

Challenges with the implementation of sustainable consumption

- A Case Study of the Municipality of Malmö and clothing consumption

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Human Ecology Division
Department of Human Geography
Faculty of Social Sciences
Lund University

Author: Lisa Hansson
Supervisor: Andreas Malm
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Abstract

In the city of Malmö urban sustainability has been a front figure in municipality development strategies. Despite this, large shopping malls are approved by the municipality and sustain patterns of consumerism. This lead into the question of how the municipality is working for sustainability within consumption, and particularly within one of the worlds most polluting industries, the clothing industry with the emerging phenomena of fast fashion. This question has been studied to further bring input to the research question: *What challenges are identified in municipality work for achieving sustainable consumption of clothes?*

In the case study of Malmö qualitative interview and document data, resulted in mapping the municipality work for sustainable consumption of clothes. Further the work was categorized according to the theoretical approaches of the production angle and the consumption angle. These results showed that the strategies applied by the municipality from the production angle are few in number but have a high visibility to the public. The strategies within the consumption angle outnumbered the production angle but these strategies consisted of small-scale trials and temporary efforts.

The study concludes that the main challenge met by municipalities is the short-term advantage of the production angle, caused by the factors identified as economic and social reasons, influenced by power. The second major challenge is to reduce consumption levels, which is a key to achieving sustainable consumption of clothes. These two challenges further contribute to the perseverance of environmental challenges, which arise in the production-consumption system sustained by the production angle but with a green label.

Key words: Sustainable consumption, Green consumerism, Consumerism, Consumption, Unequal exchange, Distancing, Distancing waste, Power, Fast fashion, Malmö.

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Abbreviations

BAU – Business As Usual

CFK – Centrum för konsumtionsvetenskap

EPA – Environmental Protection Agency

EU – European Union

GAIA – Global Awareness in Action

H&M – Hennes & Mauritz

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

SYSAV – Sydsånes Avfallsaktiebolag

VA SYD – Vatten och Avlopp Syd

UN – United Nations

1. Introduction

Fashion

Collections of ever-so-slightly different versions of hats, jackets, tops, scarves, knickers, trousers, shoes and skirts spill out of the commercial fashion system, with an increasing familiarity and pace. In this way, we can see how the everyday social practice of shopping connects us to one of the most ecologically destructive systems in the world, a system that wrecks havoc throughout the natural world (Chapman, 2014: 75).

Fashion and clothes are something most people can relate to whether they are interested in them or not. The influence that fashion has on peoples' every day life is hard to avoid. In almost every large city in Sweden there is a store of Hennes & Mauritz (H&M) (H&M, 2016). Turning on the TV, commercials run from the large fashion brands. Passing a bus stop will probably expose you to a fashion commercial. Willing or not, the fashion industry will reach you. In last years the phenomenon of *fast fashion* has emerged where large fashion brands launch new collections as fast and as cheap as possible, letting the consumer buy cheap garments at alarming rates (Gabrielli, Baghi and Codeluppi, 2013; Sunhilde and Simona, 2014). The cultural phenomenon of fashion has become a destructive and wasteful system where change and constantly new items have become normality (Chapman, 2015: 74).

The textile industry has been cited as the world's second most polluting industry as it is polluting the environment in multiple ways (Ditty, 2015; Sweeny, 2015; The true cost, 2015). Environmental and social conditions are put at the edge and pushed even harder (Allwood et al. 2006; Kozlowski, Bardecki and Searcy, 2012). Producers have effectively become invisible to the consumer, and so has the environmental degradation. Clothing is one of the most globalized industries (Ditty 2015) and the relationships along the value chain of fashion are broken. The consumer does not know how their clothes are produced or the environmental effects of it (Ditty, 2015; Princen, 2002a: 31).

Research done in 2015 has shown that the consumption levels in Sweden are rising. In the category of clothes and shoes there was a total rise of 27% between 2004

and 2014 (CFK, 2015: 9). Despite the rising consumption levels, according to a European Union (EU)-commission survey (EU, 2014) the Swedish population is relatively well informed and environmentally conscious compared to other countries in Europe. According to this survey Swedish people worry the most about the environmental impact of their consumption and had the highest amount of people stating that they buy eco-friendly products (EU, 2014, 8, 26, 34, 37). Still, the average citizen in Sweden buys more than 12 kg of textiles, throws 8 kg in the trash, and leaves 3 kg to charity each year (Carlsson et al. 2011).

Sustainable consumption

On the one hand, at least conceptually, sustainable consumption needs people to consume less, in order to reduce the pressures on natural resources that are used as raw materials and to lower wastes resulting from production and consumption. In contradiction, market-economy systems need to constantly increase consumption in order to sustain the economy. Consumption drives production, which drives economic growth. (Akenji, 2013: 15).

In the early 1990s, voices from the Global South claimed that the Global North had a great involvement in environmental degradation due to overconsumption (Princen, Maniates and Conca, 2002: 3). The issue of unsustainable production and consumption patterns had been well known for quite some time but at this point the ecological aspects and global impacts of consumption became a widely acknowledged reality (Swedish EPA, 2011: 71). This all happened around the time of the United Nations (UN) conference on Environment and Development in Rio De Janeiro 1992 and the development of the Agenda 21 Program of Action, and the matter of hidden costs in consumption were highlighted and discussed further throughout the Rio conference (Swedish EPA, 2011: 72).

Following Rio, the attention of sustainable development practice was increasingly turned to waste, goods and services. The previous focus on direct pollution sources turned into an awareness of the diffuse pollution all along the commodity chain (Swedish EPA, 2011: 72). Additionally, attention was directed to what potential impact economic growth itself could have on the matter of sustainable

development. With the promotion of better technologies, monetary compensation for one's pollution or environmental damage, and more efficient production processes, consumption and economic growth came to be viewed as tools for sustainable development (Fuchs et al. 2014: 2).

Sustainable consumption reflects back on the most basic needs of human life: consuming for survival (Princen, 2002a: 30). The relation between humans and nature is essential but has come to be a relation where humans have started to influence nature at a very high pace and at a very large scale (Princen, 2002a: 31). One of the most influencing factors is the way we consume and the destructive production processes hidden from the consumer, as well as the waste it generates. While consumption levels are rising in large parts of the world, the culture of consumerism has started to be questioned. (Akenji, 2013: 14; Autio, Heiskanen and Heinonen, 2009; Fuchs et al. 2014: 1; Kozlowki et al. 2012: 18-19; Schor, 1998; Schor, 2010)

On the 1st of January 2016 the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by world leaders in 2015, came into force. One of these goals was to “Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns” (UN, 2016). The SDGs call for action by all countries but as they are not legally binding, each country is responsible for implementing these practices on their own (UN, 2016).

Malmö

We take on the challenge: Malmö will be the best city in the world for sustainable urban development by 2020. (Environmental Department Malmö, 2009: 2)

In 2020 [...] the supply of sustainable goods and services will be broad and readily available. Consumption of material goods will have decreased. Malmö's citizens will maintain a high quality of life despite minimum use of resources. (Environmental Department Malmö, 2009: 5)

In the city of Malmö, wherever you go in the city center you can see traces of the efforts being made for more sustainable consumption patterns. Shops selling ecological clothes, local designers creating fashion out of reused fabric and second-

hand stores. You can have a fair-trade coffee with your vegan lunch and visit a local entrepreneur producing fair jeans in Malmö. (Malmö stad and Malmö Citysamverkan, 2015; Rolfsdotter-Jansson, 2008)

However, if you look around you still see that commercial big brand stores mainly surround you, though many of those also advertise their green intentions. Or maybe you chose to go out of the city center to enjoy all stores at once, in one of Sweden's largest shopping malls, Emporia (Fastighetsvärlden, 2012). In 2008 the City Planning Committee of the municipality in Malmö gave the building permit for this huge shopping mall, the biggest in the history of Malmö with its 200 stores covering 80 000 m² (Steen & Ström 2008). The year before, another shopping mall, Entré, opened in the city center of Malmö (Westerberg, 2015).

Not long after the building permit in 2008 the municipality was working hard to develop what come to be published in 2009 as *The Environmental Programme for the city of Malmö 2009-2020*. The quotes above are picked from this program and the second one specifically from the objective "It's Easy to Do the Right thing in Malmö", which included a sections called "Sustainable consumption and lifestyle" and "Waste will be recycled". (Environmental Department Malmö, 2009: 12)

1.1 Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the factors contributing to the challenges arising in achieving sustainable consumption of clothing in municipalities, in order to better understand and potentially mitigate them.

This is done by looking at how the national responsibility for the SDG "Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns" is implemented at the final stage, at the municipality of Malmö. In order to do this, the following sub-questions need to be addressed: How is the municipality of Malmö working with sustainable consumption of clothes? How are strategies for sustainable consumption of clothes implemented in the work of the municipality? Furthermore, the purpose is to highlight the challenges faced by the municipality when working for sustainable consumption of clothes, to be able to answer the main research question of this study:

What challenges are identified in municipality work for achieving sustainable consumption of clothes?

1.2 Delimitation

This study will target the issue of sustainable consumption within an urban environment, and specifically how one Swedish municipality is working with this matter and what challenges arise in its work. This paper has been delimited to a single-case design focusing on the municipality of Malmö, named *Malmö stad*. This was done to be able to study one case in-depth. The timeframe of the case study was limited to the years of 2015-2020, as the timeframe of the main document studied, the *Environmental Programme for the City of Malmö 2009-2020*, end in 2020 (Creswell, 2014: 14; Yin, 2014: 2). The primary focus on environmental issues in the Environmental Program has also been the focus of this study. Nevertheless social and economic issues are also briefly evaluated throughout the study.

The information sources have been delimited to the municipality of Malmö. Within the municipality, interviews have been conducted with staff at the Environmental Committee and the Environmental Department. These two groups were chosen as they are described as responsible for the environment in Malmö and for leading, coordinating and establishing the work related to the Environmental Program (Malmö stad, 2016g).

For the qualitative study of documents the delimitation was not as strict. The interviewees mentioned projects and strategies coordinated by other departments of the municipality, whose webpages were also researched. Documents researched were limited to public documents of the organization such as environmental goals and reports, as well as webpage publications.

The city of Malmö was chosen as the single case for the dual reasons that Malmö has been internationally awarded and recognized for its sustainable urban development (Malmö stad, 2016j) and has ambitious goals in this regard (Environmental Department Malmö, 2009). At the same time, the municipality is handing out building permit to a new large shopping mall, which could be considered contradictory due to the simulation of consumption, which is associated with these types of facilities (Steen & Ström, 2008).

This mall mainly consisting of clothes' stores which – together with the fact that the city of Malmö historically has been an industrial city including textile industries from the end of the 19th century – led to the delimited focus of clothes (Emporia, 2016; Malmö stad, 2016k). Despite the contributing factors above, the main reasons for choosing private clothes consumption, as the focus of this study is the large environmental and social aspects of the industry and consumption of clothes.

2. Theoretical framework

In the following chapter the theoretical framework is laid out in three steps, starting with the concepts *consumption* and *consumerism*.

Followed by presenting the clothing industry and the phenomenon of *fast fashion*, as well as the *environmental and social aspects of clothes consumption*.

The final section starts with elaborating the concept of *sustainable consumption* and further brings two perspectives on the consumption-production issue. After these two perspectives have been introduced, *critiques of the production angle* are presented.

2.1 Consumption and consumerism

2.1.1 Consumption

The definition of consumption can vary according to the context in which the term is used. It can refer to the biological act of consuming for survival but it can also refer to the complex social phenomena of consumption on a global market of goods (Princen, 2002a: 30).

The basic definition of consumption as material provisioning is given by Thomas Princen (2002a: 30), in “Consumption and Its Externalities: Where Economy Meets Ecology” as “to expend or use up, to degrade or destroy.” Biologically this means consuming for survival and reproduction, which is a natural level of

consumption, but socially this might mean consuming to enhance social aspects such as identity or autonomy (Princen, 2002a: 30). When consumption becomes social the scale on which things are used up and degraded is enlarged, which means that the consequences of consumption are enlarged as well (Princen, 2002a: 31). Zygmunt Bauman characterizes our modern society as a consumer society where “a consumer is a person who consumes, and to consume means using things up: eating them, wearing them, playing with them and otherwise causing them to satisfy one’s need or desires.”(Bauman, 2005: 23).

In the consumer society, consumption has gone from being a biological need to a social want (Princen, 2002a: 30-32). The Oxford Dictionaries define consumption as being “the act of using up a resource” and “the purchase of goods and services by the public”, which will be the definition referred to throughout this study (Oxford Dictionaries, *Consumption*, 2016). Similarly, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines consumption as “the final use of goods and services” (Swedish EPA 15). In Steven Miles’ (1998) book *Consumerism: As a Way of Life*, a definition by Campbell (1995: 102) is quoted, specifying consumption as “the selection, purchase, use, maintenance, repair and disposal of any product or service”. All of these definitions of consumption seem to refer to the socially constructed consumption of resources. Using the words “resource”, “goods” or “products” indicate the human impact on nature. As consumption has become an economic and cultural phenomenon it has resulted in a dependency on consumption and on resources. As noted by McCracken, (1990: xi) and cited by Miles (1998: Chap1: 3):

Without consumer goods, modern, developed societies would lose key instruments for the reproduction, representation, and manipulation of their culture [...] Without consumer goods, certain acts of self-definition and collective definition in this culture would be impossible. (McCracken, 1990: xi)

According to definitions and the use of the term consumption in modern society the practice can no longer be limited to the basic act of consuming a natural object for biological reasons. As Miles argues, one of the interesting aspects of consumption is that through the cultural and economic as well as social practices that have come to be associated with consumption, it has come to legitimate capitalism (Miles, 1998: Chap1: 3). As consumption has come to be part of a wide and complex socially

constructed process, there is a need for a more complex concept to try and catch the essence of it (Miles, 1998: Chap1: 3).

2.1.2 Consumerism

Miles argues that when studying consumerism one should “attempt to come to terms with the complexities that lie behind the act of consumption.” (Miles, 1998: Chap1: 3) The Oxford Dictionaries define consumerism as “the preoccupation of society with the acquisition of consumer goods” (Oxford Dictionaries, *Consumerism*, 2016), while Miles (1998: Chap1: 3) goes one step further and suggests that consumerism can be considered as the “arena within which social lives are currently constructed.” In this arena of consumerism, exchange and spending have come to characterize the relations between individuals (Miles, 1998: Chap1: 4, 9). As Miles frames it, “in effect, while consumption is an act, consumerism is a way of life.” (Miles, 1998: Chap1: 3)

The scaling-up of spending that emerges through the habit of comparing one’s own consumption to that of people who earn much more is another component of consumerism, emphasized by Juliet Schor (1998). She argues that the comparisons with such reference groups become problematic when people earning less wish to consume as the rich. For that to be possible, one has to work more, so as to be able to consume more (Schor, 1998: 4). Schor (1998: 5) argues that “the new consumerism is also built on a relentless ratcheting up of standards.” This means that on your way towards the standard of the new reference group, you constantly meet the presumption that you should upgrade what you already have to meet the new standard (Schor, 1998: 5-6).

The urge for consumption and the possession of goods with a certain social or cultural status is nothing new. This has been the case for thousands of years, but the difference today is that the ability to transport goods and material all over the world has expanded. This makes it possible to feed every need of the individual consumer – who commands sufficient purchasing power – through global trade. The consequence is, however, that consumption, which in ancient times was mainly located in and influencing the near surroundings, is now a system of resource flows all over the world leading to a large pressure on the environmental resources around the globe. (Hornborg, 2012b: 26)

In the consumer society, with consumerism as a way of living, more is being consumed and more becomes waste. The accessibility of consumer goods through Internet as well as the establishing of shopping malls and advertising feed this consumerism and its negative aspects (Clapp, 2002: 161).

2.2 Clothes consumption

2.2.1 Fashion consumerism

Fashion is arguably the arena within which the wares of consumerism are most visibly expressed and fervently endorsed as constituting a legitimate way of life. (Miles, 1998: Chap 6: 1)

In recent years, clothing consumption has reached new levels when it comes to consuming fashion (Naturvårdsverket, 2016). Fashion can refer to several categories, but for this study, fashion is referring specifically to the fashion of clothing. Fashion as such can be defined as;

an expression that is generally accepted by a group of people over time and has been characterized by several marketing factors such as low predictability, high impulse purchase, shorter life cycle, and high volatility of market demand (Sunhilde, Simona, 2014: 163).

What has changed over the last years when it comes to fashion is the time aspect. Fashion has become fast, meaning that the traditional fashion system with two collections per year has shifted into a system of fast fashion, continually distributing new items for the consumer, all year around (Gabrielli, Baghi and Codeluppi, 2013: 207; Sunhilde and Simona, 2014: 163). The industry has come to a point where fashion becomes unfashionable within a very short period of time, creating the “need” for consumers to buy new fashion items to keep up (Sunhilde and Simona, 2014: 163-164). This has become part of the lifestyle of many consumers, well aware of the latest fashion and with an urge to adapt to this new fashion reality (Gabrielli, Baghi

and Codeluppi, 2013: 206). Fashion has become very important in constructing and communicating ones identity and in measuring success (Mont and Plepys, 2007: 536). Earlier on, identity might have been constructed through family relations or relations to neighbors, as well as through the work one achieved (Hornborg, 2012b: 27). Hornborg (2012b: 28) argues that the lack of a clear identity has created an emptiness, which currently is filled through consumption and the creation of ones identity through the act of acquiring commodities. Miles (1998: Chap 6: 11) further argues that fashion and consumerism “provide the individual with a realm in which he or she can freely express him or herself”.

The new wave of fast fashion contributes to increased volumes of clothes being consumed (Sunhilde and Simona, 2014: 163-164).

Fast fashion characterizes the speed of today’s clothing production and consumption: clothing is designed to be cheap, easy, and rapid to produce, and is created to be distributed, sold, and consumed in ever-increasing quantities (Sunhilde and Simona, 2014: 163).

The fast fashion is distributed by several of the large clothing companies such as H&M, Zara and Topshop. These companies contribute to this new phenomenon by providing cheap clothes, leading to overconsumption. New collections are launched every other week and sold at a very low price with low quality to maximize the purchase of it. To stay competitive, these clothing companies follow the premises of fast fashion. (Bianchi and Birtwistle, 2011: 335; Kozlowski, Bardecki and Searcy, 2012: 18; Sunhilde and Simona, 2014: 164)

This system makes it possible for almost anyone to follow new fashion trends, as prices are kept low. Consumers become comfortable in this system and expect constant change and new products. With new products, the old ones need to be disposed of, and even if the consumer has made a shopping mistake it becomes no big deal to dispose of it, as so little economic and psychological effort was required for the original purchase. (Bianchi and Birtwistle, 2011: 335; Gabrielli, Baghi and Codeluppi, 2013: 206-207; Kozlowski, Bardecki and Searcy, 2012: 18)

Disposability has come to refer to any object at any cost which is no longer wanted. Chapman (2015: 78) states that a century ago only small things used out, such as napkins, were widely considered disposable. Today it has become “culturally

permissible” to throw away practically anything and replace it with something new. “[L]argely through the efforts of industrial strategy and advertising” (Chapman, 2015: 78), of for example fast fashion.

The essence of fast fashion has been identified as the speed, in which new fashion items can be produced; constant change; as well as affordable prices (Gabrielli, Baghi and Codeluppi, 2013: 206). Fashion has become a way to feel fulfilled in the social context, and ”a product of social demands.”(Miles, 1998: Chap 6: 1). The need for fashion can both be attached to the individual as well as to the society. Individuals can express their identity through fashion while at the same time enjoy the feeling of belonging. At the same time society can enjoy the economic benefits of it. (Miles, 1998: Chap 6: 2)

2.2.2 Environmental and social aspects of clothes consumption

As was mentioned briefly in the introduction, the textile industry is one of the worlds most polluting industries (Ditty, 2015). Clothes have a long and complex lifecycle including “resource production and extraction, fibre and yarn manufacturing, textile manufacturing, apparel assembly, packaging, transportation and distribution, consumer use, recycling and ultimate disposal.”(Kozłowski, Bardecki and Searcy, 2012: 19). The consumption of clothes contributes to environmental and social consequences throughout the whole lifecycle (Kozłowski, Bardecki and Searcy, 2012: 22). The major impact is on those at the bottom of the supply chain, those who grow crops, produce fibers or sew the garment. These steps of the supply chain are often relocated to areas with cheaper labor as well as weak environmental or social regulations (Kozłowski, Bardecki and Searcy, 2012: 18).

The major environmental impacts of the clothing industry arise from the use of energy and chemicals (Allwood et al. 2006: 2; Swedish EPA, 2011: 46-47). The industry has an intensive chemical use, and accounts for one fourth of all chemicals used in the world (Ditty, 2015). The heavy chemical use has led the industry to become the second most polluting of clean water (Ditty, 2015). Chemicals are used in agriculture generating primary resources, but also in the process of producing synthetic materials (European Commission, 2011: 7-8). Further, chemicals are used for pre-treatment, dyeing and printing on the fabrics. All these chemicals pollute the

environment and the people working and living in the areas in question (Allwood et al. 2006: 2; European Commission, 2011: 10). The energy use of the industry is due to electricity in machines needed in the production and maintenance of the garment, by using washing machines for example. Another energy use in the business is through the direct use of fossil fuels in agricultural machineries, and in the transportation of goods all along the commodity chain as well as to the final consumer. (Allwood et al. 2006: 2)

In addition to these two major areas, there are several other environmental issues related to the clothing industry. A large amount of water is consumed, mainly in the agriculture of cotton; likewise, large amounts of wastewater are generated and discharged along the production process (Allwood et al. 2006: 2; Kozłowski, Bardecki and Searcy, 2012: 19). Waste is generated along the production chain, and the use of chemicals and synthetic materials contributes significantly to the rise of industrial waste (Clapp, 2002: 168; Kozłowski, Bardecki and Searcy, 2012: 19).

The waste generated at the final stage of consumption is another issue of concern. A large amount of bought clothes are thrown in the garbage. As mentioned in the introduction, the Swedish consumers throw or give away almost as much as they buy in one year. (Carlsson et al. 2011: 6)

Another issue is the working conditions at the production sites, if located in countries without efficient regulations. In these cases the workers are pushed to do more in less time and for less money. Minimum wages are low and workers are easily led into a circle of poverty (Allwood et al. 2006: 2; Sunhilde and Simona 2014: 163-164). This is due to large companies being able to push the prices down and if the producer does not agree, the company can move its production to another factory or country willing to take the offer (The true cost, 2016). This does not only result in low wages and long days. It also contributes to the lack of safety measures in the factories, which in the last years has resulted in major disasters in textile factories¹ where several hundreds of people have died as a consequence (Kozłowski, Bardecki and Searcy, 2012: 18; European Commission, 2011: 8).

The production process of consumer goods include cleared or transformed ecosystems, the use of energy sources along the production chain, as well as the need to handle new forms and larger amounts of waste, creating the need for waste sinks.

¹ For more information view; Rana Plaza - One of the largest industrial disasters.

The production process can be viewed as a way to add value, but it can also be viewed as a chain that consumes resources (Princen, 2002a: 31)

2.3 Perspectives on sustainable consumption

2.3.1 Sustainable consumption

As Oksana Mont and Adrius Plepys (2007: 532) phrase it, “there is still no consensus regarding the definition of sustainable consumption.” The concept covers several different issues related to “human needs, equity, quality of life, resource efficiency, waste minimisation, life cycle thinking, consumer health and safety, consumer sovereignty, etc.” (Mont and Plepys, 2007: 532). What makes sustainable consumption hard to define and operationalize are that many of the issues included in the category have conflicting objectives (Mont and Plepys, 2007: 532). The complexity of the concept leads into the establishment of several different strategies for how to treat the issue of consumption. Some strategies suggest changing the production process or greening the market, while others propose reduced consumption levels and a change of lifestyle (Mont and Plepys, 2007: 532; Princen, Maniates and Conca, 2002). These different strategies are presented in the following two sections and are described as the production angle vs. the consumption angle.

Despite the difficulties of defining sustainable consumption, the authors Mont and Plepys (2007: 531) argue that “without addressing patterns and levels of consumption, it may not be possible to reach the vision of sustainable development”. A similar argument is made by Lewis Akenji (2013: 15), who uses the term “sustainable consumption” as a reference to lower consumption and lower waste generation, as well as by Fuchs et al. (2014: 1), who state that even though it is not convenient, there is a need to reduce global material throughput to achieve sustainability.

2.3.2 The production angle

Thus analytic and policy attention is directed to production – that is, to the processes of supplying consumers with what they desire. Getting production right means getting markets to clear and the economy to grow. If a problem arises in this production-based, consumer-oriented economy, corrections are naturally aimed at production, not consumption. (Princen, Maniates and Conca, 2002: 4-5)

In *Confronting Consumption*, Thomas Princen, Michael Maniates and Ken Conca (2002: 5, 14-15) consider this production-oriented logic part of the so-called *production angle*. This angle or strategy believes in classic economics where competitive behavior makes the displacements of costs in space and time logical, as well as ever increasing production (Princen, Maniates and Conca, 2002: 14). Through this logic, sustainability within consumption arises through efforts changing the object being consumed by influencing the production side through less environmentally destructive processes. Influencing the producers, changing production methods, or paying for pollution have been ways to address the issues – but without considering consuming less of a particular product (Princen, Maniates and Conca, 2002: 5, 8). These ways to address the issues give rise to what throughout this study will be referred to as “green” products.

In the production angle the production is seen as *the* problem, which means that all efforts are put on regulating that sphere (Princen, Maniates and Conca, 2002: 5). This focus on changing the production or turning it “green” has been dominant so far in the world economy, possibly because it meets traditional business criteria (Akenji 2013, 15-16; Princen, Maniates and Conca, 2002: 14).

2.3.3 The consumption angle

The other perspective on the consumption-production issue is the *consumption angle*. This concept is elaborated by Princen, Maniates and Conca (2002: 14), as the authors seek a new angle on the issue. This angle is opposite to the production angle, whose logic it regards as destructive and self-defeating (Princen, Maniates and Conca 2002: 14). Production processes are considered as “using up secondary resources (energy and waste-sink capacities) to amplify and accelerate the use of primary resources

(forests, grasslands, fisheries, and so on).” (Princen, 2002a: 31). This means that along the chains of production, resources are consumed throughout the whole process. From this angle the primary resource is separated from the wealth created and final consumer goods, enabled by the use of technology throughout the manufacturing process. (Princen, 2002a: 31-32).

The consumption angle assumes that there are limits of the ecological and social world, which can be “ignored, stretched or disguised” for a short period of time but at increasing costs. The impossibility of using a production angle on the consumption issue is what the consumption angle aims to highlight. (Princen, Maniates and Conca, 2002: 14).

2.4 Critique of the production angle

2.4.1 Green consumerism

When aiming for market-driven structural changes to achieve sustainable consumption, one can refer to the concept of “green consumerism” (Autio, Heiskanen and Heinonen, 2009: 41-42). But it can also mean the need to reduce consumption levels although the first strategy mentioned is the one that has come to be frequently used for sustainable development in recent years (Akenji, 2013: 15-16; Autio, Heiskanen and Heinonen, 2009: 41-42; Princen, Maniates and Conca, 2002: 14).

This strategy was developed and promoted in the aftermath of the Rio Conference 1992 (Fuchs et al. 2014: 2) and refers to “the production, promoting, and preferential consumption of goods and services on the basis of their pro-environment claims.” (Akenji, 2013: 13) The promotion of green consumerism is done in several ways and the most visible approaches are described by Akenji (2013: 13) as being “eco-labeling”, “public awareness campaigns”, “recycling activities”, “process certifications” and “green public procurement by governments and public institutions” (Akenji, 2013: 13).

Strategies to promote green consumerism can arguably be seen as strategies to maintain economic growth through individual consumption. It encourages the consumers to choose products that are green and manufacturers to meet this demand.

In this case, the consumers end up being the responsible actors able to influence the market and drive the shift of society towards sustainable consumption, if they are willing to take environmental and social concerns into account by choosing green products and recycling waste (Akenji, 2013: 14; Autio, Heiskanen and Heinonen, 2009: 42). Akenji (2016: 15) argues that this means moving responsibility from authorities and companies to the consumers regarding both economic and sustainable development. The author further argues that as long as there is a consumer demand, this will be met by the industry. This means that green consumption is not efficient due to the urgency of the issues related to consumption, as it maintains high levels of production (Akenji, 2013: 15). Mont and Plepys (2007: 535) similarly argue that social settings and social factors make consumers relatively constricted in their capacity to change behavior and that consumers act within boundaries of knowledge, the market and technology (Mont and Plepys, 2007: 535), meaning that changed behavior easily stay within set boundaries.

Green consumerism has become part of what is perceived as responsible consumer behavior in modern society (Autio, Heiskanen and Heinonen, 2009: 45). The consumption of green products has become a mainstream way to address the issues related to consumption – but, again, without attention to the question of whether a product could be consumed in smaller quantities. It rather focuses on maintaining the act of consumption but in a greener way, through ecological, natural and organic products as well as reuse, recycling and sorting waste (Princen, Maniates and Conca, 2002: 5, 8). An example of this are large fashion brands adopting this strategy and introduce more environmentally friendly materials in their products. (Kozlowki et al. 2012: 18-19) Despite the decreased environmental impact per item produced, consumers buying green products as well as influencing manufacturers to meet environmental demands, does not necessarily result in environmental sustainability, as quantities remain high.

This production-oriented logic of addressing the issue is highlighted by Akenji (2013: 16), who argues that green consumerism is an end-of-pipe approach, meaning that the production system and the products consumed are in some sense transformed but without intentions of changing the destructive system itself. The same thing is argued by Thackara:

Despite decades of campaigning and advocacy, the overall condition of the biosphere continues to worsen. The reason for this is simple: we've been addressing symptoms, but not their principal cause – an economic system whose core logic is perpetual growth in a finite world. (Thackara, 2015: 43)

Shore (2010: 2) similarly argues that changing technology will not solve the problems of unsustainable consumption, “BAU [Business As Usual] with a coat of green paint is not enough.” (Shore, 2010: 22). There is rather a need to change the work and consume lifestyle, “[w]e need an alternative economy” (Shore, 2010: 2).

Thackara (2015: 44) further brings attention to the way symptoms have been addressed, as green consumerism relies on the sustainability work of companies. Such work is not collectively defined (Thackara, 2015: 44). Without collective governance, the work can result in empty promises (Thackara, 2015: 44). Similar points are made by Kozlowski, Bardecki and Searcy (2012: 18) who refers to the lack of industry standards when it comes to labeling products as “ ‘ethical’ ‘green’, or ‘eco’ ”. This means that green products have been put into the market without any collectively defined, specified definition or standard of what ethical, green, or eco actually refers to. Related to this, Schor (2010: 19) states that many of the green products of today might fulfill the criteria of being sustainable in one dimension rather than in all its dimensions. But if not all dimensions of a so-called green product are sustainable, that means that producing the product in large quantities still has a negative environmental impact (Schor, 2010: 19).

In the essay *A Whole New Cloth: Politics and the Fashion System*, John Thackara (2015) brings up an example showing that production can easily be perceived as green, even though the environmental impact has not changed or even increased. In this example Thackara (2015: 43-44) is referring to a company changing its resource supply and stating that 50% of resource use will be certified or reused. At the same time, nothing is said about the other 50% of resource supply. The impact of those 50% might be as large as total impact before the sustainability work, because the company's aggregate resource use has grown in the meantime (Thackara, 2015: 43-44). The companies' reliance on economic growth, where everything can be exchanged with money, speeds up the use of resources (Hornborg, 2012b: 29). In another study, Thackara (2015: 43) describes a situation where a company claimed that the expansion of the company's production was necessary to generate economic

growth so that the sustainability work could be financed. Hornborg (2012b: 28-29) presents a similar logic where industries use a resource today to generate economic growth, so that tomorrow they can use even more of that resource.

As earlier argued by several authors, sustainable consumption can only be achieved by including lowered consumption levels (Akenji, 2013: 15; Fuchs et al. 2014: 1; Mont and Plepys, 2007: 531-532). This argument that green consumerism is not enough for achieving sustainable consumption will be backed up by including the issue of power, followed by different authors arguing in different ways that production and consumption contain environmental costs, hidden or distanced from the final consumer (Hornborg, 2012a; Clapp, 2002; Princen, 2002b), whether the processes are branded green or not.

2.4.2 Power

In the article *Power: the missing element in sustainable consumption and absolute reductions research and action*, Fuchs et al. (2014: 9) highlight the issue of power when it comes to sustainable consumption, and view power as the driver of consumption in general. The authors refer to the notion of power as “the capacity to influence other, to get others to do what they would otherwise not do.” and further state that “power is relative: one actor's increase in power is another's decrease.” (Fuchs et al. 2014: 9) The inequalities behind power are what the authors aim to highlight as well as its influence on action for sustainable consumption. What needs to be considered is: “who sets the agenda, defines the rules and the narratives, selects the instruments of governance and their targets, and thus influences peoples' behavior, options, and their impacts.” (Fuchs et al. 2014: 9)

Fuchs et al. argue that power creates a barrier for sustainable consumption when the agenda of the work is placed in the hands of those with power, such as in the production angle. Not addressing the issues of power leads to a cover-up of these issues and to an assumption that strategies with transformed technologies and aware consumers, really are addressing the core issue. (Fuchs et al. 2014: 9)

Fuchs et al. (2014: 2) further state that the focus on changing the production and making it greener is evidence of the avoidance of the issue of high consumption levels as well as the power that drives the growth of consumption.

In their research the authors present three dimensions of power. First is the "instrumental power" drawing on the resources of an actor, used to influence policy output, for example through lobbying. Second is the "structural power" where the aim is to influence policy input. An example for this is transnational companies moving production from one country to another if unfavorable policies are adopted in the first one. Last is the "discursive power" consisting of the diffuse power of for example norms, values and ideas, which influence political agenda. An example provided by the author are actors spreading the idea that growth is an economic necessity. (Fuchs et al. 2014: 5)

These forms of power are prevalent along the entire production-consumption chain of goods, and the inequalities in power and resources generate unsustainable consumption patterns (Fuchs et al. 2014: 5-8).

In their research, the authors conclude that what needs to be targeted in policies and when forming strategies are the basic conditions of "inequality in power and resources" behind unsustainable consumption. This rather than solely rely on strategies influencing consumers and producers in directions such as green products or awareness campaigns focusing on the symptoms of power inequalities like environmental degradation or social conditions. (Fuchs et al. 2014: 9)

2.4.3 Hidden costs

The aspect of power is also referred to by the author Alf Hornborg (2012a: 9) who discusses one of the inequalities behind power preformed through the use of machines.

To begin with, the use of machines and technology is one way of hiding environmental costs (Hornborg, 2012a: 12). The belief in technology or machinery is that it saves time and land area. This has been a reality for a minority of the world's population throughout the last centuries and has created wealth and power for those with the privilege of using the technology. But, for instance, the burning of fossil fuels to power such technology has started to show its negative environmental aspects. The belief in saving land here rather conceals a way of using land areas millions of years back in time, and putting areas in the future at the risk of destruction. The problem now is that the technology of today relies on fossil fuels

containing millions of years of accumulated energy, which are not renewable and cause unsustainable levels of emissions (Hornborg, 2012a: 12). The technical reliance on high efficiency energy sources makes the logic of the production angle illogic to the consumption angle, as natural resources are limited (Princen, Maniates and Conca, 2002: 14).

Hornborg further points out that technology is embedded in cultural and political systems, which remain hidden behind the belief in technology and its ability to be efficient. What makes Hornborg compare today's technology with the Inca rituals, in his book *Global Ecology and Unequal Exchange* (2012), is that both hide the cultural and political aspects of exchange. But without an asymmetric exchange nothing would be achieved in those processes. (Hornborg, 2012a: 8-11)

In examples from the past, this unequal exchange is easier to notice while, as Hornborg frames it, today it is very hard for people to perceive it clearly, since we are "inside the cultural bubble" where machines are decoupled from material reality and the real price tag of things. What makes this bubble hard to crack is the logic of neoliberal economics, which tends to make us believe that market transactions are equal. (Hornborg, 2012a: 10-11)

This way of thinking about economics when it comes to trade – the efficiency of machines being decoupled from reality and the real price tag – leaves out the material asymmetries and the exchange of other metrics like energy, land and labour. The exchange of space and time is made possible through the exchange of money and causes transformations within society as well as environment. By looking at alternative metrics, the inequality behind the monetary exchange can be revealed. (Hornborg, 2012a: 9-10)

The machines and technology, hiding inequalities and accumulating capital is argued by Hornborg (2012a: 9) as being a power strategy. "The mechanical 'power' of the machines is thus an expression of the economic and ideological 'power' through which it is sustained. Ultimately, what keeps our machines running are global terms of trade." (Hornborg, 2012a: 9)

2.4.4 Distancing

Distancing is one way to keep unequal exchange possible. Distance hide costs and is a way to separate decisions that are being made. Thomas Princen (2002b: 116), in his article *Distancing: Consumption and the Severing of Feedback*, writes about the separation of decisions and defines the term “distancing” as referring to “the separation between primary resource extraction decisions and ultimate consumption decisions occurring along four dimensions – geography, culture, bargaining power, and agency.” This complex distancing that occurs in the production-consumption chain includes, according to Princen (2002b: 116-128), the physical distance between the two decisions made; the cultural distance, with a lack of reference to that person at the other end of the chain; the distance that the global market establishes, leading to an excess number of farmers or producers who push prices down; and, lastly, multiple agents along the production chain, which result in a situation where only the primary producer has the knowledge of threats caused by and limits to the ongoing resource dissipation.

Another distanced and hidden cost of consumption is waste generation. Most manufactured goods today are produced on a large scale and brought to the consumer from all corners of the world, as a consequence of global systems of trade (Clapp, 2002: 159-160). This system generates several steps of distancing between the waste and the consumer (Clapp, 2002: 157). The large scale, as well as the distancing of waste, has developed throughout the last decades hand in hand with economic growth, pushing in a direction of increased production and consumption (Clapp, 2002: 159, 167). Waste crises have globally been handled primarily through industrial improvements, improved waste management or policies. The focus has been on “how to manage waste” (Clapp, 2002: 156). In the article *The Distancing of Waste: Overconsumption in a Global Economy* (2002: 155), Jennifer Clapp seeks to highlight the distancing of waste and emphasizes that there is both a physical dimension and a mental dimension to the process.

The physical dimension refers to when the production process and the act of consumption are separated geographically, as a result of which the consumer easily becomes unaware of the waste behind the product (Clapp, 2002: 157). This leads into the mental dimension of distance. Not knowing about the production process and the generation of industrial waste leads to a lack of awareness of the environmental and

social aspects of consumption and waste generation. This part of the mental dimension is what Clapp notices as the cultural dimension of distancing waste. She states that the lack of awareness contributes to a lack of motivation and ability to change consumer behavior. (Clapp, 2002: 155, 157)

The other mental dimension is that of authority decisions made between the consumer and the waste disposal (Clapp, 2002: 157). Most people do not notice waste as an issue at first hand, as waste is picked up and taken care of by other actors. Taking Sweden as an example, where the municipality is responsible for the waste collection system, waste has become cheap and easy to get rid of (Clapp, 2002: 155, 159; Lundgren, 2015). As Clapp (2002: 157) frames it: “Once waste is out of sight, people tend to forget about it, assuming that it is someone else’s responsibility.” Waste disposal can, at a society level, also be a way to clean up the mess while at the same time contribute to economic growth. (Clapp, 2002: 168)

Furthermore, Clapp (2002: 157) states that; “as distance between consumer and waste increases, more waste tends to be generated.” This statement indicates that there is a need to tackle the issue of distance between consumers and waste and the need to view waste as an issue of consumption, and not an issue of industrial inefficiency or lack of waste management (Clapp, 2002: 155).

3. Research method

This chapter covers the procedures of the study as well as approaches taken. First the research procedure is presented briefly, followed by arguments for using a case study as research method. Further the qualitative research approach is argued for and the connected data collecting procedures are presented. Last is the discussion of research quality of the study.

3.1 Research procedure

The first thing done in this research was to find out what the municipality publicly aspires to regarding sustainable consumption. For this a qualitative research approach

was applied, as the study aims to understand and explore how the matter is represented and dealt with by the municipality (Creswell, 2014: 4, 186).

Starting out with searching through the webpages of the municipality led to basic information regarding its work and guidelines on whom to contact. It also led to the document called *Environmental Programme for the City of Malmö 2009-2020*. Through textual analysis of that document and, additionally, the *Action Plan for the Environmental Programme – Prioritized Work by the City of Malmö 2015-2018* (title translated by me), the first parts of how the municipality is working was put into place but big parts were still missing. These pieces had to be found by extending the qualitative method and conduct in-depth interviews, which also contributed to developing the direction of the research and to bring data to answer the complex research question applied.

Moving forward, key actors working in the municipality were contacted. This resulted in three in-depth interviews with politicians and civil servants working within the Environmental Committee and the Environmental Department in the municipality of Malmö. The questions were formulated so as to get more information about how the municipality works to achieve the goals stated in the Environmental Program, but also formulated in relation to the theoretical framework to interpret the complexity of the situation and get more information regarding what factors are limiting or contributing to the municipal work for sustainable consumption, of clothes in particular (Creswell, 2014: 4, 186). The data collected from the three different procedures; interviews, documents and participatory observation, was further reviewed and combined into the findings of the research, consisting of both strategies for sustainable consumption of clothes and challenges identified by the municipality.

At the final stage these findings were analyzed and discussed in relation to the theoretical framework to get a complex picture of the issue studied and to answer the main research question (Creswell, 2014: 185, 190).

3.1.1 Case study

A case study is usually formulated to answer the “how” or “why” questions regarding the way a certain social phenomenon works (Creswell, 1998: 120). This kind of research approach allows investigating a certain case and gives the opportunity to do

in-depth research. This is done both to bring a description of the phenomena as well as multiple perspectives of the case (Creswell, 1998: 120; Yin, 2014: 4). Through this method the complexities of the issue studied can be thoroughly investigated, whereas through other methods they might have gone missing (Yin, 2014: 11). As Robert K. Yin (2014: 4) frames it, “the distinctive need for case study research arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena.”

Collecting data for a case study can involve a wide range of procedures. Documents, interviews or observations are some of the procedures available for the researcher to try and build a complex picture of the case (Creswell, 1998: 123).

3.1.2 Qualitative research

Qualitative research looks deep into an issue and address aspects of social life that may not be addressed through the use of a quantitative research method (Holliday, 2007: 7, 9). This method is similarly advocated by John W. Creswell (2014: 17-18) as useful if there is a need for a detailed view on the topic, which in this case is the work for sustainable consumption of clothes in the municipality of Malmö.

Adrian Holliday (2007: 6) states that the beliefs of qualitative research are that reality can only be “superficially touched” further claiming that qualitative research is dependent on interpretations (Holliday, 2007: 6). This means that qualitative research does not attempt to provide proof but rather to establish gradual knowing within the area studied and further bring interpretations of a complex reality (Holliday, 2007: 6-7).

Qualitative studies are structured as being open-ended, which means that the researcher does not know beforehand exactly into which areas the research might lead, when investigating a certain person within the study (Holliday, 2007: 7-8). Holliday (2007: 5) describes the qualitative research method as having a “conviction that what is important to look for will emerge” and that one needs to “go into the field to see what is going on”.

3.2 Data collection

3.2.1 Interviews

As Steinar Kvale (1996: 146) describes it, “the ideal interview subject does not exist – different persons are suitable for different types of interviews”. When choosing interview subjects for this study, the aim was not to identify the ideal subject in the sense of being cooperative, motivated or knowledgeable (Kvale, 1996: 146). The interviewees were rather chosen for their direct involvement in the municipality work for sustainable consumption, and were considered suitable as subjects of this research in that capacity.

The persons interviewed had different background, which was reflected in their answers and the data collected during the interviews. Within the Environmental Committee, chairman Carina Svensson and vice chairman Bob Ericsson were interviewed. Both are also key members of the VA SYD (Vatten och Avlopp Syd) board and Ericsson is also involved in the Consumer Advisory group. Their role, as Svensson framed it, is to mediate what the politicians think, want, and will do. They do not have the specific knowledge about environmental issues but rather lead meetings and are representatives in public relations representing the environmental work in the municipality of Malmö (Svensson, 2016). Ericsson also described the big variations in their tasks: one day answering angry calls from neighbors about waste in the streets and the next day doing interviews for a master’s thesis (Ericsson, 2016). These two interviewees did not have any deeper knowledge about the issue of clothes consumption, but they had a good overview of how the municipality of Malmö establishes and conducts its work, and they also had the agenda for upcoming environmental projects in Malmö – though most of these projects did not relate to the specific topic of this thesis. The interview with Carina Svensson was conducted on March 23rd at the her office at the Kommunals sektion’s expedition in Malmö, and the interview with Bob Ericsson was conducted on April 6th at the coffee shop Barista in Lund.

In the Environmental Department, the interview subject was Emma Börjesson, working at the subdivisions Urban Development and Strategy, as project manager within the specific area of Sustainable Development. The Environmental Department

has the environmental expertise within the municipality and is in charge of coordinating the environmental work, giving guidance, develop projects and supervise environmental regulations (Malmö Stad, 2016h). Emma Börjesson had a lot of knowledge about the issue of consumption and a good overview of what is done in the municipality of Malmö for sustainable consumption of clothes, as well as being aware of the challenges of achieving the environmental objectives (Börjesson, 2016). The interview was conducted on March 30th at the Environmental Department's office in Malmö.

When choosing the number of subjects interviewed the author Kvale (1996: 101) states that one should interview as many people as possible to find out what one needs to know. For this study the three interview subjects turned out to be enough, as they held key positions and were able to answer the questions asked and to bring interesting and varied perspectives on the issue studied.

Before formulating the interview questions, general information from the municipality webpage had been collected so that the questions asked would be well informed. The questions asked aimed to understand how the municipality is working with sustainable consumption of clothes; how they work with the three areas of production, consumption and waste; and which aspects of the production-consumption chain they believe need primary focus. Further questions were asked regarding if they consider that the work done by the municipality for sustainable consumption of clothing is efficient, sustainable long-term and enough for reaching the goal of sustainable consumption. As the interviews were arranged as semi-structured interviews (Kvale 1996: 124), most of the interesting information emerged in the spontaneous questions in-between the structured questions and contributed to the final structure of the study. The spontaneous answers together with short questions and questions following up the answers throughout the interviews do, according to Kvale (1996: 145), contribute to a high interview quality.

Before the interviews started, the subjects were informed about the interview setup, in which context their given information would be used (Kvale, 1996: 154), as well as asked whether the subject wanted to be anonymous or not. The interviews came to be between 60-90 minutes each.

3.2.2 Documents and webpages

The documents and webpages were researched through the whole study, first to get relevant pre-knowledge and further to follow up what had been said at the interviews. The main documents studied have already been presented and the main webpage visited was that of the municipality, *www.malmo.se*. Additional webpages related to the projects and strategies presented in the interviews were furthermore researched.

3.2.3 Participatory observation

One of the projects presented by the interviewees was up-and-coming and was launched within the time limit of the study. Participating in this event when the documentary “The true cost” by Andrew Morgan (2015) was screened by Doc Lounge at Panora, Friisgatan 19D in Malmö, generated the most accurate data collection about this project.

3.2.4 Limitations

The interviews carried out were limited in numbers due to the small range of people working within this particular area of sustainable consumption of clothes in the municipality. This contributed to the low amount of interviews conducted, and so did the time limitation of the study. Another limiting factor was the lack of reply from some of the possible interview subjects contacted.

3.3 Research quality

3.3.1 Bias

As the author of a research paper one has the ultimate control over what is being investigated as well as how it is presented. My interpretations as a researcher might contribute to bias as to how the findings are shaped, presented and analyzed

(Creswell, 2014: 202). The cultural context, which is being studied, is also the context in which I as researcher have been growing up. This could possibly lead to bias in the sense of being blind to circumstances as they have been a constant part of one's life. The university background within human ecology also creates a certain context in which the research is done and the findings presented and analyzed. This should be mentioned to remind the reader of possible bias in this research.

3.3.2 Validity and reliability

To gain validity and reliability to the study the research has been following a certain procedure and the approaches taken are consistent among multiple sources (Creswell, 2014: 201). Validity is referred to by Kvale (1996: 237) as “the truth and correctness of a statement”, which can be managed through the use of different procedures. For this study the following aspects have been taken into account to gain validity throughout the research. First of all is the need to follow a certain procedure, as well as including all the choices made throughout the study, such as focuses, themes and research activities (Yin, 2014: 45-46; Holliday, 2007: 8).

Validity is also gained through the use of theories and by pointing out the logic of the theories used (Yin, 2014: 45-46; Kvale, 1996: 238). The approach taken needs to be consistent among multiple sources and contribute to establishing chains of evidence in the research (Creswell, 2014: 201).

To further gain reliability and examine the solidity of the research, documentation of all the procedures and steps taken in the case study has been presented, and correct transcription of the data collected has been ensured (Creswell, 2014: 203). Despite this, there is always the issue of reliability in transcription of interviews, as the interpretation of the researcher influences the transcripts (Kvale, 1996: 163). To get reliability in the transcript of interviews the records has been listened to more than once, and the notes read and reread closely (Kvale, 1996: 163).

4. Findings

The following chapter presents the empirical data collected through the qualitative research. The chapter is divided into three sections, starting with the data collected from documents and webpages establishing the base on how the municipality of Malmö is working, as stated in the environmental objectives guiding the work for sustainable consumption. At each objective an evaluation is made by the municipality through what is called “Miljöbarometern”, which represents the progress on established indicators.

The following section presents strategies applied by the municipality for achieving sustainable consumption of clothes. Within this section there are three headlines dividing the strategies into the categories of *the production angle*, *the consumption angle* and the last category containing both angles. In this section data is collected from documents, webpages and interviews, as well as participatory observation.

At the final section issues identified by the municipality regarding its work for sustainable consumption of clothes is presented. The data for this section was collected through interviews.

4.1 Environmental objectives for sustainable consumption

The qualitative research for this study took its departure in the investigation of the municipality webpage searching for public documents and writings about how the municipality of Malmö is working for sustainable consumption. The evident document to start with was the *Environmental Programme for the city of Malmö 2009-2020*. The program was adopted by the Malmö City Council in 2009 and aims to serve as an inspiration for the whole city of Malmö, but with a target group consisting of politicians and civil servants within the municipality (The Environmental Department Malmö, 2009: 3). Within the municipality, each committee and board is responsible for fulfilling the goals relevant to its working area, but the Environmental Committee is responsible for setting indicators for the environmental work and measuring progress. The progress related to these indicators

are reported by each committee and further checked, reported and communicated by the Environmental Committee (Environmental Department Malmö, 2009: 14).

The environmental program focuses on the ecological aspect of the sustainability concept and consists of four environmental objectives representing the areas prioritized by the municipality in the work towards becoming a sustainable city (Environmental department Malmö, 2009: 3). These are “Sweden’s Most Climate friendly City”, focusing primarily on local energy use; “Malmö – the City of the Future”, where the focus is on urban planning; “Sustainable Use of Natural Resources”, with a local focus on agriculture and water resources; and finally “It’s Easy to Do the Right Thing in Malmö” focusing on sustainable choices (Environmental department, Malmö, 2009: 7-12). Among these four objectives, the last one was identified as crucial for this study and is presented shortly. In presenting this area, the *Action Plan for the Environmental Programme – Prioritized Work by the City of Malmö 2015-2018* (title translated by me) (Miljönämnden Malmö, 2015) is included. The action plan focuses on areas in need for additional actions to meet the goals. This involves mandatory activities as well as other non-obligatory ones (Miljönämnden, Malmö, 2015: 3).

4.1.1 It’s Easy to Do the Right Thing in Malmö

In 2020, resource usage will be characterized by sustainability and long-term thinking. It will be easy for residents, industry and the municipality itself to make sustainable choices when it comes to commodities, services, travel, and waste management. (Environmental department Malmö, 2009: 12)

This objective focuses on making it easier to “do the right thing”, both for the municipality and for industries and citizens of Malmö, through the five areas of concern. Among these areas there are two of interest for this study. First, “Waste will be recycled” and second, “Sustainable consumption and lifestyle”.

Waste will be recycled

The first area regarding waste includes aims to minimize the generation of waste, stop increasing levels of waste, and to make recycling and sorting waste more accessible and easier (Environmental Department, City of Malmö, 2009: 12). According to the action plan, this area is heading in the right direction and does not need additional activities (Miljönämnden Malmö, 2015: 2).

Studying indicators related to this area show that the amount of collected separated waste has increased, which makes it hard to tell whether it is positive or negative as an increase in waste is negative, but as the municipality explains it, the increase in separated waste is positive. Overall, the aim in this area is expected to be partially fulfilled until 2020, as the amount of waste is still growing in Malmö (Miljöbarometern, 2016:a).

Sustainable consumption and lifestyle

The second area focuses on the citizens of Malmö by making it easy for citizens to make choices that are “sustainable and zero-toxin”. Consumption and production can – or shall, if reading the Swedish version of the document – “require lower resource input and can have more focus on quality.” (Environmental department Malmö, 2009: 12; Miljöförvaltningen, Malmö stad, 2009: 12) In the action plan there is a focus on the urban development for, and the activities promoting, sustainable consumption and the accessibility of sustainable choices. The mandatory activities in the action plan, to be able to fulfill the objective until 2020, are the following: collaborate with the public, private and voluntary sector for projects regarding sustainable consumption of goods as well as services; establish and try out systems for sustainable consumption; and raise the preconditions to consume sustainably. (Miljönämnden Malmö stad, 2015: 11)

In the action plan, the concept of sustainable consumption has been defined by the municipality as a matter of “what” is consumed, “how much” is consumed and “in what way” it is consumed. Further, it is stated that sustainable consumption means lower impact on the environment and the economy and that it can bring a higher life quality. (Miljönämnden Malmö stad, 2015: 10)

This area is also expected to become partially fulfilled until 2020. The area in which Malmö advances is the amount of environmentally certified businesses that has

increased. Further is stated that this goal is hard to evaluate, as several more indicators are needed to be able to draw any conclusions whether “it is easy to do sustainable and zero-toxic choices” (translated by me). (Miljöbarometern, 2016b)

One of the indicators the municipality uses is the measurement of greenhouse gas emissions due to consumption per capita. This indicator was last updated 2005 and the figures presented by the Environmental Department back then are stated to not include the consumption perspective. However calculations of Malmö’s emissions made by Stockholm Environmental Institute, which in contrast included global emissions due to consumption, were 150 percent higher. (SEI, 2012: 8; Miljöbarometern, 2016c)

4.2 Strategies for sustainable consumption of clothes

4.2.1 The production angle

Fairtrade City

Malmö has been certified as a Fairtrade City for 10 years. Being a Fairtrade City means that the city successfully meets several criteria. These include spreading information about the brand Fairtrade and the concept fair trade. Stores, restaurants, etcetera, shall be mapped out for local collaboration and growth in the consumption of fair trade products. Additionally, the municipality of Malmö has to buy a certain amount of Fairtrade-certified products, this amount has to grow and a steering committee has to be established to coordinate the work. (FairTrade, 2015; Malmö stad, 2016a)

Products that are certified through Fairtrade Sverige are taking environmental concerns into account and promote ecological production, additional to their primary focus on ethical concerns (Fairtrade, 2016a). The product provided by the brand Fairtrade is mainly food-related, but one product related to this study is certified cotton, which is provided by Fairtrade (Fairtrade, 2016b).

Nordic Textile Initiative

This project or cooperation will be launched this year and is about collecting discarded textiles. (Börjesson, 2016)

4.2.2 The consumption angle

GAIA

Global Awareness in Action (GAIA) is an international project co-funded by the EU. The aim is to contribute to sustainable development through the development of education, by reaching new target groups as well as by informing the public to change behaviors. This project aims to engage citizens more in the sustainable development of the city and has a focus on fair trade (Malmö stad, 2016b).

Garaget

This project is a trial project aiming to create a meeting point for people. At this spot people can borrow books and computers, have a coffee or join the creative garage where citizens can fix broken clothes and other things, be creative, arrange or participate in an event; such events are normally arranged several days of the week. (Malmö stad, 2016c; Börjesson, 2016; Svensson, 2016)

Four fit challenge

The four fit challenge was arranged by SYSAV (Sydskånes avfallsaktiebolag). The challenge was to only wear four garments for one week. Among these four garments, underwear and outdoor garments were excluded. The reason for this campaign was to highlight the issue of textile waste and to make people think more about sustainable fashion by using what you have and by thinking through the purchasing of new garments. (SYSAV, 2016)

Supporting and informing the consumer

At the municipality webpage there is information regarding how to act as a consumer to be more sustainable. One of the topics is the consumption of clothes. Under the headline “Smart mode” there is a checklist of how to consume in a more sustainable manner and how to extend the lifetime of one’s garments. (Malmö stad, 2016i)

The municipality of Malmö also has something called “the consumer counseling” to which one can turn for advice regarding consumption decisions as well as to learn about the rights and duties related to consumption (Malmö stad, 2016d).

4.2.3 The production and the consumption angle

GO! Malmö

During autumn 2015 the Environmental Department arranged a three weeks long campaign together with Malmö Citysamverkan. One of the aims of the campaign was to highlight stores, coffee shops and restaurants with sustainable supply (Börjesson, 2016). A pop-up store was set up for this campaign, in which ecological, fair trade, local and recycled goods, clothes and other various things were collected in one store to show a range of more sustainable consumer choices (Ericsson, 2016; Malmö stad, 2016e). Included in the campaign was also a demonstration of alternative ways of consumption such as sharing, swapping and borrowing (Börjesson, 2016). At several locations activities were arranged where citizens could participate and learn about consumption, regarding its social and environmental influences. Most of the activities were related to food consumption, but some were concerned with clothes consumption. For examples, a lecture about the shoe industry was arranged, the documentary “Fairtrade Challenge” about sharing and collaborative consumption was screened, a clothing swap activity was arranged and a tour through Malmö’s stores with a green supply was arranged. (Malmö stad, 2016e)

This project is planned for a second round for the autumn of 2016 (Börjesson, 2016).

ReTuren

VA SYD has opened Malmö's first center for reuse and recycling. People living in the area can bring things they no longer want or need, as well as leave their hazardous waste to this central. At this meeting point creative activities will also be arranged. ReTuren takes care of several categories of waste, among them clothes, textiles and manufactured goods. There is a corner where things that are still perfectly usable are collected and arranged into a free flea market where citizens can leave what they do not want anymore, as well as take something they want or need. (VA SYD, 2016)

Ericsson (2016) describes this project as a way to highlight reuse as an alternative to recycling and waste collection. Having this central within a neighborhood aims for people to not have the need to use the car to recycle their waste (VA SYD, 2016).

This project has been inspired by a Danish model (Ericsson, 2016) and aims to reduce the amount of waste as well as to inform citizens of what can be done for sustainable consumption. The goal is for this project to grow and spread to all parts of the city (Svensson, 2016).

Screening documentary

In the spring of 2016 a small project was established together with the screening network Doc Lounge to inform about the backsides of clothes consumption. The documentary "The true cost" was shown twice, once for the public and once for invited actors (Börjesson, 2016). Participating in this screening brought information about how the municipality works together with local actors in Malmö and promotes work for fair fashion. Emma Börjesson was the host of this event, where three local initiatives were highlighted and the founders spoke about their work. The event was informative, but also showed alternatives to commercial consumption through eco-fabrics, fair trade and reuse. After the screening a cloth swap was arranged for the participants.

Highlighting good examples

Several times during the interviews, as well as at the event of screening “The true cost”, Emma Börjesson (2016) mentioned that the municipality wishes to “highlight good examples”. Within the municipality there are two prizes handed out each year. One is directed towards the business world, for those working within the area of environment and sustainable development. In the year 2015 a company producing shoes and bags of recycled material won the prize. The second prize is directed towards voluntary action for urban sustainability (Malmö stad, 2016f).

4.3 Challenges for the implementation of sustainable consumption practices

4.3.1 The Environmental Committee

Throughout the interview with Catarina Svensson (2016) a lot of topics were included and several reflexive monologues were held regarding the questions asked. Starting off with addressing the structure and process of decision-making, Svensson explained that the overall framework of the municipality is established by the City Council. It has the authority to make decisions such as adopting the goal for Malmö to become “Sweden’s most climate friendly city”. After that it is up to each committee to work to meet these decisions within the budget given. Asking questions about how the work is followed up, and about the lack of updates at the indicators for “sustainable consumption and lifestyle” on the webpage (Miljöbarometern Malmö stad, 2016c), Svensson affirms that:

We cannot influence if we do not know how the development is going. We need concrete indicators on how far we have come to reach the objectives. Unfortunately with the pace we have now these objectives will not be reached. In that case it will be a conflict of interest where we [the environmental committee] come and say ‘do this and this and this’. Then the other Committees will tell us that we cannot do like that. (translated by me)

Further the example of putting pressure on businesses who rent salesrooms is mentioned by Svensson (2016) as something the Environmental Committee cannot do because it interferes with other Committees work and objectives.

When asking Svensson about shopping malls and sustainable consumption of clothes she confirms that it is a bit contradictive and she recognizes several negative aspects of shopping malls, but asserts that the latest one, Emporia, is at least well connected with public transportation. She says that the municipality is politically governed, so the guidelines given by the City Council and the Committees need to be followed and sometimes create conflicts between the parties. She states that it would be good to put pressure on those owning the malls to have a certain amount of green or ethical stores. (Svensson, 2016)

Regarding the question of how to achieve change, Svensson directs the attention to the consumers. Those are the ones who can put pressure on the business world. She further states that the consumption level does not necessarily need to decrease, but consumption can rather be done through swapping. By consuming in alternative ways, instead people can use their money for buying new products with high quality. (Svensson, 2016)

While talking to Bob Ericsson, some new aspects of the strategies applied by the municipality were brought into the discussion. Starting with the certification of Malmö as a Fairtrade City, Ericsson tended to sound a bit skeptical to the strategy of being such a city. He explained this by saying that through this certification, several obligations are put on the municipality, such as buying Fairtrade-certified products. This prioritization does, according to Ericsson, leave out the promotion of other decent certifications. He states that the municipality has a tendency to lock themselves up if finding something that seems good and convenient. He continued by stating that there is a need to have an open standardization, meaning that the municipality should rather promote all kinds of environmental or ethical certifications, not only the Fairtrade brand. (Ericsson, 2016)

Another issue mentioned was that there are not enough relevant regulations regarding textiles and too little is being done within the area of textiles. Ericsson says that there is no one responsible for taking care of textiles – “Where will it go?” – and that it could be reused a lot more. In the final minutes of the interview Ericsson states that if it were to implement refining of water from chemicals and recycling of clothes, Malmö would have come a long way. (Ericsson, 2016)

4.3.2 The Environmental Department

Throughout the interview with Emma Börjesson some interesting aspects about the environmental work of the municipality came to the surface, and challenges of working with sustainable consumption became clearer. First of all is an economical issue resulting from a tight budget in the municipality because of the low taxpaying power. This results in the need to apply for external funding to be able to proceed with projects to meet the set goals. These funds usually support a certain kind of project, or projects aiming for a certain outcome, and in many cases also require measurable outcomes such as lowered CO² emissions. Progress within projects for sustainable consumption is, according to Börjesson, (2016) generally not easy to measure, which means that the funding available becomes limited. The need for funding is limiting the freedom of the department, but despite this, Börjesson (2016) confirms that the projects are always cohering with the environmental goals of the municipality, and that they just need to be flexible. (Börjesson, 2016)

Another issue related to finance is the concern of reaching out with the message of sustainable consumption. The municipality of Malmö is competing with commercial actors, which have much more money at their disposal than the Environmental Department. Because of this, the department tries to cooperate and work towards the business world in Malmö. This is done both to raise the discussion of sustainable consumption and to become part of the business context and its work for sustainable consumption. Börjesson (2016) also states that the business world wants to come to Malmö as the city has an environmental profile, probably not because they have a drive for sustainability but because it is wise for doing business. (Börjesson, 2016)

Regarding the area of clothes and textiles, the Environmental Department does not have any firm guidelines regarding how to work with this issue. This is due to the lack of tasks directed from the municipality board, who are those leading and coordinating the work in the municipality. Despite this, the Department has a vision to work with textiles even though there is no financial support from the municipality. It is currently applying for funding to support these projects, including from the LIFE-EU fund, which consists of the three standpoints: Collecting, Communication and

Product development. While talking about waste collection and recycling, Börjesson (2016) comments that there is a risk if focus is directed only on this, but recycling will also raise awareness and bring value to what has earlier been considered waste. Additional to recycling, individuals need to be influenced to consume smarter and take care of the things they have. (Börjesson, 2016)

Last but not least, Börjesson (2016) mentions the issue of getting the other departments to come on board and work with the Environmental Program. All departments are busy with their work and do not always find a way to integrate environmental aspects in their work. As Börjesson (2016) frames it, the other departments are interested in environmental goals but lack the time to engage. When asking about the aspect of working for sustainable consumption of clothes, while at the same time other parts of the municipality agree on opening large shopping malls with mainly conventional stores, Börjesson (2016) laughs and says that it is a political question. But one way to move away from this conflict of interest is to change the way we consume with shared consumption and consumption of services. (Börjesson, 2016)

To give an overview, Börjesson (2016) described the work for sustainable consumption as a series of trials with different projects. This is the only available strategy right now, as there is no city taking the lead within this area of urban development, which means that there is no clear path to follow. The strategies are applied and the work is done from a consumption perspective, as Börjesson (2016) describes it, where it is all about seeing the whole chain of consumption. When asking if these strategies applied by the municipality are enough for sustainable consumption in the long run, the answer is that it has been shown in municipality reports that it is not enough and is not done at sufficiently high pace, but that the municipality is trying to do what it can; however, there are limited possibilities to influence this matter. A system change would have been needed, but in the situation we are now, the municipality of Malmö is navigating within an existing framework. (Börjesson, 2016)

5. Analysis, discussion and conclusion

The final chapter of this study is divided in two sections. First the production angle and the consumption angle are analyzed in relation to the findings.

These insights are further discussed in the second part, in relation to the challenges identified in the municipality work for achieving sustainable consumption of clothes.

5.1 Analyzing strategies for sustainable consumption

In achieving sustainable consumption the municipality of Malmö has not been officially targeting the issue of clothes consumption and the environmental and social issues related to it. There has been a lack of assignments from the municipality board within this area, lack of focus in the environmental objectives, as well as a lack of financing from the municipality for projects related to clothes or textiles.

Reviewing the environmental objective “It’s Easy to Do the Right Thing in Malmö”, the subtopic saying that “Waste will be recycled” does not include textile waste in particular. Waste is rather addressed in general in the environmental objectives, where the need to stop the increasing volume of waste, as well as to make recycling and sorting waste easier, is stressed (Environmental Department Malmö, 2009: 12). Connecting this goal to the consumption of clothes, it indicates that clothes are a major contributor to the up come of waste, as the Swedish consumer throws large amounts of purchased clothes in the trash every year. This implies that patterns of clothes consumption and fashion consumerism are largely influencing the outcome of this goal. When it comes to the recycling of clothes, it is something that is currently not provided by the municipality, but still something that the municipality is hoping and working for to become a reality in the near future.

The other subtopic, “Sustainable consumption and lifestyle”, neither includes the consumption of clothes in particular; nevertheless, it includes the statements of making it easier for citizens to make sustainable and zero-toxic choices with low resource input and focus on quality (Environmental Department Malmö, 2009: 12). This points towards clothes being a key factor in unsustainable consumption and

lifestyle. The industry is highly polluting and chemical-intensive and has a high resource input due to both the lack of widespread recycling of textile fibers and the fast fashion industry. Fast fashion is also a major contributor to the widespread production of low-quality clothes.

Despite the lack of official focus on sustainable consumption of clothes within the municipality, the Environmental Department has established several projects in its work for sustainable consumption, addressing the issues of clothes consumption and fashion consumerism through both the production angle and the consumption angle.

The definition of sustainable consumption provided by the municipality includes both of these angles. As presented earlier, it states that sustainable consumption is about *what* is consumed, *how much* is consumed and *in what way* it is consumed (Miljönämnden Malmö stad, 2015: 10). The production angle addresses the aspect of *what* is consumed, while the consumption angle addresses *how much* is consumed. The phrase *in what way* we consume is understood as aiming for consumption of for example reused clothes, shared consumption, swapping or the consumption of services. It is located in-between the two angles, but it will be argued further on that it belongs primarily to the consumption angle.

Projects within the production angle can be concluded as targeting the act of purchasing – the consumption – but without concerns about the amount being consumed. While on the other hand, projects within the consumption angle target the lifestyle within the consumer society – the consumerism – including how society consume and how much. As declared earlier on, several authors agree a reduction of consumption levels is an essential part in achieving sustainable consumption (Akenji, 2013: 15; Fuchs et al. 2014: 1; Mont and Plepys, 2007: 531).

5.1.1 The production angle

Strategies applied by the municipality of Malmö deriving from the production angle are not very many but have a high visibility for the public. The projects within this category mainly have two aims. The first is to promote the selling and consumption of green, eco or ethical products, the second is to bring clothes to reuse or recycling, when eventually recycling of textiles has been implemented.

Promoting green stores or products, Fairtrade-certifying the city, attracting businesses through the work for sustainable development, handing out awards as well as providing waste management, are all strategies that are mainly cooperating with or involving the business world, which agrees with the view of the production angle. These strategies maintain established patterns of consumption while having a greener agenda. Consumption can continue, bringing economic benefits to businesses and the municipality, while at the same time the consumer can contribute to greener practices through consumption, as well as expressing one's identity through clothing (Miles, 1998: Chap 6: 2; Princen, Maniates and Conca, 2002: 4-5). Green consumerism maintains the logic of consumer demands driving production, causing economic growth (Akenji, 2013: 15).

5.1.2 The consumption angle

The consumption angle is present in a large amount of the strategies applied by the municipality of Malmö. This angle considers current patterns of consumption and production as a self-defeating system (Princen, 2002a: 31), which implies that the strategies taking on this angle aim to lower consumption levels and change current patterns of consumerism.

The projects established within this strategy are mainly aiming at two things. First is to generate awareness. The GAIA project aims to educate and change behavior. Similarly, the FourFitChallenge aims to engage citizens in issues related to consumption and especially the waste it generates. Several documentaries have been screened, as well as lectures being held, to generate awareness of the clothing industry. Activities were arranged in the GO! Malmö project where citizens could learn about environmental and social consequences of consumption. Additional to this is the supporting and informing of consumers through the municipality webpage and providing counseling meetings.

The second focus of these strategies is the creation of meeting points with events and workshops, as well as the possibility to extend the lifetime of one's clothes by fixing them. According to the empirical data many of the strategies within the consumption angle are trial projects on a small scale, or temporary events. Despite this, these strategies are aiming to address the essential part of the sustainable

consumption concept, namely the consumer lifestyle. Addressing how people live through raising awareness and providing alternatives to commercial consumption are essential parts for achieving lowered consumption levels and sustainable consumption of clothes. (Akenji, 2013: 15; Fuchs et al. 2014: 1; Mont and Plepys, 2007: 531)

5.1.3 Production and consumption angle

Strategies including swapping clothes, second hand clothes and using reused fabric, such as the campaign GO! Malmö, Garaget and the event with screening “The true cost”, are harder to divide into either the consumption or the production angle. These ways to consume could on the one hand be included in the consumption angle as the act itself reduces resource extraction and production levels, but on the other hand it also has a possible tendency to maintain patterns of fashion consumerism.

When used in the context of the consumption angle, including lowered consumption levels, swapping, second-hand and reuse can be considered sustainable strategies of consumption, as they are not to any large extent putting further pressure on environmental or social conditions. On the other hand, when used in the context of a production angle, these strategies can be considered as part of maintaining patterns of consumerism, although they might be somewhat less environmentally intensive. Despite this, the main critique of the production angle is the continuing of the production processes and waste generation, kept at a distance. When it comes to swapping, second-hand and reuse, the production processes are limited and the activities are local, which implies that these strategies are more appropriately classified as belonging to the consumption angle.

The main aspect of achieving sustainable consumption is, this paper has argued, the act of lowering consumption levels through the consumption angle, and the findings indicate that the municipality of Malmö is also aware of this. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that it is the production angle that is dominating Malmö’s sustainability efforts, even though more projects are aiming for the consumption angle when it comes to sustainable consumption of clothes.

The final section of this paper will discuss why the production angle is dominant and what challenges this generates for achieving sustainable consumption.

5.2 Discussion

First of all, it is hard to define the achievement of sustainable consumption. But what at least has been agreed on by authors referred to throughout this paper is that consumption levels need to get lower and the lifestyle of consumerism, as well as trend of fast fashion, need to be broken. Production needs to be conducted in a green way with an agreed standard on what green actually is, but the amount of produced goods needs to be reduced, and kept low to be considered sustainable. So, as the municipality states in its vision: “In 2020, resource usage will be characterized by sustainability and long-term thinking.” (Environmental Department Malmö, 2016: 12) This indicates that the municipality agrees with the idea that achieving sustainable consumption means breaking existing patterns of consumption.

As has been argued, strategies within the production angle are few in number but have a high visibility for the public and have powerful actors on their side, while projects within the consumption angle are many in numbers but consisting of temporary or trial projects. This points towards the challenge identified as the largest one for the municipality in its efforts to achieve sustainable consumption of clothes: the advantage of the production angle. This advantage has been identified as due to economic and power reasons as well as the social setting.

Starting with the economic aspects, the municipality has stated its limitations due to the restricted municipality budget. As there is no financial support for working with clothes within the municipality and the budget set for the Environmental Department is tight, the involvement with the business world is a way to reach out with the message of sustainable consumption. The problem could be, however, that the involvement with the business world points towards the production angle being advertised.

Additionally to the economical limitations mentioned above, the municipality of Malmö has a tight budget due to a relatively meager taxation basis. This potentially indicates that the economic contribution from the business world and consumption to the municipality income is considered important. Indicators on this are the establishment of shopping malls, while the city at the same time promotes itself as sustainable. As an example, even more contradictory is that the shopping mall Emporia is located in the brand new area of the sustainable urban development project

Hyllie². However, it could be argued that shopping malls do also have a green supply of clothes, so citizens can enjoy the new shopping mall and still “do the right thing” from the perspective of the production angle.

These messages from the municipality point towards the importance of consumption for the municipality budget, while at the same time pointing towards goals of sustainable consumption. Strategies of the production angle with green consumerism tend to maintain economic growth while at the same time promoting sustainable consumption practices. Becoming involved in the business world tends to have its advantages for the municipality when it comes to both advertising and the economy.

The economical challenge leads into the question of power influencing the work of the municipality. The indication of economic dependency on consumption, combined with the aim for achieving sustainable consumption, could point towards letting powerful actors such as the business world influence the work done by the municipality. The establishment of shopping malls as well as certifying the city with the Fairtrade brand are both potential indicators that outside actors might have influence on the output of the municipality.

Continuing, power along the production chain of clothes is crucial in the maintenance of commercial or green consumerism. This global inequality in power – carried out through unequal exchange and distancing – challenge the ability to achieve sustainable consumption of clothes as it is the deriving forces of the maintenance of unsustainable production-consumption patterns.

Last is the power of established consumption norms, as well as advertising maintaining these norms. This indicates that efforts to change how we consume or how much is consumed are worked against by discursive power.

The aspect of power implies that the production angle on the consumption issue does not only maintain the consumer lifestyle, but it could also potentially boost the power of the actors who set the agenda. With the production angle, the sustainable consumption concept becomes a tool to continue power inequalities and to promote established norms, but in a green way. Strategies of the production angle, applied by the municipality, point towards this tendency.

² View, Hyllie Malmö stad for more information.

Continuing on norms, the involvement of the production angle could also be convenient for achieving change among consumer behavior, as it is done within established norms. Doing right, when viewed from the production angle, does not require much effort – from the municipality, the business world or the citizens – compared to the consumption angle. Green consumerism can be established within the current social setting without the need to change social structures (Mont and Plepys, 2007: 535). Strategies of green products and waste management are easily implemented in the current consumer society and do not limit the economy or the enjoyment of consuming clothes (Autio, Heiskanen and Heinonen, 2009: 45). Green consumerism becomes part of a responsible consumer behavior and maintains consumerism in a greener way (Autio, Heiskanen and Heinonen, 2009). This means that green consumerism gives the impression of doing right when one consumes, but without presenting the alternative of not consuming. Maintaining the logic of consumer demands through green consumerism drives production and maintains economic growth (Akenji, 2013: 15)

The production angle relies as a strategy for sustainable consumption on consumer choices. This reliance on consumers means that they become responsible for driving the change, through the act of consuming. First of all this is a way of shifting responsibility away from authorities and companies, and secondly, Swedish citizens believe they do more than they actually do (Naturvårdsverket, 2015), which suggests a slow transition into green consumerism in the first place. The power to lead the transformation into sustainable consumption is in the production angle put in the hands of the consumer but also in the hands of the business world. These strategies tend to ignore the powers driving consumption and the environmentally destructive practices that it brings, as in this case the sustainable strategies are set by the same actors who could actually benefit by maintaining or even escalating current consumption rates.

The holistic advantage of the production angle, which has been elaborated above, implies a production-oriented logic where sustainable consumption is managed through environmental improvements. But this production is still based on consumer demands combined by human need and desire. Strategies of green consumerism are aiming to change what is consumed into more sustainable alternatives, but on the other hand the consumerism is not questioned, neither are the high levels of consumption. This means that the advantage of the production angle leads into

environmental challenges that the municipality is facing in its work, as production processes will continue, as well as waste generation. Lowered environmental impact through green consumerism does not indicate anything regarding sustainability, only that the production process is less environmentally destructive than before (Thackara, 2015: 44).

For achieving sustainable consumption of clothes, strategies with a production angle cannot be the dominant ones, as the distancing, hidden costs as well as power inequalities of consumption will remain. As for the strategies applied by the municipality of Malmö, economic aspects, power and social setting – all linked together – could indicate potential reasons behind support of the production angle when it comes to advertising and expansion of the strategies. As Princen, Maniates and Conca (2013: 5,8) note, green consumerism could be criticized for not addressing the economic, social or cultural drivers of consumption patterns. With a growing population and growing global demands for fashion, the strategy of changing lifestyles is undoubtedly necessary. Clothes cannot continue to be considered an easily disposable product.

5.3 Conclusion

This paper has been researching how municipalities are working to achieve sustainable consumption, with the aim of identifying challenges and exploring contributing factors.

The results are far from clear-cut, but suggest that municipalities are working from both the production and the consumption angle when establishing strategies for sustainable consumption of clothes. The main challenge for municipalities to achieve sustainable consumption of clothes is the short-term advantage that the production angle has when it comes to strategies for sustainable consumption. The reasons behind this advantage are economical constraints of the municipality as well as the power that the business world possesses. Further advantage is due to the convenience of implementing the production angle within the current economy and social setting, promoted through the prosecution of power.

This leads to the second major challenge of reducing consumption levels, which has to be viewed as the key to achieving sustainable consumption of clothes.

Without reduction in consumption levels and through strategies of the production angle, a third major challenge is identified. This area includes the degrading aspects of the production-consumption system – including environmental and social aspects – sustained by the production angle but with a green label.

To conclude, identified main *challenges within the municipalities work for achieving sustainable consumption of clothes* are the economical aspects, social structures - both related to the influence of power - all resulting in challenges of working with the combat of environmental degradation.

Contribution to field of research

The aim of this study is to contribute to the understanding of the difficulties behind the work for sustainable consumption in an urban environment. The research has contributed to better understanding what challenges arise in the work for achieving sustainability and what factors indicate to limit the effectiveness of the work. The research has shown that when working for achieving sustainable consumption, the aspects of power and culture are crucial contributors to challenges arising as well as the drive for economic growth.

Discussion of further studies

While this study has identified several factors to create challenges for sustainable consumption of clothes, it would be beneficial to do further studies to explore these factors more in depth for better combating them.

Reflections

The results of this study indicate that working for sustainable consumption of clothes within municipalities is not an easy task. At the beginning of this research, the presumption was that the municipality of Malmö was not doing very much for achieving sustainable consumption of clothes, and that the general focus was to “green” consumption. As the research proceeded, it became clearer that the

municipality actually does a lot within the area of sustainable consumption, and also in the area of changing the consumer lifestyle. This made me wonder why my assumption differed from reality. As I have been living near Malmö my whole life, studied there, as well as spent a lot of time there in the last years, I should have a pretty good overview of the city, at least at the surface. This surface told me that consumption is an important part of the urban environment of Malmö. As the research has proceeded the reason for this assumption has become clearer as well as the incredibly difficult task that the municipality is working with due to surrounding factors and social structures. The ultimate question is though if the current advantage of the production angle and green business as usual will be enough to slow down the environmental crisis, to which clothes consumption is contributing, to eventually turn it around.

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