In stating that "behaviour hinders action" Weber referred to the capacity of routines to produce (practical) convenience for 'safeguarding' our daily lives, and according to Giddens (1984: 49) this occurs mostly through the formation of practical consciousness.

Billy Ehn and Orvar Löfgren (2010: 81) point also to the dual role of routines as both constraining (a straight-jacket) and supporting (corset) in the organisation of daily life. Routines and habits in turn carry internalised and embodied knowledge (Ilmonen 2007: 199) that serve as repertoires of disposition of thought and action. In routinized and habitual behaviours, there is an inherent dimension of historicity in daily going-on. During the lived and experienced lives (biography), accumulated sediments in the mind and the body, perceived as dispositions and habitus, may be seen as a routinized way in which the world in understood (e.g. Bourdieu 1990; Ortner 2006; Røpke 2009). Formulating a particular type of path dependency (Røpke, 2009: 2493) through engagement in practices means that we are predisposed to view some practices more appropriate and desirable than others and the practices we are engaged with in turn formulate the path. This process is viewed as a social reproduction of routine and habitual behaviour. However, while opposing change it inherently carries along the possibility of change at each moment in time-space (Shove, 2010) "in everyday crisis of [performance of] routines" (Reckwitz, 2002: 255).

Southerton, Warde, and Hand (2004: 33) have further argued that "most consumption is collectively and normatively derived". In consumer societies, consumption allied with normative constraints may be seen as focusing on "the requirements of 'fitting in' and in the importance of contextual competence" so that social norms in a particular society or a group constrain consumers. This occurs "in terms of broader culturally embedded conventions that are captured by terms such as 'respectability', 'pride' and 'reputation'" (ibid., 2004: 37-39). People have a need to be normal and accepted, and are prone, whether competitively or not, to 'keep up' with what is considered as *decent living standards* (e.g. Dutt, 2008; Dwyer, 2009; Frank, 2000; Jackson, 2009; Sanne, 2002, Schor, 1998). According to Bente Halkier (2001: 41), also be seen as *not* binding moral rules, but rather as drafts for social norms that are reflected and negotiated in various consumption situations.

The framework of *sovereignty* and *autonomy* (freedom of choice) of the consumer (see Ajzen, 1991 about *'theory of planned behaviour'*) as a calculating and self-interested agent (Reckwitz, 2002) has been critiqued with respect to environmental concerns by a number of researchers. They point out that a sustainable society will not be achieved by the choices of the conscious and even concerned individuals as consumers alone (e.g. Eräranta and Moisander, 2006; Keller et al. 2016; Princen, 2010; Randles and Warde, 2006; Shove, 2010a; Vihalemm et al., 2015). The opponents base this critique on the utility - and purpose-based idea of the individual agent, *'homo'economicus'*, and the idea of "informed consumption choices based on deductive reasoning, economic utility maximization and motivational information" (Guillén-Royo and Wilhite, 2015: 304; Maniates 2001; Shove 2010). Moreover, the reductionist approach is claimed of ignoring the mutual shaping of consumption, that is, interaction between individuals, technologies and markets occurring in the frame of policies (Guillén-Royo and Wilhite, ibid.). The practical carrying out daily life is then an indication of the – a reflection of policies, in terms of both success and failure.

Change in consumer behaviour and thus in unsustainable consumption, according to the ABC (attitude-behaviour-change) model is seen to materialise through information, incentives and market steering leading to 'better' ('green') consumption (e.g. Jackson, 2005). The problems concerning current policy work have, in many cases, pointed out that the models those follow are strongly rooted in an individualistic paradigm that holds mainly individuals accountable for pursuing sustainability in way of life and consumption (Southerton et al., 2004). In policy work it leads to a search for measures and instruments that might direct consumers to behave in more sustainable ways or to make more pro-environmental consumption choices (see OECD, 2002). Having encountered sometimes heavy critiques (e.g. Shove, 2010a) also concerning the presumption of linear and causal relations between attitudes and behaviour the debate is among the many unresolved issues in social scientific consumption research: do the relatively easy-to-measure dimensions, such as people's awareness and attitudes of a certain sort ensue accordant behaviour and action? (see e.g. Csutora, 2012; Markowitz and Bowerman, 2011; Heiskanen, 2005; Sanne, 2002; Schor, 2010).

In many studies, people are reported as being more environmentally conscious than before. In Finland, environmentally and ethically sustainable attitudes have been gradually strengthening for long (Tulokas 1998; ISSP 2010: environment; Autio and Heinonen, 2004; Uusitalo and Oksanen, 2004; cf. Koivula et al., 2015). The Finnish Data of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) 2010 concerning environmental issues shows a decline in *materialistic* attitudes, that is, priorities in pursuing wealth, possessions and luxury. Finns also expressed willingness to lower their living standard to protect the environment. The same survey indicates, however, that when asked about related practices informants tended to be much less sustainable. The significance of recent developments remain to be seen, as a representative survey (Koivula et al., 2015) revealed strengthening support for individualistic attitudes in Finland.

In the light of the findings of their study of consumer attitudes in Oregon, USA, Markowitz and Bowerman (2011) point out that despite the consistency in their attitudinal battery with, for instance, wide-spread support for reducing consumption, there is a wide gap between attitudes and actual behaviour. This has been a result of many other studies as well. In the US surveys, Markowitz and Bowerman also asked questions indicating public support for a variety of consumption fees (luxury taxes, support for public transport etc.), revealing only a slight correlation between the attitudes and stated support for accordant policies (all ps<0.05; see ibid.: 11). General trends both in the US and in Europe are, therefore, simultaneously towards rising volumes of consumption and dematerializing attitudes.

Interestingly, the impact of, what Csutora (2012: 151) calls the 'socio-economic configuration', is proven to be much more significant on ecological footprint of consumption (consumption level) than the impact of environmental awareness or attitudes, but even the effects of those remain ambiguous (e.g. Kujanen et al., 2014; OECD, 2014). Csutora refers to socio economic configuration as consisting of income *and* socio-cultural context, including education and the social surroundings one considers belonging to (see Gram-Hanssen, 2014), Habitual patterns of thought and behaviour do not simply disappear when they are provided with information or exposed to the insights of environmental ethics, but tend to remain stable for as long as circumstances allow.

2.2 Daily practices

> "[A] relation (always social) determines its terms, and not the reverse, and that each individual is a locus in which an incoherent (and often contradictory) plurality of such determinations interact. Moreover, the question at hand concerns modes of operation or schemata of action, and not directly the subjects (or persons) who are their authors or vehicles." (de Certeau, 1988: xi)

According to Andreas Reckwitz (2002: 244), the interest in practices stems from the interest in the daily life. Fundamental to the orientation is also the pursuits to better understand us humans in 'natural environments' collaborating with things and other beings (human and non-human or subject and object interactions; e.g. Guillén-Royo and Wilhite, 2015; Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014) in various contexts and situations. There is a longstanding tradition of the study of social practices both in theoretical terms and concerning different aspects of peoples' daily lives (e.g. Bourdieu, 1977; 1990; de Certeau, 1988; Giddens, 1984; Warde, 2005; Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2002; Shove et al., 2012; Wilhite, 2010).

Social practice theory is not one cohesive approach but theorised and utilised in empirical research in various ways (e.g. Martens, 2012; Halkier et al., 2011). In each of its variations it takes under investigation some form of a compilation or ensemble of material objects, such as things and appliances, and practical know-how, habits and routines, and socially sanctioned objectives. All this is occurs or is performed in the context of socio-material systems, social and economic institutions and includes modes of spatial and temporal organization (Southerton, 2013: 339; also Hand et al., 2005). As illustrated above, practices are characteristically repeated daily activities that are relatively routine or trivial, characterised by regularity and "constitute part of the everyday taken-for-granted worlds of the social actors concerned" (Bourdieu 1977: 165-166). In refusing the hyper-rational and intellectualised view on human behaviour or agency and the social, the focus is shifted to practical knowledge, routines, bodily movements, and things (Reckwitz 2002: 258), including the shared aspects of our social existence. Importantly, practices are "carried, enacted, and reproduced by cohorts of 'ordinary' people, without whom it would obviously not exist" (Shove and Walker, 2010: 473; also Heller, 1984) in the form that it currently takes, which points again to the possibility of both reproduction and change. In daily life there is a constant and a dynamic dialogue between practices (established) and intentions (realised or unrealised), in a non-causal, but processual manner, and therefore an intrinsic inconsistency is seen to exist.

An analytic distinction between *practice-as-entity* and *practice-as-performance* is made (Schatzki, 1996; Shove et al., 2012). Practice as entity refers to the historical and collective achievement of concurrent re-enactments and a distinct combination of elements, while practice as performance is the set of interconnected doings and sayings of carriers of practices (people) that both reproduce and transform the practices as entities (Røpke, 2009; Schatzki, 2002; Warde, 2005). Constitutive of any practice is the interconnectedness (and dependency) of its elements. A practice "only exists and endures because of countless recurrent enactments (performance), each reproducing the interdependencies of which the practice (entity) is comprised". (Shove et al., 2012: 7). This is important for the investigation of both stability and change: studying practices may be important as it is (to understand how performing something occurs in daily life), but also for understanding how some practices are excluded and others prevail.

No particular agreed-upon formation or constellation of elements of practices exists, but various theoretical versions as well as empirical applications are utilised. Often cited summarizing formulation of a practice by a philosopher and a recent developer of practice approach, Reckwitz (2002: 250), states that practice is "a routinized way in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described and the world is understood". Philosopher Theodore Schatzki formulated a practice as "a temporally and spatially dispersed nexus of" (1996: 89) and as "a set of interconnected doings and sayings" (2002; 70ff; also Røpke, 2009). In any practice, there are also a multitude of 'intersecting elements' such as commercial pressures and gendered expectations, expectations concerning particular classes, social groups, and external timetables (Morgan, 2011; Southerton, 2006).

Consistent with a definition of practice by Reckwitz (2002) as body/knowledge/things-patterns, domestic practices were viewed in my second article through 'distributed agencies' (Aro, 2016b). The conceptualization I applied was developed by anthropologist Harold Wilhite and colleagues (2008; 2010; also Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014) for the purposes of investigating household energy consumption and sustainability. Through the adopted view, domestic daily life is seen as conditioned by the socio-cultural context, relevant to daily life policies, material goods and arrangements, historicity through dispositions (biography as lived and experienced life), and available resources. 'Doing' and negotiating of domestic necessity were analytically looked at as conditioned by or realised through *distributed agency* (Ortner, 2006); agency was viewed as internalised and embedded forces inscribed in the elements of practises, not properties of internal or external interveners having the potential to influence our actions to a varying degree (Ortner, 2006: 134–135, 152; Giddens, 1984; Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014; Wilhite, 2012). The influences, however, depend on how daily life is carried out (e.g. Halkier et al., 2011; Keller et al., 2016; Morgan, 2011).

In my third article (Aro, 2016a) the elements constituting mobility practices were analytically formed in dialogue with theory and on the interview material. This hermeneutic circulating resulted in presenting mobility practice in the light of shared understandings, knowledge, matters-of-course and time. As these two presented approaches applied in my second and third articles are distinct approaches that overlap in certain ways, I will next illustrate a combination of analytical elements of practices and their inscribed 'agencies', namely 'material world', socio-cultural dimensions', 'the body and the mind' and 'time' emphasising common foundations for the two while introducing some key distinctive characteristics. These elements or categories are analytical, and naturally overlapping.

2.2.1 Material world

Concerning the crucial role of the material world (e.g. Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014) in daily domestic life, the recent arrival of material elements in the investigations is most welcome. Referring to, for instance, Bruno Latour's (2000: 114) claim about artefacts being "the stuff out of which socialness is made", Shove, Pantzar and Watson (2012, 10), place things and materials of everyday life in a constitutive role, "adding a material dimension to what are otherwise conventionally 'social' theories" (also Keller et al., 2016).

Things are seen as necessary elements in practices. Things and their use, that is "using particular things in certain ways" 'mould' social practices, enable and limit certain bodily and mental activities, and certain knowledge and understanding (Reckwitz, 2002: 252-253, 257). In addition to things, also appliances, and the material surroundings are viewed to hold a practice together (entity), but the 'items' are not considered causally to determine use and performance of a practice; those are open for individual interpretation in each unique enactment (Gram-Hanssen, 2009: 161; also Akrich, 1992). This entails also that the material availability, say technology, infrastructural element such as biking lanes etc., does not guarantee use and appropriation and thus the occupation (of the element) into a practice. For the compilation of any practice, Reckwitz (2002: 253) suggests that subject-object (human–non-human) relations should be equally important as subject-subject (human-human) relations. Objects would similarly then be considered as places of the social and the agency (and competencies) would then be viewed as distributed between things and people (Shove et al., 2012). Wilhite (2010) has, as presented above, likewise conceptualised the role of the material elements as 'agency' among other agencies What follows then is that those objects, and the material surroundings more generally, such as infrastructures and technologies, may be seen as to create 'scripts' for future activities (Akrich, 1992; Wilhite, 2008).

With respect to the vast and complex material world we occupy, incorporating a wide spectrum of materiality into the investigation of practices is required as the complexity varies from objects to infrastructures and technologies. Wider material arrangements, such as those concerning energy provision at home (e.g. Chappells and Shove, 2003), as well as for instance houses and roads, enable a wide array of practices (Shove et al., 2012; Southerton et al., 2004). Concerning particularly the investigations of environmental sustainability and bearing in mind the nature of practices as assemblages of elements and contexts the material dimensions should always be viewed in collaboration with other elements and dimensions: the lessons from policy work have repeatedly shown that changing one element (e.g. energy-efficient appliances) may not bring forth the large-scale change expected (e.g. Walker and Shove, 2010; Wilhite and Sahakian, 2014).

2.2.2 Socio-cultural dimensions

Practices are considered as to be guided or directed toward objectives that have shared substantial meaning for people of the same social group or in a particular socio-cultural context. Then, rather than individual motivations, these are shared meanings, cultural and collective conventions (e.g. Gram-Hanssen, 2009; Shove et al., 2012; Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014) and common understandings circulating and spreading through practices (Moloney and Strengers, 2014: 5). Those are complicated and interrelated opportunities and constraints that everyone faces (Shove et al., 2012). Although each individual performance is unique, and each moment individually experienced, they are products of collective conventions and shared understandings (Strengers, 2010), and belong to a practice rather than "emerging from self-contained individuals" (Røpke 2009: 2492). On the other hand, Gram-Hanssen (2009: 155) notes that seeing practices as collective does not dismiss being "open for individual differences and for seeing rational knowledge input and aspects of attitudes as part of an explanation of practices". What is relevant is not ascribing causality between rationality or attitude and action. In this thesis, also the notion that social patterns and power relations are constituted in practices providing also the context for their performance is relevant. The investigation of daily practices provides then an interesting and a potentially fruitful perspective, and a toolkit for studying, for instance, political, economic, and cultural power relations and institutions (Røpke 2009: 2493).

2.2.3 Body and mind

Practices are routinized bodily activities concerning for instance handling certain objects, but also 'intellectual' activities such as talking, reading and writing. Practices also contain sets of mental activities implying certain routinized ways of understanding the world, of desiring something, of knowing how to do something (know-how, interpretations, aims, emotional levels), and making use of things and situations (Reckwitz, 2002: 251-257).

A societal and historical dimension is constituent of practices, too, as there is interplay between history and biography, having then a societal and historical dimension whereby lived experience predisposes future knowledge and action (Bourdieu, 1984; 1990; Morgan, 2011; Ortner 2006). This historical dimension is represented in the form of *habitus* constituted by transferable bodily and mental dispositions (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990; Ortner, 2006). Habitus refers to a practical sense of how people view and divide the world or essentially, how the world is unconsciously embedded in people's bodily actions from early childhood and the important contributions to routines and practices (Gram-Hanssen, 2009: 154). According to Bourdieu (1977: 164) what is important is the taken-for-granted common and embodied knowledge that is practiced and performed, which in turn reproduce the performer's habitus (also Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014; Ortner, 2006). The dynamic process between habitus and practices is a process of continuous naturalisation and normalisation (Giddens, 1984: 5; also 'doxa' in Bourdieu, 1977: 77, 165-166; Heller, 1984), reflectivity and questioning (Wilk, 2009). Here, we return again to the centrality of *habit* and *routine* perceived as capturing the taken-for-granted forms of tacit knowledge, embodied skills, and shared cultural conventions (e.g. Southerton, 2013: 337–338, 341). Also, knowledge as rule-based 'what has to be done', as well as theoretical knowledge is important in considering environmentally significant practices (e.g. Reckwitz, 2002). These have to do with knowing and not-knowing, for instance about opportunities, alternatives, or impacts (e.g. Gram-Hanssen, 2009).

2.2.4 Time

In broad terms temporality in practices has to do with repetitiveness as the inherent nature that "occur in the sequence of time, in repetition", producing social structure (Reckwitz, 2002: 255) and the historical-temporal aspect of both practice-as-entity and personal history coming together in each performance of a practice. Furthermore, it concerns the organising and management of time in everyday life. Experienced time in practice, are important in understanding the organising of daily life (Aalto and Varjonen, 2012; Jalas, 2011; Shove et al., 2012). This apparently self-evident notion of time is crucial, as each practice comes with its own temporal requirements. Between time and practices there is a recursive nature in that practices organise temporalities in having their own temporal requirements (rhythm, sequence etc.), but time as resource also organizes practices requiring coordination from the practitioners (Southerton, 2006; 2013; also Jalas, 2006).

Time is always constituted and performed in practice and thus processual and relational. Concerning time then, the significance of routines and habits is particularly important from the perspective of the conflicting demands of the repertoire of practices we are involved with and carry out, including the temporal demands in societal structures, such as opening hours, work- and school-related temporal structuring etc. In his studies on temporality, habits, and practices, Dale Southerton (2003; 2006; 2013) illustrated how understanding these temporal-spatial demands and conflicts provides crucial information on the possibilities for change and helps social scientists move beyond causal and straightforward explanations.

2.3 Standard of Living

My interest in changing living standards originates in the ideas on the process of mounting nature of (material) living standards, in particular the "crucial developments in domestic infrastructures supporting the creeping evolution of normal standards of daily material life" (Shove and Warde, 1998: 2). Therefore, the interest lies in two distinct, but inherently interconnected matters: the general rise in material standard of living and how it is reflected in the domestic sphere, and further, how the contents and consequences of this are related to environmental sustainability. The rise in living standards during the process of modernization has resulted in the average working citizen being able to enjoy 16 times higher material living standard. That is, for instance 16 times more goods and services compared to only 10 generations ago, but in varying degrees between and inside countries (de Jong, 2015: 45-46). In affluent countries such as in Finland, the level of 'sufficiency', in objective terms, is passed. In relative and subjective terms, however, the limits of sufficiency are ever changing.

The constitution and development of *standard of living* has been a subject for academic interest and policy for decades from theoretical, moral, and political perspectives. The contributors represent various academic fields, for instance economics, social sciences and philosophy, and utilise versatile research materials and methods, as well as intersecting concepts including norm, class, needs, wants and well-being in social theory and social and public policy (e.g. Allardt, 1976; 1998; Doyal and Cough, 1991; Max-Neef, 1995; Sen, 1987; Veblen, 1899/2007). In my thesis, standard of living, in addition to 'having' with reference to material possessions, is viewed as "a conventional set of expectations" (Dwyer 2009: 338) appropriate for a certain socio-economic class in certain time and space, and thus relative in nature (e.g. Sen, 1987; see Hirvilammi, 2014: 78-

79[10]). Standard of living is constituted by degree of material well-being available and considered necessary for sustaining and enjoying life, such as food, clothing, shelter, security, and essential services, as well as the level of wealth, comfort, material goods, and necessities.

Non-material living standard may be derived from the concept of non-material wellbeing, which refers to quality of life, happiness or 'being' and 'loving' in Allardt's (1976) terms. Between the material and non-material living standards, there are conflicts in how those are conceptualised, measured, and interpreted (e.g. de Jong, 2015; Nordhaus and Tobin, 1973; Daly and Cobb, 1989; Raijas, 2008). These conflicts originate, for one, from the worry about the 'diminishing returns to economic growth' by accounting for non-material dimensions, such as inequality and environmental depletion, that originated in the 1970s (de Jong, 2015: 51). I do not focus on non-material living standard, *per se*, but it is necessary to reflect on it both empirically and theoretically when looking at domestic life and sustainability.

A widely noted tendency has existed in the measurements of wellbeing in favour of economic and material indicators being commonly measured in gross domestic product (GDP), which refers to economic growth by amount of resources (Speth, 2008) in which environmental damage has been viewed as a negative externality. Growth in both income and consumption, to a certain extent, augments human wellbeing. However, there is now broad agreement that after a certain point, a rise in income level does not contribute to wellbeing or happiness. The relationship between economic growth and subjective wellbeing (SWB) has been suggested to be weak and non-linear, rather having a curvilinear relationship between income and happiness (Veenhoven, 2008; Easterlin, 1974; Diener and Seligman, 2004). The widely discussed 'Easterlin Paradox' (Easterlin 1974; Easterlin et al., 2010) concerns precisely this relationship and explains the *short-term* linear relationship (any one point in time) and *long-term* non-linear (or even negative) relationship between economic growth and SWB in countries at different development stages. It is also widely recognised that high levels of wellbeing do not require high levels of material consumption. For instance, Nordhaus and Tobin (1973) introduced an alternative and experimental indicator (MEW) for accounting the costs of affluence, thus recognising the non-linear relation between material improvement and non-material wellbeing (de Jong, 2015: 49-50).

In addition, an alternate index called the Index of sustainable economic welfare (ISEW) was developed by Daly and Cobb (1989) that holds that while GDP has continued to rise, a decline in ISEW was detected already in the 1970's

[10] Hirvilammi's (2014) notions about the dangers of relative views in rich countries are interesting. She claims that both objective and subjective measures needed and universal needs theories or capabilities list should be used. Hirvilammi's study questions previous studies claiming comparison solely to one's own society, close surroundings and peers. In her study the people in lower income groups also reflected on their standing in global frame with comparisons to the poor in developing countries and those in the catastrophe areas.

(Guillén-Royo and Wilhite, 2015; also Daly, 2013[11]). According to the European Happy Planet Index (NEF 2006) and The World Happiness Report (Helliwell et al., 2012) abundant consumption may (indirectly, e.g. through harming the natural environment) even reduce human wellbeing (also Hoffrén 2011, 2012; McNeill and Wilhite, 2010). Accordingly, Sachs and others (1998) have suggested that 'real' sustainability arises from an alternative to growth oriented interpretation of the meaning of a good life. Also, sustainable wellbeing is suggested to be comprised of sufficient living standard ('having'), meaningful and responsible action ('doing'), meaningful relationships ('loving'), and living presence ('being') based on holistic thinking and deep ecology (Hirvilammi, 2014; Hirvilammi and Helne, 2014). This view is grounded in the notion that better acknowledgement of relations between humans and the ecosystem is needed. However, in the Nordic countries, the investigations of living standards have traditionally not included ecological and environmental considerations (Hirvilammi, 2014 ref. Allardt, 1998: 4). The decent living standard has recently been investigated from the perspective of minimum income *and* environmental sustainability in Finland, particularly minimum income and environmental loading of the households living with scarce economic resources in particular. This study resulted in suggesting a new paradigm and a theory of eco-social policy (Hirvilammi and Helne, 2014) sorely needed in current times of both ecological and economic turmoil. Hirvilammi and Helne showed that in all income groups the threshold for sustainability was exceeded[12]. Decent living standard, referred to by the indicator 'environmental space', was conceptualised as the threshold of sustainable use of resources between socially unsustainable poverty and ecologically unsustainable (over)consumption (Hirvilammi 2014: 76; also Spangenberg, 2014). In my study, the focus is on the upper limits of the threshold.

Clearly then, concerning the obvious and problematic relative nature of living standards and wellbeing, the development of consumer societies has produced a resurgence of critical approaches within a framework of environmental concerns. Hence, as a socio-material construction, standard of living is to be understood as factually influenced by opulence, as Amartya Sen (1987) has proposed, but not *a standard of opulence.* A relevant question is, however, what should or may be 'supported' as normal, decent, or necessary (e.g. Druckman and Jackson, 2010).

Sociologist Rachel Dwyer's (2009) theoretical work builds on Thorstein Veblen's (1899/2007) and Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) theories of stratification and emulation. She writes about consumption patterns, standard of living, and the important consequences rising income inequality has had on those. Dwyer maintains that Veblen has often been discarded, his perspective "often por-

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11 After sufficiency there is no detectable growth in self-evaluated happiness or wellbeing, and the threshold is passed in rich countries.

12 E.g. Hirvilammi ibid., Kotakorpi et al., 2008 and Moisio et al., 2008 are all using MIPS. In my study, no measures for actual environmental loading were used.

trayed as flawed and outdated", and that the critiques are commonly based on too thin a reading of theories of positional consumption in Veblen's lineage. This concerns, for instance, a claim that consumers are not as rational competitors of maximising status as Veblen is claimed to suggest (see Dwyer, 2009: 329-330). In Dwyer's view, Veblen's suggestion is, in fact, that consumption that may begin as deliberately emulative is often eventually adopted and maintained primarily as a matter of habit and "may easily lead to an insistence on it as an element of decency" (ibid.). Emphasising the collective nature of standard of living, anthropologist Richard Wilk (2010: 41-44) has suggested it may be viewed as a 'metaphor for normality'.

> "[I]t is a desire to live up to the conventional standard of decency in the amount and grade of goods consumed. This desire is not guided by a rigidly invariable standard, which must be lived up to, and beyond which there is no incentive to go. The standard is flexible; and especially it is indefinitely extensible, if only time is allowed for habituation to any increase in pecuniary ability and for acquiring facility in the new and larger scale of expenditure that follows such an increase. It is much more difficult to recede from a scale of expenditure once adopted than it is to extend the accustomed scale in response to an accession of wealth." (Veblen, 1899/2007: 103)

There seems to be a certain kind of 'stickiness' in standard of living in that rather than declining, it has a tendency to move upwards. According Wilk (2010: 41-42) standard of living "acts like it is governed by a ratchet […] As it rises, it is supported at each new level. […] Moving downward is 'falling' [less is bad] and upwards is 'climbing'". But what are the mechanisms behind this tendency? Both dissatisfaction with one's living standard, and its' upwards tendency are rooted in similar processes. Juliet Schor (1998), among many (e.g. Guillén-Royo and Wilhite, 2015; Sachs, 2012), suggests that comparisons of one's life situation and that of one's reference group may have a negative effect on life satisfaction (social comparison). People also tend to adapt or adjust to their circumstances. These processes are seen as potentially resulting in significant developments in both standard of living (e.g. ownership level, consumption levels, necessity) and the accompanying environmental loading. If not a dramatic or even mostly a detectable change, this is an important if subtle process: "If we argue that consumption is part of everyday life, and that practices and habits in some way hang together there is merit in thinking about the evolution of expectation as a process of collective ratcheting" (Shove, 2001: 16). In addition, Dwyer (2009: 335) maintains that in a broader form of conventional action in which the purposeful 'competitive consumption' is complemented with 'comparative consumption', it is admitted that no deliberate attempt to impress exists, but that certain consumption patterns are a consequence of actors' immersion in a particular social context. "Individuals tend to adopt the consuming behaviour of social contacts and it need not depend at all on considerations of emulation or 'conspicuous consumption'" (ibid. ref. Duesenberry, 1949: 27-28). Obviously, and controversially, this may work to support sustainability efforts as well, were the surrounding community or society is engaged in sustainable practices (Shove and Warde, 1998). Therefore, from the perspective of environmental concerns, the dismantling of unsustainable consumption should begin from the well-to-do (see Ahlqvist, 2004 ref. Aarts, 1995; Spangenberg, 2014).

2.4 Necessity

As presented above, a number of studies have contributed to studying decent living standards and necessities as its constituents in various academic fields. In many countries research on necessity has also had a strong policy-orientation as studies have focused on providing information on the development and determinants of the material conditions of peoples' daily lives at the lower end of the social spectrum. These studies have concentrated on relative deprivation and poverty, therefore, looking at articulating *minimum* decent living standards (e.g. Lehtinen et al., 2010; Hirvilammi, 2014). Here however, the perspective is not on the subsistence level, such as adequate food and shelter, since in aggregate the level of basic needs has in Finland been passed decades ago. Additionally, the discussion on necessities has, in absolute terms, moved beyond the subsistence level *needs* towards wants or the selection of alternative satisfiers (Guillén-Royo, 2010; Max-Neef, 1992) of basic needs, such as shelter, security, and social recognition (Allardt, 1976; Hirvilammi, 2015).

Key approaches to necessity have been summed up, for instance, by Braun and colleagues (2016). Their analysis views objective approaches looking at necessity as reflecting universal human nature (needs) and social constructionist approaches considering the socially influenced nature of necessity as the relevant perspectives. Perceptions of necessity may be looked at as *consensual* (what is perceived as necessary for everyone or *subjective* (what is necessary for me and/or my household), both of which are relative in terms of being context-bound.

Still, frequently cited work on necessity was done in the UK in the 1970's and 1980's, among them Peter Townsend's (e.g.) *Poverty in the United Kingdom* (1979) and Joanna Mack's and Stewart Lansley's *Poor Britain* (1985). These, along with other studies in the fields of deprivation and poverty research (also Gordon and Pantazis, 1997) conceptualised necessity in constructing minimum decent living standards by asking people their opinions on the perceived need of a number of pre-selected ensembles of goods and services. Peter Townsend's aforementioned work utilised an approach of relative deprivation that incorporated various aspects of social and material deprivation. In Finland, Olli Kangas and Veli-Matti Ritakallio (e.g. 1998), and Mikko Niemelä (e.g. 2005) have, too, investigated living standards, necessities, and various aspects of social and material deprivation. Finnish studies using a consensual method in which consumers themselves were asked about what they regarded as necessities for everyday life have produced information on terms such as a 'commodity basket' including a wide array of items collectively regarded as necessities for daily life (Lehtinen et al., 2011). Necessity perceptions have also been investigated in some focus group and case studies (e.g. Jyrinki et al., 2012). In some countries national surveys are conducted on the development of necessity perceptions: in addition to the Finnish surveys used in this study, in the US, for instance, surveys on necessity perceptions have been carried out by PEW Research Center (Taylor et al., 2006; Taylor and Morin, 2009; Taylor and Wang, 2010).

Resting on the work of Townsend, and Mack and Lansley, Björn Halleröd and his colleagues conducted several inquiries on social and material deprivation and necessities (e.g. Halleröd, 1994; 2006; Halleröd et al., 2006). In studying consumption patterns that are "widely encouraged or approved in a society" (Halleröd, 2006: 375; orig. Townsend, 1979), and using an objective relative deprivation index by Mack and Lansley (1985), he asked people whether or not they have or use (have access to) the pre-selected goods and services (e.g. mobile telephone, TV, computer, daily paper, one-week holiday away from home once a year). Moreover, concerning items people do not have, they were asked whether they cannot afford them or whether they do not want them (Halleröd, 2006: 387−88). A mapping device based on Halleröd's categorisation has been used by Christer Sanne in viewing the scale of needs perceptions in Sweden (1998; 2002). In addition to basic human needs and social needs Sanne (1998; 2002; 2005) talks about structural needs. With those he refers to the needs generated by structural restrictions supporting/promoting, for instance private automobility versus public transportation.

The categorisation of goods and services have been conducted in various ways when investigating necessity. These range from dichotomous categorising between necessity and luxury (e.g. Taylor and Wang 2010), between necessity and non-necessity (e.g. Mack and Lansley 1985), to more broad scales of perceived need (Karlsson et al., 2004). Contrasting necessary to luxury has been criticised, and it has been proposed that asking people to make distinctions between items they consider to be 'necessary' or 'superfluous' should be preferred (Taylor and Wang, 2010: 2). Perceptions change in time and are context-bound and situational; Historical and rapid changes may occur, while some developments are subtle and slow. For instance, Halleröd and colleagues (2006) proposed that ownership (having) is closely connected to perceiving something as necessary. People are also prone to adapt their preferences to economic resources (Halleröd, 2006: 387−88). This resonates with the findings of Niklas Karlsson and colleagues' (2004) study on household consumption, money management, and aspiration level, in which the last refers to "the degree to which households consider consumption of different goods and services to be necessary" being "a subjective goal that may be situationally or dispositionally determined" (Karlsson et al., 2004: 755). Interestingly, they found there was only a weak direct effect between income (economic situation) and consumption of non-essentials (other than commonly necessary items). However, significant indirect influences were detected: the economic situation of the household had an effect on consumption through aspiration level (perceived necessities) and social comparison "What is seen as necessary to buy increases with the ability or possibility to actually buy it. However […] an alternative interpretation is that households adjust their aspiration level to their degree of consumption, so that the more households consume, the more they consider things to be necessary." (Karlsson et al., 2004: 764) This is interesting in the light of the 50 per cent threshold used in defining a necessity (Mack and Lansley, 1985) and the idea that what is conceived as necessary by the majority should be guaranteed for all. This may be problematic particularly concerning rich countries and in terms of sustainability. To enhance our satisfaction with consumption people are, according to the findings of Karlsson and others (ibid.) more likely to keep up consuming more rather than to lower their expectations (also Guillén-Royo, 2010; cf. Halleröd, 2006: 387). Therefore, in contrast to the rather neutral or even innocent tone of 'necessity', aspiration level is built on a more dynamic note.

3 RESEARCH PROCESS

Traditions of studying consumption and daily life with the problematics of living standard and necessity suggest multiple potential research materials and methods, both qualitative and quantitative that entail various vocabularies and toolkits for analyses (e.g. Halkier et al., 2011; Gideon, 2010). These various methods depict different "versions" of or open different windows to ordinary life (see Hämeenaho, 2014; Jalas, 2006). In my thesis, two primary sets of research materials were utilised: statistics (OSF, 2010b; 2012; 2013) and quantitative survey material constituting a nationally representative longitudinal dataset of Finnish people (e.g. Sarpila et al., 2010), and in-depth interviews of a particular age and socio-economic group, the well-to-do in their prime working age. The first provides a temporal change perspective and a wider societal framing of domestic necessity and socio-economic and demographic dimensions. The second accounts for the lived and experienced daily lives and were analysed using content analysis and a conceptual apparatus informed by theories of practice. The original articles, utilized research materials, and their position in answering the research questions are presented in table 1 below.

TABLE 1 Data, methods and research questions.

Paper	Research materials	Purpose (use and position)	Research question
How can the problematic relations of rising living standards and environmental sustainability be better understood by investigating domestic necessity and daily life?			
Standard of living, consumption norms and perceived necessities	Longitudinal survey dataset, statistics	Mapping necessities, temporal change, background variables	How has the construction of decent living standards (ownership and necessity) developed in Finland and what are the key determinants?
"A bigger living room required a bigger TV" – Doing and negotiating necessity in well-to-do households	14 in-depth interviews with well-to-do Finns, who have higher than average income and are higher educated, aged 30-45 years	Investigating the role of material, socio-cultural and dispositional aspects in the construction of domestic practices/necessity	How domestic necessity is constituted in daily realities of well-to-do households?
Normality against sustainability – Mobility practices of well-to-do households	14 in-depth interviews with well-to-do Finns who have higher than average income and are higher educated, aged 30-45 years	Investigating the shared aspect of mobility practices; experiences of time	How is necessity constituted in mobility practices of well-to-do households and are there alternatives to the taken-for-granted thinking about and doing of mobility?

3.1 Quantitative research material and methods for analysis

The first perspective to necessity in my thesis was taken by utilising quantitative survey data derived from three cross-sectional surveys that together constitute a longitudinal dataset: "Finland 1999, 2004, 2009 - Consumption and way of life". It is representative of the Finnish adult public with final sample sizes of N=2,417 (1999), N=3,574 (2004) and N=1,202 (2009). The age of the respondents varied from 18 to 75 years. The survey data was collected in collaboration with

Economic sociology Unit of the University of Turku and Sociology Unit of the University of Jyväskylä (Sarpila et al., 2010). Official penetration statistics from Statistics Finland (OSF, 2010b; 2012; 2013) were used to illustrate and discuss relevant issues in the development and current level of ownership of the studied items. Analysis of these is presented in article 1.

Quantitative research materials and analysis are commonly utilised in social sciences providing means to investigate behaviours, engagements, and perceptions of large populations (e.g. Wright and Marsden, 2010). Longitudinal data has also had a powerful input in many government policies through, for instance, investigation of trends (Elliott et al., 2008). In approaching the research problem, the significance of this study is in that it illustrates the historical development and the present stage of material standard of living on a large scale, as well as the association between socio-demographic variables and the perceptions of necessities. Details of the conducted surveys are found in the published research reports (see Erola et al., 2005; Sarpila et al., 2010[13]). Based on previous studies and framed by the available material, we focused on the development of both ownership and necessity perceptions of goods and services that may be viewed as "less necessary" items in terms of survival (see Karlsson et al., 2004). However, in terms of the contextual and relative nature of 'perceived needs' those may be regarded as necessities, whether on social, cultural, or material grounds (see Ahlqvist, 2009; Sanne, 2002). The studied items were considered interesting also in the light of previous studies and our theoretical frame (Halleröd, 2006; Halleröd et al., 2006; Karlsson et al., 2004; Taylor and Wang, 2010).

Relevant parts of survey data were used to investigate the change in the perceived necessities of nine technology and leisure-related consumer goods and services (car, mobile phone, digital camera, home computer, Internet connection, daily newspaper, holiday travel every 6 months, cultural services, and dining in restaurants regularly) between 1999 and 2009. Socio-demographic variables have rarely been used to explain necessity perceptions despite their noted importance to consumption patterns and ways of life in previous studies (e.g. Holt, 1997; Le Roux et al., 2008; Kahma and Toikka, 2012). We used income, education, and household type, place of residence, age, and gender[14] as independent variables to explain necessity perception. For better grasping of the phenomenon, penetration statistics were also utilised for illustrating and reflecting on the development and state of ownership of the items studied. Our approach of looking at ownership and necessity through certain material items and services in time, explained by variables named above entailed theoretical and contextual interpretations of the everyday and wider socio-cultural and material contexts.

The surveys covered a wide range of questions regarding attitudes and practices related to consumption, work, income, lifestyles, and perceived risk and problems in society. In this study, we analysed questions *"which of the fol-*

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13 Also Koivula et al., 2014 for the latest survey not included in our study.
14 Short descriptive statistics are presented in article 1.

lowing do you regard as necessities for yourself?" in regard to travelling and services items, and *"which of the following do you regard as necessities in your everyday life?"* concerning the old and new media items and services, and the car. In the original data, the latter question also included leisure time services, in addition to issues such as work, home, children and an impeccable life, that are not included in our analysis. First the frequencies of the perceived necessities were analysed for each year. A three point scale[15] from necessity, to useful, and to non-necessity, rather than a dichotomous scale from necessity to non-necessity was used in anticipation that few people would regard leisure services and goods related to entertainment as absolute necessities. We also wanted a broader perspective of the perceptions as discussed by Karlsson et al. 2004.

The perceived necessity of the items in 2009, the latest year of the survey, were analysed separately by the Univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the economic and demographic variables were used as dependent variables. Analyses of variance are commonly used in social sciences in investigating whether or not group means of certain independent variables vary with respect to a particular matters of interest (dependent variables) (e.g. Nummenmaa, 2009), concerning perceptions of necessity in the case of this study. In this study the differences in the perceptions of necessity of certain items are explained with socio-demographic variables. The research process was conducted following the rules and guidelines of good scientific practice (e.g. Wright and Marsden, 2010). For the purpose of also providing the reader the opportunity to assess the reliability and validity of the analysis, the details of constructing the variables and of our analysis and other details concerning our study are presented in article 1.

Comparable to any research project, the overall research process with this study was not linear or without cuts. We attempted different research designs before settling with the one published and presented in this thesis. Limitations of the survey study include the rather low number of items, and the relatively old data concerning fast moving development and emergence of particularly ICT devices. Concerning this rapid development, the data neither reveals how many nor what size equipment households have. In general, this lack of indicators for the investigation of the number and size of items in households has been noted in previous studies (Guillén-Royo and Wilhite, 2015). Further studies should also look into the co-efficiencies of different variables and the explanatory power of those to the necessity perceptions as well as to surrounding practices. Furthermore, better collaboration with elaborative quantitative and detailed qualitative materials with the same informants may prove to be fruitful in similar investigations.

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15 The perceived necessities were rated on a 1–3 Likert scale (3=necessity, 2=useful, but not necessity, 1=not necessity or useful).

3.2 Qualitative interviews as research material and methods for analysis

The second set of research material utilised in this study (articles 2 and 3) consists of in-depth interviews (Holstein and Gubrium, 2003) conducted in 2012 and 2013 in 14 *well-to-do* households [16] in four cities in Finland (Helsinki, Jyväskylä, Oulu, and Tampere). Field notes were used for reflecting on the research process as well as making preliminary notes and interpretations. Followed from considering interviews as a key method for the investigation of how people experience and understand their lives (Kvale, 2007), this research material was utilised for the purpose of more detailed investigation of necessity in lived and experienced daily life.

The gathering off research material as a part of research process begins well before the actual interviewing (Ruotsala, 2005). The pre-interviewing period sets some of the most crucial grounds for the coming research: selecting method(s), recruiting interviewees, and the positioning of oneself as a researcher in the field of study, including identifying and recognising relevant preconceptions. Deciding on the research focus naturally orientates researcher's eyes on certain issues while closing those from others. In the interview process and analysing I have however aimed at remaining open to surprises, both in process and concerning findings. In 2012 I designed a recruitment letter and the format for interviewing and begun recruiting interviewees by using snowball method and contacts based on publicly available tax register. Via the tax register I directly contacted people anticipated fitting to my focus group. Only one person was finally recruited via tax register. With snowball method I mean that any interviewee was encouraged to inform me about anyone who would fit the focus group and would possibly be willing to partake. The recruitment letter was published in blogs, sent via Facebook and e-mail and distributed from hand to hand by several people. The recruitment process was rather challenging as it turned out the well-to-do were not easily reached. In turn, schedules were surprisingly easily arranged whenever a suitable candidate appeared, despite the informed lengthy duration of each interview.

Interviewees and topics covered

The interviewees were 30-45 year-old Finnish men and women of various backgrounds and household types. Household types include single men (2) and women (2), couples without children (2), single or part-time parents (1), and families with children (7). Background information includes family origins (place of birth and number of siblings), education and occupation of spouse (when applicable), and of parents. Some also provided information about their spouse's family background, but it was not systematically asked. The majority

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[16] Table of interviewees is provided in Appendix 1.

of my informants lived in city centres. The rest lived in more sparsely populated areas or at least outside the greater city centres.

Each interviewee had higher-than-average income and each interviewee had a university degree, being thus categorised as well-to-do[17]. The age group of 30-45 year-olds are considered belonging thus to the *'support generation'* (aged 30-50) who play a key role in, for instance, daily mobility (e.g. Camarero and Oliva, 2008) and are in their *'prime working age'* (e.g. Koivula et al., 2015; used 31-45 as the age category). The actual age range was 31 to 42 years old. The point of departure was that these people have experience and knowledge about the issue I am keen on investigating (Eskola and Suoranta, 2008: 34), therefore, they were approached as experts (of their daily lives). Interestingly, the endless details of individual lives are concealed behind and under ordinariness. It is claimed that people typically construct themselves and their lives as ordinary (doing of "being ordinary") within their own social surroundings (Knuuttila, 2008: 481-482 ref. Sacks, 1992; 'membership category device'). The method of detailed accounting of things, doings, and sayings enables the researcher therefore to investigate the collective ordinariness. Apart from the mundane goings-on, there are significant 'cuts' in the everyday repetitiveness the representing of which I have found to be crucial for the research concerning the task of formulating a picture of the shared aspects of these unique lives (see also Hämeenaho, 2014). These include unexpected or rare occasions and out-of-the-ordinary events.

The interviews varied from 1.5 to 3.5 hours in length, the average duration being three hours. In this regard, they may be characterised as in-depth interviews[18]. All but three interviews were conducted at informants' homes with no or some family members present (although usually not partaking in the interviews). In the latter regard, being typically conducted in the everyday surroundings of the informants, these interviews also contained elements of ethnographic interviewing (Spradley, 1979). Furthermore, in addition to acting as the interviewer in each case I also acted as an observer of the surroundings and living conditions taking notes and, if permitted, photographing as well. House tours were not systematically done. Observations about the surroundings and the interview situation as well as some preliminary interpretations were written in field notes. I also kept track of challenges in conducting the research and executing the interviews.

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17 People having a higher-than-average income and a university degree are here considered well-to-do. Following the limits set by Statistics Finland for the high-income group, the lower limit of *higher-than-average* (gross earned income) in the recruitment letter, was set at minimum of € 4,000-5,000 per month in one earner households and minimum € 8,000-9,000 per month in two earner households. *Median disposable monetary income* in Finland in 2010 was € 28,940 (see Official Statistics of Finland, OSF 2010a). High income group is conceptualized as > 1.67* of the median.

18 One interview was conducted at informant's place of work. This clearly affected the length and the depth. However, two interviews were conducted in a homelike environment, but outside of interviewees own home. These two I have counted as in-depth as detailed accounts about daily going-on were provided. House tours and observation were obviously not possible in these three cases.

There are several issues that can go wrong in the interview situation and the researcher must be prepared with good plans – and a lot of batteries. On the one hand the researcher may direct the interviewee too much and compromise the integrity of the interview. On the other hand the interview may be unfocused without the researcher being in charge of the proceedings in the sense that some pre-set guidelines are followed and intended topics covered. In my study, the interviews had a thematic pre-structured frame[19] without adhering, however, neither to specific mode of asking nor to specific order of questions providing the informants freedom to follow their own pace, and adequate freedom of expression and of following what they felt relevant or important topics concerning their daily lives. Interview design was also adaptive evolving (both in structure and in contents) along with the progress of the researcher's understanding of the research subject (Eskola and Suoranta, 2008: 85). Interviews consist of two broad topics: "organizing the everyday life and ordinary consumption" and "what I need and have" in the context of daily life. For a start informants were first asked to talk about their ordinary everyday life and about an ordinary day or a week (see also Hämeenaho 2014). Habitual and routine aspects were emphasized. Further, they were asked to describe their daily lives and ordinary consumption as practical doing, decision-making, as purchases, as use of appliances and other items and services, and as consumption of resources, but also any guidelines and principles possible identified as effecting their doings and sayings. A number of different spheres or realms of daily life and consumption were discussed including food, clothing and hygiene, hobbies, appliances, domestic chores and mobility. Moreover, informants were asked to contemplate on their own (and their household's) consumption from the perspective of environmental sustainability as well as to reflect on the similarities and differences, consistencies and inconsistencies of other consumers and their own from different perspectives. If environmental concerns did not come up, they were then specifically asked about those.

In the second theme, informants were asked to contemplate on the perceived need and to categorize items on a list[20] provided while discussing the role and relevance of each item in the organizing of their daily lives. The categories were: necessities (what I or my family cannot manage without in daily life), what I need and have, what I don't need but have (excess), what I don't need and don't have (idle), what I need but don't have (lack)[21] and luxury (subjective description). Most items and their significance and roles were discussed during the whole of the interview and thus the analysis of necessity deals with the entire research material not solely the categorizing of those items.

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19 Interview structure/list of questions is provided in Appendix 2.

20 A list of items under three topics was provided, see Appendix 2. The topics were: daily mobility, household appliances, and leisure time and travel.

21 This type of categorizing has previously been used e.g. by Sanne (1998). This Swedish survey mapped the occurrence (ownership) of certain belongings and habits of consumption together with people's perceived need for them (Sanne, 2005: 320).

By better planning and forethought, the disadvantages and limitations, such as not conducting all interviews at interviewees' homes and not systematically conducting house tours, would have been possible to avoid. These would have strengthened the research material. The research would have also benefitted from detailed mapping of time-use and practices possibly conducted by the householders themselves.

3.2.1 Content analysis

In my study, using the interviews as research material initially and intrinsically meant being true to the study object and to the research material, as well as following a pre-set theoretical frame in aiming at providing "knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study" (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992: 314) For this purpose, directed content analysis was utilized (Tuomi and Sarajärvi, 2009).

Consistent with the adaptive method utilized in conducting the interviews, adaptive approach was also used in analysis. Initial coding of the transcribed interviews was made using the *Atlas.ti* –programme. This enabled me to arrange the material (of approximately 800 pages of transcribed discussions) into a more manageable format as well as to make preliminary notions and propositions. The transcripts contain only the audio-recorded materials excluding discussions and commenting apart from the actual interviews. In transcribing, also the non-verbal communication and expressions of meaning are ruled out from the produced text. Due to these, and because of translating of the material, the transcripts follow a particular way of presenting the interview talk as utterances might not be directly translatable etc. (Nikander, 2010; Ruusuvuori, 2010.) Field notes were written for the purpose of capturing these, as well as, for accounting impressions, feelings, and preliminary interpretations.

By way of reading the text through several times (close reading) and organising it into more manageable sections, I began to identify themes, repeated contents and patterns (Krippendorf, 2004: 381, 385). In accordance to the principles of *directed* or *theory-guided content analysis*, codes were defined both before, that is deriving those from theory and relevant previous research findings, and during the process of analysis (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005: 1286). In my study, the interview design was based on areas of ordinary daily life and consumption relevant to environmental sustainability as described above. Further, the elements of standard of living served as an initial framework for identifying relevant contents combining the two. An integrational model of environmental sustainability (mobility, housing, and appliances; food was excluded due to lack of time), and standard of living (shelter, material goods and necessities, wealth and comfort) and domestic practices (intersected nature of a variety of doings and sayings in daily life formulating as or composing nexuses) was formed. Consistent with the theoretical frame applied in analysing the interviews, Krippendorf (2004: 16) framed the task of an analyst as aiming at to unravel something at least partly hidden referring to the complex and challenging implicitness of matters revealed in investigation of temporal orderings, needs and expectations, discourses, and social situations. "[C]ontent analysis must predict or infer phenomena that they cannot observe at the time of their research [as a whole at least they can't versus ethnography]. […] Analyst seeks answers to questions that go outside a text. […] Analysing should occur "in the context of the lives of the diverse people" (ibid.: 16-17). Referring to Atkinson and Coffey (2003) Halkier and Jensen (2011: 109) point out that were it either interviews or participant observation (ethnography), the produced materials of each may be viewed as expressions of social action, and entanglement with social interpretations in both is inevitable.

During the coding and analysing I kept also the theoretical framework open for extending. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005: 1281) this helps to focus the research task and questions. This was part of the circulation of the research material and the 'true statements' of interviewees, research questions and researcher's or analyst's propositions or statements based on these (Krippendorf, 2004.) and followed the basic idea and functioning of the *hermeneutic circle* commonly utilised in qualitative research. This constant circle of questioning relates to the reliability of the study, as well: evaluations and corrective moves are done during the whole research process and thus reliability is with respect to the overall research process. The chosen theoretical perspective, concepts used, and others ruled outside focus, limit the number of possible interpretations. While the research process must be systematically conducted it is, however, in the nature of qualitative research orientation that the interpretations remain numerous considering the contradictory nature of our realities. (Eskola and Suoranta, 2008; also Halkier, 2011; Halkier and Jensen, 2011.)

The research material being selective, rather than representative, also refers to and is gathered from a focused group. For instance Eskola and Suoranta (2008: 65-67.) conclude that all qualitative research may be considered as case studies the objective of which is not to make generalizations similar to statistical analysis. Rather it should be assessed from the perspective of theoretical, analytical (Halkier, 2011) or substantial generalization (Eskola and Suoranta, 2008: 67). Thus, the interpretations (resilience and depth) made from the research data are essential. Credibility of the interpretations was tested by making comparisons to substantially similar contributions (ibid.: 65-67) and the reliability in strengthened by, for instance, using interview citations to support the interpretations and allowing the reader to follow the line of thought of the researcher (Tuomi and Sarajärvi, 2009: 157).

3.2.2 Practice approach to interviews

Practice approaches, according to Reckwitz (2002: 257-259) may be seen as heuristic, social-theoretical devices entailing certain ways of seeing and analysing social phenomena. Importantly, he claims, empirically applied or not those also (re)direct our understanding of ourselves. "Social theories provide us with a certain way of defining our positions as human beings in a social world which inevitably implies political and ethical dimension" (ibid.: 257). It is then well fitted to my research task. Considering the empirical applications, there has not been a strong agreement on *how* practices should or can be studied (e.g. Halkier and Jensen 2011; Martens, 2012; Røpke 2009; Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014; Shove et al., 2012). In this tradition there is a shared and an intrinsic interest in the most mundane and routine aspects of peoples' lives. The utilization of different types of research materials has raised some debate, however.

By some, interviews have been viewed as overly focused on individuals and not adequately on subject-object relations and performance or action related talk (e.g. Shove et al., 2012; Warde, 2005). The discord about whether or not interviews may be employed in using practice-theoretical approaches has much to do with its dissociation from methodological individualism. The basic assumptions of theories of practice are distinct from that of methodological individualism, which emphasise freedom of choice, goal rationality and individual differences. Rather, in order to enhance our understanding of consumption it is maintained that we need to recognise both its stability and the changes and processes in relation to behaviours and arrangements it is involved with. Hence, viewing people as 'dupes' captivated by structures, for instance, market forces and technological systems, are likewise considered too simplistic views of the world.

Practice theories take a processual approach to intentionality: rather than looking at, for example, attitudes and values as motivations with linear relations to specific actions, 'agency' is here understood as both realised in an ongoing process of activities (Giddens, 1984; Røpke, 2009: 2491) and, distinctively in this study, as a potential of distributed elements (such as materials) to influence actions (e.g. Ortner, 2006).

Particularly concerning interview research, some claim that people cannot be *asked* about their practices since in their triviality and ordinariness those are unattainable to the informants' thinking and thus their narration. Also, the idea of inconsistencies between sayings (talk) and doings as well as the basic trustworthiness of interviewees, have been discussed concerning any interview study (e.g. Mietola, 2007; see Gubrium and Holstein, 2001). On the other hand, Russell Hitchings (2012: 64) asserts that people may well be able to talk about their practices "to build […] a reflexive awareness of how their routines work […], talking about actions done 'as a matter of course'". Hitchings (ibid.) also notes, and this is supported by my own empirical experience in conducting interviews, that one indication for the researcher of being on the right track may be to receive puzzled or even amused reactions to interview questions considered trivial and mundane to the extent of not being suitable for scientific research with responses such as 'this is just what I do' or 'this is just the way it is' (see also Ehn and Löfgren, 2009). Douglas Holt (1997: 339) states that it is methodologically important to note that "asking people directly about the social meanings of their consumption practices is unlikely to yield appropriate data" and that "instead, researchers must interpret these relational differences from grounded discussions of tastes, preferences, and actions at a level that is relevant to everyday life". Thus, it may rather be about an appropriate and good research design than incompatibility. In addition, in accordance to Spradley

(1979), Halkier and Jensen (2011: 110-111) presented ways of enhancing compatibility that were utilised in my study as well. They suggested using certain ways of asking including descriptive, detailed accounts of goings-on; structural, accounts of distinctly different situations and contexts; and contrast questions, concerning proper and deviant ways of doing and thinking, etc., derived from ethnographic interviewing traditions. Furthermore, Halkier and Jensen state that it is necessary "for researchers to reflect in the situation of data-production upon important instances on implicitness" (2011: 111) regarding different qualities, such as uttered 'goodness' and 'badness' and propriety of something compared to other things. These may provide important information about what might be considered as normal and why (e.g. Ilmonen, 2001). Importantly, the role of the interviewer-researcher must be recognised as an important tool of doing research: in building trust with the studied, in making interpretations and tackling any operational difficulties. Nonetheless, it is about balancing between the informed perspective of the researcher and the lived experiences of interviewees as portrayed in research situations.

In my thesis, as presented above, I have utilised two distinct versions of theories of practice in analysing my interview material and producing distinctive insights from the daily life. In the second article I analyse daily routines and the distributed agency in the material, the socio-cultural and the body and mind. In the third article, practices constituted by particular set of elements, namely knowledge, shared understandings, matters-of-course, and temporality are discussed. The particularities of these distinct approaches are presented in the enclosed original papers.

4 RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION

This thesis consists of three original articles, the key insights of which are summarised in the following sub-chapters. The first article focuses on domestic necessity through temporal changes in ownership level and necessity perceptions of some goods and services, and looks at how socio-economic and demographic factors affect the latter. The second and the third article (in non-chronological order) focus on a more detailed investigation of the entwining of living standards and domestic necessity by first investigating household and then mobility practices. In both I analyse the shared and taken-for-granted aspects of doing and negotiating daily life in the context of an affluent consumer society.

4.1 Article 1: Standard of living, consumption norms and perceived necessities

In the first article we look at the development of ownership of some essential technological and leisure related items, goods and services, using ownership statistics, and a longitudinal survey dataset from 1999 to 2009, for investigating the development of necessity perceptions of 10 items (car, daily newspaper, TV, mobile phone, home computer, internet connection, digital camera, holiday travel every six months, cultural services and going to restaurants regularly). We also look at how socio-economic and demographic background variables are associated with those perceptions. Providing a rather rare view on consumption patterns, this article aimed to investigate and discuss the development and construction of decent living standards (ownership and necessity) and 'normal' consumption (question 1).

The results of this article show that the material standard of living has clearly risen in recent years in terms of the perceived material necessities. The low necessity of the services studied showed no notable change during the decade under examination. This suggests that the social and cultural position of technological consumer goods, in particular, is clearly more susceptible to temporal changes than the position of leisure time services. To our expectations there were notable increases, some even dramatic, in both the ownership level and the necessity of ICT related items and services (mobile phone, computer, internet connection and digital camera). This reflects the co-evolution of the items and services and the multiplicity of roles and purposes in both old but differently mediated practices (shopping, running errands, socialising, communicating) and in new practices such as use of GPS (e.g. Røpke, 2001). Already in 1999, a mobile phone was quite commonly regarded as a necessity in Finland, as the country was at the forefront of mobile technology (see Puro 2002; Wilska 2003). The development of mobile phones, both as a possession and as a necessity, was rapid in the following decade – in 2009 majority of the Finnish population had a mobile phone, and in this study, mobile phones were considered necessary by 70 per cent of the respondents.

The ownership of new media items (a computer, an Internet connection and a digital camera) multiplied in just a few years, moving rapidly from curiosities of a few to necessities of a growing crowd. In turn, both the penetration and necessity of old media (TV and newspaper) saw a slight decrease with expected differences in the increase being strongly biased by age. Among the younger population the substitution of old media with new technology was particularly obvious compared to older age groups who still generally relied on traditional media. The new media appliances and services were also more typically necessary for highly educated people with university or college degrees, while lower education predicted the necessity of a TV, noted in previous studies as well.

In our study, the life-cycle aspects (age and type of household) were the most significant in explaining the necessity perceptions, followed by the socio-economic configuration (education, income, and place of residence). Gender had the least explanatory power in general and no significant effects on the necessity of internet or a computer. A mobile phone, however, was more likely to be regarded as necessary by women. Results concerning both computers and internet, and mobile phone suggest possible narrowing of the 'digital divide' between genders (e.g. Cooper, 2006)[22]. Following more traditional paths, cars, in turn, were perceived as necessities much more typically by men (cf. Jokinen, 2005).

With a steady rise in the ownership level, approximately 80 per cent of Finnish households owned at least one car in 2009[23]. The perceived necessity of a car had, however, remained rather stable in the 2000's with less than half of the respondents regarding it as necessary for their daily lives[24]. The type of

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22 Specialized devices include several of the same kind of devices for different uses or different spaces, while personalized devices refer to those that each family member possesses, for example mobile phones.

23 The number of cars owned by person/household was and is not asked in current surveys.

24 However, the descriptive analysis shows a new upward trend with nearly 60 per cent necessity rate of a car. A further decreasing trend in the perceived necessity of a TV, a

household was a significant determinant for the necessity of most items under examination, particularly for the necessity of a car. Families with children were the most likely (almost 95 per cent ownership), and single persons the least likely to regard a car as a necessity (ownership of 60 per cent). Along with economic reasons – generally less income in single households – family structures affect daily practices and time management in various ways. Additionally, in accordance to previous studies (e.g. Kalenoja and Kiiskilä, 2008), place of residence, related to the infrastructures and service levels affecting the formation of mobility practices, was the most significant predictor for the perceived necessity of a car. Thus, living in a rural area made the perceived necessity of a car much more likely (see also Hämeenaho, 2014) than in a town or a city. Car ownership was the lowest in the country at less than 65 per cent in the metropolitan area of Helsinki in 2009. Also, low and mid-education predicted the necessity of a car (cf. Aro, 2016a).

Importantly, our study showed that income quintile predicted the perceived necessity of restaurant visits, holiday travel, and cars the most. People in the highest income quintiles perceived going to restaurants, having holiday trips every six months, and a car as a necessity more often than others. Both findings may be viewed as indications of adjustment to household economic situation.

4.2 Article 2: "A bigger living room required a bigger TV" – Doing and negotiating necessity in well-to-do households

In the second article I utilised in-depth interviews of well-to-do Finnish householders. The article aimed at answering the second research question: *how is domestic necessity constituted in daily realities of well-to-do households*? The objective was to investigate the routine and elemental aspects of domestic necessity and the role of environmental sustainability in the surrounding daily practices. Doing and negotiating necessity is looked at as realised in various ways in intersecting practices in daily life through *distributed agency*, as internalised and embedded forces in domestic practises having the capacity to 'influence actions' in terms of stability and change (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014; Wilhite, 2010).

The material world in the contemporary affluent society carries a selection of appliances and devices for specialized or personalised purposes with which householders interact and with which the wider infrastructure and material

deep negative slope for the newspaper, and an increasing trend in the perceived necessity of a computer, internet connection, a mobile phone and a digital camera are shown in the most recent dataset not included in our study, however. (see Koivula et al., 2015.)

arrangements, as well as household micro-infrastructure, co-evolve.[25] Household micro-infrastructure has significant agency in the doing of necessity as houses and rooms may be constructed materially around appliances, such as in designing and building bathrooms and utility rooms “around” a washer and a dryer. Practices, in turn, are formed around the appliances, with their specialised scheduling and inscribed with particular sets of needs. Experiences of lack of time and lack of space contribute to alternative strategies of carrying out domestic tasks being considered inconvenient and even impossible. Giving up the dishwasher or the tumble-dryer, for instance, would mean organising housework anew among the family members, planning, or adjusting to collectively managed schedules, re-organising the space, and re-negotiating convenience.

The straightforwardness and ease of the habitual ways of doing things entail certain situated (time-space) ways of moving the body and the practical reasoning required for its everyday rationalisation. All in all, ‘not wanting or having to think or to make an effort’ was a common statement among the interviewees and a key element in understanding many practices. Things that people have and use are surrounded or captivated by practices, and routines are built and habits formed around them. Through learning how to manage the appliance and the schedules surrounding it and by inscribing practical meaning to it becomes difficult to think outside the normalized practices (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014; Southerton, 2013; Warde, 2005). Concerning domestic necessity, convenience, comfort, and ease are common denominators the meanings of which are shaped in an ongoing process encompassing collective socio-cultural and material aspects (Shove, 2003b: 397).

According to the findings of my study, living space is attributed with agentic capacity: the lack of space and not wanting any more or to get rid of stuff; needing more space for family and things; larger space “requiring” larger equipment the standard of which has risen in recent years (also Quitzau and Røpke, 2008). Socio-cultural surroundings have agential power (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014: 29–30) through tacitly accepted norms on, for instance, decent and comfortable living conditions, which are commonly not contested (Maller, 2016). Findings of this study highlight the importance of looking at the non-negotiable domestic practices (e.g. Strengers, 2011) that encompass living conditions and the associated and embedded consumption of resources and materials. These all contribute to the ‘silent’ and inactive energy consumption or base load (see Wilhite and Lutzenhiser, 1999) co-evolving with overall living conditions and standards. Importantly, tacitly accepted norms surrounding living conditions and the proper ways of consuming and living are not usually fallowed through deliberate calculation, but rather as matters-of-course.

Householders commonly declared that they live ordinary lives and do ‘normal’ things irrespective of their living standard, recognised in previous

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25 Specialized devices include several of the same kind of devices for different uses or different spaces, while personalized devices refer to those that each family member possesses, for example mobile phones.

studies as well (see Purhonen et al., 2014: 234). These statements were often accompanied by claims of non-conformity (e.g. to masses) and emphasis on individuality. In addition to constructing 'ordinariness' in the interview situation, in light of my study, I claim that this has more profound and wider significance referring to in-group or collective ordinariness (see Knuuttila, 2008 ref. Sacks, 1991; Morgan, 2011). In asking people to contemplate consumption and ways of life of ordinary Finns, some declared they did not know any ordinary Finns or were not able to grasp what the consumption of an average Finn would consist of. This posed an interesting background for the discussion on daily life and living standards (cf. Jokinen, 2005). In comparing their own consumption and ways of life with those of 'average' or 'ordinary' Finns, the differences were mostly considered substantial in housing (size and area), vehicles, holidays and, in the fact that they do not have to think about how much everything costs.

Imagining a scenario in which the household income would plummet, less expensive alternatives and managing their money better concerning all domains of life were viewed sufficient. Along with a general contentment with their living standard, interviewees presumed they would not have to lower their living standard or to give up anything important to them, such as good food and cars of their liking and in accordance to their perceived need, holiday travel, current or equivalent house/flat. The findings suggest that rather than deliberative competitive consumption, or status displays, household consumption follows the subtle processes of implicit comparative and habitual behaviour (Dwyer, 2009), and 'normal' indulgences of holidays and 'daily luxuries' concerning comfort and wellbeing. Also, conforming to peer practices among the well-to-do (see Guillén-Royo, 2010) does not mean that the elements of practices, such as the material particularities, are the same among the well-to-do, nor that income necessarily has direct agentic power (Gram-Hanssen 2014). However, the findings have more to do with the overall standard of what is 'normal for people to want and desirable to desire', how and where people live, travel and move about.

4.3 Article 3: Normality against sustainability – Mobility practices of well-to-do households

In the third and final article of my thesis I focused on investigating the shared aspects of daily and leisure mobility practices utilising the same in-depth interviews as in the second article. The objective of this article was to answer the third research question: how is necessity constituted in moving about and are there alternatives to the taken-for-granted thinking about and doing of mobility?

The key findings show that daily 'musts' concerning moving about are constituted in intersecting and often conflicting and variously time and attention demanding practices. Concerning doing the taken-for-granted, this study illustrates that sticking with the familiar ways of conducting things resist change enforcing unsustainable practices, the status quo, however, those could work for sustainability, too. Familiar and routine ways of doing things help organise the daily life and potentially save time (Morgan, 2011; Southerton, 2013). As the outcomes of different elements, arrangements and circumstances that meet in the 'faithful performance' of a practice (such as automobility), familiar and socio-culturally accepted and normalised ways of doing and thinking are prone to persist as matters-of course. In mobility, as well, this entails 'what is considered easy and straightforward', commonly default automobility as an easy access mode and the car as a stand-by convenience device (e.g. Shove, 2003b). Furthermore, it was revealed that any strategy of moving about has to be inscribed with the similar qualities of convenience, 'being in control' and 'freedom of others and of external timetables' to be viewed as true alternatives.

The process in which other strategies (such as a collective strategy of public transport) become obsolete (Bourdieu, 1977; Moloney and Strengers, 2014) may be understood as *'doing of necessity'*. In this case, a material object in repetitive use is incorporated into practical consciousness and shared understandings. Also, in a similar vein to previous studies, embedded in the complex interdependencies of, for instance, transport infrastructures and related policies, the still persistent mentality concerning the private car as representing full citizenship, adulthood and sovereignty, condition possible paths and futures (Urry, 2004: 36). These illustrate how certain kind of 'stickiness' may hold a practice together even in cases of disruptions or changes in, for instance, material conditions.

The shared understandings and collective engagements related to mobility practices concerned private economy, personal and family well-being and comfort. The issues with private economy had to do with how people are predisposed to income and money in general (constituted in household money management), but also in shared cultural models and discursive practices. At the same time 'not having to think about what everything costs', living 'according to one's means', and 'not wasting' were common statements among the studied householders. Concerning automobility and inconspicuous consumption such as purchasing insurance or petrol and maintaining the car, or conspicuous consumption such as purchasing a vehicle, the investments for the convenience, comfort, and ease associated with the private car was commonly self-evident and not questioned.

Key findings concerning temporal matters in mobility practices include, perceiving time as limited, 'not having time to think' and experiencing of time-pressures. These enforce default doings that possibly add to increased stress and busyness. For example, not wanting to be involved in the 'rat race' of hectic and pressured way of life, but admittedly being part of it in dealing with challenges of professional life and enjoyments and comforts of leisure time, having the freedom of autonomous scheduling and route-planning offered by private automobility; hurried workdays and scheduled evenings with driving to and from work and one's own as well as kids' hobbies, and managing multiple tasks and conflicting demands. The common bitter-sweet statement goes: time is limited and it should not be wasted. The desired temporal sovereignty concerns both mobility and surrounding practices (e.g. Southerton, 2006), although mobility seems to be something people consider to be in their control.

The findings highlight the need for better acknowledgement of 'normal' practices that co-evolve with things, material surroundings, collective conventions, and multiple intersecting practices not only householders are engaged in, but also those of the multiple interveners or facilitators.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Necessity and sustainability in light of empirical results

This study argues that the living standards, along with necessities, that are commonly on the rise are inseparable from socio-cultural and material arrangements and resist backward movement (downscaling), as well as movement towards sustainable domestic and mobility practices. Concerning both mobility and household practices, this entails a normalised level of decency increasingly incorporating reliance on personal modes of mobility, privately-owned and individual equipment considered as matters-of-course as well as rarely questioned and tacitly accepted norms for decent living conditions, with inscribed environmental burdens. Despite efforts (campaigns, etc.) to reduce household consumption and the environmental load, this study suggests that rather than decreasing, levels of consumption are on a steady rise.

The multiplied ownership levels and significantly increased necessity of ICT devices may be viewed as examples of a larger development provides reason to anticipate that a lot more is coming. Although probably significant, the development is not only related to the substitution of the old with the new, but concerns the rapid emergence of new ICT devices such as tablets and smartphones that come with complementary devices (e.g. van Dijk, 2012). The fact that nearly 70 per cent of Finns owned at least one digital camera and over 60 per cent owned at least one laptop in 2009, provides most probably only a hint of the development ahead.[26] The role of individualisation remains speculative, although the number of devices per household has, in previous studies, been shown to rise (e.g. Quitzau and Røpke, 2008; Kohvakka, 2010). This has to do with individualised time-frames among family members, which is supported by this study as well. What is problematic with the statistics and survey data is that the number of devices in a household were not asked, while studies on

[26] Laptop was not asked separately in our survey.

unsustainable practices would benefit from this information greatly (see Guillén-Royo and Wilhite, 2015; Moisio et al., 2008: 12). In the US, as well, necessity of a TV is on a downward slope, while at the same time an average household owned three televisions in 2009[27]. Monica Guillén-Royo and Harold Wilhite (2015: 12) point to the deficit as well. There are many indicators beyond the purely economic measures, such as GDP, to indicate determinants of human wellbeing, such as Human Development Index (HDI). None of them show, however, the growing number and size in appliances, houses, length of travel on a daily basis, or the environmental indicators of carbon and material footprints.

Here, the relevance of the rises in the material living standard and its relation to environmental sustainability is both in the overall level having cumulative effects and in the items adding to the energy and materials consumption. The appearance and appropriation of new items does not necessarily entail discarding the old but, for instance, multiple ways of complementing those with new supplements etc. (see Røpke, 2009). The disappearance and discarding of old ICT and other technological devices is relevant, however, concerning the overall life-cycle effects, including therefore their pace of renewal and disposal (see e.g. Kotakorpi et al., 2008). While people may be prone to both invest in 'quality' and to hold on to their acquired appliances and device, durability and reparability depending upon product design, production, and related services appear as key factors concerning sustainability. The findings highlight the need to better address their trajectories both as necessities and items of obsolescence in research and in policy.

The importance of income for the perceived necessity of expensive goods and services as well distinctive services (cultural services and restaurant visits) is not surprising, but it nonetheless provides important further indication about the relationship between income, consumption patterns, and future expectations. These are relevant in investigating the intersected nature of living standards and environmental sustainability, commonly more of the former and deficit of the latter (e.g. Kotakorpi et al., 2008; Spangenberg and Lorek, 2002). Interestingly, as proposed by Karlsson and colleagues (2004: 766) people's expectations and behaviour may be more strongly influenced by social comparisons of possessions and consumption than the effect of the economic situation, *per se*. In turn, income did not affect the perceived necessity of very common or inexpensive technical goods corresponding with previous research. In the US studies, the effects of income have for long been notable, that is, the higher the income, the higher the number of necessities (Taylor et al., 2006). In 2010 (Taylor and Wang, 2010: 6), however, the effect of income on necessity perceptions for most items was fading in the US[28]. This may be caused by many factors, but suggests

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27 In the US survey a dichotomous scale was used with necessity opposed to luxury providing therefore very different types of categorizations and interpretations among respondents compared to our survey.

28 We did not look at the effects of background variables per each year, but only in 2009.

that possible lowering of commodity prices, possible familiarisation and normalisation through continuous exposure (social surroundings and media, public discourse on 'what householders ought to have'). The penetration of items in all socio-economic groups may be fading the effect of income on perceived necessity (see Braun et al., 2016: 219-221). The movement from unessential to necessity and the fading effects of income highlight the evolution of the constitution and rise in the overall standard of decency, perhaps involving the ease with which loans can be obtained. With fading status functions of items and decreasing effect of income, the goods may remain integral elements of everyday life and the standard of living (Dwyer, 2009). These results are important as they indicate interesting territory for further research on daily life, consumption, and sustainability among the higher income groups and the higher educated, as well as between different groups in various life stages.

The tendency of rising consumption levels and living standards contradict downscaling scenarios, whether anti-consumption, downshifting or voluntary simplicity (e.g. Black and Cherrier, 2010; Fournier, 2008). Finns' strong attitudes towards restricting private consumption on environmental grounds and the weak accordant behaviour revealed in previous research (e.g. ISSP 2010: Environment) – the attitude-behaviour gap – are interesting with respect to these findings. Discussing environmental sustainability among the well-to-do, the findings of my interviews revealed a common notion of "everyone knows" about environmental matters and impacts, which were perceived as important as well. Furthermore, people do not find more or better information needed or being a possible source or initiator of shift towards more sustainable mobility (cf. Heiskanen, 2005: 184-185; Heiskanen and Timonen, 1996). It remains speculative, however, whether this may partially be due to constructing themselves as knowledgeable in the interview situation (see e.g. Jokinen 2005). Sahakian and Wilhite (2014: 27-30) for example, deem that in both mobility and domestic practices, people use heuristic devices such that making judgements on day-to-day realities do not occur based on a "full understanding". Rather, the actual doing of the practice is a constitution of what is easy and straightforward, what knowledge one has, and what engagements or motivations are associated with that knowledge (Gram-Hanssen, 2009: 159; also Moisander, 2007). This is to say that any amount of information does not suffice on its own (see Hobson, 2003; 2010; Vihalemm et al., 2015).

Pursuing personal and family wellbeing and comfort is a 'natural' prioritization and the indulgences in daily life, whether doings or inscribed in (or prescribed by) material surroundings such as household infrastructure, may easily be resource intensive (Quitzau and Røpke, 2008). People, however, do not consume resources, *per se*, as has been noted in previous studies as well (Wilhite and Lutzenhiser, 1998), but are concerned with the provided services. Making the connection of environmental concerns and daily goings-on requires meaningful participation and a combination of cognitive and bodily processes (see Wilhite, 2012: 95-96): for instance, the absorbed vocabulary of 'not wasting' (money or time) and efficiency of time use make common sense in a more familiar and engaging manner. The discursive practice (see Reckwitz, 2002), the cultural model and mentality of 'not wasting', refers to both the traditional ethos of thriftiness that can be related to the Protestant ethic, and the modern economic ethos of utility and the *'language of efficiency'* (see Huttunen and Autio, 2010; Jackson, 2012; Schultz and Tapio, 2010; Väyrynen, 2009). What this meant in my study was 'living according to one's means' with particular reference to the current economic resources (income and wealth) of the household, adjusting consumption and expectations to the economic situation. Thus, those may not have much resonance with or significance to sustainability in contrast to the rationalisation discussion in the pursuits of sustainability (see Hobson, 2010).

In accordance to previous studies, my study supports the view that people have a handful in managing their daily lives scheduled by multiple intersecting practices, with often conflicting demands, such as parenting, socialising, working and running errands, usually experienced as hectic related to both domestic and working life. There are surrounding practices that may strengthen any daily practice; with the interconnected and co-evolving practices of authorities, policy makers, developers, employers etc. (Maller, 2016: 78-79; Watson, 2012: 491). This complex organisation of quite ordinary and mundane proceedings sets pressures in various ways. Some are generated or co-constituted by the practitioners' engagement is certain practices and their socio-cultural surroundings in conforming to what is viewed as normal and desirable living, and some by the work-and-spend cycles. Some are constituted by socio-material arrangements, such as the mobility-related infrastructures concerning both the normality of private car based mobility, the incapability of the public transport systems to recruit users, and the policies and advocates to support the development of more sustainable mobility practices. Any practice or a constellation of practices in one's daily life has its specific temporal requirements and along the materials incorporated may either provide the practitioner with (experienced) 'more time' (time saving devices, appliances, functions such as timers and stand-by) or create more haste, time-slot demands, busyness. The (hyper)modern convenience devices such as cars and tumble-dryers are commonly considered as necessary tools for managing schedules and organising time (Southerton, 2003), but through heightened standards of convenience and cleanliness those may also result in requiring more time, for example in the frequency of laundry (Pantzar, 2010: 7-9; Shove, 2003). As mentioned above, individual mobility strategies (walking, biking, or driving), with experienced freedom of others and external timetables, have an appeal much higher than collective strategies (public transport or ride-sharing), with shared schedules, among the interviewees. The degree of predictability, the preparedness for 'ad hoc' tasks, surprise errands, and taking the kids to the doctor, for example, emphasised the importance of automobility, however. Not wanting or being able to plan ahead has been shown in previous studies as well showing people with higher education being more keen than others on creating temporal space for spontaneity (Southerton, 2006: 450-451). This also refers to the 'money rich, time poor' people, as opposed to 'time rich, money poor' not having time to plan or think about alternative strategies (see Southerton, 2013).

It is widely recognised that within current environment-related policy measures, people are viewed as consumers and 'agency' is generally attributed to them in doing informed (market) choices (e.g. Akenji, 2014; Fuchs and Lorek, 2005). Interestingly, the majority of the interviewed householders in this study considered themselves as being 'green' at least in their reference group irrespective of their actual level of engagement to sustainable consumption. Here, people say they 'do what they can' and are 'doing their bit'. 'Little green things', for instance, in buying what are viewed as environmentally friendly or energy-efficient products, switching-off lights and using stand-by functions reflect the policies occupying a very narrowed selection of "how's and who's", the responsible actors and methods in pursuing sustainability (Moloney and Strengers, 2014; also Gram-Hanssen, 2009; Hobson, 2010; Maller, 2016). This is in accordance to the weak sustainable consumption approach, that is, green consumerism. At the same time, the "green bits and pieces" promoted and done may be perceived as obsolete by the householders, recognising the scale and complexity of the environmental problems faced (Akenji, 2014; Autio et al., 2009; Moloney and Strengers, 2014). The relatively more significant acts (see Spangenberg and Lorek, 2002), for instance, bidding electricity provider on environmental grounds or downscaling living space, and change of mode in mobility, are rare and commonly viewed as arduous (see Moloney and Strengers, 2014; Meyer and Maniates, 2010). The reasons range from not having time to think, not considering those investments worth making, not considering the 'supporting' of, for instance, 'green' energy as their job, all of the above incorporating a variety of structural factors.

While, for instance, investing in 'good (enough) quality', using things to the end, and 'not wasting money', environmental issues do not have wider resonance in daily goings-on, if not considered to contribute to their and their family's comfort and well-being. People expect larger scale interventions and at the same time want to continue their lives 'as normal' (also Fournier, 2008: 539-540). Having knowledge of environmental matters, such as the general consequences of petrol-based mobility to the environment, many consider addressing the issue being beyond individuals in general and not a concern for their doings in particular (Autio et al., 2009: 45; Moisander, 2001). Freedom of choice was emphasised while the 'something' needing to be done is commonly attributed to 'everyone' or 'the authorities' (Wilk, 2010: 40–42). Thus, people wonder about the responsibilities, efforts, and effects of authorities, but also about how much their own doings are effecting, and if others are contributing as well (Akenji, 2014; Hobson, 2002). Often, the organisation of daily life also remains distant from environmental concerns, concerning 'others' and happening 'somewhere else' (e.g. Barr et al., 2010; Princen, 2002 about 'distancing'). These open interesting views to consider questions of responsibility and choice (see e.g. Fournier, 2008; Hobson, 2002).

One of the most relevant insights of my study is that despite general knowledge and concern of environmental issues among the householders studied, and the leeway provided by their higher education and higher-than-average income (see Räsänen, 2003) sustainability, *per se*, does not have strong bearing in daily life, but people rather 'do normal life'. Opening the largely unreflective and routine daily life to reflection in the interview situations, environmental considerations were commonly perceived as requiring money and/or time, both of which people consider that they do not have. Those were also perceived as requiring familiarisation, and all of the above were experienced as inconveniencing people's daily proceedings. These highlight the need for an alternative to consumer sovereignty and freedom approaches and broader systemic changes (e.g. Akenji, 2014).

5.2 Theoretical and methodological implications

In addition to the significant upwards movement of material living standards concerning ICT devices the most important result of this study was, surprisingly, the rather modest explanatory power of income and education compared to that of the demographic variables of age and household type. While this points towards other than mono-causal relations of income and education versus consumption and perceptions of necessity (Gram-Hanssen, 2014), it leaves here much room for speculation. Adjusting to an economic situation and social standing (see Csutora, 2012) suggests that the links between income, education, and other "determinants" work in constructing living standards by way of collective conventions and evolving expectations of ownership and necessity (e.g. Dwyer, 2009; Halleröd, 2006: 387-388; Karlsson et al., 2004). Also, rationales for the current level of and construction of consumption are easy to find (see Jyrinki et al., 2012).

In subjective terms, necessity may include anything, and in relative terms the category changes along with rising living standards. For better understanding of the dynamics, I suggest that necessity be viewed as an "outcome" of a process or a point in a process of doing and negotiating in daily life. Any one appliance, device or service may potentially simultaneously be 'necessary', 'superfluous' or 'luxury' depending on the context and situation (see also Jyrinki et al., 2012). Accordingly, considering the number of devices in a household they may be perceived 'needed' with varying degrees due to their specialized purposes their distinctive roles and positions in space. In addition, it is a question of the provided convenience, comfort, speed, and the perceived suitability to time-frames than the item in question, *per se*. Adding to Braun and others' (2016) presentation of approaches in studying necessity, I suggest a 'practice approach' to necessity: necessity is *not* located in the person or individual, nor is it a property of any 'thing', but is *located in practices.* It is constituted in doings and negotiating, through the performance of which established necessities as non-negotiable ways of doing things and tightly attached to certain material objects and tools, eventually becoming elements in practice as entity, as well.

Concerning the relativity and subjectivity of necessities, Don Slater (1997) in accordance with Doyal and Gough (1991) and Soper (1981), writes about the social and political nature of needs in the frame of consumer culture. Relevant to my study, the social and political nature are manifest in perceiving something needed in order to live a certain kind of life that is profoundly bound up with ideas of propriety and acceptability of social interests and projects. The obscurity of these connections is, in Slater's view revealed, for instance, in treating these needs and objectives as natural or purely subjective (also Schultz and Tapio, 2010). Material possession encompassing the living conditions, appliances and things may have an inscribed and concealed capacity to influence further developments in living standards, that is, a subtle but steady rise. This has potentially significant effects for policy. Still, it is the level of perceived necessity that is the defining line for reducing consumption (Jyrinki et al., 2012; Morgan and Trentmann, 2006; also Druckman and Jackson, 2010 about 'bare necessities' and 'reduced consumption scenario').

While it has been recognised that any one variable, socio-economic or demographic, has a limited explanatory power concerning the complex organisation of daily life, socio-economic and demographic factors (gender, age, education, income) may be viewed as to constrain people's engagement in practices, but also how they experience and allocate practices in daily proceedings (Southerton, 2006: 436, 446-451). Socio-economic position (configuration) sets certain pressures and orientates expectations towards similarity in ways of life, whether it was recognised among the studied or not. This may not have to do with material particularities, as described above, but with the overall standard. Doing of 'living standard' among the studied well-to-do may be viewed as a habitual or normal practice, and like any practice, it is in a constant process of questioning, opposing (e.g. Wilk, 2009), and normalising (Giddens, 1984). This has to do with distinction and conformity as well as a struggle between habitus and practice. It may be viewed as occurring in the intersection (dialectic relations) of individual, collective and structural, and in which use of resources. It may relate not only to *having* higher income, but to how people are predisposed towards those, and to the significance of the organisation of time. Therefore, based on the insights of my study, standard of living may also be viewed as practice-as-entity, as a historical and collective achievement of the concurrent re-enactments and a distinct combination of elements.

Crucial then, is that the consumption actions and daily practices "have histories, both at the societal and individual levels", and the repeated lived experience creates dispositions for future action (Winther and Wilhite, 2015: 596). Creating the personal leeway (space for possibility and action), co-constituted with the historically sedimented societal leeway (space for possibility and action), as socio-economic and demographic factors constrain our engagement in practices, but also how we experience and allocate practices in daily proceedings (Southerton, 2006). If for analytical purposes the purpose or goal of these performances would be possible to separate, in either daily life context or wider historical, political and socio-cultural contexts, for latter those may be considered as to be obscured as, for instance, dominant views and ideologies hold their power precisely on the grounds of this obscurity. Personal histories and lived and experienced life create predispositions (sediments) orienting (both reflectively and habitually) the use of our resources in a way in which the world in understood (Bourdieu, 1990; Ortner, 2006; Røpke, 2009): how life is led, how the leeway is utilized. Historical and collective developments (sediments; path-dependencies, some alternatives seen as possible while others not etc.) create and are co-created by the resources, opportunities, possibilities seen and constraints created and met (leeway). These “interlock in ways that configure the possibilities for social change in and what people consume” (Chappells et al., 2004: 146; also Akenji, 2014). Based on the findings of my study, I suggest, that in the interlocked intersection of these and the *environmental space* (Hirvilammi, 2014; Lorek, 2016; Spangenberg, 2014; orig. Oopschoor and Reinders, 1991) is the ‘space’ where the possibility for sustainability in daily life lies.

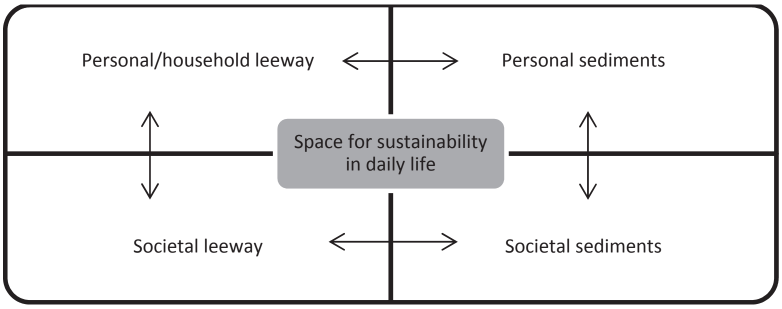

CHART 1 Space for sustainability in the organization of everyday life

5.3 Practical and policy implications

The substitution of old media does not necessarily indicate a decreasing trend in ownership of those items (Dwyer, 2009) as besides the substitution phenomena (exclusion of one mode of doing something by taking on another, such as, different modes of transport) simultaneous use of different modes and devices may occur, suggesting complementary use (such as if one device or service the use of other device or service possible, e.g. combining of transport modes in biking to train station etc.). These may also work in clusters or complexes, in that no one mode may function properly without the proper functioning of the others (such as having, driving and maintaining the car, the roads, the traffic signs, the overall infra etc.). (Røpke, 2009: 2492.) The necessity of computers, and other devices, and the Internet is enforced by multiple daily practices with concrete objectives, such as running errands, banking, information retrieval, and shopping (e.g. Kohvakka 2010) entwined with several simultaneous processes: the socio-technical constructing of online services, including traditional media companies, the 24-hour society and the self-service society drawing all age and social groups online (also out of necessity). This occurs simultaneously with a process of 'killing practices', such as, traditional modes of running errands, customer service in banks and offices. Although prices of ICT devices have significantly lowered, families with children as well as the elderly may be confronted with difficulties to manage the price and pressures of digitalized school work and services. Social comparisons occur among children and the young, as well as adults, effecting their expectations and feelings of belonging having impact on household consumption, as well (e.g. Jyrinki et al., 2012; Räsänen, 2006; Tondeur et al., 2011).

This study (articles 2 and 3) has shown how the current pursuits for sustainability are and will not be adequate without carrying meaning in everyday functionality, sensibility, and meaning for the householders in their multiple overlapping roles and making connections in the details of daily life. The situational, contextual and practice-related nature of necessity provides also points for possible "intervention". Concerning, however, the noted (Aro, 2016b) relatively spacious homes, and the predicted rise in living space, along with inscribed energy consumption (etc.), the question remains, how the requirements for living space (and homes in general) considered desirable and normal may be changed. This among other issues dealt with in this thesis are bound up with complex and 'larger than ordinary domestic life' issues concerning comfort, wellbeing, and expectations and "the collective, resource-intensive practices to which those are connected and co-evolve with" (see Maller, 2016).

Innovative new paths and pursuits of change need to be found (e.g. Shove and Walker, 2010; Vihalemm et al., 2015; Watson, 2012) also concerning the 'system of automobility' and the practices surrounding it having made themselves in many ways indispensable (Urry, 2004; 2008). In contrast to, for instance Holden (2007), it is maintained here, that the changes will require 'questioning the level of travel', as well. This involves enforcing other strategies as 'true alternatives' and taking seriously the possibility of control and moderation of car-use rather than expecting constant growth and supporting it further as taken-for-granted. Automobility-driven transport policy (and other policies struggling with output pressures) contradicts with goals of other policy sectors, such as climate and land use; climate and other environmental concerns have been met with decreasing train and bus services (particularly in more sparsely populated areas) creating contradicting messages related to long-term objectives and planning reducing effectiveness of policies (e.g. Kivimaa and Virkamäki, 2014).

In accordance to previous studies, sovereignty of schedules and freedom of others "the degree to which people do or do not have control over their temporal regime" (Cass et al., 2005: 551; Kalanti, 2001: 102-103) are constitutive elements in mobility practices. Interestingly, in this study the inclination to consider cycling as an alternative to private car-driving as opposed to public transportation, a collective strategy (see Watson, 2012), may be seen as an indication of this. This predisposition may or may not lead into practice due to other contributing factors and should thus be utilised in designing policy. Concerning domestic practices, as well, material agency (houses, micro-infrastructures, appliances) and the surrounding practices co-evolve with temporality in sequential doings and scheduling both constraining and constructing consumption patterns and expectations, creating standards (e.g. Shove et al., 2012; Southerton, 2006). At least considering the studied well-to-do, the currently promoted collaborative consumption and sharing economy as possible routes towards sustainable living (e.g. Ahlqvist and Heiskanen, 2006), may prove to be difficult to apply. The provided instant and easy-access, flexibility, and stand-by capacity are keys in micromanaging and 'juggling' with tasks and demands (Shove, 2003b; Southerton, 2003; 2006). Promotion of velomobility and walking as active and healthy mobility related to exercise while doing other things contributes to several aspects (non-material) of wellbeing: individual, societal and environmental; simultaneously relieving time pressures, emphasizing the reliability of the mode; saving time from congestion and parking, not having to drive kids to and from school, hobbies etc. However, while for instance new and better knowledge (rationalisation discourse; see Hobson, 2002) about cycling as an excellent sustainable daily mobility practice may not 'break' or kill the habit of car-driving, change in the perspective of seeing cycling as normal might (e.g. Vaismaa, 2014). The task is without any doubt, not easy. The participation of multiplicity of stakeholders as change agents is paramount: for instance, schools, businesses, and municipalities are required to partake, and cross-sectional and consistent policy work are needed (e.g. Akenji, 2014; Keller et al., 2016).

The present state of affairs in people's daily realities are, as described above, 'sticky' to a degree that even an adjustment or alteration or modification towards inconvenience (no parking space, road block etc.) may not lead to any noticeable change in the practice remaining stable for as long as circumstances allow. Disturbing the stability of the practice (status quo), is generally considered to require change in several elements of a practice in question, maybe even change in surrounding practices (Watson, 2012; Shove et al., 2007). Both reproducing and transforming a practice-as-entity, as the historical and collective achievement and a dynamic product of countless performances requires, in a way, leaning towards a particular direction long enough, 'pushing the ship', taking a path and building dependencies. The strength of innovation programs (etc.), according to Elizabeth Shove and Gordon Walker (2010) depend on creation of cumulative positive feedback effects by way of positive changes in various elements and actors (change agents; see also Keller et al., 2016). The repertoire could and should be wide ranging from addressing the easy and straightforward default choices (see Akenji, 2014; Maniates et al., 2010) to policymakers and legislators taking responsibility for effective incentives and measures and all the above creating 'spheres of influence' (see Spangenberg and Lorek, 2002: 136). Those have possible, both positive and negative cumulative effects, operating as multiple interveners or facilitators (Jackson, 2009; Keller et al., 2016; Shove et al. 2008). However, normal and ordinary lives seem too delicate of a subject to address in politics as it is private, outside the bounds of interference (see Cohen, 2005; Jokinen, 2005; McNeill and Wilhite, 2010): freedom with private choice (private pleasures and comforts, needs as unlimited and insatiable) and freedom to do as we please in our private life (Slater, 1997: 26-28). Outside the frame of sustainability, the daily life *is* constantly intervened or "interfered" with (e.g. smoking; see e.g. Akenji, 2014), but the 'sacrifices' made are considered either positive or negative, and either accepted or declined depending on their suitability to our view of the world (habitus) and the repertoire of practices (both societal and individual). Also, the social control attributed to the self-disciplined consumers through 'doing their bit' seem not to work for larger societal changes towards sustainability (see Hobson, 2010).

5.4 Final remarks

People as consumers and householders constantly trade-off "one kind of sacrifice for another" (Meyer and Maniates, 2010: 6), whether those are overt, conscious and explicit, or implicit routine-like 'sacrifices', or covert such as environmental harm (also Heinonen et al., 2013; Lorek and Spangenberg, 2014; Max-Neef, 1992). Daily proceedings are replete with possible paths concerning whether time, money, and effort is required to be put into something, or whether a certain way of conducting a task is associated with a certain life phase (in the life-cycle of a household), that is for instance what is prioritized in families with children. Where and why people decide to live are decisions that have multiple connections to housing and mobility infrastructures and service levels, personal history, occupation and place of work, social connections, etc. There are, then, "sacrifices driven by livelihood, family, opportunity, and social expectations" (ibid.) resonating with multiple socio-cultural, economic, and demographic dimensions. However, as has been shown in this thesis, considering the complexity of daily realities, those do not function causally or singularly.

According to Thomas Princen (2010: 145-146), operating in consumer society, the rhetorical use of 'sacrifice' in the current consumer society (refers to consumer economy) is, in fact, confined with consumer sovereignty accompanied thus with a certain acceptable 'repertoire' of trade-offs *for* the marketplace (what to buy) claiming further that sacrificing *in* the marketplace (not to buy) is unacceptable. While being attributed with agency[29], 'power', freedom and sovereignty, people claim the vanity of their doings (see also Slater, 1997), as they are met with the confusing reality in being demanded to act (being self-governed and self-disciplined) (e.g. Moisander, 2007), but the larger scale actions of governments (etc.) await implementing (e.g. Hobson, 2010; Princen, 2010). Interestingly, the current state of affairs of emphasising our freedom of choice attributes someone else with the responsibility to do the 'job' and 'make

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29 E.g. YLE (Finnish Broadcasting Company) 22.7.2016 "7 ways to do the emissions reductions yourself".

an effort' while we, the ordinary people as consumers and householders, but also as policy makers, researchers etc., are able to continue our lives as normal. Changes in the overall frame of thinking and operating are required (see Akenji, 2014; Lorek and Spangenberg, 2014).

Heavy emphasis may be put on asking whether there are real and meaningful alternatives in doing something and leading our lives, and how the meaningfulness and value is weighed. It is important to bear in mind that no trade-off is value-neutral, as "people always give up something of value whatever they do" (Meyer and Maniates, 2010), but the essential question is: *what or who is it valuable for?* For instance, practices such as biking to work and exercise biking, are nexuses of multiple elements, embedded in the power structures under which the consumer society and consumer culture operate (see Slater, 1997), but also with respect to the natural world. According to the findings of my study, some ways of doing daily life and some ways to consume are perceived more ok, normal and acceptable than others. What was noted by Elizabeth Shove (2003) over a decade ago, referring to much earlier investigations, was that looking at whose knowledge and interests the prevailing conceptions of human needs, and their alternate satisfiers (see Guillen-Royo, 2010; Hirvilammi, 20014; Schultz and Tapio, 2010) are based on, is not a new orientation. However, the questions are still acute and unresolved. The task of research is both to look at those normalities and to investigate the underlying interests and knowledge. Following from the insights of my study I claim that researchers and policy makers should be conscious of how standard of living with its capacity to condition and to script future expectations is talked about, and how and what it is used for. Finally, concerning the range of domestic and mobility practices the centrality of practitioners (citizens and consumers, researchers and policy-makers, authorities and business executives alike) must be recognised as practices exist only through their faithful performance and recurrent reproduction. Shove (2003: 23) notes further that scientific and commercial interests work in constructing normality, that is, in "building conditions and conventions at one and the same time" (also Moisander and Valtonen, 2007) and precisely the subtlety of this process is crucial in understanding it. In defining of the problems we encounter, discourses are produced and reproduced, and what demands attention is defined, that is, "making and shaping the future" (Shove et al., 2008: 307).

Importantly then, with respect to policy making and decisions, too, the above presented question of trade-offs is always present: how are other decisions taken as *investments worth making*, while others remain, or have become seen as non-negotiable (see Fournier, 2008), unwanted, representing maybe stagnation, and repressing freedom (of choice) or requiring unwanted financial investments. These may be viewed through the different interpretations of sustainable development: strong sustainability, for instance recognising the inevitability of lowering consumption levels among the rich, or weak sustainability, depending on market mechanisms ability to steer us into a desired development-path (Akenji, 2014; Lorek and Fuchs, 2013; Spangenberg, 2014; Hopwood et al., 2005). In daily life and in politics, the negative effects of consumption may be seen as unfortunate, unavoidable and distant externalities and more or less acceptable as that. In the case of my study, and supported by several previous studies as well, there is a strong accordance to that environmental issues are important and even to the pressing need for action, *'doing something'*.

In a situation when the threshold for the decoupling of wellbeing and rise in GDP (and consumption) has long ago been reached there is a call for taking responsibility and action (e.g. Akenji, 2014). What we are facing now, among other challenges, is the rise of emerging economies as consumer societies with a growing global middle class and proportion of well-to-do (e.g. Hansen and Wenthal, 2010) which is comparable to the recognised processes of rising expectations and patterns of consumption, along with the global 'underclass' of poor people (Bauman, 2007). In weighing the rights and responsibilities, there is no denying of the basic conveniences of the people of developing world (e.g. Miller, 2001; Wilk, 2001). In fact, what has been suggested by Spangenberg (2014), among others, is that as neither *underconsumption* nor *overconsumption* are sustainable (accounting for social and economic dimensions as well, see WCED, 1987), the strategies for the future should entail *'better but less'* for the rich and *'enough and better'* for those struggling with poverty. As claimed above, in occupying a critical stance, sustainability should be understood as a general critique towards the rising volumes of environmentally unsustainable consumption (e.g. Daly, 1991; 2013; Schor, 2010). The above proposed view is a critical one dealing with the widely recognized, and here noted, difficulties with which the countries within the current economic frame, with the perpetual economic growth imperative, striving towards sustainability are struggling with: the same system that is claimed to have created the problems faced, is geared for solving them (e.g. Akenji, 2014; Jackson, 2009). The importance of these findings come from the urgency to note, that while it is clear that the systemic embeddedness of our lives constrains and constructs ways of doing and thinking, and our daily demands and 'musts' are important and real, it is even more so crucial, that by way of this understanding and recognition, agency should be seized. However, this does not entail only the agency of consumers, but also political leadership towards wider systemic change (see Fournier, 2008; Dobson, 2006). With knowledge and freedoms come responsibilities which must be taken by and attributed to those with more resources and with better skills both globally (the affluent north) and nationally (the higher educated and the wealthy).

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämän väitöskirjan tavoitteena on tutkia miten elintason ja ekologisen kestävyyden ongelmallista suhdetta voitaisiin paremmin ymmärtää arjen välttämättömyyksien ja arkisten tapahtumien tarkastelun avulla. Tutkimustehtävä on jaettu kolmeen kysymykseen, joihin vastaamisessa hyödynnetään kahta näkökulmaa ja kahdenlaisia tutkimusaineistoja: tilastoaineistoja ja pitkittäisen aineistokokonaisuuden muodostavia kvantitatiivista kyselyaineistoja vuosilta 1999–2009 (n=2,417, n=3,574, n=1,202), sekä tietyn sosio-ekonomisen ryhmän, hyvin toimeentulevien, joilla on keskimääräistä korkeammat tulot sekä korkea koulutus, parissa tehtyjä syvähaastatteluja. Haastateltavat edustavat lisäksi tiettyä ikäryhmää (30–45-vuotiaat), eli ns. ruuhkavuosia eläviä. Kyselyaineistot mahdollistavat ajallisen muutoksen tarkastelun, sekä välttämättömyyskäsitysten tarkastelun sosio-ekonomisten ja demografisten muuttujien valossa. Haastatteluaineisto avaa yksityiskohtaisemman näkökulman elettyyn ja koettuun arkeen. Haastatteluaineistojen analyysissa hyödynnettiin sisällönanalyysia ja sitä ohjasi käytäntöteoreettinen lähestymistapa.

Tutkimustulokset osoittavat, että kulutuksen kestävyystavoitteista huolimatta välttämättömyydet lisääntyvät ja kulutustaso kasvaa. Normaalina ja välttämättömänä pidetty kulutus ja kulutuksen taso ovat perustaltaan kytköksissä sosiokulttuurisiin ja materiaalisiin ulottuvuuksiin, jotka sekä rajoittavat että rakentavat kulutuskäytäntöjä ja kulutukseen liittyviä odotuksia. Tutkimuksen tulokset tukevat näkemyksiä, joiden mukaan arjen organisointi on kytköksissä moniin siinä risteäviin käytäntöihin, asettaen sille aikapaineita ja ristiriitaisiakin vaatimuksia, eikä arki siten välttämättä ole johdonmukaista tai rationaalista. Tutkimuksen mukaan arjen organisoinnin tärkeimpinä tavoitteina ovat sujuvuus, mukavuus, sekä oma ja perheen hyvinvointi. Kulutukseen liittyvästä ympäristötiedosta ja -huolesta, sekä tulojen ja koulutuksen tarjoamista mahdollisuuksista huolimatta ympäristöllinen kestävyys jää usein etäälle 'normaalista arjesta': sen huomioimisen koetaan vaativaan aikaa ja rahaa, joita ihmiset kokevat että heillä ei ole, sekä perehtymistä, kaikki arjen toteuttamista hankaloittavia tekijöitä.

Tutkimuksessa esitetään, että tila kestävän arjen organisoinnille muodostuu kolmenlaisten liikkumavarojen kohdatessa; historiallisten ja kollektiivisten kehityskulkujen muodostamat yhteiskunnalliset kerrostumat ja näiden muokkaama liikkumavara; henkilöhistorian ja eletyn ja koetun elämän muodostamat kerrostumat, ja henkilökohtaisten elämänkokemusten myötä syntyneet ja muuntuvat ajattelun ja toiminnan taipumukset, jotka suuntaavat meillä olevien resurssien käyttöä ja osallistumista käytäntöihin; sekä luonnonympäristön asettamat rajat. Tutkimustulokset painottavat laajempien ajattelu- ja toimintatapojen muutoksen tarpeellisuutta, sekä systeemisen muutoksen välttämättömyyttä kestävyyden tavoittelussa.

Avainsanat: välttämättömyys, kestävyys, normaalius, arkielämä, elintaso

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Table of interviewees.

	Gender/Age	Household type	Education / Profession
1	M37	Couple (no children)	Dentist
2	M35	Single	Lawyer
3	F31	1 child (pregnant)	MSc (Tech) / Project manager
4	F41	2 children	Architect
5	F41	2 children	MSc (Econ) / Controller
6	F33	1 child	Lawyer
7	F35	2 children	MSc (Natural science)
8	F37	2 children (pregnant)	Med licentiate / Specialist doctor (Med)
9	M36	2 children	MSc (Econ) / Manager
10	F40	Single	MSc (Tech) / Senior Analyst
11	M36	Single	PhD / Expert
12	M31	Couple (no children)	Specialist doctor (Med)
13	N42	Single	MSc (Econ) / Expert
14	M42	Single (part-time parent)	Dentist / Specialist doctor

Appendix 2. Interview structure / list of questions.

- Consent from the interviewee to use this data for research purposes
- Declaration of anonymity
- Notification about audio recording and taking notes
- Description of the interview situation

Theme I: Normality and ordinariness in consumption and daily life

1. Describe your (and your family's) ordinary day and week
   - How do you move about, what is done, how time is spent, etc.
   - Tell me about your household practices and mobility practices (such as going to work, running errands): how is your daily life organized, what is important? Also domestic services, such as water and energy are asked about with respect to daily practices.
   - Possible guidelines and principles?

2. Tell me about your ordinary consumption.
   - Describe purchasing (what do you buy and where), using and disposal of products, devices, appliances and services.
   - Food: what and where purchased, what is important and why?
   - Possible guidelines and principles?

3. Describe yourself as consumer.
   - How would you characterize your/your household consumption?
   - How would you describe unusual or uncommon consumption to you/ your family/household?

4. Are you content with your (household) consumption, in what and how much you consume? What about your living standard?
   - Please elaborate: why/why not.

5. In general, how would you describe ordinary consumption in Finland?
   - What do you think an ordinary Finn is like with respect to consumption?
   - What about with respect to environmental matters in consumption and daily life?
   - What do you think is important to ordinary Finns concerning their consumption and daily life?
   - How would you describe and assess your consumption and daily life with respect to that of an ordinary Finn?
   - How would you describe and assess your standard of living with respect to the average in Finland?

6. Who do you consider to be your peers and reference groups (family, colleagues, childhood home, income group, 'class', etc.)?
   - How would you assess your consumption and daily life with respect to

that of your peers and reference groups? What about your standard of living?
- Is your consumption similar/different to those? Do you strive towards similarity or distinction consciously? How and why?

7. What and who do you think effects your decisions concerning your consumption and daily life:
   - Comparisons to others? Who? Income group/class? Childhood home/upbringing? General living standard? Media, fashion? Other? Do you recognize social pressure? Keeping up tendencies?

8. Describe and assess your daily life and consumption from an environmental (sustainability) point of view.
   - Can you give examples?

9. Consider a situation in which your/your household income would a) plummet, and b) double: how do you think your daily life and consumption would change? Please elaborate.

Theme II: Necessity, need, obsolescence and luxury in daily life

2.1 What do you consider necessary in your daily life/in organizing your daily life? What could you not give up? What could you not manage without in your daily life?
- Name three (goods, appliances, services concerning e.g. moving about, housework, leisure time, travelling) that you consider the most important.
- Describe freely and be as elaborate as possible.

2.2 The chart of items and categories (see below) is presented to the interviewee.
- Perceived need and ownership (availability) of items is discussed.

2.3 Tell me what is their meaning in your daily life?
- What purpose do those fulfil or what role do those play?
- Tell me why could you not give those up/manage without those?
- Describe what kind of daily situations those are involved with.
- What functions/practices/routines/activities (etc.) do those facilitate or make possible?

2.4 Can you tell me what you consider having an impact on your perceptions of necessity and what would have to change or be different in order for you to forgo the above stated necessities?
- e.g. material surroundings, infrastructure; availability, supply; time, money; values, attitudes, beliefs; norms; social pressure, status; knowledge, know-how; comfort, gratification; security; etc.

Background information

- Age; gender; family background (parents' education/occupation, family structure, place of origin)
- Education and occupation
- Place of residence
- Household structure/size (also partner's education and occupation when applicable)
- Information about living conditions, dwelling size (living space, m^2), heating system, residential area.
- Income: personal/household combined
- Other? (e.g. life situation/phase)

-Can you think of any questions or areas of importance that should have been covered by/included in this interview?
-Is there anything you would like to ask?
-Thank you for your time!

Chart: Perceived need

1) What is necessary. What I or my family could not manage without in my /our daily life.
2) What I need and have.
3) What I don't need, but have.
4) What I don't need and don't have.
5) What I need, but don't have (lack).
6) What is luxury.

Daily mobility

Item: (number, renewal)	**Category:**	**Elaboration:** (e.g. number, size, renewal)
Car		
Bicycle		
Motorcycle/scooter/microcar		
Public transportation		E.g. mode, distances, suitability of timetables, etc.; on what terms could change from other modes?
Other?		

Household appliances

Item:	**Category:**	**Elaboration:** (e.g. number, size, renewal)
Washing machine		
Laundry room or other shared washing service		On what terms could change into from other modes?
Tumble dryer		
Drying outside or on rack/drying room		On what terms could change into from other modes?
Dish washer		
Refrigerator		
Freezer		
Computer (internet)		
Micro-wave oven		
Television /home theatre		
DVD–player		
Music equipment (CD-player/stereo equipment/mp3/other)		
Game console		
Mobile phone		

Digital camera (number, renewal)		
Vacuum cleaner		
Other cleaning?		
Small domestic appliances (blender/water heat-er/coffee maker/etc.)		
What other appliances and device do you have in your household?		

Leisure time and travelling

Leisure mobility:

Item:	**Category:**	**Elaboration:** (e.g. frequency, distance, mode)
Domestic travel		
Travel abroad		
ATV/snowmobile/boat/ other		

Leisure time and socialising:

Item:	**Category:**	**Elaboration:**
Organising of social events/dinners/get-togethers		Frequency, procurement of goods etc.?
Eating out		Frequency, distance, mode of transportation?
Movies/theatre/concerts		Frequency, distance, mode of transportation?
Leisure activities and equipment		
Clothes, etc.		
Books, magazines/newspaper, music		Format (electronic or material), etc.?
Other? (e.g. toys)		

ORIGINAL PAPERS

I

STANDARD OF LIVING, CONSUMPTION NORMS, AND PERCEIVED NECESSITIES

by

Aro, R. & Wilska, T-A., 2014

International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy vol 34 no 9-10, 710–728

II

″A BIGGER LIVING ROOM REQUIRED A BIGGER TV″ – DOING AND NEGOTIATING NECESSITY IN WELL-TO-DO HOUSEHOLDS

by

Aro, Riikka, 2016

Submitted for publication

III

NORMALITY AGAINST SUSTAINABILITY – MOBILITY PRACTICES OF WELL-TO-DO HOUSEHOLDS

by

Aro, Riikka, 2016

Environmental Policy and Governance vol 26 no 2, 116–128