

Lifestyle change that matters

Introducing an ethics-as-politics approach to social change of consumer society in a Danish urban context

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Lund University Centre for
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Abstract:

Climate change is real and imminent, and mitigation and adaptation responses are vital and urgent. Denmark is renowned for its aspirations for sustainability and concerns in that regard, especially among its citizenry. Nevertheless, high-impact lifestyles persist which put an excessive pressure on the global climate system and expose a tension between pro-environmental dispositions and actual consumption practices in Danish society. This thesis contend that part of the problem lies in ethical foundations for lifestyle consumption. Citizen-consumer perspectives on sustainability, consumption and the good life is explored through a series of interviews. A critical discourse analysis (CDA) is applied to give existential depth and social width to these perspectives. The CDA amounts to a conceptual framework or an *ethics-as-politics formula*, which is an ethical understanding of the current discourse practice and an ideological social practice of sustainable lifestyles in a Danish urban context. The formula is both a way of formulating a reduced consumption lifestyle as a livable alternative and a springboard for framing the systemic relevance of lifestyles. This means the formula develops the theoretical grounds for comprehending sustainable lifestyles as 1) an alternative way of living well in (post)consumer society, and 2) a public sphere activity for reduced consumption and transformation of social structures that script for overconsumption and environmental degradation. The point is that 1) and 2) merge so that changing yourself coincide with practices that change society. Inner transformation, which according to this view in light of climate change is the generation of personal well-being from realization of one's underdetermined social and moral responsibility, coincides with collective action for structural change. The ethics-as-politics formula is a platform for further research that seek to meet people where they are and begin there with fostering sustainable lifestyles for social change of consumer society. As such, it can be used as a practice and transition theory approach with focus on ethical foundations for daily life practices in affluent consumer societies. Introducing an ethics-as-politics approach into sustainability science means developing a conceptual tool for evaluating ethical life foundations, as mentioned. But most importantly, it is a tool for evaluating sustainability scientist' flair for formulating solutions for sustainable lifestyle change that matter in a dual sense: to people because they have existential and social value, and to the environment because they are substantial contributions to transformative change of consumer society.

Keywords: Climate change – Sustainable Lifestyles – Critical Discourse Analysis – Ethics-as-politics – Community-based activities - Transformations

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1 Introduction

1.1 Lifestyles

Besides being a driver of emissions (Blanco et al., 2014), *lifestyles* are what the IPCC (2014) calls a *common enabling factor* of mitigation and adoption responses to climate change. This means lifestyle choice accommodate institutions, governmental bodies, businesses, NGOs etc., as a central component of transition management toward sustainable societies (IPCC, 2014, p. 99).

Now, what is lifestyle? Life as a *style* - as if you were wearing it, could take it off and swap it for something else. No. As appealing as it might sound, the use of the word *lifestyle* in this thesis aligns itself not with the insinuation of fashion, but with the word's existential and social connotations.

Lifestyle signifies "*the way in which a person lives*" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2018), or the way a life is led and unfolded over time. Taking as a subject matter for sustainability science, the negotiation of lifestyles – or how individuals choose to conduct their lives, and why - will be the arc of rotation for an inquiry into the sociocultural domains of consumer society.

1.1.1 Fostering sustainable lifestyles

In sustainability science, lifestyles are environmental and social "*prints of how we live*" (Akenji & Chen, 2016 intro). They are the marks we make as individuals on the natural and social world. These marks in environmental terms are called *footprints*, and they differ greatly among peoples, regions, countries and cultures (Akenji & Chen, 2016; Schaefer & Crane, 2005; Tukker et al., 2014).

The global climate system, for example, has historically been impacted mostly by greenhouse gas (GHG) emission from consumption patterns in Western societies, who put a massive pressure on it still (Laurie Michaelis in Moser & Dilling, 2007 p. 251). In recent history, GHG emissions from household consumption in the EU increased in absolute terms over the period 1996 to 2012 (Reichel, Mortensen, Asquith, & Bogdanovic, 2014), and again in 2015 (Ortiz et al., 2017, p. 5). Based on the numbers alone, lifestyle-related impacts on the climate system from Western consumer societies such as Denmark is a highly relevant topic for sustainability science .

1.1.2 Climate change governance

It has been argued that climate change governance and research tend to focus most on the production-side and less on the consumption-side, i.e. lifestyle-related aspects of the political economy (Bhaskar, Frank, Høyer, Næss, & Parker, 2010; Conca, Princen, & Maniates, 2001).

In recent years, especially with the *17 Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) and the *Paris Agreement* (PA) from 2015, climate governance regimes have focused more on emissions arising from final-consumption and consumer demands in affluent parts of the world, including Denmark (Fernández-Amador, Francois, Oberdabernig, & Tomberger, 2017; Hildebrandt, 2016; UN, 2018; UNEP, 2010, 2017; UNFCCC, 2015).

Information and education campaigns, new technologies and occasional top-down prohibitions have been instruments deployed to 'green' contemporary consumer practices in the West (Cohen, Brown, & Vergragt, 2010), and attention to the task of fostering sustainable lifestyles have flourished (Munch, Risø, & Tno, 2008; Prothero et al., 2011; P. Vergragt & Brown, 2017; P. J. Vergragt et al., 2016).

1.1.3 The nature of consumer society

Even with a renewed interest in the relations between lifestyles, consumption and sustainability, affluent consumer societies in the West can not be said yet to have transitioned to either sustainable consumer societies nor sustainable post-consumer societies (Cohen, Brown, & Vergragt, 2017).

This thesis sets out to comprehend some of the qualities of contemporary consumer society in a Danish context. It seeks to contribute to an understanding of what constitute, condition, maintain and possibly obscure the possibilities for sustainable lifestyles in a Danish urban context, and how these current sociocultural conditions for lifestyles can be altered for the sake of sustainable development.

1.2 Ethics

In doing so, it introduces the discipline of ethics into issues of sustainable lifestyles, to emphasize and explore questions already raised by sustainability science in the wake of the environmental and social crisis of climate change. Such as *who we are* and *why we do/keep doing what we do* (Calder, 2011), and *how much is enough to live well* (Durning, 1993)?

Ethics is the ancient discipline that seeks to administer these types of questions. It helps us understand the reasons for the answers we give to them – at the level of the individual and the level of culture. In practice this means ethics is a curious and critical process of apprehending, formulating and taking responsibility for motives behind and consequences of direct and indirect actions (Roth, 2005). It also means reflecting upon the perceptions we hold about who we think we are and aspire to be (Roth, 2005).

The exercise of ethics, then, in terms of modern lifestyles is focus on ideals and actions that constitute the ways we live, and how our lived experience come to affect others and the environment.

There are many historical traditions of ethics, of course. The three dominant ones are *utilitarianism*, *deontology* and *virtue ethics* (Roth, 2005). This thesis does not deploy any of these in particular, but focuses on the *social* and *relational aspects* of human life, and explores the current ethical nature of Danish consumer society. It departs from the general notion that climate change as a dynamic socio-ecological system of events constitute a sort of “*antecedent realm of moral facts*” (Calder, 2011, p. 158), that asks of us to reconsider our ethical arrangements, whatever these might be.

The meaning of ethics in light of climate change is the invitation of sustainability scientist and citizens alike to discuss, reflect and possibly reassess ways of life, personal and social commitments, perceived responsibility and other elementary ethical components of modern life in consumer society. Climate change can be the global base for such an ethical inquiry for sustainability (Singer, 2011).

Attempting to generate the most comprehensive and thorough understanding of the ethical nature of current consumer society, this thesis holds a dual definition of lifestyle consumption: it is both culture and more than culture. In more technical terms, lifestyle consumption as a social human practice is both *social-cultural*, *social-material* and *social-institutional* (Roy Bhaskar in Bhaskar et al., 2010, p. 10). What this means will be explained in the following.

1.2.1 The role of culture

The social-cultural field of a human social practice includes apparent ethical dimensions (Roy Bhaskar in Bhaskar et al., 2010 p. 10). In that sense, lifestyle choice and consumption are ongoing social activities bound within cultural webs of meaning and interpretation that have multiple ethical expressions and existential

implications for citizen-consumers¹ daily lives. These implications are among other things the creation of social identities and relations, and the establishment of perceived versions of reality (Thompson, Pollio, & Locander, 1994).

Because of the existential depth of lifestyle choice and consumption, then, and because it has been suggested by Schaefer and Crane (2005) that sociocultural notions barely have been linked to sustainability, this thesis treats sociocultural and hence ethical aspects of consumption as a crucial starting point for fostering sustainable lifestyles in an urban Danish context.

1.2.2 More than culture

Social-material and social-institutional fields of consumption practices involve among other things the *environment* and *social structures* (Roy Bhaskar in Bhaskar et al., 2010 p. 10). They call attention to underlying mechanisms of the ethical and cultural aspects of lifestyles.

The reason why these underlying mechanisms are relevant is sociocultural-ethical categories in themselves (the culture) do not necessarily explain the role lifestyle consumption come to play in maintaining specific environmentally and structurally unsustainable relations. A deeper understanding of societal mechanisms is necessary, especially to conceive of the possible systemic relevance lifestyles have for sustainable development. Ultimately, such knowledge is relevant to target the root causes of unsustainable consumption practices in consumer society and instigate social change.

Bearing this in mind, as a supplement to what will come to be the dominant focus of this thesis, namely the sociocultural-ethical analysis, the possible nature and implications of (some) structural circumstances will be discussed.

A Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as originated by Norman Fairclough (see below), was chosen to fulfill the methodological task of this dual research design.

¹ A concept I borrow from Spaargaren, (2000) and Spaargaren & Mol, (2013).

1.3 Critical Discourse Analysis

First two steps in the CDA are the *textual* analysis and the *discourse practice* analysis. The third step is a *social practice* analysis that seeks to link sociocultural-ethical dimensions of sustainable lifestyles to structural circumstances of consumer society

The critical and action-oriented element of the third aspect of the CDA, the final phase of the analysis, is oriented towards discussing an action-plan that cultivates the grounds for a 'new' type of pro-environmental agency that is self-enacted through collective action for sustainability.

The overarching goal of the CDA and its three phases as a whole is to position lifestyles within the context of collective action for social and sustainable transformation of consumer society (Akenji & Chen, 2016).

1.3.1 Exploring individual perspectives

That objective begins by exploring individual perspectives as an empirical foundation for further theoretical abstraction. A series of interviews were conducted with pro-environmental urban citizen-consumers in Storkøbenhavn² as the empirical anchor of the CDA.

The choice of exploring individual perspectives rests on what Roy Bhaskar (2011) calls a *transformational understanding of social activity*. According to this view, the social structure on the one hand preexist and influence individual activity (Bhaskar, 2011). That is, the social structures of society constitute the rules under which individual activity (can) be carried out - they are the conditions of possibilities for agency. But, and this is the important possibility for transformative agency, these social structures themselves on the other hand can be altered by creative and bold activity (mostly in larger groups), because they are reproduced and/or transformed by the very activity individuals engage in on a daily basis (Bhaskar, 2011). As such, micro activity has macro activity relevance – and the way to expose the nature of social structures is through understanding individuals' daily life point of views, and the rules they seem to adhere to - consciously or unconsciously - in their social activities.

The point of exploring individual consumer perspectives, then, is to gain first-hand knowledge about the nature of consumer culture and potentially social structures (macro-levels) that constitute or obscure the

² One interview was with participants based in Aarhus, Denmark's second largest city.

possibilities for sustainable lifestyle choice (micro-level) (Dolan, 2002). Such knowledge would make it easier to develop a strategy for fostering sustainable lifestyles by *meeting people where they are, and beginning there*.

Meeting people where they are means understanding the social, historical and cultural universe they find themselves in, and how they personally and inter-subjectively make sense of it (Carnevale, 2013; Taylor, 2002). Going through this elaborate process of perspectives, ideally, would help participants identify with the proposed sustainable lifestyle change solution – because it would emerge from their own lifeworld.

Such a strategy, according to Kemp and Nielsen (2009), is one of the most important but least developed one's for mobilizing individuals for collective mitigation purposes in the Danish context (p. 11). Among other reasons, that is why this thesis sets out to formulate a conceptual framework, or a *formula* as it will be called, for meeting people where they are.

1.4 Structure

To achieve these research goals I have structured my final research into three sections:

Part two of the thesis addresses the issue of unsustainability in Danish consumer society through the lens of current high-impact lifestyle trends. It introduces the tension between *societal pro-environmental dispositions* on the one hand and *unsustainable pr. capita footprints* on the other. Arising from this tension, or attitude-behavior gap as it will be called, is RQ1 and the CDA.

Part three is the CDA that investigates three dimensions of sustainable lifestyles in an urban Danish context. The CDA amounts to the concept of the *ethical formula*, it discusses this formula and a possible social practice with significance for fostering sustainable lifestyles. Part three is also the place for the early developments of a possible solution. It formulates an alternative ethics-as-politics strategy for lifestyles' collective action for social and sustainable change.

Part four discusses two social criteria for sustainable lifestyles, possibilities for further research, the scope and limitations of this thesis, and contributions to sustainability science.

2. Introducing Denmark: an advanced society for sustainability

2.1. Pro-environmental dispositions

In Denmark, sustainability is outspokenly favored over unsustainability. As easy as that. Sustainability is captured in economic discourse, environmental discourse and social discourse. The prime minister, Lars Løkke-Rasmussen sums them up politically when he writes in a joint statement between the Nordic prime ministers last year:

Achieving the historic goals set in the Paris climate agreement and the UN 2030 Agenda will require much hard work from all of us.[...] Decades of working together have helped our [Nordic] countries to enjoy economic growth, protect the environment and maintain our social values. We must keep up the good work. (Løkke-Rasmussen, Solberg, Sipilä, Benediktsson, & Löfven, 2017).

In making this comment, Løkke-Rasmussen et. al. celebrate the fact of the sustainability paradigm, its canonical documents (the PA and the SDGs), and its migration into Danish economic, environmental and social landscapes. The sustainability paradigm is the common belief that unsustainable political, economic and social trends belong to the past and sustainable ones to the future (Blühdorn, 2007, 2011). Sceptics object the sustainability paradigm means advanced capitalist consumer societies have adopted the lingo of sustainability, which does not necessarily translate into actual sustainable development but rather an impasse that sustains the unsustainable while stating the opposite (Blühdorn, 2002, 2007, 2011).

Regardless, Denmark has usually been perceived as an advanced consumer society well on its way towards sustainability. Lars Løkke Rasmussen himself, together with his sitting government sees Denmark as a frontrunner nation: especially in terms of lowering emissions agreed to in the PA through energy efficiency and decoupling the economy from the environment (MFAD, 2016; The Danish Government, 2017; UNFCCC, 2015). Some scholars argue Denmark's political initiatives, businesses and civil society movements can take on a leading role in sustainable development (Armann & Nakkerud, 2006; Mandagmorgen, 2009; RCE-Denmark, 2012). Others argue along the same lines that Danish state and non-state actors play an important role in the "*understanding, diffusion and realization*" of the SDGs (Hildebrandt, 2016 p. 446).

Denmark is renowned for its high levels of environmental awareness and environmental attitudes among its citizenry (Franzen & Vogl, 2013; Harju-Autti & Kokkinen, 2014; Hofrichter & Reif, 1990; Miljøstyrelsen, 2006). A prominent figure usually ascribed to another one, namely the *formal* educational system's emphasis on

sustainability (see e.g. Breiting & Wickenberg, 2010; Læssøe, 2010; Læssøe & Öhman, 2010). In terms of *non-formal* education, which is the communication and distribution of information about climate change and the environment in civil society through media, NGO campaigns etc. (Wibeck, 2014), Denmark has many public sphere educational programs³.

Based on these brief and general observations, it seems Danish society have political, economic and social dispositions fit for sustainability.

2.2 The unsustainable practice beneath the lingo

These dispositions, however, do not explain ‘the other side of the coin’, the fact that Denmark, relative to the PA’s 2°C target, have increasing and target-exceeding emissions (Concito, 2018; UNFCCC, 2015). Danish resource footprints, ecological footprints and emissions from especially international trade and final-consumption patterns are dramatically high (Concito, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2016, 2017; Davis & Caldeira, 2010; Levitt, Pedersen, & Sørensen, 2015; Tukker et al., 2014). According to Concito (2013), an independent Danish green think tank, Denmark had already consumed almost half of its IPCC proposed 2 billion ton carbon budget for the period 2000-2050 in 2000-2012.

Concito claim that Danish high-impact lifestyles cause an annual 19t CO₂eq emissions pr. capita (Concito, 2017)⁴, which is 6-8 times the proposed 2°C carbon budget limit for global pr. capita emissions in 2050 (Concito, 2010, p. 4-5).

The number seems absurdly high at first compared to other official accounts of Danish pr. capita emissions. For example the OECD’s annual 9,27t GHG emissions for the year 2014 (OECD, 2018), the WRI’s 8,55t CO₂eq emissions for the year 2014 (WRI, n.d.), and the Worldbank’s 5,936t CO₂ emissions for the year 2014 (Worldbank, 2018). Briefly put, the reason why Concito’s account is so much higher compared to other types of emission accounts is the incorporation of so-called *scope 3* emissions⁵.

³ See Gundelach, Hauge, & Nørregård-Nielsen, 2012, p. 93 for a empirical youth study; Lysgaard, 2014 about NGO’s non-formal educational work; and Miljøministeriet, 2007 for a civil society behavior change campaign.

⁴ 6t of the 19t are total public/institutional emissions divided and distributed pr. capita.

⁵ See appendix 6.

2.2.1 Scope 3 emissions

From the total of 19t CO₂eq emissions a year, 20% come from so-called *scope 1* and 2 emissions (Concito, 2012), meaning either from direct personal consumption of predominantly fuels such as gas and oil, or as indirect consumption of locally produced energy, such as district heating, electricity etc. (see figure 1). The remaining 80% percent, according to Concito (2010 p. 8), stems from another type of indirect emissions, namely *scope 3* emissions. These emissions account for the fact that most physical products Danes consume are produced outside the country (Concito, 2012 p. 4).

Scope 3 emissions (see figure 1) are embedded in the global production-consumption system, and arise from supply-chain processes such as extraction, production, transport, etc. of goods and services (Barrett et al., 2013; Wright, Kemp, & Williams, 2011).

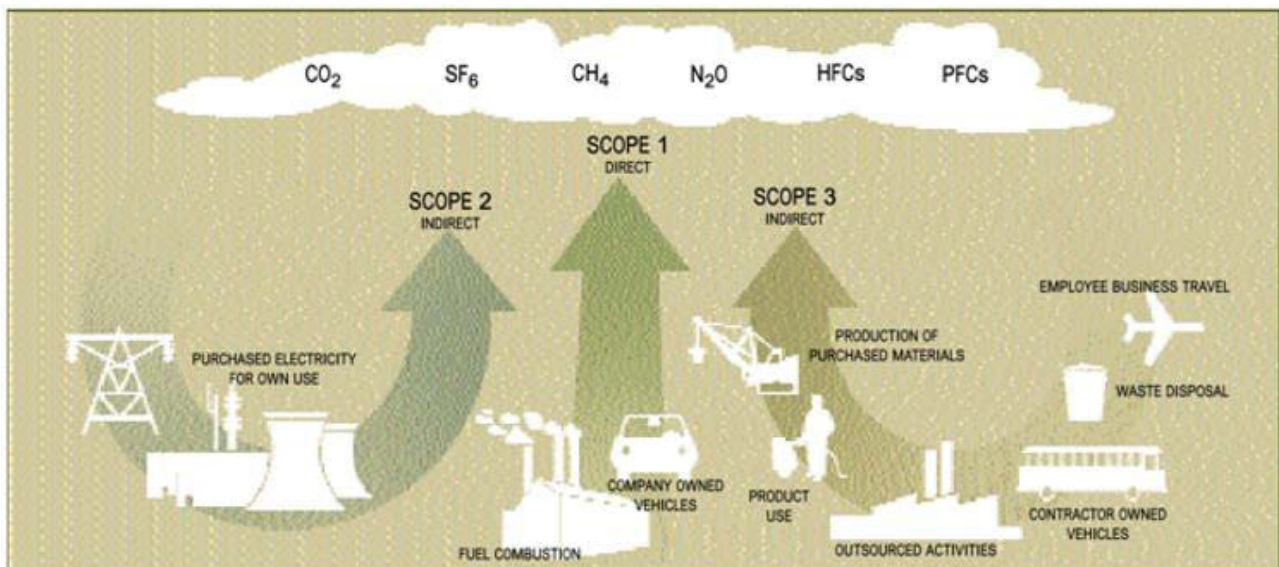


Figure 1: Conceptualization of scope 1-3 emissions. This figure shows different scopes of emissions involved in consumption as a social-ecological activity with many steps in the production-consumption value-chain. Note that this type of emissions account was originated for business use purposes, and that Concito (2010) deliberately uses it to measure direct and indirect personal consumption footprints (p. 3). As such, some activities in the figure, e.g. “outsourced activities” and “contractor owned vehicles” are relevant for consumer footprint accounts, insofar as they are part of the carbon chain of production and consumption of goods and services. (Source: WRI, 2000).

Associated with the kind of affluent consumption patterns and high-impact lifestyles introduced above, scope 3 emissions suggest a link between local Danish lifestyle consumption patterns and global systems, which

includes not only the global production-consumption system (figure 1), but the global climate system as well (figure 1).

In technical terms, what the high level of these indirect emissions show is that a small, open economy like these Danish one, ought to account for not only local production-side and local consumption-side emissions, but scope 3 emissions as well (Levitt et al., 2015).

However, the scope 3 perspective provides more than just the grounds for technical reassessment of the economy. Most interestingly, the high levels of Scope 3 emissions from high-impact lifestyles in Denmark suggest that green values and ideals do not always translate into pro-environmental behaviors. In other words, that there is a tension between sociocultural pro-environmental dispositions on the one side and actual lifestyle consumption practices on the other.

This tension between ideals and practices, or between knowledge and action, has been coined the *attitude-behavior gap* (Terlau & Hirsch, 2015). This gap exists in most consumer societies and relates to the common concern of how to transition “*present energy- and materials-intensive consumer societies*” (Cohen, Brown, & Vergragt, 2017, abstract). It can be explored from a variety of angles and with different sets of aims, methods and appreciations of social change and intervention (M. J. Cohen et al., 2017)⁶.

In the following, further investigation of this gap in the urban context will take place with a special focus on sociocultural and ethical dimensions of lifestyles as mentioned above. Inspired by consumer research this will be done in the CDA by exploring consumer’s expressed meanings about themselves, others and reality (Boluk, 2011; Thompson et al., 1994).⁷

Emerging from the initial diagnosis of a tension between ideals and practices in Danish society, is the first research question (RQ) of this thesis:

⁶ See M. J. Cohen et al. (2017) for an excellent collection of critical consumer society studies.

⁷ See appendix 7.

2.2.2 RQ1:

How do individuals/families with environmental aspirations explain and interpret relations between sustainable lifestyles, consumption and the good life?

3. A Faircloughian CDA

In this section a *Faircloughian CDA* will be applied to answer the RQ1 (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 1992, 1993, 1995, 2010). The main reason for the relevance of a Faircloughian CDA is that the research object “*can be formulated to include or highlight questions of semiosis*” (Fairclough, 2012, p. 464). Semiosis is the *intersubjective process* of making sense of oneself, others, social life and the world, through language use and social interaction (Fairclough, 2010; Fairclough, Jessop, & Sayer, 2010).

Fairclough’s CDA draws explicitly on a “*realist social ontology*” and critical realism (see e.g. Fairclough, 2012, p. 451; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 70). That is why this thesis throughout the analysis supplements the CDA with relevant critical realist inputs, concepts and ideas.

3.1. The purpose of the CDA

The overall purpose of this CDA is to investigate *three dimensions* of sustainable lifestyles in an urban context; namely the *textual* level (1), the *discourse practice* level (2) and the *social practice* level (3).

My CDA gives *illustrative examples* of these dimensions (1-3), i.e. it characterizes ethical elements of consumer society *as these elements emerged from the interviews and through the subsequent analysis of discursive and non-discursive elements of the interviews*.

In technical terms, this means that the purpose of this CDA is to make a sound three-dimensional *rational abstraction* (Sayer, 2010) from the *normative layer* (Bhaskar et al., 2010) of lifestyles, with the interviews as an empirical anchor. The CDA does not deal emphatically with other layers of lifestyles, such as economic, political, biological ones etc. (Bhaskar et al., 2010). The reason is focus on semiosis and discourse clarity.

3.1.1 The three-dimensional approach to discourse

Here I will briefly introduce the analytical framework of the CDA: the *three-dimensional conception of discourse* (see e.g. Fairclough, 1992, pp. 72-73):

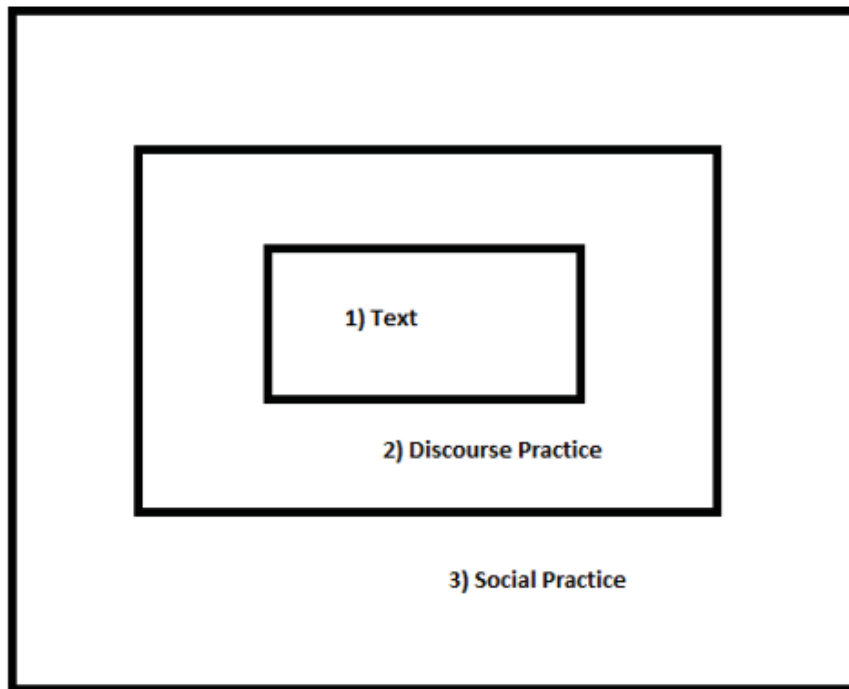


Figure 2. Three-dimensional conceptualization of Fairclough's CDA (Fairclough, 1992 p. 73).

- 1) The first dimension is the analysis of text (see figure 2), which consist of two analytical moments. *Linguistic features* (LFs) such as grammar, sentence construction, vocabulary and semantics are analyzed in the first moment, and the articulation of *intertextual components* such as established genres, discourses and narratives (GDNs) are analyzed in the second. Both moments combine to explore *how* the speaker make sense of herself, others and the world – in regards to RQ1.
- 2) The second level deals with the production and consumption of discourse more emphatically (see figure 2). It seeks to characterize the discourse practice produced and consumed in the text. This is done by establishing *interdiscursive links* between the interview text as *a communicative event* on the one side and *pre-existing sociological meanings* on the other (Fairclough, 1995, p. 188).
- 3) The third level in the three-dimensional model is the question of social practice (see figure 2). Here the discourse practice is analyzed as situated within non-discursive aspects and social structural

conditions of consumer society. This step seeks to establish so-called *external relations* between the discourse practice and the social practice encompassing, constituting, conditioning and maintaining it (see e.g. Fairclough, 2010 p. 3).

All three dimensions stand in a dialectical relation – which means that the discourse practice for example is not only determined by the social practice, but can influence and alter the social practice itself through creative discursive and transformative social activity (Caldas-Coulthard & Coulthard, 1996). Because the relations are dialectical, the *critical* aspect of the CDA, which is the deliberate confrontation of constituents of discourse and social practice, is possible (Fairclough, 1995 p. 132-133), and will be discussed later.

3.2 The first dimension: textual analysis

3.2.1 Interview research design

A round of interviews was conducted with 10 Danish urban citizen-consumers with pro-environmental aspirations in an Danish urban context. The sampling size was deliberately kept small to focus on in-depth potentials (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). Sampling was purposive at the outset (Bryman, 2012), i.e. participants were chosen based on household-type, age and environmental aspirations (see appendix 4) . The snow-ball effect method supplemented the purposive sampling to close in on theoretical saturation (Bryman, 2012).⁸

A basic semi-structured interview design was chosen as the principal method (Bryman, 2012). The interview guide consisted of a few governing questions with relevance to RQ1 (see appendix 9). In order to establish conditions for the possibilities of in-depth conversations, an *intensive research strategy* with a focus on interactive interviews was used to create and make use of the interview guide (see e.g. Sayer, 2000 p. 21). This strategy made room for free association and creative spontaneous contemplation on the topics, on emerging themes and relations etc. - while inviting participants to evolve their explanations and interpretations in detail.

Based on these methodological considerations and the RQ1, the interviews were conducted and transcribed in detail for further analysis.

⁸ See appendix 8

3.2.2 Textual analysis approach to the interview text

The interviews and the interview guide were designed to shed light on the discourse practice *from the perspectives of individuals*. Therefore, an interpretivist-hermeneutic approach to text analysis was adopted in the early analytical steps of the CDA (Bryman, 2012). This meant that personal utterances, understandings and interpretations were treated as relevant sources about the discourse practice in a dual sense: both *subjectively* and *sociologically* (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006).

Subjectively in the sense of *emic themes*, which is perspectives ‘from the inside’ on experiences and understandings of a given topic under given circumstances (Fischer, Castilhos, & Fonseca, 2014, p. 76). Sociologically in the sense of *etic themes*, which are cultural indicators of social life hinted at by the participant and further developed by the researcher (Fischer et al., 2014 p. 76).

3.2.3 Early findings: A simple overview of the body of text and the textual analysis

The *active code model* (appendix 1), the *statistical occurrence model* (appendix 2), the *code application model* (appendix 3), and the *interview tables* (appendix 4 and 5), combined give an overview over and a broad account of the outcome of the textual analysis:

- 1) The *Active Code Model* is a condensation of textually activated interdiscursive elements. Some of the essential elements were *consumption, sustainability, unsustainability, individuality, change, morality, well-being, choice, community* and *structures*. These essential interdiscursive elements will be used below as springboards for analyzing the discourse practice in more detail (see 3.3).
- 2) The *Statistical Occurrence Model* depicts statistical links between LFs, which are ways in which participants use language to create social identity, social relations and versions of reality, and GDNs, which are essential interdiscursive elements. LFs are the *form* of language use, whereas GDNs can be said to be the *content* of language use. As such the two can never be separated, and the distinction serves mainly analytical purposes. This means that the LFs give a *sense of importance* to the text, i.e. hints at when something has *subjective significance* for the speaker. This is when things start to get personal, so to say. LFs ascribe more meaning and existential depth to the GDNs, because GDNs are articulated not in a neutral way but in a profoundly personal and existential way.
- 3) *The Code application model* personifies code activity, which means that it relates LFs and GDNs to particular participants.

4) *The interview tables* show the properties of the interview participants and transcripts.

Combined, these models give a rough conception of the body of text. They give an idea of 1) *what kinds* of interdiscursive elements were activated textually, 2) for *what semiotic purpose*, and 3) by *who*.

However, they do not provide a sufficient view into the complexities of the ethical dimensions of the discourse practice the RQ1 is interested in. They form, however, the textual-empirical basis for further analysis.

3.3 The second dimension: internal relations

The discourse practice of sustainable lifestyles and consumption will be explored by establishing what Fairclough (2010) calls *internal relations* between communicative events in the (interview) text and relevant communicative events in the literature.

In their language use, individuals hint at or make use of pre-existing discursive systems of meaning and other system elements of the social world (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006). This is basically the discourse practice. These system elements will be given more substantial sociological meaning in the following. Inspired by Crouch and McKenzie's (2006) exploratory concept-generating model, I will "*re-research*" the body of text within a "*spiral of conceptual development*" (p. 491-92), oscillating between subjective accounts and relevant sociological accounts, ideas, categories, definitions, theories etc.

3.3.1 Interdiscursive link: Consumption, Sustainability and Unsustainability

1. Negotiating personal needs as a contextually bound consumer

Navigating patterns of personal consumption was an ongoing mediation between *good practices* and *bad practices* for sustainability (Lysgaard, 2014). Some participants expressed difficulties with getting their daily needs and routines to meet sustainability criteria, and found it necessary from time to time to adopt unsustainable lifestyle acts.

When P1 for instance visits his family in Northern Denmark, he takes the plane from Copenhagen, which in his own words is "*neither the cheapest nor the most sustainable solution – but the fastest*" (P1).

P8 had had a real dirty boys' car⁹, and “. . . I thought about it [sustainability] a little bit, but it was not most important at all” (P8).

P10 recently bought himself a veteran car, because “I am one big smile when I drive it, I think it's super-duper nice. But I totally recognize it's a dirty mess¹⁰” (P10).

Reflecting upon these and other cases in the text, it seems pro-environmental sympathies do not necessarily prevent one from engaging in 'bad' practices, or display what has been called a *cognitive dissonance* between principal beliefs and daily life activities (Osbaldiston & Schott, 2012).

To close in on a more profound understanding of this apparent inconsistency or seemingly *attitude-behavior gap* at the level of the individual (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002), instead of focusing on *psychological factors* of consumption alone, looking at *social structural circumstances* for individual consumption (Gossard & York, 2003), might help explain why environmental attitudes do not necessarily translate into alleviation of 'bad' practices.

That is to say, from the social context perspective, P1, P8 and P10 in the examples above express more than personal preference and needs as reasons for adopting unsustainable lifestyles, which was the psychological factor. P1 for example expresses a need for fast and efficient travel. Covering this need, he prioritizes the plane over another type of perhaps more sustainable transportation. It “saves him incredible amounts of time” (P1) as he puts it. The *time factor*, a social circumstance according to Reisch (2001) in late-modern *non-stop society*, is a determining factor of P1's consumption pattern. General expectations to high-levels of *physical mobility* is another particular societal norm with significance for P1's decision (Hélène Cherrier & Szuba, 2012).

P8 and P10 seem to be under influence of another type of societal norm. They talk about enjoying themselves or getting a sense of pleasure from driving a nice, old car (cf. P10's comment above). The norm they align with here might be that of having a good time, typical of what Brinkmann (2017) calls the *pleasure ethics* of consumer society.

In effect, individual preference and everyday needs dominate lifestyle consumption behaviors. But these in turn are always already bound within a sociocultural web of meanings and expectations (Hélène Cherrier &

⁹ “En drengerøvsbil”

¹⁰ “Et svineri”

Szuba, 2012). Individuals with pro-environmental aspirations might be “forced to adapt lifestyles that are unsustainable” (Reisch, 2001, p. 374), because they have to comply with prevailing and unsustainable consumer norms found within their social context.

P3-P4 mentions in this regard their friend in Australia, and give an illustrative example of the type of lifestyle dilemma:

P3: We have a friend in Australia; she lives on the countryside, in this eco-farm. [...]. And in many ways . . . she is the perfect example of how things can actually work [sustainably]. [...] But then again. The moment she has been one roundtrip to Denmark, her whole life’s CO2 budget is consumed [...] and she has been travelling many times between Australia and Denmark. P4: Because she has a boyfriend in Denmark. And it was kind of a necessity for her that she could visit him (P3-P4).

Basically, if their friend in Australia did not adopt elements of an unsustainable lifestyle, e.g. that of air travel consumption, it seems, she would jeopardize a subjectively significant social relation. What is more, her life seems to be under influence of different social contexts at the same time, with different prevailing norms: environmentalism and ‘romanticism’. Making trade-offs between these two sets of aspirations seems like a difficult task.

This lifestyle dilemma pertains to the social nature of personal needs as mentioned above, combined with the fact that a certain degree of *social risk* is associated with not following dominant social context norms (Hélène Cherrier & Szuba, 2012; Hageman & Orup, 2017). These norms in turn might very well imitate unsustainability, as is the case here with air travel and expected physical mobility.

This amounts to the first intertextual proposition that the consumer is *a contextual consumer*. If the social context determinants are subjectively significant for lifestyle consumption, it raises the question regarding its effects on self-perceived individuality.

3.3.2 Interdiscursive link: Consumption, Sustainability and Individuality

2. Altruistic, biospheric and egoistic perceptions of individuality

The two prevailing ideas of individuality expressed in the text were respectively the idea of the *altruistic/biospheric self* and the idea of the *egoistic self*.

P5 as an example, identified with a spiritual system of values that puts veganism at the center of human activity. She perceived “*ethical responsibility for animal welfare*” (P5) to be a cardinal altruistic virtue.

P5 linked the responsibility regarding animal welfare to responsibility for the environment and sustainability. She coupled altruism and biospheric values with consumption, and said every consumer was responsible for starting “*with oneself first*” (P5) to instigate individual change for the betterment of the environment and animals.

Elements of P5’s standpoint on individuality echoes the environmentalist scholar Dale Jamieson’s doctrinal framework for moral and political obligations to the environment (Jamison in Moser & Dilling, 2007). Jamieson (in Moser & Dilling, 2007) argues the individual position is the departure point for sustainable development. Self-transformation and living the good life go hand in hand with being part of a big movement and changing the world (Jamison in Moser & Dilling, 2007, p. 481).

P5 found this personal self-transformative process difficult at times:

it is a very individual process [...] we, Stinne [her vegan friend] and I often talk about this type of loneliness that follow, actually (P5).

In a world where meat consumption is still the dominant norm, adhering to principles of veganism while pursuing well-being and happiness for oneself and others proved a difficult task to master singlehandedly.

P5 identified with what environmental psychologists have called *altruistic* and *biospheric* personal values for sustainability (Nielsen, 2017). A third such value and indicator of what Paul Stern (2000) coins *environmentally significant behaviors* is *egoistic values*.

P10 expressed – albeit not totally identified with – this latter type of values. He delineated a different form of environmentally concerned self, namely a self-oriented on more egoistic self. This self had what P10 called “*self-utility*”¹¹ or “*self-gain*” (P10) as its main driver of sustainable lifestyle choice.

Presented as a calculating and cunning agent, as an opportunist that sought to optimize her position and satisfy personal preference, this self resembles a neoclassical view of the human, a kind of economic individuality, homo economicus (see e.g. Machan, 1998, p. 3). Economic individuality in the neoclassical sense

¹¹ “Egennytte”

revolve around self-enacting activities undertaken by someone “*who only thinks and looks inwardly*” (Wolff & Resnick, 2012 p. 256). At the core of this view of self lies the presumption that humans are predominantly egoistic. As a result, reasoning about sustainability and sustainable lifestyle choice is based in the psychological model: *what do I get from it?* Or the more soft version: *can I see myself in it?*

A consequence of this view, according to P10, was that solutions for sustainable lifestyles ought to incorporate “*self-regarding perspectives*” (P10). P10 explained most people today are raised into this egoistic, self-realizing tradition: “*it is all about optimizing how I make a better life for me, all the time*” (P10).

That means sustainability is obsolete insofar as it is not appreciated as part of individual self-enactment. Understanding the dynamics between altruistic, biospheric and egoistic elements of individuality is attempting to understand *how people perceive themselves*, e.g. what they are and aspire to be.

3.3.3 Interdiscursive link: Consumption, Sustainability and Change

3. Incentives for lifestyle change

Connected closely to versions of individuality in the text were different notions of incentives for lifestyle change. P2 as an example explicitly called for a stronger social conceptualization of individuality. He pictured social elements such as collective consciousness and collective practices would facilitate the conditions for both individual and grand scale change, “*push [social] structures*” (P2), and do away with the dominant focus on individual sovereignty and the dominant culture of egoism (P2).

P10’s argument about possible incentives for change was closely related to the egoistic traits of individuality mentioned above. Personal-gain and conceivable immediate-returns were central drivers of change, at both individual and social levels. P10 emphasized the need for targeted communication, suggesting that solutions be communicated differently to different people from different layers of society (P10).

That people have different value priorities is a recognized and democratically valued circumstance in Danish consumer society (Thøgersen & Olander, 2002). In regards to sustainability, however, moral relativism, or the idea that value priorities are many and equally justifiable (to a certain democratic limit), means sustainability has different meanings and priorities to people. P10 gave a personal example:

For example at my work, we don't talk about sustainability. We talk about growth, big projects, about money. [...] and a guy walking in for a meeting with a big IT-CEO wearing a suit, we can't relate to [...] [the] sustainability-freak [...] because we are just fundamentally, value-wise and career-wise and socially so different (P10).

Taking into account different value stances among the population amounts to the proposition that meeting people where they are involves paying attention to *what it is that drives them*.

Such attention includes a sort of tactical awareness of what it is that individuals seem to find worth pursuing in their lives. Which creates an opening for talking more emphatically about morality in relation to sustainable lifestyles.

3.3.4 Interdiscursive Link: Consumption, Sustainability and Morality

4. Lay-normativity and moral guide lines

Morality refers to the worth of human actions – to their rightness and wrongness (Roth, 2005). In its most elementary form, morality describes the *mechanisms* that constitute what is perceived as good and evil in society (Roth, 2005). These mechanisms are of course always socio-historically constituted and loaded with different sets of “*personal and social values, rules, beliefs, laws, emotions, and ideologies*” (Roth, 2005 p. 967).

Part of exploring the culture of sustainable lifestyles was investigating individual perspectives on ideas of what is *good* (Sayer, 2004 p. 4) and what is *human flourishing* in society (Sayer, 2011, p. 135).

P3-P4 explained, for example, how an “*organic wave*” with its own kind of moral symbolism had made organic products into signifiers of personal flourishing (P3-P4). As they put it, it had become “*a parameter you use to measure prosperity in some sense. [...] that you are flourishing¹²*” (P3-P4). The act of organic consumption was something “*that feels good, and gives a good conscience*” (P3-P4).

P9 framed sustainable lifestyles and consumption as an elitist project or even a thing for the rich: a “*social status*” project for “*a certain social group who can afford [it]*” (P9). He implied that such a project might have negative consequences for a serious integration of sustainability into daily lives of consumers.

¹² “Har overskud”

In line with P3-P4 but more explicitly, P9 criticizes these types of trivial consumption acts for essentially being about *ethical selving* (Varul, 2009), empty words (Heiskanen & Pantzar, 1997) and prestige, rather than real personal deeds for sustainability.

P9 touched upon an acknowledged problem in the literature about ethical consumption. The type of trivial consumption acts has been said to function mainly as a re-positioning of the consumer as a *moral protagonists* within the social field (Luedicke, Thompson, & Giesler, 2010). Adopting a sustainable lifestyle in these terms means changing one's *practical understanding* of one's contribution to sustainability, but not *actually* changing one's routines substantially (Gross & Heinrichs, 2009 p. 224). This trend is usually attributed to the circumstance that

the structures of society promote consumption patterns that Nordic people think of as normal, but which are unsustainable (Mont, Heiskanen, Power, & Kuusi, 2013 p. 2).

P6 spoke of the "*globetrotter*" (P6), a kind of person that travels the world, collects personal experiences and then brags about it – a type of self-realization P6 found profoundly noxious (P6). The globetrotter mentality was both too individually orientated and lacked what P6 deemed an important virtue for sustainability, namely self-control or "*self-restraint*" from emissions-intensive activities such as flying (P6).

These are examples of what participants and their 'representations of other people' think is best for sustainable lifestyles. In moral terms, the examples represent personal and social normative rationales and ideas about what is right and wrong concerning sustainable lifestyles.

P3-P4 and P9 for example, agrees that sustainable lifestyle choice should be *real*, not alone symbolic. P6 thought some deeds to be better than others: appalled by the egoistic, unsustainable image of self-realization embraced by the globetrotter, for example, P6 believes this kind of individuality is *bad* for collective actions for sustainability (P6).

Each utterance is in fact loaded with morality. It is a moral statement of favor or disfavor of some social elements concerning sustainable lifestyles and the worth of human actions in that regard. These individual understandings of moral aspects of consumer culture, as ordinary as they may seem, are important building blocks of the discourse practice.

As pieces of the normative social order of things, each individual perspective is an instance of what Andrew Sayer (2004) calls *lay normativity*. Lay normativity is the individuals' internalization and interpretation of the normative rules of society (Sayer, 2004). They become individual moral guidelines for meaningful and purposive daily activity. As such, researchers should take this basic dimension of normativity seriously "*precisely because it matters to people*" and because it exposes "*things which seriously affect their well-being*" (p. 4).

This new dimension of lay-normativity adds a *subjectively significant* layer to the strategy of *meeting people where they are*, namely that of well-being. Well-being seriously couples the question of sustainable lifestyles to ethics, and concerns about what it means to live well.

3.3.5 Interdiscursive Link: Consumption, Sustainability and Well-being

5. Adding existential value

Well-being is a complex socio-psychological state of being with many different constitutive elements. Amartya Sen (2003) mentions a few, such as "*being happy, achieving self-respect, taking part in the life of the community*" etc. (p. 37-38). These are very much common-human aspirations.

Participants especially identified with states of well-being when consumer acts gave rise to a good feeling from doing what was considered right. P5 for instance explained how she began feeling both physically and mentally better from becoming a vegan. P8 being pregnant decided to abandon hygiene products with perfumes, because she experienced well-being from a feeling of connectedness with her baby:

I can feel that everything I put onto and into my body now, is actually going directly to the baby as well. And I just want to protect him all I can (P7-P8).

Ending her line of thought on social standards of hygiene by saying: "*how brainwashed I have been [before]*" (P7-P8). Not all moments of well-being expressed by participants, however, had this link to self-perceived sustainability. In one case, P6 explains how some of his children:

can't stand spending the winter in Denmark. And then they go to Africa or some place like that, even though it might just be for one week (P6).

Contrary to P5 and P8, this is an example of how an unsustainable consumption act; flying to cope with winter conditions in Denmark, was used as a means of restoring well-being.

P6's children's self-perceived winter-well-being depends on what Font and Hindley (2017) call *tourism freedoms*, e.g. the freedom to travel to Africa for a week's stay if one is not happy about the present situation in Denmark. According to Font and Hindley (2017), these types of individual freedoms are under threat by the new sustainability paradigm. Which means one's well-being, if it is geared toward certain 'unsustainable freedoms', or 'bad' practices as we have called them above, is threatened by climate change as a new realm of moral facts.

We arrive again at the question of trade-offs between sustainable ideals and personal needs. This time trade-offs between attitudes and actual behaviors can be perceived as having existential significance, because it involves well-being.

Most interestingly in that regard, P6 himself couples the idea of the good life with environmental responsibility – as we saw Jamison doing above. P6 says the idea of the good life lies first and foremost in *“doing something for others”* which in terms of sustainability, according to P6, means *“not permit[ting] yourself to do some of the things that many people permit themselves”*, for example by *“abstain[ing] from taking a trip to Thailand here in the weekend”* (P6).

According to P6's ethical logic here, ideals of sustainability can in principle be combined with the pursuit of well-being and happiness (Akenji & Chen, 2016; Cohen et al., 2010). In these terms, taking ecological responsibility, i.e. doing something for others and the planet, would not (alone) be something you do because you feel like it (out of preference) or because you have to (out of duty) – but because it is good and because it makes you *live well*, so to say.

The *subjectively significant* category of wellbeing together with lay-normativity adds ethical-existential value to the strategy of *meeting people where they are*. Another existential theme central to well-being is individual autonomy (Kant, 1993; see also chapter three in Mill, 2003). Hence, questions regarding individual choice came up when well-being was discussed in the interviews.

3.3.6 Interdiscursive Link: Consumption, Sustainability and Choice

6. Choosing to act on what one values

The question of individual choice, its role in sustainable development in general and sustainable lifestyles in particular, was discussed in the interviews. Most participants agreed with the commonly accepted notion that individual voluntary action and choice is at the heart of sustainable development and especially sustainable lifestyle change (Helene Cherrier, 2006).

A few interesting doubts, however, were raised concerning the credibility of this proposition. P3-P4 for example questioned the focus on personal consumption altogether:

P3: . . . in reality, personal consumption is not what weighs the most in the total accountancy. [...] It is all these heavy industries. [...] P4: There are many who think "it has no use anyways, if it's just me", right? [...] P3: It is nontransparent, and the reason why we are sustainable is that it gives us a good conscience. Because I doubt it makes any difference at all (P3-P4).

P9 along the same lines was critical of individualization of solutions to sustainable development (P9). P9 echoed existing criticisms, saying individualized solutions are empty gestures,

seductive to both business and consumers, encompassing as it does the idea that the individual consumer, making decisions to buy one product in preference to another, can painlessly and almost effortlessly create social and political change (Low & Davenport, 2007, p. 336)

In P9's words, sustainability and lifestyle choice, instead of being an issue that is dealt with at the level of the collective, as "*a choice we make jointly as a society*" (P9), solutions to sustainability are

[...] individualized and becomes de-politicized [...] they succumb to the market, [...] the market decides it all [...] it is through one's consumption that one lives out one's political attitudes (...) where you get indulgence for your bad conscience, without it really making any difference (P9).

What is at stake here is the question regarding relevance and weight of individual choice in the bigger picture, the role of agency in social structural transformation. P3-P4 are skeptical whether individual choice compete with structural domains at all. P9 that individual choice is purposely limited to arenas not allowing for actual political or transformative action.

Along these lines, Blühdorn (2006) argues the colonization by market systems of individuals' and families' daily life arenas is a prominent feature of advanced consumer societies. This in turn has consequences for autonomy and individual choice:

supposedly self-determined, human activity, ranging from sexuality or parenting to mobility or gardening, is governed by the range of options which the market has available for the respective purpose (Blühdorn, 2006, p. 29-30).

Blühdorn's (2006) point is that every issue of identity, every self-determining deed or existential act of choosing oneself through one's actions is accommodated by a market solution. P9 mentions H&M as an anchor example of marketization of sustainable lifestyle-identity choice (P9).

These perspectives on individual choice can be incorporated into the emergent strategy for *meeting people where they are*. Questioning the role of individual choice in sustainable development, i.e. asking if an individual is capable of exercising substantial influence on her surroundings if she wants to, raises the question of empowerment. Does the individual have the necessary social capabilities and freedoms to live the life she values, and change it accordingly if she wants to (Sen, 2000)?

The question of choice relates to social surroundings or social context again. Nevertheless, more specifically this time to the concrete social arena of community.

3.3.7 Interdiscursive link: Consumption, Sustainability and Community

7. Community-based powers to the people

P9's fundamental concern introduced above is the consequence individualization, de-politization and marketization of lifestyle choice has for social and political life. P9 says, "*the lifeworld is enclosed by [the capitalist] logic*", what ultimately diminishes is one's capacity to spend "*time on those things that matter to one*", and "*feel that you are part of society and have influence [...] on a community*" (P9).

P2 saw the community as empowerment, or as the bridge between the individual and the broader social order of things (P2). He asked for a "*bottom-up movement, a sort of community*" (P2) that would have a dual strategic purpose. One was "*influenc[ing] those who pull the big strings in the EU and UN*" (P2), as a sort of social movement. The other was that of securing individuals' well-being through social and practical relief in collective daily practices (P2). He contended:

our way of living [as individuals] is simply too hard, and many people are stressed [...] not feeling their life is what they dreamt it to be. [...] one has to show that things can be done in an alternative way. For instance by living in a collective, reducing workhours (...). Not as an individual (...) but as a big group of people (P2).

The community, according to this logic, acts as a social reassuring context that encourages, supports and empowers individuals to perform pro-environmental behaviors in their daily lives, and live the lives they value. With the community in place, P2 says, *“then I think it would inspire people to attempt to do something differently”* (P2).

Less social costs or social stigma is associated with adopting a sustainable lifestyle when a community-based organization provides the individual with the necessary support in the transition phase and in the continuation of the practice (Middlemiss, 2011).

Along the same lines as P2, P6 states the importance of community to lifestyle change, but uses the term *“movements”* instead:

That’s why it’s probably a good idea with movements about sustainability [...] They help people get involved. Because pretty much everyone wants to be part of some sort of community, social being/being social¹³ with other people, right? [...] for example meet up with others and have a vegan meal once a week, right? And then by comparing oneself with others (...) you could make a joint effort (P6).

Corresponding with P6’s idea is research suggesting that individuals with sustainability aspirations benefit from involvement with environmental movements and groups (Schaefer & Crane, 2005). Non-activist and activist individuals supporting environmental movements reflect their values and beliefs in these movements, and gain a sense of purpose from indirectly making a contribution to sustainable development (Stern, Dietz, Abel, Guagnano, & Kalof, 1999).

Community-based, collective and social movement efforts in this sense both give social and practical relief to individuals, they provide a social foundation for environmental identity and relations, and instill a feeling of power.

¹³ “Samvære” in Danish, and “togetherness” directly translated to English.

With the community-perspective, *meeting people where they are* then means looking for the possibilities for them to engage in community-based activities that empower them, in the sense of providing them with the social reassuring context for living a life they value – and perhaps even to push structures.

3.3.8 Interdiscursive link: Consumption, Sustainability and Structures

8. Finding a place in the big whole

Some participants made active use of the term ‘structure’, for example P2, P9 and P10, while others touched upon social structures implicitly. P2 called directly for “*push[ing] structures*” (P2), as we have seen above, because the ultimate goal to him was “*structural change*” (P2). While P7-P8, talking about hygiene, gave an implicit account of social structures as *social imaginaries* people have about the social world and social life (Taylor, 2004):

P8: I mean there is both the perfume that gives this feeling of cleanliness¹⁴, and the color I believe. E: The color? P8: I mean on cleaning products it’s usually blue. Because it symbolizes cleanliness [...] P7: There is a bit of brainwashing [...]. And there is this fear of germs [...]. There is this image that they are just terrible (P7-P8).

P10 explicitly and continually made use of the term ‘structure’, depicting a certain “*value-charged world*” (Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen, & Karlsson, 2002 p. 38), that of capitalist society with its own conceptualizations of “*good and evil*” (Danermark et al., 2002 p. 38). As P10 himself puts it:

there are so many of our social structures in society that are built around capitalist self-utility rationales (P10).

Social structures and imaginaries, and their appertaining values, were especially important to participants when they sought to position themselves within a broad context, that is when they explained their everyday activities, commitments and aspirations they drew, deliberately or not, on what they took to be the fundamental building blocks of society.

¹⁴ “Renlighedsfølelse”

3.3.9 The discourse practice

The following conceptual framework or *formula* is an ethical understanding of the current discourse practice of sustainable lifestyles in urban Denmark. Drawing on each sociological elaboration and the eight interdiscursive links (1-8), it sums up the discourse practice and is the answer to RQ1.

The ethical lifestyle formula

Individuals/families with environmental aspirations explain and interpret themselves (see figure 3):

based on a sense of *rightness* (4) they have about the way they *perceive themselves* (2) and the *things that drives them* (3), which *matters to them* (5) by *choice* (or not) (6), because it is situated within a *social context* (1), (likely) based in a *community* (7), and under influence of certain *social structures* (8). See figure 3.

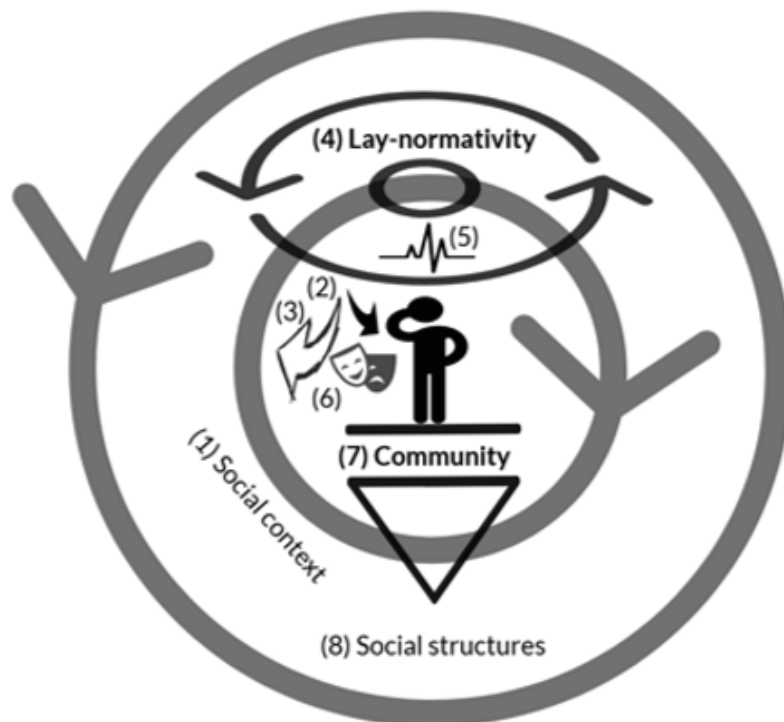


Figure 3: Conceptualization of the formula for understanding the existential situation of a participant in relation to ethical conditions and possibilities for a sustainable lifestyle. Formula elements (1)-(8) are illustrated in the figure. (Own illustration).

Each element (1-8) regards the existential depth and social width of lifestyles. That means they have *subjectively significant* value for participants and also *sociocultural relevance* for researchers. The argument is that *meeting people where they are* as a means of fostering sustainable lifestyles in a democratic and appealing way requires stimulation of some or all of these elements of the discourse practice.

All elements of the formula but especially (1), (4), (6), (7) and of course (8) raise the question of sustainable lifestyles as social practices (see e.g. Gross & Heinrichs, 2009 p. 224) – and invite to the formulation of the next RQ:

RQ2:

What social practice underpins the discourse practice of sustainable lifestyles and consumption, and how can sustainable lifestyles challenge the social practice's ethical foundations?

To close in on an answer to RQ2, and to elaborate on the systemic relevance of lifestyles found especially (1), (4), (6), (7) and (8), we approach the third dimension of the CDA.

3.4 The third dimension: an external link to the philosophy of growth

Personal experience is shaped not alone by the discourse practice but by social practice as well (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002 p. 64). By what can be called "*impersonal, objective social conditions*" of society (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006 p. 489-90), that have "*various orientations - economic, political, cultural, ideological*" (Fairclough, 1992 p. 66).

These underlying conditions and their orientations can be structural lock-in mechanisms supporting conventional consumer lifestyles and/or contain the seeds for future perhaps sustainable ones (Berkhout, Leach, & Scoones, 2003; Geels, 2011; Munch et al., 2008; Schneider, Kallis, & Martinez-Alier, 2010). As a sort of "*intransitive referent*" of social life (Chouliaraki, 2002, p. 83), they exercise constitutive influence on the individual's beliefs, values and actions, i.e. on (4) lay-normativity which strongly influence (2), (3), (5) and (6) in the figure - without the individual (usually) being aware of it.

This thesis investigates the social practice of the discourse practice *as capitalism*. Capitalism is a historically complex and unfolding economic, political (Callinicos, 2007), cultural (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002), and even

ecological event (Malm, 2016). As such, all these facets continue to stimulate and constitute lifestyles and consumption practices embedded in capitalism (Cohen et al., 2017).

However, this thesis approaches capitalism not on all these grounds, but from *an ethical perspective* (Rosa, 1998). It pays specific attention to capitalism's ethical foundations (see RQ2) or ideological orientation with significance for individual and social flourishing and prosperity – for the idea of 'the good life' in contemporary consumer society.

Capitalism as ideology, or what Brinkmann (2014) calls the *dominating philosophy of growth*, will be explored in the following inspired by widely read Danish scholar Svend Brinkmann (2014, 2016, 2017).

3.4.1 Brinkmann's critique

In contemporary Danish consumer society, the *philosophy of growth* dominates not alone the political and economic spheres – but the socio-psychological one as well (Brinkmann, 2014 p. 133-134, 2017).

Consequently, human flourishing is conceived through the lens of unfettered self-development, self-enactment and realization of one's inner potentials (Brinkmann, 2014). Today the good citizen is someone that does not settle with what one has, but categorically seeks to acquire always new and more stuff. In Brinkmann's words:

The good citizen is the consuming, self-transcending, limitless and incessantly aspiring human (Brinkmann, 2017 p. 26)¹⁵.

From Brinkmann's pragmatics point of view, this is a problem for the prospects of a progressive and sustainable development of a society causing ecological instability and overconsumption (Brinkmann, 2017).

Three underlying and interconnected societal processes loaded with the philosophy of growth drive these current unsustainable trends of consumer society and lifestyles in Denmark (Brinkmann, 2014, 2016, 2017).

These are:

- 1) Hedonism

¹⁵ "I dag er den gode borger det forbrugende, selvoverskridende, grænseløse og evigt stræbende menneske." (Brinkmann, 2017 p. 26). My translation.

- 2) Instrumentalization
- 3) Individualization

Hedonism

Hedonism, according to Brinkmann (2016), is the widespread subjectivist idea that existential and social meaning of life can be measured or at least understood as subjective experience of happiness and pleasure (p. 31). It is the idea that social and existential questions regarding value, worth, quality and meaning are predominantly individual concerns (Brinkmann, 2016 p. 49). In other words, the self not objective or collective traditions, institutions and circumstances, or other people and the planet for that matter, is the source of meaning and existential purpose (Brinkmann, 2016 p. 49 and p. 182). As a consequence, social life in Danish consumer society has little cohesion, and it is difficult to persuade individuals to do anything for others if it would not benefit themselves (Brinkmann, 2017).

The hedonistic self derives his moral rationales for living first and foremost for himself from the second underlying societal process, the one of *instrumentalization* (Brinkmann, 2016, 2017).

Instrumentalization

The dominant way of ascribing value to things in a hedonistic culture is the ideology of instrumentalization (Brinkmann, 2016). Which means things and other people are valued based on their properties as *means* of or *instruments* for achieving personal ends – and not as something that have inherent value and is worth pursuing in themselves (Brinkmann, 2016).

This is an unfortunate ideological development, according to Brinkmann (2017), because if everything and everyone, including lifestyle change for mitigation purposes, is perceived as an instrument for personal happiness and pleasure, then reflections about value-dimensions and what needs to be done for its own sake are lost in both individual and social life (p. 95). Focusing on the means only will erode the social fabric around “*common human, existential, moral matters*”¹⁶ (Brinkmann, 2016 p. 180) such as climate change mitigation and other intersubjective or collective issues.

¹⁶ “[...] fælles menneskelige, eksistentielle og moralske anliggender”. Own Translation.

Individualization

Hedonism and instrumentalization build on the societal process of *individualization*. Individualization is the philosophical conviction that the individual has appropriated the central place of the universe (Callinicos, 2007). Today, according to Brinkmann, this kind of enlightenment individualization has turned into a late-modern capitalist version, where the individual as a self-regarding consumer is the center of all social activity and the measurement of all things (Brinkmann, 2016, p. 31).

The hedonist and instrumentalist distortion of individualism “let[s] the individual find “biographical solutions” to “systemic contradictions”.”¹⁷ (Ulrich Beck quoted in Brinkmann, 2017 p. 30). Participants mentioned this type of de-politization above (see e.g. 3.3.7). We might add with Brinkmann that political consequences of this individualization is pro-social in-capabilities and a poor understanding of collective action for the sake of some common good, such as climate change mitigation (Brinkmann, 2017 p. 132).

3.4.2 Concluding from social practice

Lifestyles are *social-cultural* (see e.g. 3.3.4) and *social-material* (see 2.2) as we have seen in the previous line of argumentation. At this point in the research, it should be possible to add to the third field, namely the *social-institutional* element of lifestyle (see 1.2.2) – though still in a fairly abstract way.

Based in structural domains of the formula ((8) but also (1), (4), (6) and (7)), and Brinkmann’s socio-psychological contribution, the addition would also be the answer to the first element of RQ2 of what social practice underpins the discourse practice. My claim is:

Lifestyles are impregnated by the dominant ideology of growth of capitalist consumer society in a more or less institutionalized form.

Consequently, if Brinkmann is right that hedonism, instrumentalization and individualization are underlying societal drivers of lifestyles, and that they alter the social fabric for collective action - as it was already hinted at in the discourse practice (see e.g. 3.3.2 and 3.3.3) - then an ethical reassessment of the ideological notion of the good life for individuals is necessary.

¹⁷ “[...] lade individet finde “biografiske løsninger” på “systemiske modsætninger”. ”. Own translation.

Such a reassessment ought to take place at both discourse and social practice levels, because substantial social change ultimately requires change at the level of social practice (Fairclough, 2012). Based on these insights, and emphasizing the importance of structural components, the point of the formula would then be:

To mobilize individuals *for a collective effort for systemic solutions to systemic problems.*

Moving forward means reflecting upon the possibilities for framing sustainable lifestyles as collective efforts.

3.5 An ethical formula for sustainable lifestyles as the prism of social change

My CDA amounts to the proposition that fostering sustainable lifestyles requires a multilevel understanding of individuals' perspectives: a flair for *meeting people where they are, and beginning there*. A focus on ethics has helped provide existential depth and social width to that understanding.

At this point in the research, this understanding must be given more social propensity and transformative faculty. I contend it is necessary to formulate an 1) *ethical alternative* that coincides with 2) a move *from ethics to politics* in the old Aristotelian way (Aristotle, 2003a, 2003b), i.e. scaling up the ethical and somewhat individual lifestyle activity to a type of social-political activity capable of evaluating and ultimately transforming social structures. The ethics-as-politics parole is, I contend:

Changing yourself coincide with practices that change society.

This analytical maneuver of outlining the contours of an alternative ethical model will both be the answer to the second dimension of RQ2, how sustainable lifestyle change can challenge the social practice's ethical foundations, and be the CDA's final phase return to the level of individuals as an attempted explanatory solution-oriented approach.

3.5.1 An alternative ethical model

Brinkmann's suggested solution is based in a particular philosophical anthropology: namely the idea that the human is first and foremost a social being (Brinkmann, 2014, 2016, 2017). The foundation for existential meaning is bound to common elements of social life and circumstances, social obligations and social activities – not introspection and self-sufficiency (Brinkmann, 2016). Therefore, an alternative ethical model for human flourishing should be developed to realize and nurture the social potential of humans as relational,

community-seeking beings (Brinkmann, 2017 p. 68). This potential is notoriously suppressed in capitalist society (Kathryn Dean in Brenton & Craib, 2011).

Social circumstances are always already loaded with values and morality – even at the level of the individual, in lay-normativity etc., as we have seen above (see 3.3.4), the social context etc. (see 3.3.1). In one's meeting with a world full of values, one is asked to justify one's "*commitments, identities and ways of life*" (Sayer, 2004 p. 4), one's desires and aspirations, and hence the consequences one's actions have for others and the environment. According to Brinkmann (2016), this meeting allows for the social nature of the self-critical and reflexive human to be born (p. 79). It is the birth of the (social-moral) subject.

The single most important virtue for achieving a moral life in our times of overconsumption and climate change, as Brinkmann pictures it, is the art of self-restraint (Brinkmann, 2017). The skill of being able to miss out or settle with¹⁸ things, experiences, products, etc., is a central virtue for countering the societal processes leading to high-impact lifestyles.

An alternative ethics focusing on self-enactment through social-moral character building activities can generate:

an account of the 'good life' [that] provides a contrast with the individualizing and depoliticizing character of the processes through which individual selves are formed under capitalism (Brenton & Craib, 2011 p. 214).

Such an account of the good life is not deprived of individual pleasures and happiness. Quite the contrary. Subjectively significant elements mentioned above (see 3.3.5) are stimulated, however, in ways different from the hedonistic oriented approach to social and individual life. In short, well-being is born out of other things than individual preference and/or ascetic duty. Well-being – much like Sen's definition – is achieved as self-respect and a sense of fulfillment from doing good, i.e. doing something for others and partaking in a (morally-oriented) community. In other words, to do the good for the sake of others and the world is to do good to oneself.

Re-shaping one's life in accordance with self-restraint is something the individual under current social conditions cannot achieve singlehandedly (Brinkmann, 2016). That is why an alternative and critical ethical approach to lifestyles would be about social character building (Roth, 2005). That is, to help individuals

¹⁸ The literal meaning of "*Gā glip*", the title of his book (Brinkmann, 2017).

conceive of their moral responsibility and social position in the world, we would have to *equip them* with capabilities for acting on and choosing on moral grounds in that regard.

Therefore, supportive social arrangements, such as community-based organizations and social rituals, are necessary for the new culture to dissolve and such moral acts manifest in the daily lives of individuals (Brinkmann, 2016, 2017).

3.5.2. Socially oriented lifestyles

In effect, Brinkmann argues for a social reassuring contexts for sustainable lifestyles, much like interview participants and the discourse practice above (see e.g. 3.3.7). I contend the identification of firstly an underdetermined social ‘nature’, and secondly the need for social arraignment to stimulate and nurture such a ‘nature’ under capitalism, is an important insight for sustainability science. In sum: Sustainable lifestyles should be *socially oriented* – for their own sake, for others and for the sake of the environment.

Based on these rationales, I contend, the most important value claim about a potential ethics-as-politics solution is:

Sustainable lifestyles – if they are framed through an ethical alternative that understands individuals as moral-relational beings, and accompanied by social arrangements that equip individuals to carry out this understanding in practices – can drive social change for sustainability in urban Denmark.

The point is that, ideally, sustainable lifestyles coincide with outer transformation of consumer society. What this means I discuss in the following.

4. Discussion

4.1 The coincidence of inner and outer transformations

All in all, the formula should be understood as an 1) emerging *discourse practice* that can challenge 2) a *social practice* through 3) an *alternative ethics-as-politics* strategy. It is an attempt to comprehend sustainable lifestyles as *an opening* of (new) sources for i) existential fulfillment, ways of life and a from-individual-to-

social orientation of well-being and responsibility, and ultimately ii) new sources for communicating sustainable development on individual and structural levels.

The social ‘nature’ of lifestyles is crucial for the formula, its systemic relevance and hence its potential as a common enabling factor for mitigation responses (IPCC, 2014). As such, one of the main findings of this thesis is that:

Sustainable lifestyles has to have a deliberate social-orientation

In light of climate change, I maintain, sustainable lifestyles can be a deep and meaningful *inner transformation* that coincide with and finds its existential basis in *outer transformation* of discourse and social practices that script for overconsumption, individualization etc.¹⁹ (see figure 4).

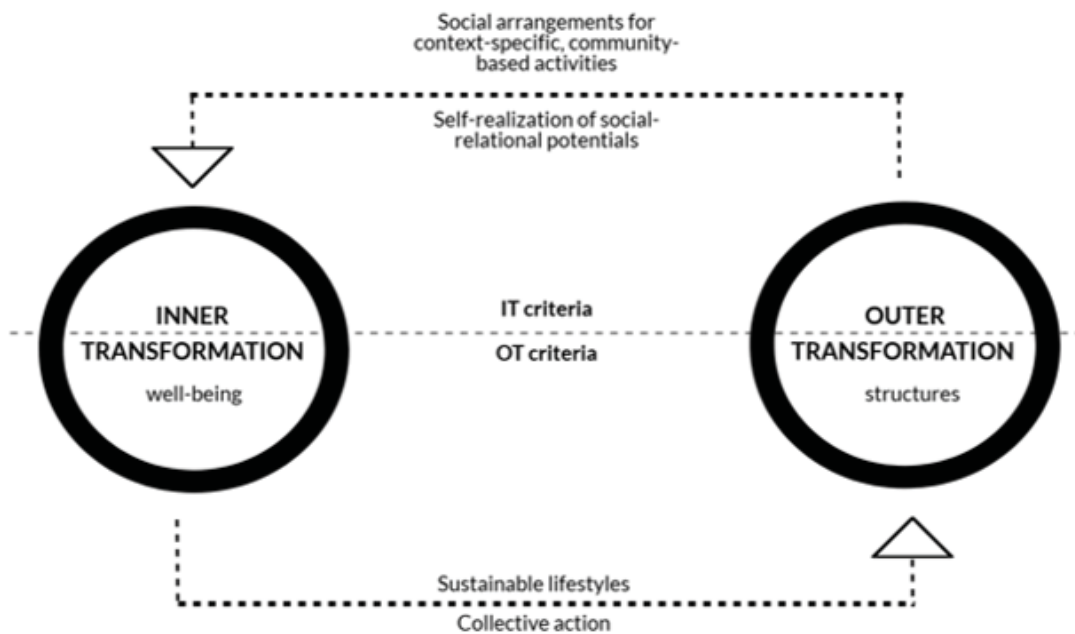


Figure 4: Conceptualization of the dynamics of an ethics-as-politics strategy for fostering sustainable lifestyles as a step along the way of transforming consumer society structures. Sustainable inner transformation is well-being – but a particular type of well-being generated by realization of the underdetermined *human social ‘nature’*. This can be done through proper *social arrangements*. These two are criteria for inner transformation of lifestyles. Sustainable lifestyles that are socially oriented and morally loaded are expected to be the outcome on such inner transformation. These *sustainable lifestyles* would channel their transformative energy through another type of social arrangements, namely movements or organizations performing *collective action* for structural change. These two are outer transformation criteria. As such, sustainable lifestyles can act collectively to transform outer circumstances, i.e. societal structures of consumer society. (Own illustration).

¹⁹ See e.g. Cindy Isenhour in Cohen, Brown, & Vergragt, 2017, chapter 7.

A strategy for fostering such lifestyles (Figure 4) could facilitate social arrangements that introduce possibilities for realizing one's social-relational potentials into the life-context of individuals. These potentials are e.g. moral responsibility, reduced consumption and social contributions. This would foster socially-oriented lifestyles that engage in collective action for transformation of ideological structures of consumer society (see figure 4).

According to this ethical logic, there are a couple of criteria for the social and systemic enactment of sustainable lifestyles, in relation to both social arrangements and collective action. These criteria are further discussed in the following.

4.1.1 Social criteria for sustainable lifestyles: communal support and collective action participation

A useful concept for providing lifestyles with a social orientation is Paul Stern's (2000) notion, briefly mentioned above, *environmentally significant behaviors*. These behaviors involve private sphere activities such as consumption and household management. But most relevantly, they combine private sphere behaviors with public sphere activities such as *activism, non-activist public-sphere behaviors* and *behaviors in organizations* (Stern, 2000). Under this latter rubric of behaviors, the systemic relevance of lifestyles can be more adequately defined.

Taken in and off themselves, individual lifestyle choice and actions' contribution to sustainability is miniscule (Mont et al., 2013). Nevertheless, lifestyles come to play a significant role in sustainable development, I argue, *if* they follow two socially determined criteria for activity in the public sphere:

The first criteria for the environmentally significant public behavior of lifestyles is 1) the *supportive role* of local community-based lifestyle activity. The second is 2) *activist or non-activist participation* in public sphere arrangements for structural change for sustainability, such as social movements or other civil society organizations.

- 1) Based on the fact that sustainable lifestyles are difficult to perform singlehandedly, as illustrated above (see e.g. 3.3.2 and 3.5.1), the idea of the *supportive role* of lifestyles is that social arrangements on a local scale be designed to facilitate a communal arena within which individuals with environmental aspirations can find social and moral relief. That is, relief from social norms, practical

circumstances, bad practices etc. imitating unsustainability in their everyday lives. This type of supportive lifestyle behavior aim at both reduced consumption acts *themselves*, while also acting as *part of communal support for others* that seek to achieve the same.

- 2) Building on 1), sustainable lifestyles ought to be *deliberate* attempts of social transformative activity, seeking to transform structures. This type of social activity is supposed to transcend individuality and the local community basis, and help individuals engage in a bigger and more powerful movement changing economic and political unsustainable circumstances.

The argument put forward acknowledges the fact that cultural change is not sufficient for driving sustainable development in itself (Cohen, Brown, & Vergragt, 2017, conclusion). Nevertheless – and this is the main point of the thesis – sociocultural change, i.e. ethical change on individual and sociocultural levels, can drive social transformative activity. Such activity is a manifestation of an alternative social practice, based in reduced consumption behaviors and public sphere transformative activities. Its realization would be radical (i.e. anti-capitalist) and will have substantial ramifications for Danish consumer society's current economic and political systems.

4.2 Further research

As I see it, from here on there are two interconnected research pathways for the ethics-as-politics formula:

- 1) Using the formula as a *Danish practice and transition theory approach* to individuals/families with environmental aspirations (see 4.2.1).
- 2) Analytically elaborating the formula as *an ideology-critique* of consumer capitalism (see (4.2.2).

4.2.1 The ethical formula as a Danish practice and transition theory approach

The (1) traditional *practice theory* approach draws on social disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychology etc., to comprehend lifestyle consumption as a complex sociocultural phenomenon (Røpke, 2009). It argues that *behavior change campaigns* should appreciate the social context and daily practice of individuals (Halkier, 2013).

Additionally, (2) *Transition management* theory is a prominent sustainability science research agenda aiming at systems change through combined efforts on cultural, economic, technological and political levels of society (Frantzeskaki, Loorbach, & Meadowcroft, 2012).

Combining the two around the ethics-as-politics approach means (1) asking ethical questions about daily practices and their social contexts, and (2) investigating how these current practices can be framed for transition.

The combined method have a couple of advantages:

- i) As a theory about life practices with specific focus on social transition, the ethics-as-politics formula would seek to enhance some analytical foci found already within transition management. For example generating context-specific knowledge about lay-normativity, i.e. what it is that matters to people in a given social context and gives them a sense of rightness about what they do, would complement the transition management focus on “*fulfillment of social needs*” (Raven, Bosch, & Weterings, 2010, abstract) and “*quality of life*” (Spangenberg, 2011, p. 275) in a social and sustainable way.
- ii) Lifestyles understood as a life practice synergy of inner and outer transformations can act as a micro-niche activity evolving into a structurally relevant *operational unit* for transition management in the city (Nevens, Frantzeskaki, Gorissen, & Loorbach, 2013).
- iii) Social arrangements or proper *transition arenas* in the city (Rotmans & Loorbach, 2009) could be designed and implemented to support the types of socially-oriented, environmentally significant behaviors for reduced consumption discussed above.
- iv) Transition arena purposes are to include stakeholders, including residents, into the transition process based on premises of *knowledge co-creation, participation and dialog* (Frantzeskaki & Kabisch, 2015). This thesis has been built on similar principal grounds, that meeting people where they is key, both in analytical, strategical and democratic terms.
- v) As a Danish practice and transition theory, the formula could contribute to a new “*theoretical paradigm*” (Mont, Neuvonen, & Lähteenoja, 2014 p. 30) for human and environmental flourishing, relevant for practically oriented strategies for mitigation responses in urban areas (Roorda, Frantzeskaki, Loorbach, Steenbergen, & Wittmayer, 2012).

4.2.2 Ideology-critique

Because some of the mechanisms behind lifestyles identified above are both rather opaque by nature and inadequate for fostering sustainable lifestyles, the second research pathway would be a proper and systemic

ideology-critique of consumer capitalism's social relations, and the sociocultural beliefs or ideologies that sustain them (Hartwig, 2007, p. 82).

Such an analysis would deal emphatically with lifestyles' reproductive function. The function of reproducing "*unacknowledged conditions*" (Bhaskar, 2011 p. 4), possibly maintaining particular local and even global power relations, obscuring alternatives such as reduced consumption initiatives (Bradshaw & Zwick, 2016; Carrington, Zwick, & Neville, 2016). The ideology-critique would investigate whether such ideological circumstances naturalize certain social and/or environmental relations into norms and conventions (Fairclough, 1992 pp. 87), and even into ideological bases for choosing how to live one's life.

4.3 Scope and limitations

One of the things that ought to be done with the knowledge acquired is a concrete return to individuals and their everyday practices. A possible theoretical foundation for such return was outlined above (see 4.2.1), but I would have liked to return to the participants myself, or tested the viability of my ideas with others in similar situations. In any case, such a concrete reflective move is not part of this thesis.

The topic of this thesis has some serious political and economic undertones. Lifestyles and consumption are for example major enabling factors of the political economy in Denmark. As I do not analyze nor discuss the direct political and economic functions of lifestyles, to realize the full potential of this thesis' contribution, my research should seek out the company of other disciplines, such as ecological economics, politics etc.

Additionally, it was not possible for me to measure participants' actual footprints (see appendix 7). A proper and thorough interdisciplinary research program could combine the qualitative knowledge produced in this thesis with quantitative research about individuals'/families' footprints (see e.g. Concito, 2017). Such a research might provide a more interdisciplinary but not necessarily a more transdisciplinary account of the complex relation between cultural dispositions and environmental impacts.

Lastly, even though this thesis was not build on any particular ethical tradition at the outset, admittedly, some virtue ethics inclinations were developed by the researcher as the research progressed.

4.4 Contribution to sustainability science

This thesis sheds light on sociocultural and normative layers of lifestyles in Danish urban consumer society. As such it makes a sociocultural, normative and ethical contribution to interdisciplinary research (Høyer & Naess, 2008), seeking to foster sustainable lifestyles in urban areas (e.g. Roorda, Frantzeskaki, Loorbach, Steenbergen, & Wittmayer, 2012). Technological advancement, industrial and household efficiency etc., is not sufficient means in themselves and must be accompanied by behavioral change (i.e. agency) (IPCC, 2014). This thesis argues that behavioral change and agency is relevant for sustainable development in affluent societies, *insofar this agency is enacted through social nets of collective actions.*

Other affluent consumer societies afflicted by attitude-behavior gaps, could approach transition process participants and ask similar RQs. It would result in an ethical diagnosis of current discourse and social practice conditions and possibilities for lifestyles, which is knowledge for social change strategies.

5. Conclusion

This thesis rests on the premise that Danish citizen-consumers, we have to reduce footprints from high-impact lifestyles. It argues that sustainable development in an affluent country like Denmark involves asking critical ethical questions about sufficiency and reduced consumption, or *how much is enough to live well?*

This thesis applies a critical discourse analysis (CDA) to explore individual perspectives. It develops a conceptual framework (the ethics-as-politics formula) for raising these questions in a Danish urban context, so that they *make sense to individuals and participants in transition processes*, and so that *sustainable lifestyle change is framed as a public sphere activity*. The formula establishes ethical-conceptual grounds for understanding both *the current ethical conditions for lifestyles*, and the possibilities for *communicating sustainable lifestyle change in a subjectively significant, appealing and relevant form* in a Danish urban context.

The main point of the argument is to place sustainable lifestyles within the context of social transformation of affluent consumer society. Therefore, the thesis argues for a coincidence between inner and outer transformations, so that sustainable lifestyles matter in a dual sense. They matter 1) to individuals because they have subjectively significant relevance, i.e. existential and moral value, and 2) to the environment because they are combined private and public spheres activities for reduced consumption. The thesis raises and discusses two criteria for the social enactment of lifestyles as public sphere activities for social change. These are *communal support* and *activist/non-activist participation* in environmental movements, organizations etc.

The ethics-as-politics formula is a platform for further practice and transition research that seek to *meet people where they are and begin there*. For instance could the formula be utilized as a *Danish practice and transition theory approach* and/or an *ideology-critique* of consumer capitalism.

The purpose of introducing ethics was to create an opening at the level of participants of a socially meaningful and livable alternative for fulfillment of sustainability criteria. It is our duty as sustainability scientists to approach participants with knowledge about current conditions and possibilities for such openings of existential situations to change for the betterment of people and the environment. As such, ethics is not only a tool for evaluating participants' life practices. It is also a tool for evaluating sustainability scientists' flair for meeting people where they are and beginning there with change that matters.

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Appendix 2

Statistical Co-Occurrence. Shows the statistical correlation between codes. Codes are both linguistic features (LF) and genres, discourses and narratives. Own Figure (www.dedoose.com).

Codes	Codes													Totals	
	LF: Social Identity	LF: Social Relations	LF: Versions of Reality	Genre, Discourse, Narrative	Consumption	Sustainability	Unsustainability	Individuality	Choice	Change	Morality	Well-being	Justification		Community
LF: Social Identity		89	104	131	82	70	41	51	39	59	46	38	31	26	807
LF: Social Relations	89		84	104	63	54	35	44	36	49	39	32	33	22	684
LF: Versions of Reality	104	84		121	78	66	43	47	34	58	43	38	33	29	778
Genre, Discourse, Narrative	131	104	121		107	85	56	59	48	70	57	47	40	34	959
Consumption	82	63	78	107		64	41	45	33	52	42	35	30	24	696
Sustainability	70	54	66	85	64		27	33	25	50	33	24	23	21	575
Unsustainability	41	35	43	56	41	27		24	18	20	23	17	15	7	367
Individuality	51	44	47	59	45	33	24		23	36	26	22	21	12	443
Choice	39	36	34	48	33	25	18	23		15	21	23	16	10	341
Change	59	49	58	70	52	50	20	36	15		30	16	22	20	497
Morality	46	39	43	57	42	33	23	26	21	30		24	19	12	415
Well-being	38	32	38	47	35	24	17	22	23	16	24		19	13	348
Justification	31	33	33	40	30	23	15	21	16	22	19	19		5	307
Community	26	22	29	34	24	21	7	12	10	20	12	13	5		235
Totals	807	684	778	959	696	575	367	443	341	497	415	348	307	235	

Appendix 3

Code Application Model. Shows application and distribution of linguistic features (LF), genres, discourses and narratives (GDNs) on the level of participants. Own Table. (www.dedoose.com)

Media	Codes													Totals	
	LF: Social Identity	LF: Social Relations	LF: Versions of Reality	Genre, Discourse, Narrative	Consumption	Sustainability	Unsustainability	Individuality	Choice	Change	Morality	Well-being	Justification		Community
Participant 10	21	16	18	25	17	17	7	9	7	18	14	8	10	9	196
Participant 9	18	8	15	22	17	7	4	5	7	6	8	5		10	132
Participant 7-8	13	12	11	15	8	4	6	6	5	5	2	7	11		105
Participant 6	13	12	11	14	9	4	6	7	4	2	4	3	2	2	93
Participant 5	15	17	15	23	15	18	6	5	8	9	11	9	3	6	160
Participant 3-4	14	11	14	18	17	11	11	11	5	9	8	9	7	2	147
Participant 2	22	19	21	31	15	7	10	7	8	6	6	4	1	5	162
Participant 1	19	11	18	19	9	17	6	9	4	15	4	2	6		139
Totals	135	106	123	167	107	85	56	59	48	70	57	47	40	34	

Appendix 4

Table 1a: The interviews: Participants' information

Participants	Age	Sex	Status	Household-form	Children	Environmental aspiration
P1	26	M	Student	Apartment – Single	No	Yes
P2	26	M	Student	Apartment – Collective	No	Yes
P3-P4	39-42	M-W	Employed/Employed	House – Family	Yes	Yes
P5	29	W	Employed	Apartment - Single	No	Yes
P6	78	M	Pension	Apartment – Single	Yes	Yes
P7-P8	35-34	M-W	Employed/Parental Leave	Apartment – Family	Almost	Yes
P9	25	M	Student	Apartment – Two	No	Yes
P10	35	M	Employed	Apartment – Collective	No	Yes

Appendix 5

Table 1b: The interviews: Transcript information

Total interviews	Total participants	Total Page Nr	Coded Excerpts	Emergent Codes in text analysis	Code applications in text analysis
8	10	90 (38.750 words).	181	156	2954

Appendix 6

I will not go into detail with the difference between numbers, their methods, measurements, variables, etc., or the question of how the numbers compare and relate to each other. My intention is to move forward with the presumption that lifestyles are causing problematically high carbon footprints, based on the studies Concito have conducted in the past to the present. For a full explanation of Concito's research in general and their combined methods approach to CO₂eq emissions in particular (the LCA and input/output methods), see Concito (2017, pp. 10).

Appendix 7

The following research, therefore, is qualitative, not quantitative. Which means that because I do not measure the participants' personal footprints, I cannot claim a direct causal link between attitudes and behaviors in terms of footprints. This would have given the research quantitative precision, but unfortunately, such combined methods approach was not possible. Meanwhile, what I can do is claim a correlation between environmental attitudes and self-perceived (un)sustainability in qualitative terms. For example what deeds are believed to be most sustainable, i.e. have the lowest impact, and what are not – and how do these deeds function, socioculturally speaking, in individuals/families daily lives?

Appendix 8

Theoretical saturation was achieved to some degree, but not completely. The in-depth interview focus, combined with ethical and cultural inquiries, meant that qualified illustration was prioritized over generalization. Theoretical saturation is still important of course, especially for validation of data and replication of results, and also for this study.

Appendix 9

See next page

INTERVIEW GUIDE – FINAL VERSION. FEB 6TH 2018

Alder: _____ EN: "age"

"Køn": _____ EN: "gender"

Bopæl: _____ EN: "household/house-form"

Beskæftigelse: _____ EN: "employment"

Uddannelse: _____ EN: "education"

En fritidsinteresse eller to: _____ EN: "one or two hobbies"

Ekspert

"Interview-undersøgelsen handler om at give lyd til folks personlige beretninger om hvordan tidens krav om bæredygtighed eventuelt påvirker deres hverdag og deres liv. På den måde er det dig der er ekspert (på dit liv). Jeg er glad for for min del at få lov til at høre dig dele dine oplevelser, holdninger og perspektiver" EN: "The interview survey is about giving voice to people's personal stories about how the awareness/demand of our times about sustainability might influence one's daily life and life in general. This means in a way that you are the expert here (on your life). I am glad to get to hear about your experiences, opinions and perspectives"

Opmærk -
somhed

- **Oplever du at der er en øget opmærksomhed omkring bæredygtighed i samfundet? - Giv gerne eksempler** EN: "Do you experience an increased awareness about sustainability in society? – give examples"
- **Hvordan påvirker den øgede opmærksomhed dig? - Giv gerne eksempler** EN: "How does an increased awareness affect you? – give examples"
- **(Eller: Hvad tænker du bæredygtighed er?)** EN: "(Or: What do you take sustainability to be?)"

Lyst

Mulighed

- **Har du lyst til at leve et mere bæredygtigt liv? - Hvorfor?** EN: "Do you want to live more sustainably? – Why?"
- **(Eller: oplever du det mere som pligt?)** EN: "(Or: Do you experience it as a duty or plight?)"
- **Har du mulighed for at leve et mere bæredygtigt liv?** EN: "Do you have the possibilities to live a more sustainable life?"
- **Har det påvirket dine personlige forbrugsvaner?** EN: "Has it affected your personal consumption habits?"
- **Giv eksempler** EN: "Give examples"

Lyst

Vanskelig

Det gode liv

- **Hvor i din hverdag har du lyst til men oplever vanskeligheder ved at leve et mere bæredygtigt liv? – Giv gerne eksempler?** EN: "Where in your daily life do you want to but experience difficulties with living a more sustainable life? – give examples"
- **Hvorfor lige dér? – Hvorfor er det vanskeligt?** EN: "Why there? – Why is it difficult?"
- **Har det påvirket dine personlige forbrugsvaner?** EN: "Has that affected your personal consumption habits?"

- **Et lidt filosofisk spørgsmål: Hvad er "det gode liv" for dig? (Hjælp: Med andre ord; hvad finder du kært og vil gerne bevare eller forstærke? Man kan sige: "Hvad er du glad for"? – "Hvad er det der betyder noget for dig?")** EN: "Here comes a little philosophical question: What is "the good life" for you? (Help: What do you hold dear, and want to preserve and enhance? One can say "What do you value?" – "What means something to you?")"
- **Kommer kravet om bæredygtighed somme tider i konflikt med de ting?** EN: "Does the demand/awareness about sustainability come into conflict with those things sometimes?"
- **Hvad kan man gøre ved det? - hvis ens gode liv afhænger af visse u-bæredygtige gerninger og visse, høje materielle standarder?**
 - **Note til interview: Diskuter forholdet mellem materielle og immaterielle goder.** EN: "What can you do about it? – If one's good life depends on certain not so sustainable deeds and certain high-level material standards? – Note to interview: Discuss the relation between material and immaterial goods"
- **Kan det bæredygtige liv være det nye gode liv? Hvorfor / Hvordan?** EN: "Do you think the sustainable life can be the good life? Why / how?"

Eventuelt – noget du vil indskyde her mod slutningen? En observation, bemærkning, refleksion eller lignende? EN: "Anything you want to mention here toward the end? An observation, a comment, reflection or something like that?"