

DISSERTATIONES DE MEDIIS ET COMMUNICATIONIBUS
UNIVERSITATIS TARTUENSIS

DISSERTATIONES DE MEDIIS ET COMMUNICATIONIBUS
UNIVERSITATIS TARTUENSIS

3

**REPRESENTATIONS OF CONSUMER
CULTURE IN POST-SOVIET ESTONIA:
TRANSFORMATIONS AND TENSIONS**

MARGIT KELLER



TARTU UNIVERSITY
PRESS

Department of Journalism and Communications, University of Tartu, Estonia.

Dissertation is accepted for the commencement of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (in Media and Communications) on November 18 by the Doctoral Committee of the Board of Social Faculty, University of Tartu

Opponents: Professor Jukka Gronow, Uppsala University
 Associate Professor Ellu Saar, Tallinn Pedagogical University

Commencement: December 17, 2004

The publication of this dissertation is granted by the University of Tartu

Copyright Margit Keller, 2004

Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus
www.tyk.ut.ee
Tellimus nr. 536

CONTENTS

LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS	6
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	7
PREFACE	8
INTRODUCTION	11
I Socio-cultural Transformation: Development of Western Consumer Culture in Post-Soviet Estonia	11
Differences of the Soviet and Post-Soviet Consumer Culture of Estonia	11
Consumer Sovereignty.....	13
Representation of Transformation as the Object of Study: Development of Research Design and Methodology	16
Maturation of Consumer Culture: Aestheticization, Freedom and Distinction.....	18
II Socio-cultural Practices in Post-Soviet Estonia: Tensions between Subjects and Objects	21
Subjects and Objects in Consumer Culture	21
Shopping Malls and the Concept of <i>Šoppamine</i> : Research Design and Methodology	24
Tensions within the Western Consumer Culture of Present-Day Estonia against the Backdrop of Soviet Experience	26
Needs <i>versus</i> Desires	27
Freedom of Choice and the New Experience of Scarcity	31
Distinction: Consumption as a Means for Social Status Competition...	32
Discussion	39
Conclusions	45
REFERENCES	47
SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN	50
PUBLICATIONS	55
CURRICULUM VITAE	205

LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

This dissertation is based on the following original publications that will be referred to in the text by their respective Roman numerals.

- I** **Keller, M.** (2005, forthcoming). Freedom calling: telephony, mobility and consumption in post-socialist Estonia. Manuscript accepted for publication in *European Journal of Cultural Studies*.
- II** **Keller, M. & Vihalemm, T.** (2003). Return to the 'consuming West'. Young people's perceptions about the consumerization of Estonia. *Young*, 11(3), 195–215.
- III** **Keller, M. & Vihalemm, T.** (2004). Coping with consumer culture: elderly urban consumers in post-Soviet Estonia. Manuscript reviewed in *Trames*.
- IV** **Keller, M.** (2005, forthcoming). Needs, desires and the experience of scarcity: representations of recreational shopping in post-Soviet Estonia. Manuscript accepted for publication in *Journal of Consumer Culture*.
- V** **Keller, M. & Kalmus, V.** (2004) Konsumerismist tarbimisliku ükskõiksuseni: tarbimisorientatsioonid tänases Eestis. In V. Kalmus, M. Lauristin ja P. Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt (eds.) *Eesti elavik 21. sajandi algul: Ülevaade uurimuse Mina. Maailm. Meedia tulemustest*. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- VI** **Keller, M.** (2004). Tarbimiskultuuri pinged tänapäeva Eestis. *Akadeemia* 16(10), 2228–2253.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to the people who have contributed in one way or another to the long and complex process of completing this dissertation.

I am grateful to my supervisor, Professor Marju Lauristin, for encouragement, inspiration and constructive criticism. I also thank other colleagues at the Department of Journalism and Communications, among others my fellow doctoral students for thoughtful insights and interesting discussions. My tremendous gratitude goes to my good friend and colleague Triin Vihalemm for offering ideas and, above all, for being a productive partner and co-author in writing articles. I thank Veronika Kalmus for co-authoring Study V, and for performing statistical analysis. Professor Peeter Vihalemm has my profound thanks for always being there when help is needed.

I am also very grateful to Graham Murdock at the University of Loughborough for commenting on and helping me with almost all the earlier versions of my articles. Without him I would not be where I am now.

Comments and suggestions by Professor Peeter Torop, Veronika Kalmus, Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt and Ragne Kõuts, who read my manuscripts, were all gratefully received. I owe special thanks also to my Nordic colleagues, Göran Bolin and Turo-Kimmo Lehtonen, as well as to members of the ESA Network for the Sociology of Consumption (particular thanks to Pernille Hohnen) and Nordic Network of Consumer Culture for useful insights, inspiration and help. In addition, I am very thankful to Katrin Rahu, who was a good partner in every step of the laborious fieldwork of Study III and IV.

Last, but by no means least, I would like to thank my family – my husband Andrus, my mother Anne and my little son Jakob – for patience, support and, above all, unconditional love.

PREFACE

Consumer culture is a part of the everyday culture of almost every individual in any modern society. It involves seemingly trivial practices such as shopping in a mall and more fundamental choices such as selecting a school for one's offspring. Hence, consumer culture is deeply bound up with identity creation, values and social relations. It is a window for looking at important socio-cultural issues: individual freedom and constraint, social relations and power asymmetries.

Consumer culture as a field of study has grown and developed rapidly during recent decades. It can best be characterised as a junction of intersecting disciplines and methodologies. However, research on consumer culture in post-socialist societies is a young field of analysis, to the maturation of which the present work seeks to contribute.

The studies comprising this dissertation can be divided into two stages. The first stage – including Study I 'Freedom calling: telephony, mobility and consumption in post-socialist Estonia' and Study II (co-authored with Triin Vihalemm) 'Return to the "consuming West": young people's perceptions about the consumerization of Estonia' in this volume – focuses on representations of social transformation on a more macro-level. The second stage comprises micro-level analysis and investigates representations about socio-cultural practices of consumers as exemplified in Study III 'Coping with consumer culture: elderly urban consumers in post-Soviet Estonia' (co-authored with Triin Vihalemm) and IV 'Needs, desires and the experience of scarcity: representations of recreational shopping in post-Soviet Estonia'. This sequence is complemented by Study V (co-authored with Veronika Kalmus), an article summarising consumer culture-related findings of a representative survey, *Mina. Maailm. Meedia* conducted by the Department of Journalism and Communications of the University of Tartu.¹ Study VI is an overview containing no new empirical data meant for the Estonian language audience.

My dissertation is a result of work during the last 7 years (including my master's studies from 1997–1999), having been a long and complex process in itself. I by no means had the end of the road clearly in sight at all stages. As a result, this work inevitably bears the imprint of my own intellectual development over the years, perhaps being less of a neat whole than I imagined when I started. It is not a comprehensive and representative study of all social groups and all possible consumption representations and practices in today's

¹ The survey was carried out with the cooperation of the Department of Journalism and Communications and public opinion research firm *Faktum* from December 2002 to January 2003 within the target financed research project (No 1774) 'Formation of the 21st Century Media Society in Estonia'. 1470 respondents and 799 variables were involved in the survey.

Estonia. It is primarily a collection of insights into how consumer culture is represented by urban Estonians of various age groups, as well as advertising text. Also, the present work can be treated as a story of the development of Estonian post-Soviet consumer culture itself, told by a ‘participant observer’ who seeks to conceptualize, understand and analyze new phenomena – the ones most urgent, interesting and sometimes painful to the eye of the analyst as well as for the population at large – ‘in real time.’

Based on this, the main goals of the present dissertation can be viewed on two levels: macro and micro. **The macro-level objective of my work is to trace socio-cultural transformation in post-Soviet Estonia through the prism of consumer culture.** This large-scale goal can be divided into two more concrete themes:

- **first, I analyse how transformation from Soviet consumer culture into Western consumer culture is represented, that is how a fundamental change from one type of society to another can be conceptualised through the lens of consumption;**
- **next, I look at when and how changes and shifts have occurred within the post-Soviet consumer culture of Estonia.**

These goals are pursued primarily through the analysis of representation – that is print advertising texts of mobile telephony from 1991–2001 (Study I) and essays written by and interviews conducted with students focusing on their retrospectives on socio-cultural transformation from 1980s to the year 2002 (Study II). Under each theme, I focus, in turn, on:

- **the transformation of the meaning of freedom associated with consumer goods,**
- **the comparisons between today’s Estonia, the later Soviet period and the construct of the West.²**

² The ‘later Soviet period’ or the so-called ‘mature Socialist period’ refers to the period from the 1960s to 1991 (see Kõresaar, 2004). Even if the loose concept of ‘Soviet time’ is used in the texts I study, it primarily means this period. The 1940s and 1950s are not used as a point of reference in most cases. Throughout the work, the ‘West’ is deliberately used as a partly metaphoric term, that is the construct of ideologized meanings, recurrent in my empirical material, usually associated with Western and Northern Europe and occasionally the USA. I do not refer to any particular geographical locations specifically. Moreover, it is not my objective, nor is it possible based on the research I have conducted to determine whether Estonia has reached some ‘final station’ and its consumer culture is completely ‘westernized’ according to some normative principle. It is used as a label to distinguish it from the Soviet model and is illustrated in greater detail with the help of the empirical data of the studies presented below

The micro level goal of the dissertation is **to map the tensions of present-day Western consumer culture in Estonia against the background of the memories of the Soviet experience as they emerge in the self-representation of individual consumption practices and attitudes by consumers.** This is carried out through the analysis of interviews conducted in 2002 and 2003 (Study **III** and **IV**) and survey data collected in 2003 (Study **V**). Here the main lens through which the material is approached is shopping malls, as new and symbolically loaded loci in the Estonian context, as well as the equally connotation-rich concept of *šoppamine*. Under this theme I focus on **how consumers represent tensions between needs and desires, between freedom and constraint, between abundance and scarcity, as well as on how consumption is represented as a positioning device fostering social status competition.**

The structure of the introductory article is the following: in the first part, ‘Socio-cultural Transformation: Development of Western Consumer Culture in Post-Soviet Estonia’, I give an outline of the first stage of my research, comprising Studies **I** and **II** by delineating basic theoretical approaches that I have used in conducting these studies, describing research design and methodology as well as the main findings. The second part of the introductory article, ‘Socio-cultural Practices in Post-Soviet Estonia: Tensions between Subjects and Objects’, summarises the second stage of my research, embracing Studies **III–VI**. I first give a somewhat more abstract theoretical approach inspired by G. Simmel, after which I move to the main findings of each study. All of the findings are given an interpretation in the light of the theories that have influenced the analysis most at these stages. My work draws on various theories from sociology, anthropology and cultural studies. I find a multidisciplinary approach the only alternative in a situation where different research traditions give valuable insight into the phenomena under scrutiny. In the ‘Discussion’ part of the introductory article, I present a summary and a proposed theoretical conceptualization that is mainly based on the representations emerging from my studies, but which can also serve as a basis for further research. The introductory article ends with ‘Conclusions’ and is supplemented by a ‘Summary in Estonian’.

INTRODUCTION

I SOCIO-CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION: DEVELOPMENT OF WESTERN CONSUMER CULTURE IN POST-SOVIET ESTONIA

Differences between the Soviet and Post-Soviet Consumer Culture of Estonia

In order to define ‘consumer culture’ one needs to ground the discussion in a definition of ‘culture’ first. I proceed from the general framework of culture as ‘expressive forms’ that are both ‘the expression of and a vehicle for constructing meaningful social life’ (Slater & Tonkiss 2001: 150). This approach has often been called ‘anthropological’. Based on Slater & Tonkiss, a definition of ‘culture’ providing a backdrop for my research is the following: ‘...culture is the meaningfully patterned character of social life and action as glimpsed through the material and objective forms...that a society produces’ (2001: 150). Thus culture is a descriptive, not an evaluative, term. ‘Consumer culture’ is usually spoken of in the context of the modern West and defined by the concepts of market, commodities and free personal choice. One of the main starting points of the present research, however, is that a consumer culture existed in socialism – even if it was only a faux mirroring of the Western model (for a detailed definition, see below). Therefore I propose to use ‘consumer culture’ as meaning ‘culture of consumption’, a meaningful pattern of social life created and modified through the practices of consumption. Indeed, some authors (e.g. Gronow, 1997) use the term ‘culture of consumption’ to refer to the Soviet society in order to avoid contradiction in terms, that is, if ‘consumer culture’ is defined exclusively through free market and individual freedom of choice, there can be no such consumer culture under a Soviet regime. However, I propose that reserving the term ‘consumer culture’ only for the Western model and using ‘culture of consumption’ for the Soviet one would be confusing. I use the term ‘consumer culture’ preceded by a necessary adjective: Soviet and Western (the Estonian equivalents could be *nõukogude/nõukogudeaegne* and *läänelik*). This is mainly due to problems of translating the terms into Estonian. In Estonian, ‘consumer culture’ has been translated as both *tarbijakultuur* (literally ‘consumer culture’) and *tarbimiskultuur* (literally ‘consumption culture’) and these translations are used as synonyms in the Estonian language. To introduce a further term, ‘culture of consumption’ (literally *tarbimise kultuur*), would, I fear, cause confusion in the Estonian terminological landscape.

Today's experience of consumers in Estonia can be understood against the background of Soviet consumer culture: people either have direct memories of the Soviet era, or are at least to some extent influenced by representations of consumption under the Soviet regime by other people, mass media, films and books. The Western consumer culture model, to a large extent adopted by Estonia today, differs sharply from its Soviet counterpart.

Hence, a dialogue and conflict between different cultural experiences and different models of consumer culture are brought to the surface in my dissertation. Studies of consumer culture in a post-socialist society, where the capitalist or Western and socialist models are juxtaposed and opposed, constitute a fast developing area and this work seeks to make a contribution to this area. However, the tensions and conflicts do not emerge only when the two cultures are compared; there are inherent discords and dilemmas within the Western consumer culture itself. In addition, even though they may not directly stem from the personal or collective memory of Soviet life by Estonian consumers, they are, I assume, to a certain extent at least, impacted by the experience of socio-cultural transformation.

The overarching theoretical framework into which I cast my studies stems from the premise that movement from socialism to capitalism, which is governed by an impersonal money-economy and an abundance of goods, has transformed relationships between people and things. These changes have brought about new ways for people to incorporate products and services into their personal lives, in manners that were not possible under the Soviet regime of scarcity of goods and forced homogeneity of lifestyle. But these shifts have also generated new tensions and problems that were not sharply experienced during the Soviet regime. This holds true not only for Estonia but for other countries as well, for example in East Germany, as studied by Milena Veenis, who has said: 'This can be found everywhere in East Germany. The material-consuming affluence in which the country is immersed is both a source of strong desire and extreme disappointment' (1999: 83). How these changes in consumer culture can be made sense of is the central topic of my dissertation.

In order not to repeat what I have said elsewhere, I will not draw a very detailed picture of the differences between the 'Western' and 'Soviet' models of consumer culture in this introductory article, since it has been to a large extent covered in the theoretical parts of the articles presented below (see Studies I–VI). I will only sketch some of the points that contribute to the overall theoretical framework and help to prepare the reader for the ideas outlined in 'Discussion' and 'Conclusions'. I base my description on theoretical reading, studies conducted by other scholars, and to a certain extent personal experience. Also, it must be born in mind that the present theoretical overview bears the imprint of my empirical analysis, having been written after the latter had been conducted. I initially offer a brief summary of the main theories and ideas that

played a crucial part in designing the studies of the first stage of my research as well as in interpreting the findings.

In the first issue of the *Journal of Consumer Culture*, its editors, Don Slater and George Ritzer, give the following definition:

In a consumer culture, then, key social values, identities and processes are negotiated through the figure of 'the consumer' (as opposed to, say, the worker, the citizen or the devotee); central modern values such as freedom, rationality and progress are enacted and assessed through consumerist criteria (range of choice, price calculations and rising affluence, respectively); and the cultural landscape seems to be dominated by the commercial signs (advertising, portrayals of 'lifestyle' choices through the media, obsessive concern with the changing meaning of things). (2001: 6)

Thus the criteria according to this definition, for judging whether there is a consumer culture or not in a society, are the importance of *market mediation* between lived culture and social resources, which in turn makes *commodities* – that is things, either material or immaterial, produced or made for market exchange – the main objects of consumption (see e.g. Slater, 1997; Lury, 1996; Featherstone, 1991). According to Slater (1997) it is possible to identify other features that characterize such consumer culture: universality and impersonality based on 'impersonal and generalizable relations of exchange' (1997: 26); money economy; identification of freedom with private choice and private life; the insatiability and unlimited nature of consumer needs; consumption as the privileged medium for negotiating both personal and group identity, as well as status; and finally, the increasing importance of culture in the exercise of power. The latter meaning that the appearance of both things and people has become a crucial site of strategic action. In this way consumption – e.g. consumer choice and consumer identity – can become sites of domination by economic or state institutions. Based on this, we can assume that Estonia's re-independence and entrance into capitalism marked a fundamental change, among other things, in everyday life. Many old routines were broken and the painful process of building new ones started.

Consumer Sovereignty

Thus the central figure of the Western consumer culture, who exercises his/her free will and freedom of choice primarily in the private sphere of consumption, is the 'sovereign consumer'. Consumer sovereignty, according to many theorists (see e.g. Slater, 1997; Bauman, 1988, 1994, 2000) is the mundane realization of civic freedom. Or as Slater puts it in the context of comparison with the Soviet Union: 'If civil society disappeared as a reality from Soviet life, its values

seemed to persist more in consumer dreams than anywhere else: capitalism, consumerism and a free civil society were felt to be entirely of a piece' (1997: 36).

Absence of consumer sovereignty, that is the state 'dictatorship over needs' (Feher *et al*, 1984) is a defining feature of Soviet consumer culture. How it is related to today's experience of freedom is one of the central issues of this dissertation, in both the first and second stages of research. The Soviet system imposed only those needs on people that the system found possible or convenient to satisfy. In order to find ways of bypassing this inefficient system, various forms of 'soft, mundane' resistance were developed by the Soviet people, one of its most vivid forms being the 'second economy' or 'informal economy' (Gabor, 1979 and Sampson, 1986, ref. in Verdery, 1996) of mutual, social capital-based relationships of underhanded deals of provisioning and reciprocal information exchange on the availability of goods (see e.g. Veenis, 1999). These practices were used to obtain goods that were otherwise inaccessible, i.e. the *defitsiit* goods. In this the logics of economic and symbolic exchange sometimes clashed and sometimes existed peacefully side by side (see Bourdieu, 1998).

Bauman (1994) has argued that absence of consumer freedom and the state's inability to satisfy the growing demands of Soviet consumers – who at least to some limited extent were influenced by what was going on in the West at that time – were the main factors that contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Citizens fighting for their freedom to a large extent fought for consumer freedom, that is for the right not to pursue only what were viewed as their 'basic needs' through the state system of provisioning, but their individual (or what they believed to be individual) desires instead. According to Bauman, the Soviet system was incompatible with the 'post-modernizing' consumer society characterized by consumer desires for pleasure and distinctive lifestyles.

The question of freedom inevitably leads to one of the central issues in consumption studies of the last 50 years: that of the relationship between liberty and constraint experienced by the consumer under a market economy. On the one hand, consumer freedom constitutes an important part of what Fromm (2002 [1942]) terms 'freedom from' isolation, coercion and oppression. Compared to the stifling Soviet regime, consumer freedom offered by the free market can be experienced as a substantial step forward. On the other hand, such freedom carries with it the responsibility of taking care of one's 'reflexive life project' (Giddens, 1991), relying mainly on oneself. The elements to compile identity or lifestyle from are increasingly mediated by the market, in other words, the urge towards 'commodified experience' (Giddens, 1991) is ever-strengthening. Giddens says: 'For the project of the self as such may become heavily commodified. Not just lifestyles, but self-actualisation is packaged and distributed according to market criteria' (1991: 198). Thus it cannot be only a one-dimensional question of 'freedom from'. It is also about

‘freedom to’, i.e. how individual life is organized, how the objects of consumer culture are assimilated into personal projects. Consumer sovereignty can be thematized as the famous dictum by Giddens (1991: 81) ‘no choice but to choose’, i.e. individuals passively facing the multitude of commodified culture over which they have no control, an ‘architectonic structure of *things* in relation to which we can do little more creative or active than choose’ (Slater, 1997: 100).

Another important line of thought that influenced the first stage of my studies was the debate about modern and ‘post-modern’ values and phenomena in consumer society.³ In an influential study of Estonia’s transition, *Return to the Western World* (1997), it was claimed by Lauristin *et al* that parallel processes of modernization and post-modernization were going on in Estonia. The first involved building up the institutions of a nation-state, including a market economy, or as M. Kennedy has termed it, a ‘transition culture’ (2002: 8) that involved moves ‘from plan to market’ and ‘totalitarianism to democracy’ (2002: 1). The second encapsulated a rise in post-materialist values, in which playful self-expression through hedonistic consumption (see also Inglehart, 1997) and increasing aestheticization of everyday life (Featherstone, 1991) take centre stage. The latter can be characterised as the dominance of sign-values of commodities in ‘advertising, the media and displays, performances and spectacles of the urbanized fabric of daily life’ (Featherstone, 1991: 68).

These ideas had a great impact on my initial search for the window through which to start looking at, what we termed at the time, the ‘influx of Western consumer culture into Estonia’ and its development here. The environment in which this search took place was rapid economic growth, a stock exchange boom and an increasing ‘conspicuousness’ of consumption with its concomitant growth of social divide. One of the most prominent products of the time was – both in mass media and everyday life – the mobile phone. Its usage had grown rapidly, prices had fallen and they were advertised extensively⁴ (see Study I). Therefore I decided to look at the transformation of Estonian consumer culture through a small ‘key-hole’ – the representation of a heavily promoted and presumably symbolically strongly charged commodity: mobile telephony.

³ On the use and meaning of the term ‘post-modern’ see Endnote 3 of Study II.

⁴ For example, the number of mobile phones per 100 inhabitants of Estonia had increased from 3.7 at the end of 1996 to 24.9 at the end of 1999 (Source: www.esis.ee)

Representation of Transformation as the Object of Study: Development of Research Design and Methodology

Conducting my study under the auspices of the then Department of Journalism, my natural point of approach was mass media. So representation of mobile telephony and, via this, development of Western consumer culture in post-Soviet Estonia became my first object of study.

In using 'representation' I proceed from Stuart Hall: 'representation is the production of meaning through language' (1997: 16). By language any signifying system is meant, in my case both verbal and visual, i.e. the copy text and slogans of mobile telephony print advertisements, as well as visual images used to convey the message of advertisers. Representation is here treated as both a process of meaning-making and a product of that process. Hence I often refer to 'representations' as constructs, sets of meaning that emerge in texts that I examine.

The first study in this volume (Study I) is an analysis of the change of representation. My assumption was that the ways in which mobile telephony is signified over the years by visual and verbal means had changed. The study was first completed as my *M.A.* thesis, 'Development of Consumer Culture in Estonia: Representation of Mobile Telephony in Print Advertising 1991–1998', based on the analysis of print advertisements of either mobile telephony operators, distributors or manufacturers of mobile phones, published in the largest weekly paper *Eesti Ekspress* from 1991–1998. After that the study was re-written into an article in which new empirical material was added. The final version, to be published in the *European Journal of Cultural Studies* in May 2005, comprises data from 1991–2001. The overarching questions I pose in that material relate to the macro level of socio-cultural transformation referred to above: how to conceptualise transformation of consumer culture during the period of Estonia's re-independence. The focal sub-questions were: how is freedom represented in these print advertisements, and how and why does that representation change over time.

First I used content analysis to find the texts that contain either implicit or explicit expressions of freedom. This analysis is partly based on the model developed by Richards *et al* (2000). I reduced the initial sample of 125 texts to 65 in which representation of freedom could be traced. The second phase was to examine the 12 most interesting texts qualitatively, with the help of some elements of socio-semiotic analysis based on Kress & Leeuwen (1996). (For details see Study I).

The study revealed a strong juxtaposition between the memories of the Soviet time and those of present-day capitalist Estonia, characterised by consumer freedom as well as transformation in the construct of freedom itself. This induced me to look for other possible representations of juxtaposition of Soviet time and the consumer culture of re-independent Estonia. Hence, as the

next step, I moved onto how transformation of consumer culture is understood by consumers themselves. I focused on critical cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and more information-rich instances. For that purpose Study II was carried out in cooperation with Triin Vihalemm, where we analysed a total of 45 essays written by the students of various departments from the University of Tartu, as well as 25 interviews with students of the University of Tartu and Tallinn Technical University. The aim was to look at how these relatively educated and, presumably, also critically reflexive young people, born between 1977 and 1983, made sense of Estonia's transition from socialism to capitalism through the prism of consumer culture development. Interview texts and essays are analysed using qualitative text analysis, mainly drawing on Miles & Huberman (1994) (for details on coding and analysis see Study II). The study tells the story of transformation, and gives an overarching and broad picture of the narrative of consumer culture development, westernization and consumerization of Estonia as seen through the eyes of a unique generation, those whose most active socialization period coincided with the rapid transformation of Estonian society. Hence, it is not a story of how consumer culture developed in Estonia, but how it was seen at the time of writing or talking to the interviewer (years 2000–2002).

The study was built around the concepts of 'Soviet time', 'freedom of choice', and 'the West', as well as 'modern vertical status hierarchy' versus "'post-modern" playful identity games.' We sought to reveal how students related to these concepts, how they compared the later Soviet time consumption to that of today, how they drew a picture of socio-cultural transformation through the lens of consumer culture, and how they represented distinction and social positioning with the help of various consumer goods and consumption practices.⁵ Hence, the first study may broadly be termed as an analysis of the change of representation, while the second one is a study of the representation of change.

⁵ I derive the meaning of 'distinction' from Bourdieu (2000 [1979], 1998), meaning both classificatory systems to distinguish between things (e.g. those goods that can function as symbolic (high) status-markers and those that cannot or mark low status) and the utilization of these things and their meanings in order to socially position oneself and others.

Maturation of Consumer Culture: Aestheticization, Freedom and Distinction

The following section outlines the main findings of the first two studies. In both Study I and II the temporal axis of 'then' and 'now' (meaning the late-Soviet period and the end of 1990s-beginning of 2000s respectively) and the spatial axis of Estonia *versus* the West were explicitly utilized to organize analysis. In other studies, to be described below, the same axes surfaced more implicitly. They can also be called the broadest sets of conceptual coordinates, or even fields of tension against which consumer culture representations in today's Estonia can be mapped.

Study II explored how the development of Estonian post-Soviet consumer culture can be understood in terms of 'coming of age' or 'growing up'. Increasing sophistication on the part of consumers, as well as increasing refinement and complication on the part of the objective consumer culture can be observed. For successful coping with the complexity of consumer culture, cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2000 [1979]; 1998; see also Holt, 1997; Southerton, 2001), i.e. demeanour, knowledge and competence, among other things about brands, styles and aesthetics connoting social status and identity, is needed. Compared to the West, Estonia is portrayed as lagging behind. It may be even said that 'post-modern' play with signs and identity, which draws on references from the West, is very complicated to exercise in Estonia, having too few highly competent consumers who could have 'practical or explicit mastery of cipher or code' (Bourdieu, 2000 [1979]: 2). However, the young and educated see themselves as carriers of this cultural capital, representatives of the 'few'. Aestheticized consumption can simultaneously become an object of ridicule when employed for rigid vertically hierarchical status competition and 'showing off' or a marker of what is considered 'genuine' good taste by the students, demonstrating the complexity and ambivalence in contemporary consumer culture experienced by young people. The same tendency towards greater aestheticization – in this case aestheticized promotion of commodities (mobile phones) – is evident in the changing advertising representation (Study I). A consumer good, as a device for self-expression involving decisions about style and taste, surfaces prominently in the mobile telephony advertisements during the second half of the 1990s.

As a result of my first two studies I found that the concept of freedom, with its complex web of meanings in the consumer culture context, has good explanatory power in understanding socio-cultural transformation in post-Soviet Estonia, both on the theoretical and empirical levels. Freedom of the nation from various Soviet constraints and freedom of choice of the consumer loomed large both in advertising text and in young people's accounts. I dare to claim, based on these two studies, as well as theoretical reading (see e.g. Slater, 1997;

Bauman, 1988, 1994, 2000; Kennedy, 2002 and Vihalemm, T., 1997), that freedom of choice can be considered the most important concept in explaining the move from a Soviet to Western consumer culture in Estonia. This will be further illustrated in Studies **III** and **IV**.

Representation of freedom in advertising text was strongly dominated by a heroization of the entrepreneur during the first period: from 1991 to more or less the end of 1996. The environment in which he (predominantly he, although gender was not one of my foci) acted, and the ideas that were promoted through him were primarily linked to materialist values such as business success and progress. There was a strong, though largely implicit, opposition between the West as a symbol of free movement and business and the isolation and constraint under the Soviet regime. The main connotations of freedom were those of work and business as well as business related travel in the Western countries (Study **I**).

Starting in 1997, when the third mobile telephony operator – Q GSM – entered the market, freedom as promoted in these advertisements acquired a hedonistic, post-materialist meaning, i.e. related to self-expression and leisure pursuits (see Inglehart, 1997). The ‘hero’ is no longer a businessman but a leisurely and playful person. Consumption of mobile phones came to be represented no longer in the context of work and liberation from constraints implicitly associated with the Soviet rule, but in the context of an aestheticized practice of free time and play. A post-materialist hedonist, the carrier of what Colin Campbell (1987) has dubbed as ‘the romantic ethic and spirit of modern consumerism’ (on the details of his theory, see below), had become a protagonist in the advertisements I analyzed (Study **I**).

However, all these results showing a shift in the representation of freedom in advertising text revealed only one side of the picture. Therefore my understanding of the macro-level processes of socio-cultural transformation is complemented by how young people articulated the change in understanding of freedom (Study **II**). Hence, it may be claimed that by associating freedom of choice and commodity consumption, these young people give a narrative of a fundamental altering of the economy, politics and the socio-cultural environment into what we may call a Western consumer culture. Seen through the eyes of present-day students, the concepts of freedom and those of *defitsiit* goods (to a large extent of Western origin) were related in two ways during the later Soviet period. The *defitsiit* goods were seen in many cases as positional devices helping to create distinction and differentiate oneself from the homogenized mass. Also, these commodities also latently carried the meaning of collective ideals of freedom: those of national liberation from occupation, ‘westernization’ and a general striving for what was deemed as the ‘good life’.

At the time of conducting the study (2000–2002) the relationship between goods and freedom was transformed. In many cases Soviet-era objects, the acquisition of which was often very complex, are portrayed as more valuable,

richer in meanings than their contemporary counterparts. The ‘colourful Western stuff’ available today is frequently seen as devalued due to both its sheer quantitative increase and superficiality of meaning. Freedom often means a choice between pre-established options, and the rules of the game cannot be determined by the consumer. Also, the connotations of heroic collective ideals have disappeared from the web of meanings of consumer choice. The commodities are seen to give the freedom to build an identity in which social climbing, i.e. self-positioning on the hierarchical ladder is seen as predominant (see also the discussion of Studies **III–V** below).

The meaning of ‘the West’ changes as well. In the advertising text of the first period, 1991–1996, the West is a yardstick, a positive point of reference epitomizing freedom to move and to do business. In the advertisements of the later period such explicit references to the West disappear, probably because Estonia is seen by the creators of the text as being part of the West already, which also explains, for example, the use of the internationally created Nokia or other mobile phone brand advertisements. Obviously they were regarded as appropriate for the Estonian context, which was most probably viewed as having ‘caught up’ with the West at least in terms of advertising representation.

Reflection by the students on how the concept of the West was perceived during the Soviet time is predominantly positive. It was, as mentioned above, materialized in scarce Western consumer items and its connotations of freedom from the Soviet coercive regime (Study **II**). However, the representations of the West in the present-day context are more ambivalent. Estonia is compared to the West as a positive role model. The West epitomizes the ideas of liberty, progress, capitalist enterprise as a means of self-actualization and good life in general. In this context the model of the Nordic countries is celebrated most (Study **I**). At the same time, the West has a negative connotation of cultural contamination and dominance, which are to blame for the influx of materialist values, mass culture devoid of authentic meaning and the erosion of civility described also in studies by M. Kennedy (2002). In this context mainly the USA is referred to, in line with general public discourses about Americanization, voiced also in the Estonian mass media. Such connotations, in their turn, elicit representations of (sometimes ironic) ethno-romantic ideals of purity that can be striven for by various consumption practices that reassert the local self-determination in the field of consumer culture (Study **I**).

II SOCIO-CULTURAL PRACTICES IN POST-SOVIET ESTONIA: TENSIONS BETWEEN SUBJECTS AND OBJECTS

Subjects and Objects in Consumer Culture

The following gives an overview of the second stage of my studies, which may be called a parallel move onto the micro-level – i.e. representations of personal experience through informant interviews – as well as onto the higher level of theoretical abstraction inspired by the classic, Georg Simmel.

My first two studies had brought to light, among other things, the tensions between the Soviet and Western consumer culture, as well as ambivalences associated with the meaning of freedom. As the next stage I decided to concentrate on the micro level, on how individuals create meaning in regard to their consumption practices, how they relate to objects and, through that prism, how they experience social transformation. Before moving onto an elucidation of the details of my methodology and findings in the second stage, I give an overview of a theoretical concept influenced by the writings of Georg Simmel. This line of thinking has proven to have remarkable explanatory power in the context of my studies in present-day Estonia. Inspiration from Simmel's work has come to have a considerable impact on my latest study (Study III) as well as on the conclusions and discussion summarizing all my work, which I present at the very end of this introductory article.

Consumer culture can be theorized in terms of relations between subjects and objects. Daniel Miller (1987) has proposed that consumption is 'the movement by which society re-appropriates its own external form – that is, it assimilates its own culture and uses it to develop itself as a social subject' (1987: 17). This understanding presupposes a dual nature of culture: existence of subjects and objects – in our given case consumers and items to be consumed, which are in constant dialectical relationship to each other. Simmel (1997 [1911, 1916a, 1916b, 1918], 1990 [1900]) has divided culture into two realms: 'objective culture' or the 'culture of things' (*objektive Kultur* or *Sachkultur*) and 'individual culture' or 'subjective culture' (*Persönlichkeitskultur* or *subjektive Kultur*). Into the former realm belong both material objects – such as tools, works of art, means of transportation and, most importantly for the given study, commodities – of human creation. But it also encompasses norms, values, laws and traditions. Subjective culture is 'the personal culture of the individual, or the life of the individual as a cultural being' (Oakes, 1984: 6, cit. in Frisby & Featherstone, 1997). From subjective culture flows the spontaneous creative energy of life, which confronts objects and forms in the objective culture. The latter moulds life according to its own logic. Objective culture can

be both rewarding and fruitful, providing people forms and ways of expressing themselves and of becoming more 'cultivated'. But it can also be hostile and constraining to subjects and their individual endeavours. At the same time, no individual can achieve development and fulfilment of his aims without drawing on the objects and forms in the realm of objective culture. Therein lies the fundamental ambivalence of culture.

Both production and consumption are ways of creating objective culture and assimilating it into the subjective lives of individuals. As Slater has stated:

We collect, use, make, own and transform objects according to the aims, goals, desires and needs posited by human subjects. In a sense, this can be one clear meaning of consumption: we view the world and assimilate it both intellectually and practically in the light of subjective projects and desires. (1997: 102)

Production and consumption of commodities are carried out by various socio-cultural practices. Some of them are more public and institutionalized, some more private and mundane – be it creative practices to promote mobile telephony in advertising industry or recreational shopping or cooking at home. These are sets of activities and ways of relating to various cultural objects governed by specific values, norms, ideals or discourses to legitimize specific action (see also Campbell, 1998) in a specific socio-cultural context. Practices are also inherently ambivalent: they contain individual life, spontaneous creative energies and objective form, which individuals draw upon. Cultural forms, in a sense, organize practices according to supra-individual sets of norms, ideals and patterns, sometimes, as mentioned above, empowering, sometimes hostile.⁶ Thus a cultural form is an autonomous crystallization of human experience into an objective form (see Frisby & Featherstone, 1997: 5). Consumption, as a means of assimilating objective culture into the subjective, always draws on and coalesces into cultural forms that, according to Simmel, exist as if by an inherent logic of their own. At the same time subjects always modify and reproduce these forms through their lived practices; while doing so the objective culture is also determined and reproduced by the subjective culture. So a constant process of transformation or Becoming (Miller, 1987) takes place.

However, this cycle of peaceful and fruitful mutual transformation is ideal. Simmel's views on contemporary culture a hundred years ago were rather pessimistic and, as such, have a poignant topicality for the context of present day Estonia. One of his central claims involves the tragedy of culture, something inherent in culture and amplified by the ever-growing amount and

⁶ The basic notion with which Simmel operates in his formal sociology is that of a 'social form'. In his essays on culture (e.g. 1997 [1918, 1916b]) he also occasionally refers to the concept of 'cultural form' as part of the objective culture, as seen above, but this use is neither systematic nor clearly defined. Therefore my use of 'cultural form' in the present context is inspired by Simmel, but does not follow him in detail.

sophistication of objective culture in modern times. The tragedy can be understood as the victory or domination of objective culture over individuals. As Simmel says ‘...the objective products of culture develop independently in obedience to purely objective norms, and thus both become profoundly estranged from subjective culture and advance far too rapidly for the latter to keep pace with them’ (Simmel, 1997 [1916a]: 92). An individual can become alienated in the face of this overwhelming mass of objective culture. Ritzer (2000) has followed this rather pessimistic note in the consumer culture context as follows: ‘Highly specialised individuals are confronted with an increasingly closed and interconnected world of products over which they have little or no control... Consumption becomes little more than a devouring of one meaningless product after another’ (171). However, as both Slater and Miller have approached this issue, the duality between objects seemingly with a life of their own and the seemingly alienated subjects dominated by mass-produced impersonal objects, can be overcome in the mundane practices of consumption of the same mass-produced objects. This is the act of sublation or re-appropriation, which, if truncated, produces indifference, embitterment, powerlessness or even alienation and, if successful, ‘recasts [goods and services] as inalienable cultural material’ (Miller, 1987: 17). So, participation in consumer culture as the relationship between subjects and objects, between objective and subjective culture, has both potentialities – that of estrangement and that of advancement of human happiness and fuller realization of their abilities. Objects and cultural forms are necessary for subjects to actualize their creative efforts, but there is always the inherent danger that these objects and forms are not recognized as made by subjects, have no ‘human face’ and bring no benefits to people for whom they were originally intended. There is a constant struggle between re-appropriation and rejection of the objective culture.

As was elaborated on in Part I of the introductory article, the issue of consumer sovereignty can be thematized as a relationship between subjects and objects, in other words, as a question of to what extent subjects in their endeavours for free self-actualization and self-expression are constrained and even oppressed by the objective world of things and by more or less reified cultural forms. This will be looked into in more detail in Studies **III** and **IV**.

Shopping Malls and the Concept of *Šoppamine*: Research Design and Methodology

The new objective realm of the Western consumer culture in Estonia contains a specific cultural form that sheds particularly vivid light on those moral tensions which have a strong bearing on the subjective cultures of consumers. I believe I have allowed 'the form to flow from social reality' (Ritzer, 2000: 159) instead of imposing it as a theoretical notion of the researcher. This is shopping, especially the particular version of it denoted by the Estonian word *šoppamine*.

At the time of starting the empirical data collection for the second stage of research, in autumn 2002, Estonia had entered a boom of new shopping malls. Several new centres had been opened in Tallinn and the first mall also in Tartu. Autumn 2002 was a time of 'over-consumption debate' in the Estonian media. The central bank had initiated a discussion over a too high level of loan-taking and difficulties of borrowers in repaying loans. Estonia had allegedly entered a phase of 'consumption-craze'. This was complemented by critical accounts by editors and intellectuals in various media channels lamenting the rise of materialism expressed by a senseless spending of time in shopping malls. The new colloquial word *šoppamine*, borrowed from the English 'shopping', had found its way into the public written language by 2002, when Järve shopping centre in Tallinn started to use *Šoppamise Rõõm* (Joy of Shopping) as its promotional slogan.

The subsequent period of 2002–2004 has exacerbated the trends further. Currently there are 12 shopping centres in Tallinn with over 10,000 square metres of retail space and two others in Tartu. More than half of the retail space of Tallinn is taken up by outlets that are classified as shopping centres. Measured by shopping centre space *per capita*, Estonia exceeds all the new member of the EU and is above the level of the respective average indicator of the 'old EU' (*Postimees*, May 5, 2004).

Šoppamine, as a borrowed word in the Estonian language, caused particularly heated debate in the Estonian media in May 2004, when the linguist Ain Kaalep (2004) proposed in the Estonian daily paper *Eesti Päevaleht* that an Estonian-root word should be substituted for the 'junk word' *šoppamine*. He offered a neologism *ostlemine* (its indirect translation would be something like 'playful buying'). Commentaries on his article on the paper's website were highly polarised, the majority voicing their overt contempt for the trivial and feminine practice of *šoppamine*. Although my empirical data had been gathered by that time, this was further proof that, by approaching this concept in the context of shopping malls, particularly anxiety-ridden phenomena were pinned down. *Šoppamine* had become a cultural form of its own, intensely debated in the media, generating many opinions that seemed to have little to do with the actual practices of those who were speaking. In retrospect, I may say that our focus on the meanings of *šoppamine* partly stemmed from the interest in the

relations between the ‘cultural form’ of *šoppamine* – living its own life in usually very normative media text, quite independent of actual lived experiences of individual consumers – and unmediated accounts of consumers themselves on what they understood *šoppamine* to be, that is which individual contents are involved in their notions of the word.⁷ (On the differences between the media discourse on *šoppamine* and the talk of the informants from the gender perspective, see Katrin Rahu’s (2004) *M.A.* thesis ‘Gendered Representation of *Šoppamine*’).

Data collection conducted by myself and my partner Katrin Rahu, who was an *M.A.* student at the Department of Journalism and Communications of the University of Tartu at the time, lasted from November 2002 until June 2003. The Christmas season (end of November and all of December) was deliberately skipped and the process was resumed in January 2003. Firstly, brief interviews were carried out in the *Rocca al Mare Kaubanduskeskus* and *Kristiine Keskus* shopping malls in Tallinn (the oldest and largest ones in the capital) and *Lõunakeskus* (the only shopping centre at the time) in Tartu. All together 49 interviews were conducted. Maximum heterogeneity of the sample in terms of gender, social status and age was aimed at (for details see Study IV). In addition, 22 in-depth interviews were carried out at people’s homes with the objective of probing some of the issues, particularly comparisons with the Soviet era, more deeply. Both types of interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed together, using qualitative text analysis that drew on Miles & Huberman (1994). On the basis of this, Study IV was compiled.

For Study III (chronologically written later), five more in-depth interviews with people over the age of 45 were carried out. The aim of this study was to concentrate on the older age groups because we assumed that, due to their longer Soviet experience, the tension between two different types of consumer culture could be most clearly observed in their case (for detailed explanation see Study III). Some data from the *Mina. Maailm. Meedia* survey was used to provide background on these informants. Coding and qualitative analysis of the material was similar to that of Study IV.

In this context the following research questions were formulated:

- **how is the tension between the discourses of needs and desires represented in various texts?**

⁷ In his doctoral thesis, *Rahan vallassa*, Lehtonen (1999) uses Simmel’s concept of social form when speaking of shopping. He, to a large extent, focuses on various forms of interaction within the practice of shopping, thus the use of ‘social form’ may be justified. The aspect of interaction is not the centre of attention in my work. I feel using ‘cultural form’ better fits the context of analysis of socio-cultural change and tensions inherent in Western consumer culture that, at least to some extent, are related to the gap between the sophisticated objective culture and the lived experience of subjective culture identified by Simmel.

- **What kind of moral borderlines and dilemmas of constructing the consumer as a moral subject are revealed when talking about *šoppamine*?**
- **How does the concept of *šoppamine* help us understand the relationship between the Estonian consumers, their present-day lived experience and either personal or mediated memories and representations of the Soviet consumer culture?**

The overarching question posed in the material concerning urban Estonians over 45 years of age, can be formulated as follows:

- **how does this particular group understand and relate to the new Western consumer culture against the backdrop of their extensive Soviet experience?**

The key words, whose meanings for these consumers were probed, were: *šoppamine*, shopping malls and freedom of choice.

Study V is co-authored with Veronika Kalmus and is based on the *Mina. Maailm. Meedia* survey data. It is meant to back up some of the points made based on qualitative analysis with survey data. For the detailed description of the methodology of the survey see Vihalemm, P. (2004) and the description of the method of analysis used by Veronika Kalmus and myself at the beginning of Study V.

Tensions within the Western Consumer Culture of Present-Day Estonia against the Backdrop of Soviet Experience

Below I give an overview of the findings of Study III and IV, interwoven with more theoretical approaches. The central themes that emerged on the micro level of the individual reflecting upon his or her life as a consumer were the moral tension between the rhetorics or discourses of needs and desires (Campbell, 1998) and personal experience-based accounts regarding freedom of choice and its limitations.⁸ Within this second stage of research I can also distinguish a more general approach related to social status competition. This deals with people's accounts of the creation of social divides in Estonia. These

⁸ Campbell uses the concepts 'rhetoric' and 'discourse' interchangeably. For present purposes I use 'discourse' to denote – drawing on Campbell (1998) and to some extent Fairclough (1995) – a pattern of meaning utilizing a certain vocabulary to make sense about various human practices and phenomena. In the given case the discourses employ 'vocabularies of motive' (Campbell, 1998: 236) that serve to legitimate or render morally reprehensible certain acts of consumption.

articulations combine both personal experience and more ‘expert’ descriptions of Estonian society. Also in this part of the introductory article, I touch upon Study V, based on survey data that sheds further light on the issues of consumption as a social differentiator.

Needs *versus* Desires

Consumer culture is, among other things, a site where consumers construct themselves as moral subjects (see e.g. Lehtonen, 1999). Thus not all tensions outlined in my studies originate only from the personal or mediated Soviet memory, but some also stem from moral conflicts and dilemmas intrinsic to Western consumer culture itself.

Such dilemmas and conflicts emerged early on in our study of shopping malls and in the simultaneously conducted in-depth interviews. Consumers’ representations of *šoppamine* as a continual negotiation between indulgence and restraint led me to Colin Campbell’s (1987) re-working of Weber’s classic study *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Campbell has explained that the romanticism-inspired ‘romantic ethic of modern consumerism’ is the engine of modern consumer culture. The basis of this ethic is the self-illusory hedonism that helps consumers to control and intensify their emotions, particularly dreams about and longing for various ideal states of being and self, through which maximum pleasure can be derived from consumption. Slater summarizes Campbell’s argument in the following way: ‘modern consumerist hedonism...is not about the satisfaction of need (which limits the experience of pleasure) but about the pursuit of the experience of pleasure for its own sake’ (1997: 96). This forms the basis of the discourse or rhetoric of wants or desire, as Campbell himself has pointed out elsewhere (1998).

However, the contemporary consumer is constantly engaging in moral struggle, since the discourse of desire is opposed by the discourse of need, which has its roots in puritanism and utilitarianism. According to Campbell, actually both the romantic and the utilitarian orientation have their roots in the same period and same social classes as Weber’s protestant ethic (2002 [1930]). This discourse focuses on restraint, frugality and rationality, which urge consumers to maximize efficiency or utility in their calculations about possible consumption options. Thus the consumer faces a moral conflict between the legitimate action to satisfy needs and the tense field of pleasurable emotions promised by the seductive world of goods and images, although indulging in this means transgression and potentially morally reprehensible behaviour.

First, it can be said that the choice of *šoppamine* and shopping centres as the window through which to look at people’s relations with goods and consumer culture was fully justified. *Šoppamine* is a very intense concept for consumers and generates extreme opinions, hence bringing out a vast array of different

attitudes and ways of assimilating or rejecting the present-day objective consumer culture.

Both in Study **III** and **IV** we encounter moral tensions between needs and desires, between utilitarian, puritan and romantic orientations. *Šoppamine* proved to be – both based on the use of the word by the informants and on reporting what it meant for them – a morally charged and thus highly symbolic concept with a complex web of meanings. The basic axis around which representations of *šoppamine* revolved were those of ‘need’ or ‘necessity’ *versus* ‘senselessness’ and ‘excess’. *Šoppamine* was predominantly related to what has been termed recreational shopping (see Prus & Dawson, 1991), associated with leisure time and aesthetics, that is, buying goods beyond the ordinary, day-to-day provisioning. So even if *šoppamine* is constituted as a time-consuming and laborious process, it is always a search for objects that are not everyday staples, goods with which a consumer is personally more involved, particularly clothing, cosmetics, accessories or technical goods.

‘Need’ itself is a complex concept. It can be the only conceivable notion in the field of consumption for the financially deprived, who claim that they cannot afford to practice desires-led recreational shopping or the like (Study **III**, **IV**). At the same time, need is used by almost everyone, regardless of their social and financial standing, as the means for rationalizing or motivating any purchase, be it initially impulsive or a result of a long-cherished wish. It seems that the culturally legitimate notion of ‘need’ or ‘necessity’ is a basis on which moral and competent (even if with limited means) consumers construct themselves.

However, the concepts of ‘the necessary’ and ‘being reasonable’, that is restraining oneself according to the puritan ethic of frugality and/or the utilitarian ethic of efficiency-calculation, provide means to transgress the moral borderline. As Lehtonen (1999) has pointed out, the borderlines only exists via transgression. ‘Controlled de-control’ (Featherstone, 1991: 59), that is knowing one’s possibilities, being able to ‘go back’ onto the side of reason, is represented as a characteristic of a competent and moral consumer. Everyday consumption is characterized by constant wavering between restraint and indulgence and a juxtaposing of opposing concepts (need *versus* desire, restraint *versus* letting go, and reason *versus* senselessness and excess). Transgression is seen as acceptable when consumers reflect on their own behaviour, whereas transgression by others is criticized as the folly of the manipulated dupe or as ‘unnecessary’ social climbing. Such accounts involve considerable class and gender stereotyping (Study **III** and **IV**; see also Rahu, 2004).

As mentioned, *šoppamine* as a cultural form and a personal practice is primarily understood as something playful, beyond ordinary chores. It is recreation and oriented to gratifying desires, even though the latter may be legitimized by the rhetoric of need. It can be an aestheticized practice of leisure and a relation to goods and symbolic meanings provided by them, as well as to other people

with whom such forms of shopping are carried out. It is also crucial that the practice not necessarily involves actual purchasing⁹. It can consist merely of browsing and strolling through shopping outlets and deriving pleasure from mainly visual immersion in the world of goods.

As shown in Study V, based on the survey *Mina. Maailm. Meedia*, 21 per cent of the total sample agreed that they visit shops and shopping centres for recreational purposes.¹⁰ It is predominantly an activity of young people (in the 15–19 age group, the indicator was 32 per cent and in the oldest age group only 14 per cent). It is remarkable that there are no differences here as to income levels. This proves that recreational shopping, as a practice not necessarily purchase oriented, is in principle accessible to all income groups.

In addition, consumers' relationship to *šoppamine* – ranging from strong denial of both the use of the word and involvement in the practice to willing admission of the pleasures *šoppamine* generates – can be conceptualized as a framework in which consumers constitute an active relationship to the objective consumer culture. On a more personal level, the relationship to *šoppamine* is determined and mediated through how people perceive their financial and time resources, family situations and social status. Meaning-creation about *šoppamine* also depends on historical experience, both personal and mediated, which constitutes *šoppamine* as a new practice in many ways in opposition to provisioning under the Soviet regime, which was characterized by shortage and demanded excessive time and information possession from shoppers. It is a practice opposed to the hunting for goods of the Soviet time and at the same time also opposed to current everyday provisioning.

When done in shopping centres, it is the opposite of visiting small shops, thus becoming a symbolic practice of immersing oneself in the world of goods, while at the same time having no personal contact with sellers. However, relations with those with whom one goes shopping are constantly maintained and re-produced, and thus it is a private practice carried out in a public space.¹¹

The attitude towards *šoppamine* also embraces people's values. Trivialization and condemnation of *šoppamine* can range from more reflexive and informed market society critiques, occasionally tinted with irony (i.e. *šoppamine* as marketization and commercialization of people's everyday lives) to

⁹ It is interesting to note, that the comparison between interviews and media text in Rahu (2004) reveals a strong tendency in mass media to portray *šoppamine* as excessive, compulsive buying, whereas the informants' understanding of the concept need not involve any actual acts of purchase at all.

¹⁰ The indicator was smaller among Estonians, 17 per cent, than among Russians, 29 per cent. The problem of ethnic differences in consumption is an intriguing area in itself, but remains outside the focus of the present dissertation.

¹¹ On relations between shoppers and the construction of public and private, see also a study conducted by a B.A. student Raili Roo (2004) in the same shopping malls based on observations.

more quotidian rejection of this practice as a 'waste of time' when juxtaposed to more 'valuable' or 'authentic' activities (such as theatre-going or walking in a park with children).

On the other hand, *šoppamine* can be accepted as a 'normal' and 'inevitable' part of the capitalist market society Estonia has become or even lauded for its pleasure-providing potential: *šoppamine* is accessible to many and offers aesthetic leisurely enjoyment above and beyond what is perceived as everyday provisioning or shopping as labour. As Slater and Tonkiss have said: '...the very validation of public hedonism that shopping presumes can itself be construed as legitimating a kind of utopian moment within capitalist market culture' (2001: 171).

These diverse accounts show that *šoppamine* can be successfully assimilated, that is modified and exercised according to personal preferences and habits, drawing on the resources provided by media, the commercial environment and other consumers. On the other hand, there are representations that demonstrate relative estrangement from this cultural form, that is rejection, which can sometimes be ironic of the concept and the practice (Studies III, IV).

The relationship of consumers to shopping malls is similar (Studies III, IV). They can be placed on a continuum. One end of this is a shopping mall as a generator of strong pleasure, a conglomerate of goods and services that epitomizes choice, fostered by sharp competition between shopping centres. Thus it is a suitable basis for passing time, a convenient locus to carry out the aestheticized practice of *šoppamine*. The other end of the continuum portrays shopping malls as contaminators of culture, even symbols of a new social structure, which seek to control people through the pre-established options of consumer choice. They are seen as potential threats of bankruptcy and architectural ghost-towns that do not fit into the city milieu. It is feared that they will 'eat up' smaller shops as representations of more humane relationships, that is closer and more personal contacts between sellers and buyers and consumers and goods.

It is interesting to note that the sharpest critique of Estonian shopping centres arises in comparison with those of the West. Here the West emerges as the site of the 'real', consumer culture, having shopping malls with pleasant atmosphere, better service, and deeper meaning in goods. The West's long tradition – in a way a patina – of consumer capitalism, is portrayed as legitimising, making various consumption locations and practices seem more pleasant and justified. Estonia's commercial world, on the other hand, is explained in these representations in terms of 'aping the West' and having low quality. These limitations are believed to be characteristic of the transition situation. The West's positive connotations serve as triggers for a quite profound critique of the Estonian version of transition

Freedom of Choice and the New Experience of Scarcity

As seen above, freedom of choice is a concept with great explanatory power. However its meaning becomes rather complex when people relate it to their personal everyday experiences.

Freedom of choice, exercised on the capitalist market is welcomed, as a general concept, as opposed to the situation in the coercive regime of the Soviet Union. On a subjective level, however, freedom is often perceived as vanishing or illusory. The *defitsiit* or scarcity of consumer goods dominant during the Soviet time is perceived as a collective phenomenon, which more or less everybody had to face, blaming the inefficient and ideologically alien state regime for that. The new scarcities and limitations on exercising one's free choice on the consumer market are seen as increasingly privatized and individual. Each person has to cope with these difficulties alone (Study III, IV). (See also, Kõresaar, 2003).

Alongside descriptions of self-expression and genuine enjoyment (Study III, IV), it is interesting to find personal accounts of experiences of absence of freedom, as well as more wide-ranging criticisms. The great amount of criticism voiced by informants in this context was surprising. On the most general level, we encounter critiques of consumer culture as such, also recurrent in theoretical debates according to which the diversity of the new ever-refining objective culture faced by the consumer only provides freedom to choose among pre-set options (see above).

Another central constraint to consumer sovereignty is perceived to be a lack of money, going hand in hand with the social divide that is seen as favouring some and depriving many of the opportunity to meaningfully and wholeheartedly participate in the new objective culture of consumption. On a more subjective level, some consumers point out a lack of goods which cater to niche needs or some specific items that are familiar from the Soviet time, thus limiting their liberty to select the most preferred items. More demanding and sophisticated consumers are not satisfied with the service level or atmosphere of the shopping outlets nor with the low quality and lack of depth of the meaning of goods, all of which amount to a broad critique of the Estonian post-Soviet version of consumer culture, which measures up poorly using the yardstick of Western standards (Study III, IV). As a consequence, consumer sovereignty remains more of a theoretical concept that helps to differentiate the Soviet pattern and the market economy of today, but on a personal level the picture is much more complex and diverse. Examples of personally felt curbs on freedom to choose are elaborated on, making the consumer world a constant field of tension between liberty and constraints.

Distinction: Consumption as a Means of Social Status Competition

Theoretical insights

As my first research stage brought to light, consumer culture cannot be studied without bearing in mind the issues of positioning people on different steps of the social ladder. As opposed to Bourdieu (2000 [1979]), however, we cannot assume any relatively static or stable environment for carrying out social status competition in our case. In the post-Soviet context, the meanings of consumer goods, as well as lifestyle boundaries, have been in constant flux, where upward and downward mobility of both things and people, have been observed. But in any case, one of the bases of my work has been that, in the post-socialist context, the developing and ‘westernizing’ consumer culture is one of the key arenas where the ‘game takes place’, where the struggles for hierarchical positions in the social space are held (see Bourdieu, 2000 [1979]). This was also shown in Study I.

Against the Soviet background, issues of social status competition are exacerbated. It is common knowledge that the Soviet Union was a society of (at least officially declared) equality and egalitarianism, which can be also understood as a coercive homogenization into a ‘grey mass’ where distinctive lifestyles, especially in their Western commodified forms, could not be pursued.

Gronow (1997, 2003) underlines that, based on his studies of Soviet consumption during the Stalinist times and to lesser extent during the later decades, in the Soviet consumer culture a phenomenon called *kulturnost* prevailed¹². This means that a distinction was there, but it was not very sharp. It

¹² The concept of *kulturnost* embraces also consumption of cultural goods, particularly those that are usually classified under ‘high culture’ – ballet, classical music, drama theatre etc. (Gronow, 1997). Studies have shown that during the Soviet time such cultural consumption was regarded as important and was exercised by many people considerably more often and to a larger extent than today (Hion *et al*, 1988; Nigul, 2004). In addition to constituting the social norm of being a ‘cultured person’, high cultural consumption can also be regarded as a compensatory practice, which partly filled the void left by the absence of consumer choice in material consumption (be it clothing or technological goods). Many people today, mostly the elderly and less wealthy, miss having the opportunity to engage in such cultural activities because they lack money. I have to make do with only the brief comment that in my empirical material such issues indeed cropped up. I acknowledge the importance of change in the pattern of what exactly people consumed both materially and in terms of cultural products in the narrower sense – that is, for example, how many concerts or novels they could afford based on their income during the Soviet time and what they can afford today. This is an important and wide area of research that needs to be concentrated on separately, and therefore has been deliberately left out of the focus of my present set of studies.

was not considered ‘good manners’ to be too different from your neighbours. ‘The material culture of their “good life” is therefore best characterized by the seemingly paradoxical concept, democratic luxury’ (Gronow, 1997: 62). As a result, Gronow doubts if the thirst for distinction and diverse lifestyles stated by Bauman (1994) was the driving force for dismantling the Soviet regime. According to him, the Soviet consumer culture, dominated by the mutual obligations of the economy of favours (Verdery, 1996), was based at least to some extent on an ethic of a ‘clan’ or ‘family’ that demands conformity and decency (see also Study, II). On the other hand, it seems reasonable to assume that complete equality and democracy were not possible under such a system based on *defitsiit* goods and favours done for each other. Also, based on both Study II and personal experience, it can be said that these scarce goods were in many cases positional goods paving the way for whatever forms of status competition existed in Soviet Estonia.¹³ Not the least because the *nomenklatura* had many privileges in terms of access to scarce goods, which made their consumption and distinction possibilities, compared to the people without those privileges, considerably better (see also Saar, 2002; Bourdieu, 1998). Those with more social capital and easier access to such consumer items presumably could position themselves higher on the social ladder. To study how exactly these elaborate relationships functioned in everyday practice, however, is not the main focus of my research. We may assume that, by and large, the prevailing memory of the later Soviet period is not so much of class differences, as of relative equality, which, in its turn, vividly illustrates issues of social stratification in today’s capitalist Estonia.

Findings of Study III–V

First of all, consumption of goods that are perceived as positional, that is, consumption above the level of what are seen as basic needs, is a very important measuring rod for placing people on the steps of the social ladder. So-called symbolic consumption can be understood as consisting of either very expensive items or goods with complex meaning hierarchies, generated mostly by branding and advertising. Those who master the code and can afford to purchase such goods, who have both economic and cultural capital, are perceived as higher on the social ladder (Study III, see also Study I).

¹³ It is also important to mention, that Gronow’s and many other studies (e.g. Caldwell, 2004; Patico, 2002; Shevchenko, 2002 and Oushakine, 2000) focus on Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. Estonia, claimed to be the ‘Soviet West’ (see Study I) during the Soviet time, was presumably somewhat different due to historical and socio-cultural reasons. Comparison between Russian and Estonian consumer cultures is not a topic touched upon in the present dissertation.

Aesthetic and stylized consumption as a social differentiator is also proved by the *Mina. Maailm. Meedia* survey (Study V). Here we use a concept of 'consumerism', which is meant to denote consumption practices involving goods with high symbolic value targeted at self-expression, identity and social status building, involving more or less reflexive use of cultural capital with the help of which consumers distinguish between brand hierarchies, different styles and fluctuations in fashion. Here we draw on Bauman (1994: 223) who claims that consumerism means 'manipulation of signs for various ends' and production, desire and consumption of 'symbolic goods'¹⁴. I acknowledge that such divisions of consumption into symbolic and less symbolic are arbitrary, and all consumption can be defined as symbolic, as having meaning. However, for present purposes we have managed to operationalize the concept and bring out practices and consumption preferences that, in our context, are more 'symbolic', that is more expressive and telling for people's identity building and social positioning. The analysis of the survey demonstrates that an index composed in such a way has considerable explanatory power in our context.

In the survey, 18 indicators related to various consumption preferences were aggregated into the Index of Consumerism, embracing phenomena such as recreational shopping, following of advertising, preference for certain clothing and/or cosmetics brands, abiding by a specific style when decorating one's home, considering fit and brand of clothing more important than price and the like (for the detailed composition of the Index see Study V). Placing a very high value on consumerism is characteristic of a small number of people, only 4 per cent of the total sample, whereas 22 per cent had consumerism missing altogether. However, the index elucidates great differences between different age groups, showing clearly that the young generation has been socialised into the values of Western consumer culture to a far greater extent than the older generation. 58 per cent of the 15–19-year-olds have remarkable to very strong consumerist inclinations, whereas the same indicator is only 12 per cent among those over 65 years of age. Predictably, the index of consumerism is much higher in the high income groups. In the group with the highest income (6000 kroons per month per person or more) 63 per cent displayed remarkable to very strong consumerism, while the same indicator was only 25 per cent in the lowest income group (up to 1000 kroons per month per person). In addition, education is an important factor here, indirectly confirming the fact that people with more cultural resources are more inclined towards expressive and identity-oriented consumption. Among the respondents with primary or basic education, 27 per cent displayed remarkable to very high consumerism, whereas the same indicator was 48 per cent among people with higher education (cf. Bourdieu, 2000 [1979]; Holt, 1997; Southerton, 2001).

Further confirmation to claims made here, is given by an analysis conducted by Marju Lauristin (2004) within the same survey: people's self-positioning on

¹⁴ For a more detailed discussion of various meanings of 'consumerism' see Study V.

the social ladder is directly associated with their levels of consumerism. 66 per cent of the upper and 50 per cent of the upper middle stratum display remarkable to very strong consumerism, whereas in the lower stratum the value is only 10 per cent. Consumerism is missing altogether only among 8 per cent of the people in the upper stratum (see Lauristin, 2004). The index of consumerism is also a strong differentiator between urban and country dwellers. In Tallinn, for instance, remarkable to very strong consumerism was evident among 47 per cent of respondents, while in the country the respective value was only 27 per cent. This is further justification for analysing self-representation by city people in order to pin down the sharpest expressions and experiences of Western consumer culture in Estonia.

However, here we can distinguish whether informants talk about their personal experience or attempt to generalize onto the level of the whole society. When reference is made to 'others', 'Estonian consumers at large' or more specifically those with less money and education, they are often depicted as anxiously trying to 'show off' and assert themselves in status competition or trying to emulate the wealthier groups by consuming things that are 'senseless' and 'unaffordable' for the particular people referred to.

Particularly noteworthy are representations depicting *šoppamine* as a form of moulding individual practice into something which conforms to social norms and pressure that urge people to climb up the social ladder by demonstrating their access to and command of the world of commodities. Such *šoppamine* means either public display in shopping centres, practices of, for example, trying on unaffordable clothes or excessive purchase of things – described as unnecessary – in large amounts. In such accounts – not surprisingly by men about women – *šoppamine* almost becomes a pure formality, an end in itself and thus an 'alien scheme' (see Gronow, 1997: 139), succumbing to which is morally reprehensible. The mass of people 'duped' by sales campaigns or the consumer culture system overall, is a recurrent image used to describe the 'victims' of consumer society, with whom none of our informants personally wanted to identify (Study III, IV).

In describing personal consumption patterns, the relation between subjects and objects is relatively more complex. In personal representations of consumption experience, the social status of the informant almost never enters the picture, and if personal aestheticized practices are described, the relationships between the subject and object are mostly articulated in terms of deep individuated engagements with material culture, a search for 'deeper meaning in goods' or the goods that fit perfectly with the perceived self-image of the consumer (Study III, IV). So if social climbing is engaged in, it is almost never acknowledged explicitly and is thematized with the help of personal identity and lifestyle. The other framework within which personal consumption is described is that of 'necessity', 'utility', 'thrift' and 'reason' (cf. Holt, 1997; Southerton, 2001).

The high price of goods can also be a marker of the social status of the purchaser, but at the same time can be a sign of a competent and wise choice of good value (Study III), particularly in the case of people over 45. It is interesting to note that, according to the survey data, when informants are asked about the importance of brands *versus* price, in purchase decisions, price is estimated as more determinant. For example, even among the highest income group there were 33 per cent of respondents who claimed that price was more important than a clothing brand and there were only 19 per cent of those for whom brand was more determining (Study V).

Estonia's new commercial outlets, such as shopping malls, are often portrayed as unable to cater to the special needs of different social groups. For the economically deprived there is almost no access to the abundance of goods because of their relatively high price. For those who regard themselves as sophisticated and competent consumers, these shopping outlets offer too low a level of quality and service. Limited choice, either for high income or low-income consumers, is a recurrent theme, demonstrating that the construct of the limited and small market in the transition economy is often regarded as a scapegoat for several social ills (Study III, IV).

Related to social stratification is the practice of so-called imaginary shopping by those who cannot afford to buy much in the urban shopping malls, but who spend time there nevertheless. For them it is a meaningful way of engaging in the new culture, a cultural form (or a sub-form in the wider concept of recreational shopping) that helps them to come to terms, if only temporarily, with the new culture and socially sharply divided society. These fantasy consumers are mostly female pensioners who have ample time (Study III, IV). Whereas recreational shopping can be viewed highly normatively or even negatively (see Study III, IV), by other social groups, the given sub-group has constructed this as a significant and acceptable cultural practice. As noted above, *šoppamine* does not have to involve actual purchases for other consumers as well. Fantasy consumption, immersion in the world of goods without actually buying anything, is a part of recreational shopping in many cases. However, in the case of the elderly, especially financially deprived elderly women, this practice becomes particularly pronounced, and through it the change in culture from shortage to profusion and their own relative fall on the social ladder is constantly negotiated.

Another theme evident in Study VI (and some of my empirical material not directly presented in the publications in this volume), related to social hierarchies, is the identification of the extreme points of the scale of different shopping outlets. These were most pronounced in Tallinn. One end is the open-air market and the discount store *Säästumarket*, and the other is the department store *Stockmann*. The absence of the latter prevented these distinctions from being as sharp in Tartu. People who frequent these outlets, can, according to the informants, be socially classified as either 'poorer' or 'richer'. However, when

speaking about personal practices, some of the informants who perceived themselves as financially relatively deprived, did visit *Stockmann* to engage in fantasy consumption and sometimes even to purchase everyday items (Study III). This proves that the sign systems associated with various consumption practices are rather volatile and flexible. (Perhaps this is less so with, for example, different product brands, but that remains to be researched further). The rest of the shopping chains and shopping centres in Tallinn and Tartu were understood as being more or less at the centre of the continuum.

It has been suggested (Lauristin, 2004; Saar, 2002) that the 'transition culture' (Kennedy, 2002), or rather a 'transition ideology' (Saar, 2002: 277), has the normative sense of 'from plan to market' as one of its central claims. Even if it provides a frame of reference for criticism, as shown above, it may be claimed that the ideas of 'transition culture' have been well internalized in Estonia, repeatedly portrayed as the success story of transition (see e.g. Åslund, 2001). This ideology, to a large extent, coincides with the basic premises of the Western consumer culture, as described above. Western consumer culture gives an almost heroic role to 'free-choosing' and 'self-relying' consumers, who construct their lifestyle projects (including social status) based on money-mediated consumption decisions. Commercialized mass media have been key factors disseminating the mentality of a successful and hedonistic consumer (Lauristin, 2004).

Indeed, as Study V demonstrates, those showing the highest levels of consumerism value *self-assertion (possession of power, social acknowledgement and interesting life)* highest, whereas spiritual balance (*equality, salvation, beautiful world*) is in negative correlation with consumerism. Also, the people displaying high consumerism identify more with *entrepreneurs, people who are responsible for something and the successful*. People exhibiting low consumerism identify with, for example, *working people, common people, the people from the neighbourhood*, and significantly, with *the poor*. More consumerist people also have a more active lifestyle. Consumerism is remarkable to very strong (62 per cent and 53 per cent respectively) among *diversely active and work and culture-oriented* lifestyle groups. At the same time, those displaying lowest consumerism belong to the *passive* group (consumerism missing among 44 per cent of respondents), *oriented to the written word, traditional* group (the same indicator 25 per cent) and *home-oriented, traditional* group (the same indicator 29 per cent). Thus, consumerism, an active consumption and identity building with the help of commodities, is the way of life of the wealthier and more successful who have formed a new habitus (see Bourdieu, 1998) of the responsible, progressive, active and self-confident. Their value orientations provide a partial explanation for the fact that, similarly to other studies (cf Kennedy, 2002; Veenis, 1999), the elderly informants confirmed, with remarkable nostalgia, that during the Soviet era relationships were more human-to-human, whereas in the capitalist market society, people's relationship to

things has come to dominate. Also, relations to other people are mediated by things, to a large extent. It is also remarkable that these new things that stand between people are often impersonal and devalued compared to the few cherished objects remembered from the Soviet time. This resonates with the loss of ‘civility’ or *kulturnost* critique, nostalgia for the days when people were not so busy with self-assertion. This can be regarded as evidence of estrangement, especially among the older generations (Study III).

In this light, social stratification is often portrayed as an inevitable and even necessary ‘by-product’ of the transformation to a liberal market economy (see Saar, 2002). So, it may be assumed that the objective culture full of new consumer items and cultural forms such as branding, holiday trips abroad or recreational shopping has become a yardstick for many people, against which one’s social standing and success are measured. In cases where these measurements are satisfying to people, they position themselves higher on the social hierarchy and when one measures up poorly against these standards, the outcome is a low self-positioning.

DISCUSSION

My study has dealt, to a large extent, with what Gronow & Warde (2001) have termed 'extra-ordinary' consumption, encapsulated in issues related to image, choice, money and shopping, that is consumption involved in the 'cash-nexus' (Dant, 2000). Although routine consumption, or 'ordinary consumption', has become an important area of study in Western (mainly British and Nordic) consumption studies, I claim that it was more illuminating to start my post-Soviet consumer culture analysis from the viewpoint of the 'extra-ordinary'. In fact, those consumer practices deemed as routine in the West (switching on electricity or drinking a glass of tap water) ceased to be routines when Estonia became independent. The influx of a free market economy and a strong ideology of liberal utilitarianism broke old routines. By no means do I wish to say that instances of 'ordinary' and 'inconspicuous' consumption under post-socialism – indeed, if we come to agree on what they are – should not be studied, but this would probably be the fruitful next step after looking at more 'burning' issues.

My studies, as well as theoretical reading, can be synthesized into a theoretical conceptualization, which partly covers the results of my analyses conducted so far and partly remains to be further researched. It is an ideal-typical model, stemming from the prevailing representations that I have encountered in analysing various texts (including studies done by other scholars), which does not seek to cover all possible consumption practices or interpretations of consumer culture either in the later period of Soviet Estonia or today (see Figure 1 and 2). Also, drawing borderlines between objective and subjective culture is rather arbitrary, because the relevant network of meanings is very complicated and, in lived everyday cultures, the subjective and objective are always entangled. Indeed, as Simmel and Miller have stated, it is an incessant cycle of objectification of subjective life and re-appropriation of objective culture onto the subjective level.

We can divide the objective realm of Soviet consumer culture into several layers. The official and public, 'visible' objective culture layer can be characterized by such key concepts as the discourse or rhetoric about the satisfaction of Soviet consumers' needs and a bright future of material well-being. As the representations show, the 'reality' remembered by consumers was quite different. It mainly meant what has been termed *defitsiit*, a very poor choice of consumer goods that resulted from the deeply ideologized and inefficient state production and distribution system. Based on consumers' representations, it can be said that the commodities of the time were 'grey' and 'unattractive' (cf. Veenis, 1999). On this level, however, the predominant capital, to use Bourdieu's term, was economic capital. With this goes the popular saying that 'back then there was money, but nothing to buy', also

recurrent in different formulations in my empirical material (see also Kõresaar, 2003). The value of money available to people was low, because money alone was not the medium to acquire *defitsiit* commodities, even though it was sufficient for purchasing goods in free supply, the ones now in retrospect often described as tedious and homogenising (Study II). Based on people's retrospective accounts, it can be said that the dominant discourse or 'vocabulary' (Campbell, 1998) was that of the satisfaction of the needs of the Soviet citizen. However, today this is looked back on as 'mere rhetoric'. We may also trace the relationship between the layers of objective culture and people's memories of distinction or social status creation. Again, on that level, based on the official discourse, the dominant representation is that of negation of status differences, of official equality.

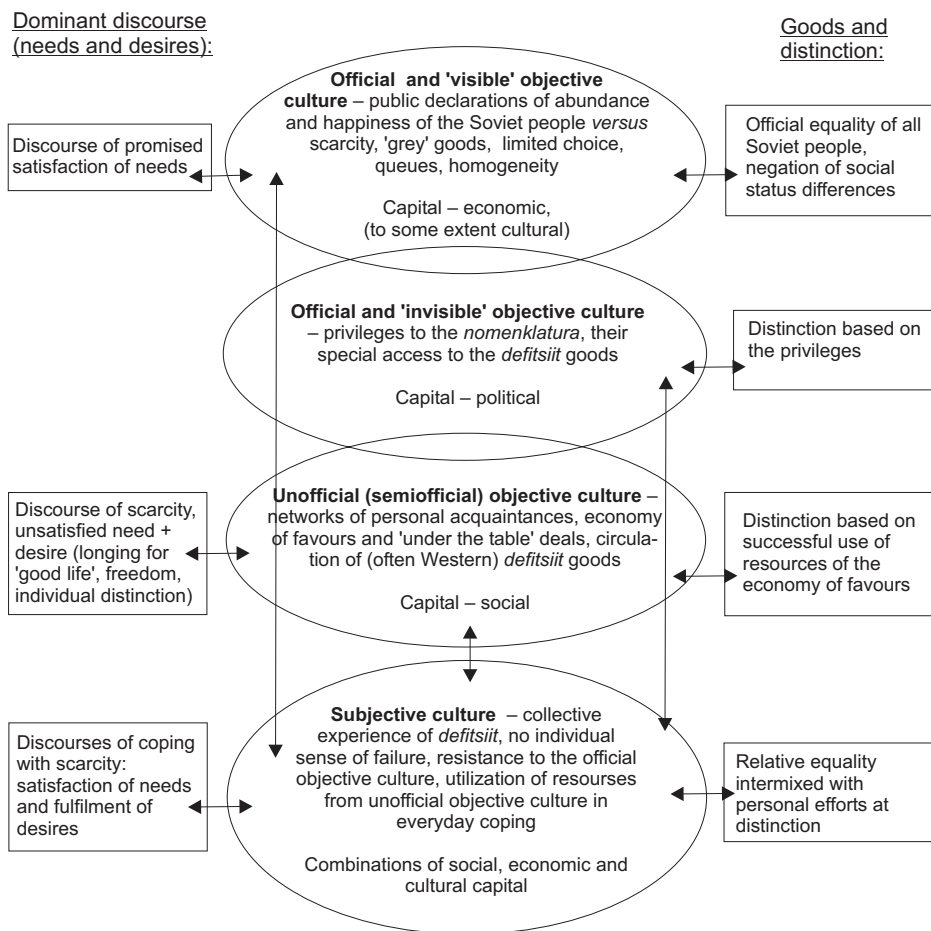


Figure 1 - Representations of consumer culture in Soviet Estonia – missing abundance and freedom of choice

The second layer that can be identified, not very thoroughly explored in my studies though, but nevertheless occasionally referred to, was the so-called invisible part of the official objective culture, which consisted of privileges mainly to the *nomenklatura* (i.e. all kinds of vouchers providing access to scarce goods and services, special shops and provision schemes) based on political loyalty, that is political capital which according to Bourdieu (1998: 16) ‘guarantees its holders a form of private appropriation of goods and public services (residences, cars, hospitals, schools, and so on)’. Such political capital-based access to *defitsiit* goods and services, a ‘special treatment’ of some people, was a strong differentiator, something that undermined the official rhetoric of the unconditional equality of all Soviet people. (For reminiscences of this ‘hidden’ status differentiation during the Soviet time, see focus group data in Saar, 2002). Since that layer is not studied in detail in my work, I can only hypothesize that here we could encounter a complex entanglement of the discourses of need and desire, satisfaction and pleasure, the exact relationships of which remain for further research.

The next layer of the objective culture embraced the informal economy of favours in which social capital to get goods ‘via acquaintances’ (in Estonian *tutvuste kaudu*) was vital. This may be termed the ‘semiofficial’ or even ‘unofficial’ domain, which in the official discourse did not exist, yet was very widely practiced. This part of objective culture is, in retrospect, characterized by underhanded flow of attractive symbolic goods (as well as less symbolic, but nevertheless in short supply, such as construction materials). These items acquired their value through scarcity. These descriptions are sometimes nostalgic, especially by those who were in possession of channels and ties leading to desired goods. Also, as evident in various other sources (see Hindrikus, 2000 and 2003, the collection of *Eesti rahva elulood I–III [Life-Stories of Estonian People]*), the informal economy also engendered humiliation in people who had to ask for favours, particularly when they were in no position to reciprocate them. This unofficial objective culture can be thematized as a kind of buffer zone between the ideological and oppressive official objective culture and the subject. The objects, such as cherished and scarce *defitsiit* goods, were meaningfully re-appropriated into the subjective culture of people. As long as they supported the ideals of people regarding their normative imaginations of the free West and personal or family related projects, they are now, looking back, understood as positive carriers of hopes and dreams. This part of unofficial objective culture also generated the feeling of collectively experienced scarcity, the blame for which could be put on the state, which could not provide for the people, not on the individual (see also Kõresaar, 2003). Thus it can be generalized that the dominant discourse in that domain was that of desire for goods that were not freely available. It was not produced by the advertising industry, as is mostly the case today, but by the – what may be termed as romantic – longing for freedom and the ideal life of welfare and choice as well

as striving for individual lifestyle (cf. Veenis, 1999). It remains an object for future study as to how exactly desire and longing as the driving forces of modern capitalist consumer society, as theorized by Campbell (1987), were experienced and realized in Soviet society. At the same time the discourse of need was there as well, since today, in retrospect, many goods acquired by such 'under the table' deals, are seen as basic necessities (especially foodstuffs). However, the details of the economy of favours fall outside the scope of this research.

In the domain of subjective culture, the collective dimension of scarcity gives rise to individual retrospectives of success in coping with everyday life, of small personal triumphs in overcoming the economy of shortage. Thus, on the subjective culture level, representations tend to concentrate on the satisfaction of needs and gratification of desires, which engender relatively warm memories of those times when consumers 'stood shoulder to shoulder' *vis-à-vis* the oppressive regime. In terms of social status differences the dominant representation on the subjective level is that of equality, however this is intermixed with representations of efforts made at establishing individual distinction utilizing the resources of both official and primarily unofficial objective culture.

The picture of the Western consumer culture of today's capitalist Estonia, as drawn by consumers at present, has become in a sense simpler, because the basic model or conceptual framework is seen to consist of fewer layers (see Figure 2). On the objective culture level there is no longer an explicitly official or unofficial (if we leave illegitimate practices such as theft aside). There is an increasing abundance of 'colourful' and 'seductive' commodities offered in an ever-expanding commercial space, especially in large towns. One of the (at least theoretical) characteristics of this objective culture is freedom of choice, which often proves to be illusory. The primary mediator between these objects and subjects is money. Also, cultural capital is needed, i.e. competence and orientation in the symbolic resources offered by the world of commodities, particularly because the new objective consumer culture is permeated by new cultural forms such as advertising, branding, recreational shopping in shopping malls or tourist trips abroad creating an increasingly sophisticated and aestheticized world of goods competence and orientation, which is deemed, although sometimes scornfully, one of the foundations of social success.

The dominant discourse furthered mainly by mass media (especially advertising and other increasingly sophisticated forms of promotion) is the romantic desire for ever novel goods, which is paralleled by the dominant ethic of thrift and discourse of need that is depicted to govern one's own subjective culture. References to the rhetoric of desire are constantly made on the personal experience level as well. Thus it may also be regarded a relevant part of subjective culture. The clash between needs and desires inherent in the modern Western consumer culture causes moral dilemmas, gives birth to representations of oneself as a moral, thrifty and sensible subject, and a sense of others being misled and seduced by commerce generating false needs.

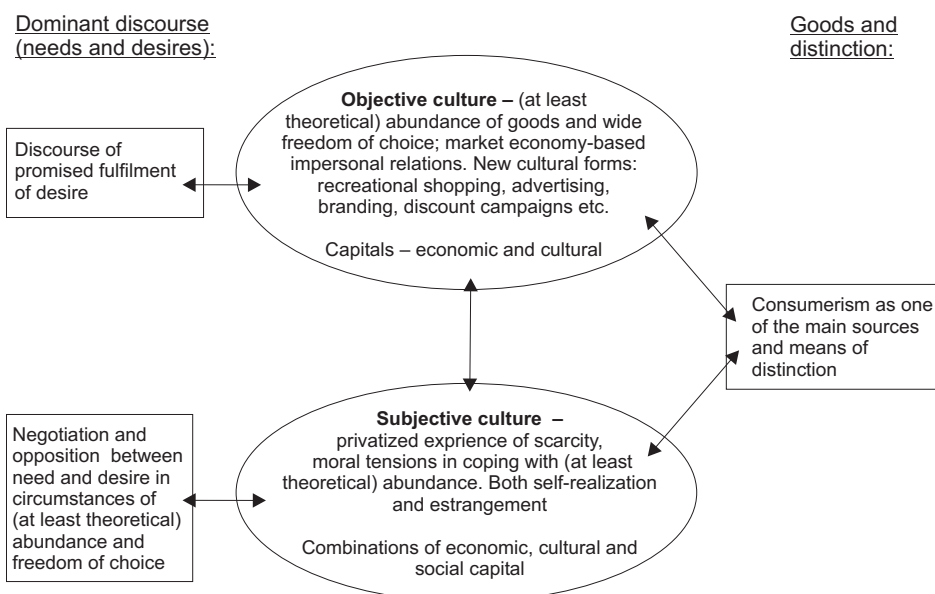


Figure 2 - Representations of consumer culture in post-Soviet Estonia – abundance of goods and freedom of choice

The subjective culture is also understood, to a remarkable degree, in terms of individual scarcities and lacks; the former collective experience of *defitsiit*, which gave birth to the social network- and reciprocity-based exchange, has crumbled. Each subject is understood as standing more or less alone *vis-à-vis* the objective culture of consumer capitalism, primarily mediated by money. This has been crystallized in the second part of the popular dictum cited above: ‘Nowadays there is plenty to buy and no money’, signifying the relative worth of money as compared to the Soviet time. As seen both in the interviews and survey data, what might be encapsulated by the term ‘consumerism’ is the main differentiator of people, the main foundation on which one’s subjective self-positioning on the social ladder is decided, as well as according to which a more general picture of society is drawn.

This conceptualization is, however, only ideal-typical brought to a rather high level of abstraction and, as such, may be open to criticism. For example it does not take into account the full complexity of consumption practices either in the Soviet era or today. Also, it is quite risky to try to generalize subjective culture with the help of a limited number of key concepts. The lived cultures of consumers are, in any case, immeasurably more complex. Therefore I acknowledge that further research is needed on other possible layers of the contemporary objective culture, alongside the model of shopping for commodities using money. It has not been within the scope of this dissertation to explore

cultural forms and practices such as gift exchange or the barter economy (such as ploughing a neighbour's field for a bottle of vodka), production of things (making mushroom preserves or jams or sewing clothes) for oneself and family. In addition, it would be interesting to look at the interrelationships of social and economic capital in the acquisition of more expensive goods at a discount price with the help of acquaintances and the like.

However, I may conclude that the sharpest features that differentiate consumer culture in present-day Estonia from that practiced in the Soviet Union is the entrance of the market economy, which brought about a sophisticated, increasingly aestheticized objective culture characterised by an abundance of goods and freedom of choice that often translates into individual scarcities and constraints and that are seen to generate an ever increasing social divide. For successful coping with this objective culture the main capitals are seen to be money and cultural capital, enabling consumers to engage in symbolic consumption in ways deemed adequate or satisfactory.

This new heavily advertised, branded and distributed objective culture, available to shoppers for money, is a double-edged sword containing both possibilities of culture, as theorised by Simmel: assimilation and re-production of objects and the resulting cultural development of the subject or failure to do so, and the consequent estrangement between people and between people and things. We see both celebrations of opportunities offered by the Western consumer culture and the lament for the devaluing of the 'colourful Western stuff' having a bad effect on people, making them climb on the social ladder and judge their fellow countrymen's worth by their material possessions. This shows that, to use the words of Coser, interpreting Simmel:

As a result of these trends, modern man finds himself in a deeply problematical situation: he is surrounded by a multiplicity of cultural elements, which, although they are not meaningless to him, are not fundamentally meaningful either. They oppress the individual because he cannot fully assimilate them. But he cannot reject them because they belong at least potentially to the sphere of his own cultural development. (1977: 190)

Consumer culture, in its positive and negative potentialities, continues to be a priceless reservoir for social scientists for further research on ever-continuing social transformation and ever-continuing tensions consumers face in their endeavours to meaningfully cope with everyday life. This dissertation has been but a small step on this long road of research.

CONCLUSIONS

In the following, the main conclusions from my studies are summarized.

- Representations of the Soviet and post-Soviet consumer culture in Estonia demonstrate a turn towards aestheticization, post-materialism and increasing sophistication of consumer culture somewhere between 1995 and 1997 (Study I and II).
- Symbolic consumption, aesthetic and identity building-oriented practices (such as those aggregated into the Index of Consumerism) provide resources for people in coping with everyday life and offer many rewards, as well as causing strong estrangement (Study I–V).
- Consumerism is a strong social differentiator, as seen through the eyes of consumers (Study I, III, IV, V).
- Freedom is a very important concept people use to create meaning regarding the transformation to Western consumer culture (Study I, II, III, IV).
- Freedom as a general concept, a contrast to the Soviet restriction, is celebrated. However, based on personal experience, today's consumer world is seen as a source of diverse constraints on freedom (Study III, IV).
- *Defitsiit* is mainly remembered as a collective phenomenon under the Soviet regime, representing state ideology. The state was blamed for inefficiencies and scarcities, and therefore no individual sense of failure resulted. However, today scarcities are seen as privatized and individualized, evoking various types of consumer culture critique, which focus to a large extent on constraints on freedom (Study I, III, IV).
- Criticism of scarcities and constraints lies on a continuum from more individual experiences to totalising social criticism featuring themes such as lack of money, lack of specific goods, lack of service atmosphere, lack of a wide choice of high quality goods as well as social divide which amount to critiques of Estonian transition from socialism. In addition, a general critique of consumer society, not directly related to transition as such, emerges (Study III, IV).
- *Šoppamine* and shopping malls are illuminating concepts through which to look at both individual experience and more general assessments of transition (Study III, IV).
- *Šoppamine* as a concept has a complex web of meanings. It is predominantly represented as a playful, leisurely practice, as recreational shopping. *Šoppamine* does not necessarily involve buying. It is practiced by all income groups and thus may be deemed as accessible and

meaningful for some representatives of each income group (Study III, IV, V).

- Imaginary shopping practiced in shopping centres by the elderly and financially deprived can be understood as a particularly pronounced way of meaningful engagement between the subjective and new objective culture under conditions in which the possibility of making actual purchases is very limited (Study III, IV).
- ‘Need’ and ‘desire’ are constantly negotiated by consumers in their moral self-construction. The concept of ‘need’ provides a particularly strong point of reference for the constitution of a consumer as a moral subject. ‘Need’ is also used to rationalize almost any purchase. Thus ‘need’ is a legitimate, but a flexible, notion (Study III, IV).
- The representations bring to light a fundamental change in how, i.e. through which practices, objective culture relates to subjective culture. The most significant of these changes can be viewed as a shift from an informal economy of personal favours for acquiring scarce and/or symbolically highly valued goods to that of an impersonal and anonymous money economy in which one particularly morally charged cultural form is *šoppamine*. Money economy-based consumer culture is seen both as a liberator and a creator of new opportunities, as well as an significant source of social stratification, erosion of authenticity and the resultant estrangement in Estonian society (Study I–V).

REFERENCES

- Åslund, A. (2001). *Building Capitalism: The Transformation of the Former Soviet Bloc*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bauman, Z. (1988). *Freedom*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Bauman, Z. (1994). *Intimations of postmodernity*. London: Routledge.
- Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bourdieu, P. (2000 [1979]). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Practical Reason : on the Theory of Action*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Caldwell, M. (2004). 'Domesticating the French Fry: McDonald's and Consumerism in Moscow'. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 4(1), 5–24.
- Campbell, C. (1987). *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Campbell, C. (1998). 'Consumption and the Rhetorics of Need and Want', *Journal of Design History* 11(3), 235–246.
- Coser, L. (1977) *Masters of Sociological Thought: Ideas in Historical and Social Context*, 2nd ed., New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich.
- Dant, T. (2000). 'Consumption Caught in the "Cash Nexus"', *Sociology* 34(4), 655–670.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Media Discourse*. London: Arnold.
- Featherstone, M. (1991). *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*. London: Sage.
- Feher, F.; Heller, A. & Markus, G. (1984). *Dictatorship over Needs: An Analysis of Soviet Societies*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Frisby, D. & Featherstone, M. (eds.) (1997). *Simmel on Culture*. London: Sage.
- Fromm, E. (2002 [1942]). *The Fear of Freedom*. London: Routledge.
- Gábor, I. (1979). 'The Second (Secondary) Economy', *Acta Oeconomica* 3(4), 291–311.
- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Gronow, J. (1997). *The Sociology of Taste*. London: Routledge.
- Gronow, J. (2003). *Caviar with Champagne: Common Luxury and Images of Good Life in Stalin's Russia*. Oxford: Berg.
- Gronow, J. & Warde, A. (eds.) (2001). *Ordinary Consumption*. London: Routledge.
- Hall, S. (ed.) (1997). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage.
- Hindrikus (ed.) (2000 and 2003). *Eesti rahva elulood I–III (Life Stories of Estonian People I–III)*. Tallinn: Tänapäev.
- Hion, E.; Lauristin, M & Vihalemm, P. (1988). *Meie muutuv ehulaad*. Tallinn: Eesti Raamat.
- Holt, D. (1997). 'Distinction in America? Recovering Bourdieu's Theory of Taste from its Critics', *Poetics* 25, 93–120.
- Inglehart, R. (1997). *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Kaalep, Ain (2004) 'On olemas ka rämps sõnad' ('Some words are junk words'). *Eesti Päevaleht*, May, 5.

- Kennedy, M. (2002). *Cultural Formations of Post-Communism. Emancipation, Transition, Nation and War*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kress, G. & van Leeuwen, T. (1996). *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge.
- Kõresaar, E. (2003). 'Hea elu normatiivsus. Nõukogudeaegse defitsiidikogemuse kujutamise elulugudes. (Normativity of good life: Depiction of the Soviet shortage of goods in life stories)', in E. Kõresaar & T. Anepaio (eds.) *Mälu kui kultuuritegur: etnoloogilisi perspektiive (Ethnological Perspectives on Memory)*, pp. 150–178. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- Kõresaar, E. (2004). *Memory and History in Estonian Post-Soviet Life Stories. Private and Public, Individual and Collective from the Perspective of Biographical Syncretism*. Dissertationes Ethnologiae Universitatis Tartuensis. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- Lauristin, M. (2004). 'Eesti ühiskonna kihistumine (Stratification of Estonian Society)', in V. Kalmus, M. Lauristin & P. Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt (eds.) *Eesti elavik 21. sajandi algul: Ülevaade uurimuse Mina. Maailm. Meedia tulemustest (Estonian life-world at the beginning of the 21st century. Report on the survey Me. The World. The Media)*. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- Lauristin, M.; Vihalemm, P.; Rosengren, K. E. & Weibull, L. (eds.) (1997). *Return to the Western World. Cultural and Political Perspectives on the Estonian Post-Communist Transition*. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- Lehtonen, T.-K. (1999). *Rahan vallas. Ostoksilla käyminen ja markkinatalouden arki (Subjects of money: shopping and the everyday life in market economy)*. Helsinki: Tutkijaliitto.
- Lury, C. (1996). *Consumer Culture*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Miller, D. (1987). *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Miles, M. B. & Huberman, M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis. An Expanded Sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Nigul, A. (2004). *Elulaadi tüübid ja meediakasutus (Types of Lifestyle and Media Use)*. M.A. thesis. Department of Journalism and Communications, University of Tartu.
- Oakes, G. (ed.) (1984). *Georg Simmel: On Women, Sexuality and Love*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Oushakine, S. A. (2000). 'The Quantity of Style: Imaginary Consumption in the New Russia', *Theory, Culture, Society* 17(5), 97–120.
- Patico, J. (2002). 'Chocolate and Cognac: Gifts and the Recognition of Social Worlds in Post-Soviet Russia', *Ethnos* 67(3), 345–368.
- Postimees online, May 5, 2004. 'Kaubanduskeskuste areng on olnud tempokas' ('Development of Shopping Centres has been Rapid'). URL: <http://www.postimees.ee/190504/lisad/kinnisvara/133411.php>. Last consulted: Oct. 26, 2004.
- Prus, R. & Dawson, L. (1991). 'Shop 'til you drop: Shopping as recreational and laborious activity', *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 16(2), 145–164.
- Rahu, K. (2004). '*Sõppamise*' sooline representatsioon (*Gendered Representation of Soppamine*). M.A. thesis. Department of Journalism and Communications, University of Tartu.
- Richards, B.; McRury, I. & Botterill, J. (2000). *Dynamics of Advertising*. Amsterdam: Hardwood Academic Publishers.

- Ritzer, G. (2000). *Sociological Theory*. 5th edition. Singapore: McGraw-Hill.
- Roo, R. (2004). *Tarbijakäitumine ostukeskuses: Tartu Lõunakeskuse ja Tallinna Rocca al Mare näitel. (Consumer Behaviour in a Shopping Centre: the Case of Tartu Lõunakeskus and Tallinn Rocca al Mare Centre.)* B.A. thesis. Department of Journalism and Communications, University of Tartu.
- Saar, E. (2002). 'Kihistumise süvenemine Eestis 1990. aastatel – kas paratamatus?' in E.Saar (ed.) *Trepist alla ja üles. Edukad ja ebaedukad postsotsialistlikus Eestis*. Tallinn: Academy of Sciences Press.
- Sampson, S. (1986). 'The Second Economy in Eastern Europe and Soviet Union', *Annals of the American Association of Political and Social Science* 493, 120–136.
- Shevchenko, O. (2002). "'In Case of Fire Emergency": Consumption, security and the meaning of durables in a transforming society', *Journal of Consumer Culture* 2(2), 147–170.
- Simmel, G. (1997 [1911]). 'The concept and tragedy of culture', in D. Frisby, & M. Featherstone (eds.) *Simmel on Culture*, pp. 55–75. London: Sage.
- Simmel, G. (1997 [1916a]). 'The crisis of culture', in D. Frisby & M. Featherstone (eds.) *Simmel on Culture*, pp. 90–101. London: Sage.
- Simmel, G. (1997 [1916b]). 'The change in cultural forms', in D. Frisby & M. Featherstone (eds.) *Simmel on Culture*, pp. 103–107. London: Sage.
- Simmel, G. (1997 [1918]). 'The conflict of modern culture', in D. Frisby & M. Featherstone (eds.) *Simmel on Culture*, pp. 75–90. London: Sage.
- Simmel, G. (1990 [1900]). *The Philosophy of Money*. London: Routledge.
- Slater, D. (1997). *Consumer Culture and Modernity*. London: Routledge.
- Slater, D. & Ritzer, G. (2001). 'Editorial', *Journal of Consumer Culture* 1(1), 5–8.
- Slater, D. & Tonkiss, F. (2001). *Market Society. Markets and Modern Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Southerton, D. (2001). 'Consuming Kitchens. Taste, context and identity formation', *Journal of Consumer Culture* 1(2), 179–203.
- Veenis, M. (1999). 'Consumption in East Germany: the Seduction and Betrayal of Things', *Journal of Material Culture* 4 (1), 79–112.
- Verdery, K. (1996). *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* Digital download. Princeton University Press.
- Vihalemm, P. (2004). 'Uurimismetoodika' in V. Kalmus, M. Lauristin & P. Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt (eds.) *Eesti elavik 21. sajandi algul: Ülevaade uurimuse Mina. Maailm. Meedia tulemustest*. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- Vihalemm, T. (1997) 'Changing Discourses on Values in Estonia', in M. Lauristin, P. Vihalemm, K.E. Rosengren and L. Weibull (eds.) *Return to the Western World*, pp. 265–278. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- Weber, M. (2002 [1930]). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Routledge.

SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Tarbimiskultuuri representatsioonid taasiseseisvunud Eestis: transformatsioonid ja pinged

Tarbimiskultuuri uurimist kui viimastel kümnenditel kiiresti kasvanud valdkonda võib iseloomustada erinevate distipliinide ja metodoloogiate lõikumispunktina. Post-sotsialistlikes ühiskondades areneva tarbimiskultuuri analüüs on aga alles üsna noor uurimisala, mille küpsemisse siinne väitekiri annab oma panuse.

Käesoleva töö aluseks olnud uurimused võib jaotada kahte etappi. Esimesse kuuluvad **I** ja **II** uurimus, mille keskmes on vastavalt tarbimiskultuuri representatsioonid mobiilside reklaamtekstis ning tudengite poolt kirjutatud esseedes ning nendega läbiviidud intervjuudes. Teise etappi kuuluvad uurimused **III–V**, mille aluseks on lühi- ja süvaintervjuud eesti keelt kõnelevate Tallinna ja Tartu tarbijatega, mis keskenduvad suhteliselt uudsele “šoppamise” mõistele ning ostukeskuste teemale. Lisaks on kasutatud Tartu Ülikooli ajakirjanduse ja kommunikatsiooni osakonna ja uuringufirma Faktum poolt läbiviidud küsitluse *Mina. Maailm. Meedia* andmeid (**III** ja **V** uurimus). **VI** uurimus on eestikeelsele auditooriumile mõeldud ülevaade, mis uut empiirilist andmestikku ei sisalda.

Töö eesmärgid võib asetada kahele tasandile. **Makrotasandi eesmärk on uurida sotsio-kultuurilist transformatsiooni taasiseseisvunud Eestis läbi tarbimiskultuuri prisma.** See laiem eesmärk jaotub omakorda alateemadeks:

- esmalt analüüsin, kuidas representeeritakse transformatsiooni nõukogude tarbimiskultuurist läänelikku tarbimiskultuuri ehk kuidas fundamentaalset muutust ühest ühiskonnatüübist teise mõtestatakse tarbimise kontekstis;
- teiseks vaatlen, millal ja kuidas on taasiseseisvunud Eesti tarbimiskultuuris endas toimunud muutused ja nihked.

Konkreetsamad fookused, mille abil olen analüüsi organiseerinud on järgmised:

- vabaduse tähenduse muutus tarbimise ja tarbekaupade kontekstis;
- võrdlused tänase Eesti, hilisnõukogude Eesti ning Lääne kujundi vahel.

Väitekirja mikrotasandi eesmärk on kaardistada pingeid Eesti praeguses läänelikus tarbimiskultuuris nõukogudeaegse kogemuse taustal, kasutades selleks peamiselt individuaalseid tarbimispraktikaid käsitlevaid eneserepresentatsioone. Selle üldteema all fookuseerun järgmistele alateemadele: kuidas representeerivad tarbijad pingeid vajaduste ja ihade vahel, vabaduse ja piirangute vahel, külluse ja puuduse vahel. Samuti uurin,

kuidas representeeritakse tarbimist kui positsioneerimisvahendit sotsiaalse staatuse konstrueerimises.

Väitekirja teoreetiline raamistik on multidistsiplinaarne, olles inspireeritud nii sotsioloogide, antropoloogide kui ka kultuuri-uurijate tööst.

Tarbimiskultuuri räägitakse enamasti modernse Lääne kontekstis, tuues peamiseks defineerivateks kriteeriumiteks indiviidi valikuvabaduse, rahamajanduse poolt tagatava impersonaalsuse ning universaalsuse ehk igäühe vähemalt teoreetilise võimaluse raha olemasolu korral osta mistahes kaupu, ning vajaduste küllastamatuse (vt Slater, 1997). Mina aga ei reserveeri "tarbimiskultuuri" terminit ainult kapitalistliku Lääne jaoks, vaid võtan eelduseks, et omalaadne tarbimiskultuur oli olemas ka Nõukogude Liidus, olgugi, et paljudes aspektides võis see olla lääneliku variandi kõverpeegel. Kasutan neid mõisteid läbivalt koos vajalike adjektiividega: seega kõrvutan "nõukogudeaegset tarbimiskultuuri" ja "läänelikku tarbimiskultuuri" ning püüan selgitada, millistena paistavad need erinevused mitmesugustes tarbimiskultuuri representatsioonides. Lähtun sellest, et liikumine sotsialismist kapitalismi on inimeste ja asjade suhet põhjalikult muutnud, toonud endaga kaasa uusi viise kaupade ja teenuste oma isiklikku ellu inkorporeerimiseks. Samas on uus tarbimiskultuur põhjustanud ka mitmesuguseid pingeid, mida nõukogude ühiskonnas nii teravalt ei kogetud.

Töö esimese etapi üheks võtmemõisteks on tarbijavabadus. Slateri (1997) kohaselt on see kodanikuvabaduse igapäevane realisatsioon. Samuti väidab ta, nagu ka mitmed teised autorid (vt nt Bauman, 1988, 1994, 2000), et nõukogude ühiskonnas sulasid kodanikuvabadus ja tarbimisvabadus kokku üheks unistuste objektiks.

Teine oluline teoreetiliste teemade ring, mis esimese etapi uurimusi tugevalt mõjutas, oli diskussioon modernsetest ning postmodernsetest väärtustest (vt Inglehart, 1997). Siin kõrvutatakse modernne vertikaalse staatushierarhia tarbimise kaudu konstrueerimine nn postmodernse iroonilise ja mängulise identiteediloomega, milles mängib suurt rolli estetiseeritud tarbimine (vt Feathers-tone, 1991).

Esimene uurimus keskendub mobiilside trükireklaamide analüüsile aastaist 1991–2001. Vaatlen, kuidas vabaduse tähendus neis reklaamides aastate jooksul muutub. Teise uurimuse aluseks on 45 Tartu Ülikooli tudengite poolt kirjutatud esseed ning 25 Tartu Ülikooli ning Tallinna Tehnikaülikooli tudengitega läbi viidud intervjuud. Kõikide informantide sünniaasta jääb vahemikku 1977–1983.

Teises uurimisetapis keskendusin ostukeskustele ning nendega seotud praktikatele ja mõistetele nagu "šoppamine", millel on tugev sümboliline laeng. Püüdsin ühelt poolt välja tuua läänelikus tarbimiskultuuris olemasolevaid pingeid, nt pinget soovide/ihade ja vajaduste diskursuste vahel ning teisalt mõtestada tänaseid tarbijatepoolseid representatsioone nõukogude kogemuse taustal. Teoreetilise raami moodustab esmalt C. Campbelli (1987, 1998) puritaanliku-utilitaristliku taustaga vajaduste diskursuse ning romantilise taustaga iha dis-

kursuse ehk hedonistliku eetika vastandumise käsitlus. Teisalt kasutan mitmete antropoloogide töid nõukogude tarbimiskultuurist (vt nt Verdery, 1996). Üldistav ning abstraktsem teoreetiline mõtestus on saanud inspiratsiooni G. Simmelist ning tema tõlgendusest D. Milleri (1987) poolt, mille olen võtnud aluseks nõukogude ja tänase Eesti läänelikku tarbimiskultuuri kõrvutava, representatsioonidel baseeruva mudeli koostamiseks.

Kokku viisin teises uuringuetapis koos partneritega läbi 27 süvaintervjuud peamiselt informantide kodudes ning 49 lühiintervjuud ostukeskustes. Valimisse on püütud kaasata võimalikult heterogeenseid juhtumeid (III ja IV uurimus). Kaks kolmandikku intervjuudest on tehtud Tallinnas ja üks kolmandik Tartus. III uurimuse fookuses on samade linnade üle 45-aastased tarbijad, kelle puhul on teravdatud tähelepanu all just tänane kogemus nõukogude mälestuste taustal. IV uurimus keskendub detailsemalt “šoppamise” kui mõiste tähendusele Tallinna ja Tartu tarbijate jaoks. V uurimus kasutab küsitluse *Mina. Maailm. Meedia* andmeid.

Käesoleva väitekirja peamised järeldused on järgmised:

- Nõukogudeaegse ning taasiseseisvunud Eesti tarbimiskultuuri representatsioonid toovad esile nihke tarbimise estetiseerumise, postmaterialiseerumise ning suureneva rafineerituse suunas. Nihke toimumise ajaks võib pidada ajavahemikku 1995–1997 (I ja II uurimus).
- Sümboliline tarbimine, sh esteetikale ning identiteediloomele orienteeritud praktikad (mis on koondatud V uurimuses kasutatud konsumerismi indeksisse) pakub tarbijaile eneseteostust ning ressursse igapäevaeluga toimetulekuks, olles samas paljudele ka tugevaks võõrandumise allikaks (I–V uurimus).
- Tarbijate silme läbi nähtuna on konsumerism tugev sotsiaalne eristaja (I, III, IV ja V uurimus).
- Vabadus on väga oluline mõiste, mille kaudu inimesed tähendustavad transformatsiooni läänelikku tarbimiskultuuri (I, II, III ja IV uurimus).
- Vabadusse kui nõukogudeaegsetele piirangutele vastanduvasse üldmõistesse suhtutakse positiivselt. Samas tuuakse isiklikele kogemustele tuginedes välja mitmekesised vabaduse piirangud, mis esinevad tänapäevases tarbimiskultuuris (III ja IV uurimus).
- *Defitsiiti* mäletatakse peamiselt kollektiivse nähtusena, mis sümboliseeris riiklikku ideoloogiat. Tarbijate varustamise ebaefektiivuses ning puuduses süüdistati riiki ning selle tulemusena ei tooda tänastes representatsioonides üldjuhul esile tollaegset isiklikku ebaõnnestumisest. Seevastu tänast puudust nähakse privatiseerununa ja individualiseerununa, mis omakorda kutsub esile mitmesugust tarbimiskultuuri kriitikat. See keskendub peamiselt vabaduse igapäevaelus kogetud piiratusele (I, III ja IV uurimus).
- Valikuvabaduse piirangute kriitika moodustab kontinuumi individuaalsetest kogemustest üldistava ühiskonnakriitikani. Kriitika keskmes on

sellised teemad nagu rahapuudus, erivajadustele vastavate kaupade puudumine, teenindusatmosfääri viletsus, kõrgekvaliteediliste kaupade valiku vähesus kui ka sotsiaalne kihistumine. Neid kõiki võib tuua transitsioonikriitika ühishimmetaja alla. Lisaks esineb üldine tarbimisühiskonna kriitika, mis ei ole otseselt seotud Eesti kui siirdetühiskonna tarbimiskultuuri spetsiifikaga (III ja IV uurimus).

- “Šoppamine” ning kaubanduskeskused on tugeva sümbolilise laenguga ning keerulise tähendusvõrgustikuga mõisted, mille kaudu on viljakas uurida nii individuaalseid tarbimiskogemusi kui üldisemaid hinnanguid sotsiokultuurilistele muutustele (III ja IV uurimus).
- “Šoppamise” tähendusväljal on peamised mängulisuse, puhkuse, vaba aja veetmise ja esteetikaga seotud konnotatsioonid. “Šoppamine” ei pruugi hõlmata tegelikku ostu sooritamist. “Šoppamist” praktiseerivad teatud määral kõik tulurühmad ning seega võib seda pidada kättesaadavaks ning tähenduslikuks praktikaks osale tarbijaist igas sissetulekurühmas (III, IV ja V uurimus).
- Nn imaginaarset ostmist/”šoppamist”, mis on iseloomulik kaubanduskeskusi külastavatele vanemaealistele ja väheste finantsvahenditega tarbijatele, võib pidada subjektiivse ning objektiivse kultuuri tähendusliku seostamise üheks eredaks ning omapäraseks viisiks tingimustes, kus tegelike ostude sooritamise võimalus on minimaalne (III ja IV uurimus).
- Tarbijate moraalse enesekonstruksiooni ühe olulise telje moodustab pidev “vajaduse” ja “iha” kõrvutamine. “Vajaduse” mõiste moodustab tarbija kui moraalse subjekti eneserepresentatsioonis eriti olulise pidepunkti. “Vajadust” kasutatakse mistahes ostude motiveerimiseks. Seega on “vajadus” legitiimne, kuid paindlik mõiste (III ja IV uurimus).
- Siin analüüsitud representatsioonid heidavad valgust sellele, kuidas on muutunud objektiivset ja subjektiivset kultuuri suhestavad praktikad. Kõige märkimisväärssem on nihe informaaalselt isiklikel teenetel rajanevalt majanduselt – mis keskendus defitsiitsete ja/või sümboliliselt kõrgelt väärtustatud kaupade hankimisele – impersonaalsele ja anonüümsele rahamajandusele, mille üks eriti tugevate moraalsete konnotatsioonidega kultuurivorme on “šoppamine”. Rahamajandusel põhinevat tarbimiskultuuri nähakse ühelt poolt vabastaja ning võimaluste loojana ning teisalt sotsiaalse kihistumise, autentsuse kadumise ning sellest tekkivate sotsiaalsete probleemide, sh võõrandumise allikana (I–V uurimus).

Peamiste representatsioonide ning teoreetilise kirjanduse põhjal tehtud järeldused olen sünteesinud G. Simmeli objektiivse ja subjektiivse kultuuri käsitlusest inspireeritud mudeliks (vt Joonised 1 ja 2 ingliskeelse ülevaateartikli juures). Objektiivne kultuur hõlmab objekte (sh kaubad) ja kultuurivorme, mis on subjektiülesed, toimivad justkui oma loogika kohaselt (Simmel, 1997 [1911, 1916, 1918]). Objektiivne kultuur pakub indiviidi arenguks toetust, kuid samas võib muutuda ka võõrandavaks ning ahistavaks, kui indiviid enam ei suuda

objektiivse kultuuri massi ning rafineeritust haarata ning oma subjektiivsesse kultuuri ehk individuaalsesse ellu kaasata. Selles kahetises potentsiaalis seisneb Simmeli teooria kohaselt modernse kultuuri tragöödia.

Nõukogudeaegse tarbimiskultuuri objektiivse osa võib tinglikult jaotada kolmeks kihiks. Ametliku objektiivse kultuuri nähtava osa moodustab ühelt poolt külluse ja nõukogude inimeste vajaduste rahuldamise ning inimeste täieliku võrdsuse diskursus ning teisalt kauplustes valitsenud tühjus ning tarbimisvabaduse puudus. Siin toimis peamiselt rahaline kapital, kuid see polnud piisav defitsiitsete kaupade hankimiseks.

Nähtamatusse ossa võib liigitada poliitilise kapitali baasil toimunud nomenklatuurile määratud privileegide ja erikohtlemise süsteemi, mis tagas eelistatud ligipääsu paljudele kaupadele ja teenustele. Sel tasandil said poliitilise kapitali kaudu hangitud kaubad hierarhia ja eristumise üheks elemendiks.

Objektiivse kultuuri mitteametliku osa moodustas "letialuste" kaupade hankimise võrgustikuline süsteem, milles maksis peamiselt sotsiaalne kapital, domineeris rahuldamata vajaduste ning lääneliku tarbimiskultuuri igatsuse diskursus. Samuti oli defitsiitsete kaupade hankimise edukus teatud määral sotsiaalse staatuselooma allikaks.

Subjektiivse kultuuri tasandil võime välja tuua, et tänased representatsioonid keskenduvad ennekõike defitsiidikogemuse kollektiivsusele ning individuaalsetele triumfidele puuduse ja piirangutega toimetulekul. Subjektiivset kultuuri iseloomustab samuti kollektiivselt tajutud vastupanu objektiivsele tarbimisvabaduse puudumisest kantud kultuurile. Subjektiivne kultuur hõlmas endas paljusid erinevaid situatiivseid kapitalide (majandusliku, sotsiaalse, kultuurilise) kombinatsioone.

Tänapäevase tarbimiskultuuri mudel on representatsioonide põhjal mõnevõrra üheplaanilisem. Ühelt poolt iseloomustab objektiivset kultuuri uute ostukohtade ja võimaluste rohkus, kaupade (vähemalt näiline) küllus ning ka paljud uued kultuurivormid "šoppamisest" reklaamini. Sel tasandil on keskne turunduskommunikatsiooni poolt õhutatud ihade diskursus, mis kutsub otsima üha uusi tarbimisest saadavaid naudinguid. Peamiste kapitaliliikidena nähakse majanduslikku kapitali ehk raha, mis võimaldab ligipääsu kaupadele ja teenustele. Teisalt on üha olulisem ka kultuuriline kapital, mis annab ressursi osta ja tarbida "õigeid" asju ja "õigel" viisil.

Subjektiivse kultuuri tasandil võib välja tuua puudusekogemuse privateerimise, mis muudab näilise külluse ja piiramatute tarbimisvabaduse paljudel juhtudel illusoorseks. Siin toimub pidev "lääbikäimine" vajaduste ja iha diskursuse vahel. Tänapäevase subjektiivse kultuuri puhul tulevad selgelt esile tarbimiskultuuri poolt pakutavad vastandlikud võimalused: eneseteostus ning rikkalik identiteediloomine ning teisalt võõrandumine ning isikliku läbikukkumise kogemus. Konsumerismi, just selle sümbolilisemas, estetiseeritud tähenduses, nagu kasutame mõistet V uurimuses, nähakse ühe olulise sotsiaalse kihistumise allika ja väljendusviisina.

PUBLICATIONS

I

Keller, M. (2005, forthcoming). Freedom calling: telephony, mobility and consumption in post-socialist Estonia. Manuscript accepted for publication in *European Journal of Cultural Studies*.

All figures are reproduced with the permission of respective companies.

Freedom calling: telephony, mobility and consumption in post-socialist Estonia

ABSTRACT

The present paper focuses on the development of consumer culture and specifically the notion of consumer freedom in the transitional society of Estonia. Drawing on the work of Zygmunt Bauman and Don Slater as well as the notion of 'transition culture' proposed by Michael Kennedy, it investigates the importance of Western goods and Western notions of consumer choice in anchoring emerging conceptions of individual freedom in post-socialist countries. This theme is explored through an analysis of a consumer item with a particularly high sign value in Estonia – the mobile phone. The analysis details the transformation discourses around freedom in print advertisements for mobile telephony in the decade from 1991–2001 demonstrating how over this period, the meaning of freedom as a value shifted from political and economic conceptions to an individualised discourse of consumer choice emphasising hedonism, self-expression and leisure.

Key words: freedom, mobile telephony, advertising, post-socialist context, consumer culture

INTRODUCTION

The transition from socialism and the 'return to the Western world' has proved to be a complicated and problem-ridden process for all the countries formerly located within the Soviet bloc. For many people within these societies the arrival of consumer choice epitomises both a freedom from oppression and the freedom to assume responsibility for one's life. This double sense of individual liberation is expressed through the proliferating forms and artefacts of an emerging marketing culture complexly shaped by the intersection of three influences: the socialist heritage; the specific context of transformation linked to the reassertion of the nation state and a free market economy; and increasing immersion in a global consumer and media culture (see Stamenova, 1999).

Estonia is an interesting case, since its post-communist development, particularly in the economic sphere, has been rapid, leading to its promotion as a 'success story' both in the West and in Estonia (see also Kennedy, 2002). This has a lot to do with its unique history. Estonia and the other Baltic states were

always considered a 'Soviet West'. Their closer ties with foreign countries and mass media (mainly Finnish TV) made the Iron Curtain appear more transparent for those looking outwards. This openness to Western influence became ever stronger after the mid 1960s when the first regular ferry line started operation between Tallinn and Helsinki. These links created a specific milieu of 'Western-ness', which served as a magnet for the Russian intelligentsia. As one Russian journalist recalls:

We were looking for what we did not have,' says Leonid Parfiyonov, journalist from the TV channel NTV who as a journalism student of the Leningrad University used to go to a Baltic capital by the night train and back the next night. 'For instance an opportunity to drink coffee. Or listen to the music that was more rhythmic than here. It was a bit of air, although not maybe the freshest one. (Liik, 2000)

In order to unpick how freedom as a value has been encoded in post-socialist Estonia I have chosen to look at the connotations carried by advertisements for one particularly resonant consumer good – the mobile telephone- on the assumption that advertising is one of the most influential 'circulators' of the socio-cultural meanings attached to a commodity. But before moving on to this case study we need to look a little more closely at the shifting meanings of freedom more generally.

FREEDOM IN THE POST-SOCIALIST CONTEXT

The meaning of 'freedom' in the post-socialist context is complicated. On the one hand it is conceived primarily as freedom from oppression and restraint.

In a totalitarian regime however, there is a strong link between the lack of political freedom and the stifling of consumer choice. The Soviet project of rational planning colonised the individual life-world not only through various party institutions but also through the provision of standardised, 'grey' consumer goods. In this context Western commodities came to play an important role not only in personal dreams and hopes but in the creation of a collective 'resistance identity' that denied immersion in a mass of 'equal comrades' (see also Keller and Vihalemm, 2001 and 2003). As Don Slater (1997) has noted:

...while officially denigrated (and linked to the decadence of the west) the heroic consumer who connects freedom and social dynamism through the market pursuit of self-interest seemed to persist. Consumer culture survived in the seeming desperation for western consumer goods, for a culture of Coke and jeans: culturally western consumption represented material success and private pleasures, but also the outcome and evidence of personal freedom. (1997: 36)

Western consumer goods and consumption habits operated not only as markers of individual success however, but also – at least during the late Soviet period and the early years of transition – ethno-romantic symbols of collective freedom, tangible proofs of a free Estonian nation state. Thus the symbolism carried by Western consumer society for the inhabitants of the socialist bloc was very much ‘of western modernity in its heroic phase (enterprising individualism, rejection of authority in private life, autonomy defined as self-creation...)’ (Slater, 1997: 36). Re-asserting these values and one’s cultural belonging to the West was a crucial issue for the socialist countries of Europe who had for decades retained a strong resistance against the Soviet ‘civilisational pathology’. It was a question of their national and cultural survival.

However, the development of the former socialist countries after the collapse of the Soviet empire did not proceed entirely as many commenators would have wished. As Mikko Lagerspetz has put it: ‘a mirror had appeared from behind the “iron curtain”’ (1997: 50). Western socialists were unpleasantly surprised by the realisation that: ‘civil society meant consumer society, civic freedom meant freedom to shop freely’ (Slater, 1997: 37).

However, for many ‘learning to be free’ was a painful process and the negative side of freedom – confusion, aloneness, and feelings of individual insignificance and powerlessness – was vividly felt after the shock therapy of severing the bonds with the state (which although forced, had created a certain sense of security) (see Fromm, 2002 [1942]). For Fromm, writing in the 1940’s with Hitler ascendent, ‘fear of freedom’ was driving people into the embrace of authoritarian regimes. Now, as Bauman (2000) argues, the present fluidity of capitalist modernity, the ‘postmodern’ playfulness and ever-increasing melting of all solids has pushed those in search of a modicum of certainty and control over everyday life into the shopping mall since the ability to ‘shop around’ in the marketplace of identities offers the most accessible way to create a coherent individual identity narrative, now that the building blocks formerly provided by work, family, class or religious ties are becoming increasingly shaky (see also Giddens, 1991). Focus group research conducted in the former Soviet Republics, including Estonia, by Michael Kennedy (2002) has confirmed that ‘freedom of choice in consumption’ is one of the most common ways of talking about freedom. At the same time, as Kennedy notes, ‘While celebrating freedom of choice in consumer goods, most people followed with a lament that of course not everyone can afford that choice’ (2002: 188). Thus people are invited to immerse themselves in the capitalist consumer market full of choice, and to see consumption as ‘a fundamental component of day-to-day activity’ (Giddens, 1991: 80), even though they often have very limited resources. The result is that for many the long-yearned for expansion of choice feeds a sense of insecurity.

THE CONTEXT OF ESTONIA

Estonia's return to the West (see Lauristin, 1997 and Lauristin and Vihalemm, P., 1997) has to a large extent taken the path of neo-liberalism where the individuals are left to their own devices. The radical reforms of the early nineties freed all prices (except some public utilities) and eliminated all tariffs and quotas on foreign trade. At the same time, social programmes for retired people, young families, and the disabled failed to provide an adequate safety net. Consequently, although many Western politicians and businessmen have dubbed Estonia a 'Baltic Tiger', it is a country where the individual quite often has to face socially produced risks alone (see Beck, 1997 [1986]; Bauman, 2000), often with scant resources.

The rapid development of Western consumer culture has played an important role in this painful process of liberation and its concomitant social problems:

Changes in material culture are represented in symbolic language referring to success, prosperity, free choice and the closeness of Estonia to the West. Conspicuous consumption and the symbolism of public behaviour are quickly learned by those who want to show their excellent adaptation to the expectations of the new world. At the same time, for a majority of people this lesson is quite painful, because they must read the signs of their own failure. (Lauristin, 1997: 39)

The fundamental process of social transformation has been accompanied by a major shift in the meaning of 'freedom'. Once the collective political freedom sought for by the 'unity of a nation gloriously rallying during manifestations of the Singing Revolution' (Lauristin, 1997: 40) was re-gained, other aspects of freedom moved to the fore. As T. Vihalemm has argued, on the basis of depth interviews conducted in the mid 1990s, by 1995 it was already becoming clear that: '...these concepts [equality and freedom] which previously evoked a unified and strong ideological context are now related to everyday personal experiences – in the case of freedom meaning freedom of individual action...' (1997: 278).

Freedom of individual action can of course be embodied in the figure of the entrepreneur whose competition-stimulated energy fuels the neoliberal economy. The 'pioneer' starting up his or her own business is the quintessential hero of this narrative (see Bauman, 1988) and offers a potent role model. At the same time, other values have also been gaining ground placing more importance on self-expression, enjoyment, and emotion (see Inglehart, 1997). The new heroes of this parallel narrative, mainly constructed by the ever-increasing volume of marketing texts, are hedonistic consumers continually re-styling their selves.

Lauristin and T.Vihalemm are explicit about this shift towards consumerism in Estonia. Basing their argument on the extensive data produced by the Balticom research programme carried out in 1991–5, they claim that:

...during the five years of transition the change in the value system in Estonia has been in the direction of postmaterialist values. A significant role in this process has been played by a growing influence of the Western entertainment industry (soap operas, movies and commercials), but more important is an increasing consumerism of the transitional society as a whole /.../ The younger generations in particular are rapidly integrating into the international youth culture, assuming the individualistic-hedonistic value orientations which prevail there. (1997: 255–256; see also Inglehart, 1997)

This shift is also confirmed by RISC research conducted between 1996 and 2000 which suggests that Estonian value orientations will be significantly shaped in the coming years by concepts of ‘connectedness and interaction’ and ‘hedonism and emotions’ (Uba, 2001)¹.

Here we come back to Bauman:

The extent to which freedom grounded in consumer choice, notably consumers’ freedom of self-identification through the use of mass-produced and merchandized commodities, is genuine or putative is a notoriously moot question. Such freedom cannot do without market-supplied gadgets and substances. But given that, how broad is the happy purchasers’ range of fantasy and experimentation? (2000: 84)

One ‘market-supplied gadget’ that has acquired remarkable sign value in Estonia, as in many other countries (see for example Varbanov, 2002), is the mobile phone. Consequently, exploring the shifting discourses around mobile phones offers a particularly fruitful way of shedding light on this ‘moot question’.

¹ RISC is an international value tracking and comparison system that was developed in France in 1980 by the International Research Institute on Social Changes. Since 2000 the Estonian market research company EMOR is the RISC license holder for the Baltics and conducts regular value studies according to this methodology. Mari Uba with whom the author made an interview is the project manager of RISC in EMOR. RISC reports themselves were unavailable for the use of the author since they are commercially ordered by companies and cannot be freely distributed.

MOBILE TELEPHONY AS A SYMBOL OF FREEDOM

According to the International Telecommunication Union (2003) the mobile phone penetration rate in Estonia was 65 subscribers per 100 inhabitants in 2002. Among the countries of the former socialist bloc this places it third after Slovenia (83) and the Czech Republic (85). However, the a representative survey (n=1470) conducted at the end of 2002 and beginning of 2003 by the Department of Journalism and Communications of the University of Tartu showed ownership rates standing at 76 per cent among men and 67 per cent among women. At the same time, these global figures conceal large generational differences with 94 per cent of 20–29 year olds claiming to own a mobile phone as against only 27 per cent of 65–74 year olds.

After a notable ‘scholarly lacuna’, research on mobile phones as ‘a mind-and society-altering technology’ has been increasing in recent years. As two of the leading commentators on the area point out, in one of the most comprehensive collections of studies on cell phones ‘Perpetual Contact’ (Katz and Aakhus, 2002), during the initial phase of take-up although the folk discourses on mobile phones proliferated, most social scientists showed little interest and few even owned one themselves.

They argue that the meanings that have accumulated around cell phones centre on notions of increased freedom. As they note: ‘Mobile phones are praised...as devices that will liberate individuals from the constraints of their settings. Individuals who master these devices are shown as people who control their destiny’ (2002: 9). If this is so in advanced Western societies, there is every reason to believe that connotations around freedom will resonate ever more strongly in the newly-liberated post-socialist countries, the more so since political and economic freedom and this new communication device arrived in Estonia roughly at the same time. The advertising industry was quick to take advantage of this conjuncture and to promote mobile phones as an iconic technology of freedom. In 1999 and 2000 mobile telephony was one of the top three most advertised products and three and two (respectively) of the top five advertisers in those years were mobile telephony related (Baltic Media Book, 2001).

However, in order to better understand why mobile telephony has become such a potent symbolic good in the post-Soviet context it is necessary to recall the arrangement of telecommunications in Soviet Estonia. Research conducted among the inhabitants of Tallinn (the country’s largest city) in 1975 and 1981 showed that while 48 per cent of people who did not belong to the Communist Party had telephones at home, the percentage among the party-members was 66 (Hansen, 1990). In this situation, potential subscribers without party links had to wait in a queue sometimes for decades before the home phone was installed. Even as late as 1993 there were cases of families waiting for 40 years to be connected to the phone network (Karja, 1990).

In addition, telecommunications were under strong central control. Inter-city calling within Estonia was possible only through the central switchboard. For phoning abroad a long distance call via Moscow had to be placed. The buildings of phone exchanges had special rooms housing surveillance technology to which the KGB had unlimited access (Tampere, 2001).

In contrast, in the post-socialist era, particularly after the Estonian Telephony Company (partly owned by Finnish and Swedish capital) was founded in 1993, telecommunications developed rapidly and the possibility to call directly to anywhere in the world, which initially was an unprecedented, almost euphoric experience, quickly became taken-for-granted.

The introduction of mobile technology at the beginning of the 1990s accelerated this opening up of communications, though at first it was a technology confined to the well-to-do. At the beginning of 1990s phones cost tens of thousands of kroons (tens of times more than the then average monthly salary) and their mere ownership was a statement of wealth (which was not necessarily legally obtained). Thus at that early period mobile phones were associated not only with being rich but (at least by the poorer and more educated part of society) with illegal business practices.

1997 brought a third operator to the market, which meant unusually (even for Western Europe at that time) sharp competition. Call rates decreased and the cheapest phones cost about 1000 kroons (a few times less than the then average monthly salary). From that point on, the cell phone became a consumer good accessible to a wide range of people. The resulting pattern corresponds closely to Rogers' classic model of diffusion (1983) of innovation with access quickly moving from the elite to the majority, while the older generation and the less well-to-do will remain 'laggards' for some time.

SELLING PHONES, RE-CONSTRUCTING FREEDOM

The analysis that follows is based on a sample of advertisements for mobile telephony carried by Estonia's largest weekly paper Eesti Ekspress (EE) in the decade from 1991– July 2001. EE was selected because of its wide readership and because most major ad campaigns in Estonia employ it as part of their marketing mix.

The sample included all ads in A3 or A4 format, 125 items in all. Partly observing the model developed by Richards *et al* (2000), I subdivided the concept of freedom into four categories and coded all instances where they occurred in the text, either explicitly or implicitly.

The subcategories are:

- ◆ freedom to move and communicate internationally. This includes all texts where international travel, communication or business are featured either

explicitly (e.g. verbal promises are given that a mobile phone enables one to do business abroad, travel and be accessible whenever and wherever) or implicitly (e.g. pictures that represent the globe, New York etc).

- ◆ Freedom of choice. Texts that appeal to the consumer's freedom to choose between different options.
- ◆ Leisure time, rest. These texts include direct or indirect expressions of time free from work or household chores, relaxation and entertainment.
- ◆ Freedom of self-expression. Here the value represented is the consumers' freedom to shape their own style and express their uniqueness via mobile phone design.

Altogether one or more of these categories could be found in 65 of the advertisements sampled. From within this sample I have chosen examples that I (and my colleagues used as a control group) identified as 'ideal typical' of the major discursive changes tracked in the full sample. This generated a subsample of 12 texts for intensive qualitative analysis. However, due to space limitations this paper focuses on six.

Free capitalist heroes

The first advertisement – a corporate image ad for the first and largest mobile operator EMT – to be analysed in detail here dates from May, 1994 (see Figure 1).

It shows a sunset-gilded panorama of New York, with the now vanished Twin Towers of the WTC, which at the time was one of the most potent symbols of Western wealth and power. The left-hand side (perhaps representing the socialist past) is dark while the right side features the first business centre in Tallinn renovated according to Western standards. This represents both the new and the ideal (see Kress and Leeuwen, 1996). The slanted lines forming a perspective stress aspiration and a drive forward. The yuppie, looking straight at the viewer, creates a personal relationship inviting the consumer to identify with his dreams and plans. The hero of the picture is one of the 'pioneer-entrepreneurs' who, as we mentioned earlier, were at that time the primary customers for mobile phone companies. The lap-top and the mobile phone on the right symbolise a new era of modern technology and efficiency. The copy text, acknowledging the high cost of using the technology, assures readers that 'A call made at the right time may compensate for the costs of buying and using the phone for a long time'. For the person living under Soviet rule such a calculation was if not completely alien, rarely used. Private business assets were non-existent, therefore there was no conception of freedom as the ability to guide one's behaviour solely by means-ends calculus, without needing to concern oneself with other considerations (Bauman, 1988: 45).

EESTI TELEKOMMUNIKATSIOONID TÄNA JA HOMME

MEIE ÜHISETTEVÕTE



EESTI MOBIILTELEFON

ÕIGE VALIK



* Mobiiltelefoniga helistades oled äritehingutes operatiivne.

* Oled kiiresti kättesaadav kõigile, ka paigus, kus tavaline telefoniühendus puudub.

* Mobiiltelefonilt saab helistada ükskõik millisele telefonile maailma igasse punkti.

* Mobiiltelefonile saab helistada nii teise mobiiltelefoniga kui ka tavalise telefoniga.

* Õigel ajal peetud kõne võib korvata nii telefoni ostmise kui kasutamise kulud pikaks ajaks.

Figure 1 - Advertisement of Estonian Mobile Telephone Company from May, 1994.

Release from isolation and restricted freedom of movement and communication is clearly illustrated by the sentence: 'On a mobile phone it is possible to call any phone in every corner of the world'. Here we see a new understanding of spatiality – the whole world is accessible. Even though by 1994 the population was more or less used to the new situation, the ad underlines the need to use freedom effectively: to make good business with the world.

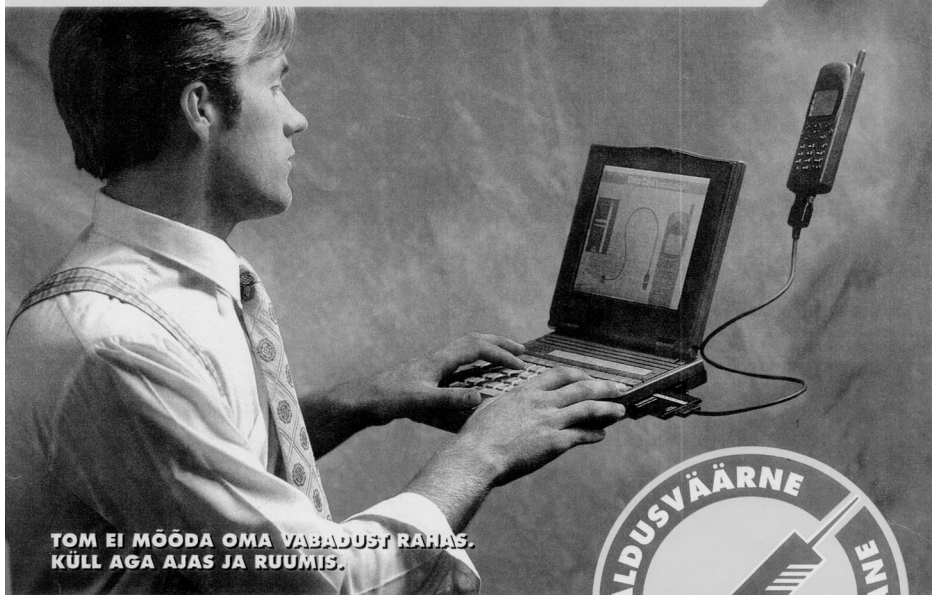
Another young capitalist hero is depicted in the second ad chosen for analysis here, from October 1995 when the second mobile operator Radiolinja entered the market (see Figure 2).

The ad starts with a strapline 'We speak of freedom already today'. The protagonist is again a yuppie, called Tom. (Note that he has anglicised, not an Estonian name). Tom is deeply engrossed in his activity – establishing a data-connection for his laptop via mobile phone.

The copy text refers to his frequent business trips, which are made by a Lufthansa Boeing (a marker of status at the time). In addition to this international dimension, Tom's personal and business freedom is also important. He is self-employed, he is in his shirtsleeves wearing suspenders. The copy says: 'Tom does not measure his freedom in money, but in time and space /.../ But he would rather do his Own Thing for 24 hours, than work for somebody else from nine to five /.../ Because above all in this world he loves freedom (needless to say that Tom is single).' Significantly Tom's freedom is associated with working extra hours (16-hours at work is 'perfectly normal'), having his own firm, international travelling and being single. He is a typical 'free Estonian man' of the beginning and mid-1990s (such a figure has not completely disappeared by 2001, but as will be seen below, he no longer occupies such a prominent position in ads). He actualises himself in work, family life and commitments have been postponed.

Tom is the epitome of the 'self-made hero of entrepreneurial capitalism' (see Bauman, 1988: 57) engaged in competitive struggle for money and power in which being at ease with the West constitutes valuable symbolic capital. Indeed, we may conclude that such young men were held in high esteem at the time, both within the successful transition countries (among whom Estonia figures very prominently) as well as in the reports of the World Bank, one of the strongest ideological documents of the 'transition culture' (see Kennedy, 2002). At the same time they are not the 'self-made tycoons, pulling themselves up to the highest reaches of society by their bootstraps' as described by Bauman (1988: 57). Although the newly liberated Estonia had to start modernising (i.e. building up an independent free market economy) they are also constrained by the emerging structures of the new global economy. Those who could and can make business in Estonia had and have to play by the rules of global post-industrial capitalism. There is no limitless freedom for them in the field of business. However, Estonian capitalism, in common with innumerable other

MEIE RÄÄGIME VABADUSEST JUBA TÄNA.



**TOM EI MÕÖDA OMA VABADUST RAHAS.
KÜLL AGA AJAS JA RUUMIS.**

Tom on noor ja edukas. Sellegipoolest ei taha ta nõustuda väitega, nagu oleks ta töönarkomaan. Ise peab ta ennast täiesti terveks, normaalseks inimeseks. Loomulikult ei saa ta eitada, et töökoormus on küllaltki suur - mõnikord 16 pingelist töötundi järjest. Aga enne ajalo ta kasvõi ööpäevaringelt Oma Asja, kui rääbib kellegi teise alluvuses üheksast viieni. See on lihtsalt tema põhimõte. Sest ülekõige siinlmas armastab Tom vabadust (on vist ületaigne lisada, et Tom on vabaklane).

Keegi on öelnud, et vabadus - see on lendamine! Või oli see vastupidine? Igal juhul, just lennates Tomi päevad mööduvadki. Hea, et on olemas Eurotelefon-keegi tuttav oli soovitanud, Tom ei tea enam, mis ta ilma GSM-ita peale hakkaks! Tapsemali, Eurotelefoni SIM-kaardiga, mis teatavasti sobib kasutamiseks kõikides GSM-ides. Pikemale reisile minnes jääb ta kavaliselt rääkima telefoni lihtsalt koju. Et ei korduks see, mis juhtus tema NMTga (jõi tülthansa Boeng'isse)! GSM-kaardiga on telefoni teenustus igapäevane asi.

SIM-kaarti hoiab Tom nagu Eesti passi - ei oleks alati käepärast. See on tema "kodaniku mälu", nagu ta ütleb. Nüüd natuke, aega ole siin oma töetara sees. SIM ju sisuliselt mikroprotsessoriga mälukaart ongi. Talletab kõik vajalikud telefoninumbri ning vahendab EUROTELEFON 256-a võrguteenuseid.

Vabadusest veel niipalju, et tänu EUROTELEFON 256-le on Tomi liikumisvabadus suurem kui kunagi varem. Nüüd võib ta isegi faksile ja datosõnumeid saata, niireelda, otse "lennul" - autotsi, jõusaalist või kui vaja, kasvõi lennuväljal. Kõike on ette tulnud! Seepärast on tal igal pool (igal pool!) kaasas laptop arvuti, mis alati hea meeltega Tomi väluva GSM-itariga ühendusse astub. Tom irukile vaid leksi, valib numbrit ja ... juba ta lendabki.



**OKTOOBRI
KLIENDIEDU 708 kr.
PRO TRAVELER-I TEENUSPAKETT TASUTA!**

Eurotelefoni volitatud esindajad on:

Tallinnas: LEVI & KUTO AS ETERMO AS MOBITELE AS TELEFONIPOOD AS KANANAMA AS MORELL C AS BELESTA OÜ VEX VMT AS "BÜROO EKSPERT" RTI AS	Staadioni 8 Regati 1 58-138 Gonsiori 29/233 Pärnu mnt. 137 Ravala pst. 4/7/17 Tatari 54 Vanu Narva mnt. 16 Pirita tee 20 Tatari 1 Tõnissoni 3A	BOGA AS INTERAITUS AS ELBERD AS Sekusi: OJUSI AS Tartus: LEVI & KUTO AS TELEFONIPOOD AS A-ELECT AS TARTU INFOBÜROO	Loki 12 Tondi 44 Pae 74 Teeduse 1 Vanemuise 65 Tehase 16 Vanemuise 65 Rooskoja pl. 14
---	---	---	--



RADIOLINJA EESTI TEENINDUSBÜROO

Viimsi 47, Tallinn Telefon 639 9966
On avatud E-R Eurotelefon 256 56 56 66
kell 9.00-17.00 Faks 639 9977

NOUA LISATAVAT EUROTELEFONI KÕIKIDE ELISTE JA TEENUSTE KOHTA RADIOLINJA EESTI TEENINDUSBÜROOST VÕI MEIE VOLITATUD ESINDAJATELT.

Figure 2 - Advertisement of Radiolinja from October, 1995.

countries, has also found the ‘secret of the philosopher’s stone: seen from the vantage point of the consumers, the consumer world (unlike the area of production and distribution of wealth and power) is free from the curse of elimination contest and monopoly function’ (Bauman, 1988: 57). So the mobile phone operator offers all the ‘self-made’ and ‘wannabe’ aspirers a consolation – consumption of a highly conspicuous commodity.

The end of isolation and freedom from oppression is ‘crowned’ by an interesting example from February 1996, which promotes the phone vendor Levi & Kuto (see Figure 3).

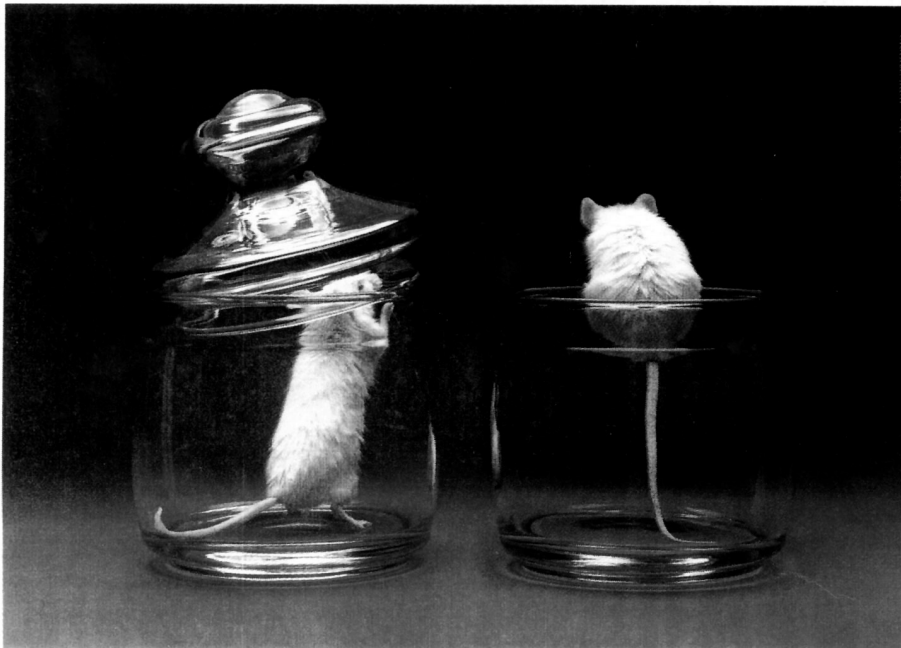
The photo shows white laboratory mice in a jar.² The metaphor of the jar is central: in Estonian the phrase ‘to be in a jar, to get into a jar’ means ‘to be in a fix’ or ‘in trouble’. The text continues: ‘Freedom to act, freedom of speech, freedom to move, freedom to communicate – when in a jar, you are without them. And you cannot signal the world either. Because the wire to pull does not reach the jar.’

The four dimensions listed here summarise the post-communist understanding of freedom. They can be reduced to two – movement (travelling to the West) and talking (speaking one’s mind without fear of repression, see also Kennedy, 2002). Although it is already 1996, the potential consumers clearly remember the times when they were deprived of these two basic rights. ‘Signalling the world’ is vital. It connotes Estonians’ fear of being cut off. The old ‘wired’ technology also connotes the past, whereas wireless is the future: ‘The mobile phone is freedom. You are audible to the world from where you are /.../ Even if you are in a jar’. A free person can communicate with the whole world whenever and wherever he/she pleases.

At the end the text becomes imperative: ‘And you must have freedom of choice, to choose the right one’. Freedom of choice is the foundation of consumer culture, without which one cannot survive in late modern society. The text ends: ‘One thing is clear – Levi & Kuto gives you freedom, not only a mobile phone’. If the new technology could even free laboratory mice from the hands of the animal-testing scientist (the memory of the communist regime?) the citizen-consumer of the new era will be made even ‘freer’. The promise is that freedom can easily be achieved through the consumption of a reputable and widely desired gadget and by this simple act of purchase a person will belong to the West, be one of ‘them’, have all the freedoms of the individualist era.

² Note that in the above mentioned focus groups conducted by Kennedy (2002: 183) an informant pointed out an important dimension of freedom ‘Opening of the world’ with a very similar metaphor: ‘In my circle of work, this communication with foreign countries is essential, considering we’ve lived for so long like lonely mice in a cage and seen just a remnant of the world’.

VAJATE MOBIILTELEFONI?



Purk on purk.
Lihtsalt vabaduse piiramise võrdkuju.

**TEGUTSEMISVABADUS,
SÕNAVABADUS,
LIIKUMISVABADUS,
SUHTLEMISVABADUS**

- kui oled purgis, oled neist ilma.
Ja maailmale märku anda ka ei saa.
Sest traat, mida tõmmata, purki ei tule.

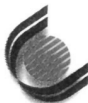


MOBIILTELEFON ON VABADUS.

Sa oled maailmale kuuldav sealt,
kus Sa oled. Sest Sinu mobiiltelefon on
Sul kaasas. Isegi kui oled juhtumisi purgis.

VALIKUVABADUS peab Sul ka olema,
et valida see õige. Mitte ainult telefon,
vaid ka **TEENINDUS, KINDLUS,
NÕUANNE, HOOLDUS.**

ÜKS ON SELGE - LEVI & KUTO ANNAB SULLE VABADUSE JA MITTE AINULT MOBIILTELEFONI!



LEVI & KUTO
MOBIILTELEFONID

NOKIA
CONNECTING PEOPLE

TALLINN Staadioni 8 tel (2) 631 3777 • **TARTU** Vanemuise 64 tel (27) 420 400
PÄRNU Ringi 10 tel (244) 45 744 • **RAKVERE** Tuleviku 14a tel (232) 44 486

Figure 3 - Advertisement of Levi & Kuto from February, 1996.

Hedonism, self-expression and leisure.

The discourse of freedom in mobile telephony ads starts to change in early 1997 when the third operator enters the market offering cheaper phones and services. As a result, the sign value of the mobile phone begins to shift from an expensive status symbol to a mass-market good (however with varying connotations). Self-expression and identity through style and leisure time become the most prominent themes.

A remarkable example is the ad from the initial Q-GSM campaign in spring 1997 (see Figure 4). Again we see a photo in the ideal position with the text offering a real solution to the dream. The weird-looking man, holding a petrol can was an unprecedented representation of a mobile phone consumer and prompted widespread public discussion when the ad was first published. The 'can-man's' identity was confusing: the can connotes the Soviet era, fuel shortages and old Russian cars. His appearance – suit trousers and a white shirt, bare feet and sandals, greasy scarce hair – epitomises lack of style. The consumer is not invited to identify with the man, but the man must look at least partly familiar (and he does!). The information on the right hand side – the Q logo – tells us that such weird combinations ('a man from kolhoz' and mobile telephony) have now become possible.

Several interpretations of his identity can be given. He can be read as a symbol of a past which is finally gone. Q GSM proclaims the complete victory of the 'communication era' (their strapline was: 'talk to people'). He can also be viewed as a humorous metaphor for a simple, not so wealthy person, for whom 'talking time' has arrived. The mobile telephony is no longer only for the young and successful, it has become affordable for others as well and is thus promoted as a common consumer good not as a luxury any more.³

On the other hand, a different explanation can be offered. The bizarre man is a 'postmodern hero' who denies grand narratives of success and wealth expressed by fixed codes of appearance. He ridicules the normative identity of a *nouveaux riche* yuppie by being free to wear no socks with a white shirt and not having to wash his hair every morning, by carrying a petrol can instead of a briefcase. However, he does not have to be like that all the time, the fluid and carnevalesque identity game allows him to alter himself whenever he pleases (the main mechanism of the game being consumption, of course).

The copy says: 'You do not have to be very talkative in order to have a Q GSM in your pocket. It is simply convenient if you can contact other people at any time and always be the master of the situation'. Control over events and

³ In 1997 the penetration of mobile telephony was still only 11 per cent. Expectedly, the advertising representation was well ahead of the economic reality.



Jäme ots on sinu käes

Taskutelefonist on saamas igapäevane tarbeasi.
Sa ei pea olema väga jutukas, et Q GSMi taskus pidada.
Lihtsalt mugav on, kui võid millal tahes teiste inimestega
kontakteeruda ja alati olukorra peremeheks jääda.
Q GSM võrgus helistamine pole kallid. Ja telefon heliseb
alati sinu juures, mitte tühjas toas. Q GSM annab
vabaduse, mille eest pole vaja kallilt maksta.
Räägi inimestega.



Figure 4 - Advertisement of Q GSM from April, 1997.

people, making decisions (also on whether to conform to the so-called fixed code of the unity of a yuppie and a mobile phone or not) is 'freedom for which you do not have to pay a lot', as promised by Q GSM.

The self-expression dimension is especially emphasised in phone ads that were not produced in Estonia, but were nevertheless adapted and widely used. The Nokia 8210 ad of November 2000 for example, is a part of a longer campaign fully oriented to self-expression through style. On the left there is a close-up of a young man (of the soft, trendy, slightly girlish type). On the top left corner (according to Kress and Leeuwen (1996) in the position of new and ideal) is the phone, a departure from the usual layout where the product is in the position of the real, a solution to the problem. The copy text claims: 'Slim and stylish Nokia 8210 gives you voice dialling, excellent sound quality and five new colours. Wear your own phone. Live Your Own Style!' It is noteworthy that the English version of the text has 'comes with' instead of 'gives you'. So, the translators have added emphasis: again, the sound and colour are not features of the phone but projected on to the consumer whose personality is augmented by them. Also, the phone is not for carrying or holding, it is for wearing!

The phrase 'Your Own Style' emphasises new resources of image building. (The fact that there are only five new colours goes unnoticed in the overall glamour of the ad). On the horizontal central line is a quotation from the young man: 'No need for extravagance. I only want every thing to be special' (the Estonian version has an unambiguous spelling 'every thing' with the aim of stressing the style aspect of material objects).

Arguably however, the valourisation of hedonism and free time reaches its peak in the EMT's brand identity change campaign from spring 2001 (see figure 5).

The primary medium of the campaign was TV with supporting print ads. EMT changed its blue globe-shaped logo into a red ladybird. It was meant to mark a turn-away from technology-centredness to more human values. The main themes of the campaign were childhood nostalgia, playfulness and pleasure as well as the carefree flying associated with the ladybird. In an ad from the campaign from May 2001 a woman in a bath is holding a soap-shaped ladybird in her hand. Her face is peaceful, remotely erotic (evening make-up) – a stereotypical woman-object for the male gaze. She trusts the mobile operator so much that she lets it accompany her at her most intimate moments. The 'new EMT' enables her to relax from any chores and routine. The creed of EMT is: 'enjoy!' However, characteristic of promotional discourse true pleasure is reached only under the protecting roof of the 'right' brand.



Figure 5 - Advertisement of Estonian Mobile Telephone Company from May 2001.

The bottom part of the ad has a barely noticeable verbal text shedding light on the ideological reasoning behind the brand change: ‘A ladybird has a place in everybody’s dreams and memories. She symbolises a sunny summer day and happy childhood. We trust the ladybird, she walks on our hand ... This is the new EMT – a small colourful detail in a simpler and more comfortable world’. Childhood is meant to connote warmth, innocence of materialism and instrumentality, also in a way denial of technology.

DISCUSSION

In this paper I have set out to trace shifts in the discourse of freedom in Estonian ads for one particularly resonant consumer good – mobile telephony. As we have seen, initially emphasis was laid on economic and political freedoms and the figure of the entrepreneur. However, as the memory of the restricted freedom of speech and communication of the Soviet era fades in Estonia, we see the emergence of powerful new foci of representation. The mobile phone’s function is no longer signalling to the world from a ‘jar’, it has become a style element. Advertisers now show new pioneer-heroes who have

accepted that one's 'real' identity is expressed not in work but in leisure and is communicated by playing with style. The new freedom is the freedom of capitalism's new liquidity. The varying connotations evident in this marketing do not emerge from a vacuum, however. In our case, they are embedded in the socio-cultural space of the post-communist world which M. Kennedy has termed 'transition culture'. This consists of two basic movements: from plan to market and from totalitarianism to democracy. Within this matrix Estonia has been repeatedly represented as a wunderkind, its success lying in smooth adaptation to an ideology that places emphasis on individualism and normality as constituted by the capitalist West in an attempt to completely wipe out the socialist past. Freedom, understood as freedom of choice within a proliferating consumer culture, constitutes the symbolic core of this new social and moral order.

There is no reason to doubt the benefits of consumer choice. It is more conducive to human dignity to enjoy a satisfactory living standard (see e.g. Miller, 2001) than to live in poverty or to be subjected to totalitarian state management of needs. At the same time a substantial section of the population in post-Soviet transition countries lacks sufficient economic and symbolic resources either for a smooth adaptation to the 'new rules of the game' of the culture of seeming abundance or for reflexive resistance (see also Kõresaar, 2003). In 1999 for example, 38.7 per cent of the inhabitants of Estonia lived below the poverty line and a further 15.6 per cent lived with the permanent threat of crossing this line (Kutsar and Trumm, 1999). Consequently, it is not at all surprising that recent research suggests that the unhappiest and most dissatisfied people live in the post-communist transition countries (see Inglehart and Klingemann, 2000). This has a lot to do with the rapidly developed consumerist ideology.

During the Soviet regime official ideology (at least for many) was experienced as a concrete set of hostile ideas and practices to be resisted as a way of retaining one's inner freedom (Kennedy, 2002). Studies from that period show that obtaining 'Western' consumer goods or domestically produced goods in short supply operated not only as a strategy of individual distinction (in Bourdieu's terms) but also as a soft everyday form of cultural resistance to the Soviet power (see Keller and Vihalemm, 2003). Today consumer goods have been stripped of their ability to operate as markers of political refusal and reduced to markers of personal status and style. This is in large part because the new consumer ideology has become 'unnameable', 'hard to demarcate' (Kennedy 2002: 188). It is now part of an everyday normality potentially symbolised by the mundane and ordinary, yet pressure exerting, mobile phone. Rapidly changing technologies which generate an incessant stream of new makes and styles are particularly vivid (maybe even extreme) examples of the new normativity. It is not sufficient to buy a mobile phone or a car and use it for years. Promotional culture aims to establish a norm of buying a new model long

before the old one is worn out by inviting consumers, especially the young, to immerse themselves ever more completely in a global web of styles. Hence, 'outmoded' commodities are discarded not because new models offer significantly enhanced technical capacities but because they offer new possibilities for personal differentiation and display.

Understanding these dynamics is a core task for emerging research on Soviet and post-Soviet consumer culture (see e.g. Gronow, 1997 and 2003; Kõresaar, 2003; Shevchenko, 2002; Rausing 1998 and 2002), of which the present paper is but a small fragment. We urgently need to explore the role of new consumer items and consumption patterns in managing and imagining transition in a context where public culture increasingly defines competence in the new rules of the game as the core criterion for defining 'winners' and 'losers'.

As Bauman notes, it remains a moot question whether, on balance, increasing calls to play with style and switch identities with the help of mass manufactured consumer goods create greater freedom or more constraint. This is not an 'either/or' question however. For many citizens of post-communist countries it is a matter of 'both/and'. For them, the possibility of having and expressing inner freedom is simultaneously provided and dismantled by the forward march of the market and the new individualism. Transcending this double bind requires them to possess novel forms of cultural capital ranging from knowledge of financial risk management to access to alternative models and ethics of consumption such as those developed by the environmental movements and by the movement for global justice. The study of consumption in post-communist societies therefore needs not only to address new patterns of everyday engagement with commodities and brands but to explore emerging forms of consumer politics.

REFERENCES

- Baltic Media Book 2001*. Tallinn: EMOR AS.
- Bauman, Zygmunt (1988) *Freedom*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Bauman, Zygmunt (2000) *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Beck, Ulrich (1994 [1986]) *Risk Society. Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage.
- Department of Journalism and Communications, University of Tartu (2003). Unpublished data of the survey *Mina. Maailm. Meedia (Me. World. Media)*.
- Estonian Statistics Board. Accessed in October, 2002: <http://gatekeeper.stat.ee:8000/px-web.2001/Database/Majandus/15Side/15Side.asp>
- Fromm, Erich (2002 [1942]) *The Fear of Freedom*. London: Routledge.
- Giddens, Anthony (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gronow, Jukka (1997) *The Sociology of Taste*. London: Routledge.
- Gronow, Jukka (2003) *Caviar with Champagne: Common Luxury and Images of Good Life in Stalin's Russia*. Oxford: Berg.

- Hansen, Hans (1990) 'Telefoniküsitluse usaldusväärsusest (On the Reliability of a Telephone Survey)'. *Edasi*, No 191(12,310), (21 August).
- Inglehart, Roland (1997) *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Inglehart, Ronald and Klingemann, H.-D. (2000) 'Genes, cultures, democracy and happiness.' In E. Diener and E.H. Suh (eds.) *Subjective well-being across cultures*, pp. 165–183. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- International Telecommunications Union, Free Statistics Homepage. <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/statistics/>. Accessed in June, 2003.
- Karja, Stepan (1990) 'Telefoniromaan (Telephone novel)'. *Edasi*, No 60 (12,187)(12 March).
- Katz, James E. and Aakhus, Mark A. (2002) *Perpetual Contact. Mobile Communication, Private Talk, Public Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Keller, Margit and Vihalemm, Triin (2001) 'Estonian Society Carried By the Tide of Western Consumer Culture', in *Estonian Human Development Report*, pp. 80–83. Tallinn: Tallinn Pedagogical University and Institute of International and Social Studies.
- Keller, Margit and Vihalemm, Triin (2003) 'Return to the "Consuming West": Young people's Perceptions about the Consumerization of Estonia', *Young* 11 (3): 195–215.
- Kennedy, Michael (2002) *Cultural Formations of Post-Communism. Emancipation, Transition, Nation and War*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kress, Gunther and van Leeuwen, Theo (1996) *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge.
- Kutsar, Dagmar and Trumm, Avo (eds.) (1999) *Poverty Reduction in Estonia*. UNDP. <http://www.undp.ee/poverty/>.
- Kõresaar, Ene (2003) 'Hea elu normatiivsus. Nõukogudeaegse defitsiidikogemuse kujutamisest elulugudes. (Normativity of good life: Depiction of the Soviet shortage of goods in life stories)', in E. Kõresaar & T. Anepaio (eds.) *Mälu kui kultuuritegur: etnoloogilisi perspektiive (Ethnological Perspectives on Memory)*, pp. 150–178. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- Laar, Mart (1996) 'Estonia's Success Story', *Journal of Democracy* 7 (1): 96–101.
- Lagerspetz, Mikko (1997) 'Piir kui peegel: Soome ja Eesti ühiskonna võrdleva uurimuse perspektiive. (Border as a mirror: perspectives on comparative research of Finland and Estonia)', *Vikerkaar* (12): 44–50.
- Lauristin, Marju (1997) 'Contexts of Transition', in M. Lauristin and P. Vihalemm (eds.) *Return to the Western World*, pp. 25–40. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- Lauristin, Marju and Vihalemm, Peeter (1997) 'Recent Historical Developments in Estonia: Three Stages of Transition (1987–1997)', pp.73–126 in M. Lauristin and P. Vihalemm (eds.) *Return to the Western World*. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- Lauristin, Marju and Vihalemm, Triin (1997) 'Changing Value Systems: Civilizational Shift and Local Differences', pp. 243–263 in M. Lauristin and P. Vihalemm (eds.) *Return to the Western World*. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- Liik, Kadri (2000) 'Venemaa igatseb eestlaste järele (Russia longs for Estonians).' *Postimees*, No 35 (40) (7 October).
- Miller, Daniel (2001) 'The Poverty of Morality', *Journal of Consumer Culture* 1(2): 225–243.

- Rausing, Sigrid (1998) 'Sings of the new nation: gift exchange, consumption and aid on a former collective farm in north-west Estonia', in D. Miller (ed.) *Material Cultures. Why some things matter*, pp. 189–213. London: UCL Press.
- Rausing, Sigrid (2002) 'Re-Constructing the "Normal": Identity and the Consumption of Western Goods in Estonia' in R. Mandel and C. Humphrey (eds.) *Markets and Moralities. Ethnographies of Postsocialism*, pp. 127–142. Oxford: Berg.
- Richards, Barry, McRury, Ian and Botterill, Jackie (2000) *Dynamics of Advertising*. Gordon and Breach Science Publications.
- Rogers, Everett M. (1983) *Diffusion of Innovations. Third Edition*. New York: The Free Press.
- Shevchenko, Olga (2002) '"In Case of Fire Emergency": Consumption, security and the meaning of durables in a transforming society', *Journal of Consumer Culture* 2(2): 147–170.
- Slater, Don (1997) *Consumer Culture and Modernity*. London: Routledge.
- Stamenova, Svetlana (1999) 'Work values shift tendencies during the post-communist transformation period. Possibilities and difficulties in building up post-modern work value orientations – The Polish and Bulgarian Examples', in Koralewicz, J. (ed.) *The European Value System*, pp. 63–85. Warsaw: Institute of Political Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences, and Collegium Civitas Press.
- Tampere, Kaja (2001) Interview by the author. November 2001.
- Varbanov, Valentin (2002) 'Bulgaria: Mobile phones as post-Communist cultural icons', in J.E. Katz and M. Aakhus (eds.) *Perpetual Contact. Mobile Communication, Private Talk, Public Performance*, pp. 116–126. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Vihalemm, Triin (1997) 'Changing Discourses on Values in Estonia', in M. Lauristin and P. Vihalemm (eds.) *Return to the Western World*, pp. 265–278. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- Uba, Mari (2001) Interview by the author. November 2001.

II

Keller, M. & Vihalemm, T. (2003). Return to the 'consuming West'.
Young people's perceptions about the consumerization of Estonia.
Young, 11(3), 195–215.

Return to the 'consuming West'

Young people's perceptions about the consumerization of Estonia

MARGIT KELLER

University of Tartu, Estonia

TRIIN VIHALEMM

University of Tartu, Estonia

Abstract

This article looks at how young people in post-communist Estonia attribute meaning to consumer goods and to the development of consumption during the last decade. The empirical material comprises 45 qualitatively analysed student essays and 25 in-depth interviews. The authors arrange the material onto two main axes: the temporal axis of Estonian transformation and the spatial axis of Estonia (including the memory of Soviet Estonia) versus today's construct of the West. Also, we look at how 'Western-ness' as a socio-cultural reference point is used by young people in representing consumption. We argue that the decoding of Western consumer culture is ambivalent for Estonian youth as it brings up national collective ideals of freedom as well as highly individual distinction-seeking. Value references ranging from more traditional to 'post-modern' are inextricably interwoven in representations of today's consumption processes. Plural processes are at work among the studied students: having a strong desire to distance oneself from the Soviet heritage and to view 'Western-ness' as the only alternative, while at the same time criticizing the adoption of the Western consumer capitalist model. This is manifested in a willingness to 'outsmart' the Western consumer by using experiences from the Soviet period as well as Estonian ethnocultural heritage.

Keywords

consumer freedom, consumer goods, consumption, individual distinction, post-socialist transition, West

One of the most significant features distinguishing independent Estonia from its Soviet predecessor is free market economy. There are numerous studies that explain the rapid transformation processes in the Estonian political and economic fields. However, we argue that the link between the onset of a Western model of consumer society and the formation of a new habitus has not been adequately studied. Our research makes an early contribution to this developing field of study.

In this article we first provide a theoretical framework, drawing mainly on the works on consumer freedom by Zygmunt Bauman and to a lesser extent on the theories of Don Slater and Pierre Bourdieu, to aid our understanding of the mixed connotations of Western consumer goods during the decade of Estonian transition from socialism to liberal capitalism. Second, we sketch a background for the value shifts occurring among the younger Estonian generations that should shed some light on their construction of meaning as regards Western consumer culture. After a methodological explanation we proceed to an empirical analysis organized around a timeline starting with the 'early days' – that is, the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the re-independence period – moving on to the mid-1990s, a period of growth and stabilization. Our analysis is completed by the young people's accounts of 'today' – meaning the turn of the 21st century. In the concluding discussion we attempt to give explanations for the ambivalence evident in the discourse of the educated Estonian youth concerning the development of Western consumer culture as well as the concept of the West itself.

CONSUMER FREEDOM AND THE TRANSITION FROM SOCIALISM

Estonia's shift from Soviet-style state management of individual life to a situation of (at least theoretically) unlimited freedom of choice, characteristic of Western free-market democracies, is remarkable. Although macro-economic figures are far from the 'full story', it may be useful to give some evidence here of the rapid economic changes in Estonia. Whereas in 1993 GDP declined by 8.8 percent, in 1997 the economic boom was in full swing, with a real GDP growth of 9.8 percent. In 2001 and 2002, real GDP growth stabilized at around 5–6 percent and the predictions for 2003 are the same (Bank of Estonia). The volume of retail trade was around €360 million in 1993; by 2001 it had increased nearly five-fold to €1.7 billion (Statistical Office of Estonia). Commercial retail trade space increased by around 170 percent between 1993 and 2000 (from 281,000 m² to 747,000 m²). The years 2001–2002 witnessed a boom in new supermarkets and shopping centres, and although per capita retail space in Tallinn today is less than half that of the European average (0.9 m² compared with 2 m²), it is expected to reach 1.5 m², or 75 percent of the European average, in 2004 (Uus Maa Ltd, 2003).

The volume of the Estonian consumer market grew by 10 percent in 2002, amounting to approximately €3 billion. However, the absolute volume of consumer expenditure per capita is approximately a tenth of that of Finland. The net income per household grew by 12 percent in 2002, an increase of almost three times the rise in the consumer price index over the same period (3.6%), meaning a substantial growth in purchasing power (Emor Ltd, 2003; Statistical Office of Estonia, 2003).

The rapid transformation of Estonia's economic environment during the past decade constitutes part of the framework shaping a new social competence for the

subject or a new habitus (Bourdieu, 1977). We assume that individual consumption and consumer goods play a crucial role here and that the historical trajectories and ideologies that contextualize Western consumer goods in Estonia offer us a valuable source of information on the development of Estonian society.

The limitation of individual freedom under Soviet rule created various modes of protest. Patriotism and the efforts to establish a nation state that emerged particularly powerfully at the end of the 1980s have been widely analysed (Brubaker, 1995; Calhoun, 1994; Laitin, 1998; Linz and Stepan, 1996; Kolstø, 2000). We argue that the desire for consumer liberty was a mundane, 'soft' form of resistance. For example individual re-contextualization of homogenized commodities as well as the acquisition of officially unavailable merchandise and consumption of *defitsiit* goods¹ – i.e. either Western commodities or sometimes even objects produced in the Soviet Union or other socialist bloc countries – became a prominent and distinctive practice.

The so-called symbolic economy of the Soviet Union was largely based on personal ties and relationships – social rather than economic capital. Having 'acquaintances' in shops or central supply organizations or in other useful positions (e.g. sailors, who had a constant opportunity to go abroad and bring home various foreign gifts) was a powerful form of social capital that facilitated the assertion of individual identity and formed part of the above-mentioned soft resistance to the regime. The ability to obtain goods of symbolic value (deficit ones like bananas or jeans) was an important social differentiator and positioning device. Thus a specific form of social capital was inevitable in the usage and reproduction of one's cultural capital; that is knowledge, competence and ease as regards taste and classifications.

This phenomenon is well explained by Slater (1997), who states that the dream of free consumption – the so-called 'mundane version of civic freedom' – was one of the basic driving forces towards separation from the Soviet Union and its economic model in many communist countries. He says:

What emerged so harrowingly for western socialists in 1989 was the extent to which eastern citizens had indeed come to see consumer freedom exercised through the market as both the epitome and linchpin of all other freedoms, and the extent to which *all* collective provisions for need . . . were neither valued nor connected to the idea of freedom. (Slater, 1997: 37)

In a similar vein Zygmunt Bauman has theorized issues of consumer sovereignty in relation to the communist state. He states that one of the basic differences between the communist regime and Western consumer capitalism is the absence of an opportunity to 'buy oneself out' from the dependent relationship with the 'nanny state' (see also Slater, 1997).² Such a regime functions through the state determining and managing individual life:

What the needs of the individuals are, and how and to what extent they ought to be gratified, is decided by the political state, and acted upon by bureaucracy; the individuals whose needs are determined in such a way have little if any say in the matters of either the state or bureaucracy. They have, so to speak, neither 'exit' nor 'voice'. (Bauman, 1988: 87)

Thus, we proceed from the premise that, apart from the individual dimension discussed above, the Western consumer world seen on Finnish television (in the northern part of Estonia) or on the rare visits to the other side of the 'iron curtain' – also gave a collective image of freedom and democracy to the whole Estonian nation.

Objects from 'out there' were mini-models of the system that was forbidden to the inhabitants of the Soviet Union. The formal Soviet ideology denigrating the West for its 'imperialism' and suppression of the will of the people created an opposite effect: it augmented the sweetness of the forbidden fruit and, at least initially, weakened whatever real and substantiated criticism of the Western consumer model there might be during the Soviet period and in the early years of re-independence (see also Keller and Vihalemm, 2001; Lauristin and Vihalemm, P., 1997; Rausing, 1998). Indeed, according to Bauman, 'political-bureaucratic oppression' is the only alternative to consumer freedom (and vice versa) since no practically tested or even theoretically plausible alternatives have been postulated. So he concludes that 'for most members of contemporary society individual freedom, if available, comes in the form of consumer freedom, with all its agreeable and not-so-palatable attributes' (1988: 88). Although Bauman is writing from first-hand experience of state oppression in his home country, Poland, his attitude towards consumer freedom is ironic. Similarly, we have reason to assume that the discourses by the students of Estonia are controversial, as they view Western consumer capitalism both in terms of liberty and of restrictions and domination. So our study sets out to trace possible manifestations of the critique of the Western consumer society model. Does the Soviet experience encourage or discourage new visions and alternatives to neo-liberal market individualism?

We would argue that striving for political liberation and the establishment of a democratic nation state is inextricably interwoven with the simultaneous desire to establish individual self-determination as a free citizen/consumer and to take responsibility for one's 'reflexive project of the self' (Giddens, 1991).

Individual distinction in contemporary consumer societies is often conceptualized in terms of lifestyle which, according to Giddens (1991: 81), is 'a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfil utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity'. For Bourdieu (1984[1979]) lifestyle patterns are relatively static, the prerequisite of this being relative stability of the fields, or the 'space where the game takes place' and where a constant power struggle goes on. Thus differentiation leads automatically to the forming of (vertical) hierarchies, where the boundaries of status groups are relatively stable as well. Although such fixity is rarely found in the dynamic Western world of late modernity (including Estonia, with its specific transition context), lifestyle choices or stances (*prises de position*) still determine the relationships governing and the struggles taking place within the social space.

Indeed, as Bauman says, consumer freedom offers an unprecedented opportunity to form an identity through distinctive practices which, however, is not a zero-sum game. Although the supply of material goods is always finite, the supply of symbols and meanings associated with goods is endless. According to Bauman:

... devaluation of an image is never a disaster, however, as discarded images are immediately followed by new ones, as yet not too common, so that self-construction may start again, hopeful as ever to attain its purpose: the creation of a unique selfhood. (Bauman, 1988: 64)

In advanced Western societies, social approval of individual choices is offered by the market, the mass media and its advertising content as well as by other agents such as peer and taste groups. In the late modern age however, the boundaries to be demarcated are blurred and constantly being re-shaped. Some theorists have postulated a

'post-modern' or 'liquid modern' identity game based on the presumption that fixed structures of society and of meaning are becoming increasingly fragmented and fluid (Bauman, 2000; Featherstone, 1991).³ However, one can by no means claim that the identities that are 'simple modern' in their yearning for the secure vertical status ladder based on a relatively fixed and clear value system have disappeared. We assume that the Soviet background (e.g. the highly emotional connotations attributed to Western goods) and the specific transitional context of Estonia create a particularly volatile and ambivalent situation. The post-socialist transition in Estonia has been conceptualized as a process of recuperation from the Soviet 'pathology of modernity'. In her work on the post-socialist transition, Estonian scholar Marju Lauristin has said:

In the countries of East and Central Europe today, we can observe how 'catching up' with the technological and institutional forms of Western modernization is occurring simultaneously with the adoption of the values and patterns of post-industrial culture, and with the implementation of new information technologies. This simultaneousness of two normally sequential phases of cultural development makes post-Communist societies internally even more controversial and difficult to understand. (Lauristin, 1997: 36)

This gives us grounds to assume that one of the fields where these mixed and even conflicting cultural patterns are expressed is consumer culture. We rarely find fixed lifestyle groups or taste patterns since the sign systems underlying the social construction of meaning in the field of consumption are many and diverse, often pulling in opposite directions. Thus it is interesting to find out which goods and consumption-related practices are represented as positional and distinctive 'then' – that is, at the end of 1980s and at the beginning of the transition period – and 'now'. Also, this fluidity leads us to the question of what types of value references are used when talking/writing about consumption: materialist (wealth, status, success) or post-materialist (self-expression, playfulness, as well as overall cultural orientations) (cf. Inglehart, 1997).

In this context it is also interesting to trace which connotations are attributed to the West as the central metaphor in the contextualization of consumer goods and consumption patterns. The West can be viewed as a political and ideological construct 'that meant the "Free World" whose synonyms were market economy, Western democracy, freedom of speech and thought' (Lauristin and Vihalemm, 1998: 683). Or it can be seen in a more critical light as a homogenizing source posing a potential threat to small cultures. Piotr Sztompka (1996) understands Westernization as liberation from the Soviet organization of life and the re-establishment of various connections with (Western) Europe. However, a complicating factor in interpreting the discourse on (particularly Western) commodities and consumption is the tacit claim that Estonia has always been part of the West. Sigrid Rausing describes how the term 'normality' connoted a powerful means of situating Estonia in the West, which forced her informants to greet Western objects with less 'of the surprise, enthusiasm or confusion that might be expected' (1998: 190). This was part of a silent redefinition of objects already taken for granted. Rausing concedes: 'the world of goods in this region, as in any other, was bound up with questions of identity, and particularly perhaps, with questions of national and class identity' (1998: 196). This highlights a peculiar configuration of different meanings attributed to commodities in the transition context. In our study we focus on the following: How are freedom and

opportunities of choice associated with consumption and particularly with the model of the West? Does the field of consumption bring to light congruence and/or opposition between the stereotypical constructs of 'Estonia/Estonians' and the 'West'? Which geographical areas and cultural features are associated with the construct of the West?

VALUES OF THE 'NEW YOUNG'

Research on how the transition to consumer capitalism is echoed in Estonian people's discourses is rather modest. Our study starts to fill this gap by focusing on a very particular consumer group: young educated people, the students who form a part of the so-called 'new young' of Estonia – 15–24-year olds (see Tallo, 1998).

Generally, post-materialist orientations (e.g. being useful to society, interest in high culture, understanding the world, altruism) were highly valued under the Soviet system (Saarniit, 2000). The gradual opening to the Western world during the 1980s and the rapid change after the collapse of the Soviet regime, which entailed increased consumer choice, market competition and 'a cult of economic success', forced value orientations in the direction of materialism. According to the World Values Surveys, this is characteristic of post-socialist countries on the whole in the first half of the 1990s (Toomere, 2001) and contrary to the trend in advanced Western countries, where post-materialist values such as self-expression, a need to belong, aesthetic satisfaction, denial of authority, etc. are gaining ground.

In the course of this individualization and 'neo-materialization', the older age groups of the Estonian population showed a decrease in personal development-related values and openness to change. For younger age groups, the value replacement seemed to be easier and, in tandem with individualization, universal values like inner harmony and clean environment were retained (Lauristin and Vihalemm, T., 1997). Also, according to Inglehart's system, the average of the post-materialism index decreased less for the younger generation than for the older generations (Toomere, 2001). Thus the younger age groups are more open to Western cultural flows and value discourses. The other studies conducted by Estonian scholars reveal that compared to the graduates of 1996–8, the graduates of 1992 are less oriented to social altruism and more interested in material well-being, individual social position and their careers.

The meaning of values has changed, too. For example, for the young, the meaning of a career has shifted from a hierarchical model to interest in inner development and in opportunities to work in different environments (Raag, 2000). Also, young people display quick changes in their understanding of some values like freedom, which at the beginning of the transition evoked a unified context (i.e. Singing Revolution),⁴ but by 1995 was spontaneously linked with leading an exciting life, and related to personal choices between different options like travelling, 'watching people' and self-realization (Vihalemm, 1997: 276ff.).

Thus we may assume that the segment of the 'new young' whom we have studied is equipped in their value consciousness to compare different value worlds and to reflect on social change – which could include being critical or at least sceptical of the materialistic, neo-liberal consumer capitalism that was dominant in Estonia in the 1990s. This is perhaps all the more evident since our informants are amongst the

more educated of their generation. This critique expressed in words may or may not form a foundation for our informants' actual consumption patterns; but this remains an object for further research.

To grasp our students' views on Estonian consumerization, it is important to ask how they represent 'then' versus 'now' – that is, the retrospective discourses on the Soviet period's as well as today's consumption, consumers and commodities. The main line of inquiry focuses on the links between the Soviet experience and the perceptions of transition and also the representations of relations between Estonia and the West.

DATA AND METHOD

The empirical material in this study consists of essays and interview texts by the students of the University of Tartu and Tallinn Technical University (born between 1977 and 1983), who write or talk about how they understand the development of consumer culture in Estonia. They have lived under both Soviet rule and the Estonian Republic, and have first-hand memories and experiences from both systems and thus a basis for comparison. Our informants are unique in the sense that their most active socialization period (school age), has coincided with the rapid transformation of Estonian society.

We are aware that retrospectively, this generation tends to see the past as quite simple and the present as very complex, which is in line with the universal narrative of leaving childhood and entering the adult world. Also, they may have more critical, 'black-and-white' views in relation to the past. Compared to their parents (who could be considerably more nostalgic about the 'good old times'), the young generation has undergone an 'easier' version of personal transition and adapted more smoothly to the increasing labour market competition, the new social security system, etc. They are presumably also more 'open' to the ideas mediated via the global mass media – including postmaterialist values. These educated young people are like 'participant observers' in the extensive processes of social change: they are personally less hurt by the game of 'losers and winners', less nostalgic about the past, while at the same time able to be critical (learned as well as mediated) of contemporary society. It is quite probable that all the ambivalences described above contribute to the considerable amount of anxiety about the Western consumer capitalist model as well as about today's individual consumption patterns, which is evident in the young people's spoken and written discourse.

Our sample consisted of two kinds of sources. The first contains a total of 45 student essays: 15 written essays from the year 2000 (8 by female and 7 by male authors), 15 from 2001 (11 by female and 4 by male authors) and 15 from 2002 (9 by female and 6 by male authors).⁵

The students were from various faculties (but mainly from the social sciences and philosophy) and all of them were in their second to fourth year. The authors of the essays had all participated in the course 'Consumer Culture and Branding' taught by one of the authors of this article (Keller). These young people are more educated (particularly in social theory) than their peers and thus more capable of being reflexive and critical about themselves and the surrounding (consumer) society. And as they attended a course on consumer culture, their analytical lens was of course very

sensitive to the problematics of consumption. Most may be considered middle class; and even though the contours of the emerging class structure in post-socialist Estonia are still fluid, we may assume that these students are on their way to becoming an educated elite. As a consequence, a close reading of their essays does not permit over-arching generalizations about shifting popular perceptions and attitudes. However, it does provide a useful first step in studying everyday interpretations of Estonia's 'return to the consuming West'. In particular, these essays point to emerging ambivalences and tensions in attitudes towards the new consumerism and they draw attention to themes that require further, more broadly based, and systematic investigation.

We are also aware of the limitations of such a retrospective narrative; it inevitably wears the imprint of today. Our young people conceptualize the past in terms of the cultural capital they have obtained during the past 11 years. This gives them grounds for regarding themselves as wise and experienced compared to the consumers (including themselves and their family and friends) of a decade ago, whom they depict with considerable critical distance and sometimes irony. This is not a picture of 'how things were' but a picture of how the 'then' is seen today and how today is represented making use of the experience of Estonia's transformation.

Our second source is 25 interviews conducted in autumn 2001 with 21–23-year-old students from the University of Tartu and the Technical University of Tallinn. They were studying various disciplines – mathematics, the social sciences, natural sciences and the arts. The interviewers were specially trained third-year sociology students who were practising qualitative social science research methods. The interviews were semi-structured, and their general mood was informal. The respondents did not participate in any special consumer culture courses and they had no other type of formal connections to the subject.

In spite of the two samples' different backgrounds in consumer culture theories, and different circumstances when producing the analysed text, we found their overall argumentation and construction of meaning rather similar. We decided to code them according to the same scheme – that is, interview texts are not compared with essays. The text analysis of essays involves no fragments that explicitly refer to or discuss social theories. Either personal evaluations or examples and illustrations (e.g. personal consumption experiences, naming of significant objects, etc.) are coded.

The coding partly follows the narrative structure similar to the temporal axis proposed by Lauristin and Vihalemm (1998). In the first period, which we have termed 'the early days', we include the 'breakthrough' (1987–1991) and the 'radical reforms' (1991–1994), the end of which overlaps with the beginning of the second period of 'economic and cultural stabilization' in 1994–1998. We have also added a third period, 1999–2002, metaphorically designated 'coming of age'.

The thematic categories represented in the texts were developed inductively after the first readings. The first and the third period had three thematic codes:

- significant consumer objects – explicit mentioning of consumer goods and brands;
- the development of consumption in general – either descriptive or evaluative statements about the current state of Estonian society in terms of the development of consumer culture (e.g. purchasing power, lifestyle constructions, criticism of consumption boom, etc.); and
- the West – either descriptive or evaluative statements about the relations,

comparisons, etc. between the Soviet system, free Estonia and the West. Text fragments were coded here when more general category markers ('the West', 'foreign countries', 'more developed countries' and the like) or names of specific countries (e.g. Finland, the USA) were explicitly stated.

The period of 'stabilization' was least represented in the texts; thus no subdivision of this temporal code was made. All text excerpts referring to a later period than the beginning of the transition or explicitly naming the period of the mid-1990s were included under this temporal code.

The second step in our analysis delineates different discourses on the construction of the relations with the West as well as on consumer objects as significant elements of personal and collective (Estonian, Soviet or anti-Soviet, Western) identity formation. An interview fragment is marked with INT and an essay with ESS.⁶

THE EARLY DAYS – DISTINCTION IN SOVIET ESTONIA AND AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TRANSITION

Looking at the students' reminiscences about consumption under Soviet rule, we can distinguish a number of discourses. The Soviet official economy was seen to provide only for basic utilitarian needs and to try to artificially stamp out individual differences. This is clearly illustrated in an interview:

During the Soviet time the consumption habits were limited as regards the choice and amount of goods that were offered in shops. You had no choice but the shoes from Kommunaar, and since the maximum size of the living room was 16 m² this did limit the size of the sofa you bought there. (INT, M, SO, 01)⁷

This situation brought about more and more protest and called for ingenuity in order to distinguish oneself with whatever means were available:

The Volga owner was clearly on a higher step of the social ladder than the driver of a Zaporozhets.⁸ The tourist vouchers for the resorts of Sochi and even for the spas of Pärnu were an object of remarkable fuss. (ESS, M, JRNL, 00)

The most important however, was investing in food that could then be demonstrated at large parties (weddings with at least a hundred guests, birthday parties, funerals). It was crucial to offer anything that was hard to get. The real players had access to warehouses or sales people, with whose help they got frankfurters and sprats. (ESS, F, PR, 00)

It is noteworthy that the concept of '*defitsiit*' and the difficulty of its acquisition (because of the amount of networking and social capital needed) was one of the main markers of distinction. Naturally it remains a moot point among which social groups the so-called clever Volga owners created envy and admiration and from whom they drew contempt and ridicule. Nevertheless, since the topic of the acquisition of *defitsiit* goods figures so prominently in the students' texts, we can conclude that it formed an important part of the symbolic capital of the time (see Bourdieu, 1998).

Certainly the greatest status markers (the greatest *defitsiit* goods) were Western commodities. Even small and worthless knick-knacks are seen as decisive factors in identity creation. Our informants were children at the time and their immediate

experience is related to the gifts their parents or relatives brought from abroad or from the hard currency shops that were created at the very end of the 1980s.

At the very beginning there were hard currency shops, of course, from where one could buy chewing gum and all sorts of trinkets for the Finnish marks saved on a work trip. I became the owner of chequered neon pink leggings after having begged my parents for a long time (I remember exactly that they cost 35 marks). Having such nice leggings was for me a question of being different (or better) than the others. (ESS, F, PR, 00)

However, we can also detect some nostalgia for the 'Soviet-West' (Estonia together with the other Baltic republics), which in retrospect is viewed as a more Westernized enclave of the Soviet Empire:

In Estonia there was a lot more 'under-the-counter' Western merchandise (jeans, Finnish coats) and cultural circulation was livelier (a recent exhibition in the Estonian National Museum proved to me that the punk movement and punks were in Estonia already from the 1970s). (ESS, M, PA, 01)

In addition to their own immediate experience, the students make retrospective, often hyperbolic generalizations about the adult world they did not directly participate in at that time. Used Western cars, coffee machines and leather jackets are presented as objects with considerable sign value and their owners are described with irony, showing today's sophistication and an ability to distance oneself from those patterns. Such 'wannabe Westerners', who even could make do with pirate goods (with names that slightly deviated from the original brand names) bought from the market place, are mostly seen in a derogatory light.

The hated tracksuits of Marat (even if stored in the closet corners) were replaced with Abibas; Nices were bought instead of Kommunaar galoshes (and stored for the bad days). (ESS, M, PR, 02)⁹

A very powerful image recurrent in many texts is colour:

In comparison with the dull and colourless Soviet products these [Western] things were naturally an entirely different, attractive and interesting world. Those for whom their uncle had brought 24 or even 36-colour crayons from Finland had a rise in their social status at school guaranteed. (ESS, F, PR, 02)

The Western world of colourfully packaged consumer items stood in stark contrast to the Soviet greyness. Colour was a symbol of a different world often described as 'glowing behind the iron curtain' and grey was the metaphor for totalitarian uniformity. However, as we see in the texts about the present, the connotations of 'colour' change remarkably (see later).

The distinctive consumption practices of that period are often contextualized in terms of a rather primitive vertical hierarchy – being (or seeming) more successful, i.e. better than the others. Many examples play up the stereotype of unselective and greedy consumers whose main goal is to demonstrate their newly gained status via consumer goods. This manifests strong normative desires as well as anxiety about consumption. The roots of both can be traced back to the different value orientations during the students' early socialization under Soviet rule as well as to present-day disillusionment. The latter offers abundant material for criticism of and even pity for the growing stratification of society, distrust between the individuals and the state,

and also concern for social and economic sustainability, which are all widespread discourses in Estonia today (Lauristin and Vihalemm, 2002; Vetik, 2001).

Individual striving to be different and better is, however, only one side of the coin. The other is the ideal of collective freedom for Estonia, separation from the Soviet Union, and re-asserting Estonian affiliation with the Western socio-cultural sphere by 'becoming a normal state with a free government and a free market regulated by laws' (Laar, 1996: 98).

There are many examples in the texts where Western consumer goods were seen by our students as a flood of freedom washing over them (the famous 'no choice but to choose' claimed by Giddens [1991]), but with the long-yearned-for liberty very much interlaced with confusion:

The Estonians freed from the yoke of the planned economy could be compared with children who are as yet not very well able to consciously distinguish between needs and wants and who feel great but short-lived joy for every new knick-knack. (ESS, F, PR, 00)

The consumers of that time are sometimes represented with a certain tint of irony, but also with considerable warmth and understanding. Senseless admiration of the West and senseless consumption are seen as absolutely natural behaviour for the newly liberated people. They could by no means possess all the cultural capital – e.g. knowledge of financial risk management or Western brand hierarchies – needed for successful and sustainable life under capitalism.

These [Western] things symbolized a Western concept of liberty, democracy and freedom of choice. At the time of opening the borders, when the myth of the West became ever more powerful, the most trivial knick-knack obtained magic value. (ESS, M, JRNL, 01)

At the beginning of the nineties everybody bought bananas, right . . . a banana had been a symbol during the Soviet time – the Western world. (INT, F, Arts, 01)

STABILIZATION AND GROWING SOPHISTICATION

The time of stabilization is represented as the time when Estonians' initial thirst for freedom was satisfied and when consumption gradually became more sophisticated, involving the acquisition of the cultural capital of the late modern Western world. The development of the country is also conceptualized in terms of increasing stratification.

Access to consumption possibilities determines the 'losers' and 'winners' in the transition:

Some pensioners would have lived much better during the Soviet time than now . . . but at the same time a thirty-year-old would have been only a small citizen in the Soviet Union who could not have expected to be able to travel to the Canary Islands in winter and to Los Angeles in summer. (INT, M, Math, 01)

The sign systems underlying the practices and goods of distinction are becoming more refined and closer to Western taste patterns. Estonian consumers are described as more selective, seeking quality and not just an attractive package:

Maybe people have become more selective in a way. Before they bought Western goods by the package. Nowadays people already know what is trash and what is not. (INT, F, Math, 01)

Brand awareness is seen to grow with purchasing power. Brands begin to be connected with certain lifestyles. Consumption as a signifying process is described as more complicated nowadays when compared with the beginning of the 90s:

An elite consumer culture can be separated out – people buy more exclusive and expensive things, like Moschino things. Particular groups within the mass-consumer culture can be differentiated as well. (INT, F, Arts, 01)

The rapid development of the mid-1990s (with the introduction and increasing use of credit cards and leasing, and the stock exchange boom) is thought to have fuelled what is often normatively represented as 'over-consumption'. The critique centres on condemnation of individual lack of reason and hedonism (instead of a 'protestant ethic' traditionally associated with the conservative and 'down to earth' stereotype of an Estonian). The texts abound with phrases like 'stock exchange mania', 'consumption boom', 'senseless leasing'. There is also a concern about the Western impact on the country's economy and ethno-culture:

There was hardly any complaining about the invasion of Western culture or emergence of consumer society in the early years of Estonian freedom. This discussion came about only a few years later, when the consumption boom had reached its peak and concerns arose about the competitiveness of Estonian economy and the excessive influence of Western culture on Estonian culture and society. (ESS, F, PA, 01)

Although the overheated stock exchange is long forgotten, we can see that similar causes for worry may be discerned in the consumption patterns of today.

COMING OF AGE – CONSUMPTION TODAY

Today's commodities and consumption patterns are increasingly interpreted in terms of the stratification of society into different status groups (classes), where the dominant majority is represented as the 'poor' (or the 'repressed' to use Bauman's [1987] term) and increasing fragmentation into different lifestyle patterns among the rich or the 'seduced'. The naïveté of valuing cheap items from China is history and the present-day consumer world is considered very complex. We find rather conflicting discourses here, extending from a discourse on distinction with a very modern value orientation to more fluid and code-mixing identities and lifestyles usually associated with 'post-modern' consumer culture (see Featherstone, 1991).

Mixed values and freedom of choice

Consumption is often connected with status and wealth, sometimes even constructed as a duty to be fulfilled once a certain position has been reached. However, the 'purchased' status is distrusted, often shown as grotesque. The students acknowledge the social norm that induces some people to consume in such a hyperbolic way. By ridiculing it, they try to distance themselves from such reprehensible conduct and indirectly show that the norm for them is different. It is also clear that we cannot

point to coherent taste and lifestyle patterns characteristic of a more stable society; Estonia is a country of 'messy' sign values:

There are people who drive a BMW and wear Armani clothes but live in a lousy one-bedroom flat full of cockroaches, where they do not even have a closet to put their Armanis nicely on a hanger. (INT, M, NS, 01)

A typical example is working (class) youth who, by skimping on food, buy themselves rather expensive used cars while living in rental apartments at the same time. (ESS, M, PA, 01)

Positional goods are as important as before, only the code has become more nuanced, including, for example, luxury brands and various configurations of taste. At times it appears that the seemingly playful identity constructions negating fixed status codes are quite normative and rigid for the young people. The trend is the norm and taste configurations are used for social classification according to a relatively simple and solid modern hierarchy:

When the celebrities of *Kroonika* already demonstrate their designer-made and high-art-decorated bedrooms, then the dreams of an 'ordinary person' are with greater probability full of solid wood furniture in peasant style or even pseudo-baroque Italian bedroom sets. However, the dreams of a younger, a bit wealthier and trend aware urban person are, at least in my circle of acquaintances, quite minimalist and shiny with chrome. (ESS, F, PR, 00)¹⁰

Sometimes even the irony is gone and some of the informants seem to make their everyday decisions about people's reliability based on the signs belonging to the code of wealth and status, which seem to matter a lot.

I systematically do not take seriously economics professors who wear cheap clothes. They are not believable. A person, who is talking about how to get rich, must be rich himself. And it must be visible. Maybe some of them can make money, but I do not see his bank account, so it must be visible in some other way. If there is an investment professor who is driving a 1992 Toyota, I cannot take him very seriously. (INT, M, Eco, 01)

More critically reflective accounts can also be found. Personal freedom is viewed in a paradoxical way. On the one hand, the choice between various items is extensive, at least compared to the Soviet period, but on the other, there is limited personal freedom to choose the rules of the game – to switch 'in' and 'out'. The global media culture, stereotypically associated with America, is seen to be the referee who regulates the game. If one does not wish to become an outsider or an eccentric, one has to abide by the rules of consumer culture.

In spite of the anxiety it causes, some students rationalize it by acknowledging that consumption is an everyday, mundane practice whose deeper meaning one should not worry too much about. We can detect traces of nonchalance associated with the young 'post-modern' consumer for whom consumer choice provides the building blocks of an ever-changing identity game:

We can ridicule it, but no one is pushing it on you, are they? No sanctions follow – but he tells me, see this is good. But at the same time I have freedom of choice. Maybe I am stupid, maybe I have no choice since all the options have been pre-determined by the fact that I am a member of a society. . . . so that somebody else is the master who determines my behaviour, right? Following this one could argue that this is not good,

but since things in everyday life are not so philosophical, right, why not then? Let them consume. Let us consume. (INT; F, SS, 01)

A very interesting example describes consumption patterns in Estonia (or at least some of them with metaphoric meaning in this context) as a configuration of pre-modern values seen as 'cool' particularly by foreigners:

Abroad, at the same time, you can hear stories about Tallinn as one of the new trend cities (in addition to Berlin, London being already way-out) where in certain circles such cool things are done as valuing one's family, buying Estonian goods, making babies and weeding in one's own garden! In clubs gin with cranberry juice is drunk and drugs are not talked about. (ESS, F, JRNL, 02)

Considerable irony can be detected in this quote, particularly in the phrase about drugs, since the latter are a prominent theme in Estonian public and private discourse. However, it is definitely not a complete trick mirroring of the perceived lifestyles of Estonians. On the one hand, the traditional values and habits as well as loyalty to local goods are elevated to the status of a consciously trendy activity, which can provide a source of meaning in life for the young urban people (Estonian and foreign) who perhaps feel too cosmopolitan and adrift. On the other hand, growing one's own vegetables, focusing on family life and buying cheaper Estonian goods are seen as an inevitability for the relatively poor majority of Estonians. Foreigners who consider it trendy are ridiculed.

There are also other examples where similar issues are opened in more straightforward terms: Estonians finding a new identity based on rather archaic stereotypes of purity (pure nature equals pure food with no additives) and authenticity under the siege, so to speak, of Western consumer culture.

The same Westernization and consumerism have brought people closer to Estonian-ness and nature, it has drawn people's attention to preserving Estonian culture, to the need to save money and natural resources. A sensible consumer has found consumption through his/her Estonian nature. (ESS, F, PA; 01)

At the same time there are 'courageous' admissions of the hedonistic pleasures of consumerism, that provide a noteworthy contrast to the more normative-critical mood of most of the essays and interviews:

How many people remember in what conditions they bought fuel for their car fifteen years ago? Today's visiting Statoil or Shell has become a remarkably more nuanced pleasure than could be expected from an ordinary filling up. I enjoy the clean, pleasantly ergonomically designed petrol tank nozzle, the masculine sound of the clicks of the nozzle trigger reminding me of closing the cover of a zippo-lighter, tens of fuel litres zooming by in front of my eyes, the knowledge that I can take as much fuel as I want with one-cent precision and the meticulously clean, aesthetically designed, lit and aromatised environment. (ESS, M; PR, 00)

Buying Vogue is like a ritual . . . Usually I save myself for the moment, that is if I really need something to cheer me up, that is when I am in a bad mood or the weather outside is lousy. . . then I buy Vogue, make tea, lie down and browse in it for an hour or so. Estonian magazines are so thin, these I have already 'consumed' by the time I get to the counter . . . (INT, F, Arts, 01)

However, life in Estonia is not easy for hedonists since hedonism goes against the

grain of society. The reflexive game with commodity signs is a pleasure – if for only a few:

This whole playfulness, hovering meanings and changing identities does not match with the worldview Estonians have held so far (it has been taught that one has to buy what is absolutely necessary and the rest should be put in the piggy bank); at the same time one still wants and justifications are sought – why indulge in this or that? As a matter of fact, post-modern consumption is not easy at all; one has to have a tremendous amount of knowledge and be informed about everything. What fun is there to wear Manolo Blahnik shoes with old jeans or put one's Philip Starck orange press on grandma's wooden chest, if there is no one to grasp your fine post-modern irony? (ESS; F, PR; 01)

Thus we see an interesting jumble of connotations that give grounds for believing that young people's discourse about the West and Western models of consumption is influenced by the ambivalent and often contrasting background of values and practices prevalent in contemporary Estonian society, ranging from more traditional traits expressed in the longing for the purity of ethnic Estonian peasant culture to references to the often cosmopolitan carnivalesque, which is heavily influenced by the global media culture.

Growing ambivalence about the West

The West no longer symbolizes a promised land of freedom for the individual and for the nation. Instead, the meaning of the West is increasingly plural, even contradictory. The normative discourse of over-consumption and false needs is very prominent, with packages, shopping malls and trash as central metaphors. Note that the meaning of colour has acquired a negative connotation of false glamour and artificiality:

Most of all colourful packages made according to Euro-directives, large department stores, plastic bags, queues and bankcards, large shopping centres. Everything, even the smallest bite is wrapped into something. A senseless heap of garbage and preservatives. (INT, F, SO, 01)

I mostly understand over-consumption as this Western consumer culture: you consume what you do not actually need. Society has set such demands on you. Subconsciousness is under too much influence – advertising and everything else that surrounds us. (INT, M, NS, 01)

On the other hand, admiration of the West as a whole is rationalized and based on the Soviet experience – that is, Estonia's need to distance itself from the East. The West (particularly Northern Europe) is a functional model from which to learn skills and improve standards as well as a reference point for identity creation both on the national and individual level.

Lifestyle taken over from the Western value system gives an opportunity to identify oneself with 'an international shopper', citizen of a welfare state and 'real European'. No matter that living standards and transition problems do not let Estonia be designated a 'real' European state, yet it cannot prevent us from feeling like taking part of this added value that is given to us by the image of Westernized Estonia. (ESS; F, PR, 01)

Quite expectedly, the West is also beginning to elicit a fear of cultural dominance that could damage the national culture, and to be a negative role model, bombarding

Estonia with excessive materialism and eroding the 'right values'. Such 'attacks' are most often seen to come from the mass media, particularly advertising. The critique ranges from rather straightforward oppositions between Estonian and (not surprisingly, American) power brands to a more sophisticated account of the re-assertion of archaic practices by 'urban hedonists' as conscious resistance (as has been seen earlier in this article).

As an example we can take Muhumaa, Kihnu or the Võru and Põlva forests, where urban people working in the name of modern values feed their mythic and hedonistic needs, actively denying (even by sitting in a sauna) the need to bow down to the authority of Western culture. (ESS, F, PR, 01)¹¹

The metaphor of the West has acquired plural meanings that have parallel positive and negative connotations. It is interesting to note that the construct of the West is seen as rather homogeneous. The most distinguishable 'chunk' separated from the aggregate is the USA (often characterized with powerful phrases like 'consumption freaks', 'consumption mania' and considered the main source and symbolic resource for life 'like in the movies'). The Nordic countries, being close neighbours, are also sometimes mentioned separately. Quite expectedly the Nordic (or 'Nordic with a twist' as postulated in the state-financed promotional project, 'Brand Estonia' of 2002) identification pattern is mostly seen as positive. Finland (seen mainly on TV in North Estonia) was a glimmer between the iron curtain, an epitome of the West. It continues to be a role model of sustainability and sobriety with whom it is believed Estonians share a common cultural heritage. The official political discourse has also played its role by distancing Estonia from the Baltic identity by asserting its 'Nordic-ness'.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Analysis of the discourse of young and critical consumers shows that Western consumer goods carry very ambivalent meanings. The retrospective construction of meaning about Western commodities is intertwined with simultaneous but contrastive connotations ranging from collectively shared ethno-romantic ideals of a free Estonian nation state to very individualistic striving for distinction. We argue that one of the fundamental reasons for present-day criticism and the relative disillusionment expressed in Estonian mass media, academic discourse and the texts of the more educated and critical youth, is the fragmentation of the myth of a unified Estonian nation state into many separate worlds. The commodities that were believed to carry both the individual meaning of social position and the ideal of a free nation of self-determining citizens at the beginning of the 1990s are today mostly signified as status markers. They increase the gulf between people who are believed to have operated in a mythic unison and harmony in the days of the Singing Revolution.

The creation of the new habitus – amongst other things, the habitus of a competent consumer – has proved to be complicated. Commodification of the self (Giddens, 1991) has offered many rewards. On the one hand these include feeling 'like an international shopper', being 'European', being part of the free world as an equal partner as well as the satisfaction of one's individual need for differentiation from the coercively created homogeneity of the mass. On the other hand 'freedom from' oppression has not automatically taught people 'freedom to' (see Fromm, (2002[1942]),

meaning an ability to be individually responsible, take risks and re-arrange one's life strategies once the 'nanny state' is gone and Estonia is open to the whirlwind of globalizing media culture while faced with the formidable task of rebuilding the nation-state. The students' portrayals of the consumerization of Estonia are ambivalent. They are very critical as they have sufficient educational resources to understand the processes in society coupled with having inadequate material resources; but they can also be constructively optimistic or sometimes nonchalant.

Our data reveals a nascent understanding amongst young people that the individual's connection to society and its 'rules of the game' is pre-determined to a large extent. There seems to be no viable alternative to the consumer culture largely fed by the Western trends that come to Estonia mainly through the mass media. Estonians' attitude towards the West has become more critical. Both essays and interviews carry a central narrative of coming of age (a child growing up), which can be interpreted in both personal and national terms. Simple black and white schemes and 'pure' emotions (admiration, desire etc) have been replaced by ambivalent feelings where criticism exists side by side with acceptance and acknowledgement. Our informants realize that being free is complicated and things have a multitude of meanings.

As argued above, in Estonia parallel influences are at work producing the co-existence of opposite value orientations. The first of these influences is the modernization of society, which entails the creation and development of an institutional framework for a modern nation state, involving developing a free market economy accompanied by the emergence of a vertical, predominantly wealth-based status hierarchy. This is coupled with the so-called 'post-modern' influences of, for example, the international 'image culture' (Jansson, 2002), which can be 'transgressive, boundary breaking' or even 'all-eroding' to use Bauman's epithets (2000). Also, one should not underestimate the influence of the Nordic countries – most post-materialist of all in their value orientations according to Inglehart (1997) – which, as represented in Estonian public discourse, are important models of development.

We assume that owing to these often conflicting forces, the sign system of goods and practices forming the structures for tastes and a foundation for the new habitus, is in transition and sometimes 'messy'. This is reflected in several ways. Different value systems cannot be clearly 'disentangled' in discourses about consumption. As argued by Featherstone, a reflexive, late modern or 'post-modern' consumer would presumably very easily switch gears between the two worlds: one with rigid control and social norms, where scarce commodities are status markers within the prestige economy, and one which is 'de-controlled', where signs and symbols can freely be used to conjure up fantasies, dreams and to re-create the self as one pleases. According to this theory, in contemporary consumer culture these two sets are not alternatives, but exist in parallel; they are equally legitimate and can be used situatively. However, our data seem to reveal that in a post-socialist context this switching between two sets of values is ridden with problems. Even more ironic and playful lifestyle references can be interpreted as rigidly normative and hierarchy-centred. 'Post-modern' consumption is even seen as a rather hopeless attempt to create a web of meanings in a situation where there is no responsive audience. Shopping is not an aesthetic private enjoyment for the individual only, the pleasure of the contemporary urban *flâneur*. Rather, it is a chance to show oneself and one's family to others, to demonstrate one's ability to shop in up-market malls or supermarkets. So, although

truly self-centred hedonistic consumption practices and discourses about them definitely exist in the young Estonian consumer world, consumption is often seen by these young people as a complicated social labour of status and category marking – or even social exclusion where there is little room for the carnivalesque, and the spectacles of signs. The insecurities and hardships of constructing social classes and lifestyles in the new and formerly classless society seem to be causing the focus in the ‘ordered disorder’ that is symptomatic of contemporary Western consumer culture, to shift clearly onto the side of ‘order’ rather than ‘disorder’ or spectacle (see Featherstone, 1991).¹²

On the other hand, archaic references to purity and traditional peasant culture are nicely commodified and packaged, particularly in Estonian food products under the campaign ‘Prefer Estonian!’ or used (definitely by a more educated, reflexive and wealthy minority) as a tongue-in-cheek resistance to Western cultural dominance. This exists in tandem with a genuine ‘return to premodernity’ where some families claim that poverty has dragged them back to a barter economy where everything is grown on the farm or exchanged with neighbours. Indeed, the majority of the people cannot afford to purchase their desired status – not to mention participate in the global ‘post-modern’ identity game. This feeds overall embitterment, also termed ‘transition stress’ (see Kutsar, 1995).

Given this background we can hypothesize the emergence of a new consumer identity among the younger and more educated segments of Estonian society. Their historical experience, richer than that of the average Western consumer, and their critical stance make them at least hope to recover from the ‘children’s disease’ of excessive consumption. The Soviet experience plays an important part in the construction of this new guise of ‘out-smarting’ the West.

One could certainly argue that these sentiments exist mainly in words and not so much in actual consumption habits today. But throughout our study we have proceeded from the assumption that discourse, words used in the everyday construction of meaning, are as real as physical acts of shopping or using certain goods. We are convinced that these young people’s verbal reflections are as much a part of their identity as their actual choices between shopping malls and smoke saunas. To find out if this consumer identity or ‘lifestyle enclave’, which is today a small number of scattered individuals, has any potential to develop into a true ‘lifestyle community’ as theorized by Scott Lash (1994) and what its symbolic influence might be in society as a whole, requires extensive future research.

Notes

- 1 *Defitsiit* goods were goods that were very rarely and sometimes never officially sold in shops but circulated unofficially. For the acquisition of these goods one needed acquaintances among either influential, privileged people (e.g. state officials or party functionaries) or among salespeople in shops who distributed these goods ‘under the counter’, as was the local expression.
- 2 Note that Bauman clearly differentiates between the producer and consumer phase of capitalism. The Western world of late modernity is characterized by consumer dominance. Being a consumer as one of the basic roles for a person in his identity construction and self-realization differs from the earlier phase, when the status and value of the individual was determined by his thrift and accomplishments in the field of work.

- 3 We do not intend to go into the very complex, and perhaps by today's standards somewhat outdated, debate about the postmodernization of society. Instead we use the term 'post-modern' (deliberately in quotation marks) as an aggregate descriptive label encompassing cultural features and values as described primarily by Mike Featherstone (1991) and Ronald Inglehart (1997), for example denial of fixed status codes, eclectic mixing of local and global values, hedonism and valorization of self-expression. Whenever the label is used we point out the particular shades of meaning we refer to.
- 4 'Singing Revolution' refers to the years from 1989–1991 when Estonia strove for and gained the re-establishment of its independence. Since it was a non-violent process of change with large popular rallies – held in the Song Festival Ground in Tallinn and involving tens of thousands of people singing patriotic songs – it has acquired a metaphoric name: the Singing Revolution.
- 5 For a study of 'imaginary consumption' in today's Russia, also based on student essays, see Oushakine (2000).
- 6 The other abbreviations used are M – male student, F – female student. The specialities of students are shown with the following abbreviations: Eco – economics, PR – public relations, PA – public administration, SO – sociology, Germ – German philology, Eng – English philology, Psy – psychology, JRNL – journalism, Math – mathematics, Arts – fine arts, NS – natural sciences. The years of writing the essay or conducting the interview are marked with 00 (2000), 01 (2001) and 02 (2002).
- 7 Kommunaar was a footwear company in Soviet Estonia.
- 8 Although both were Soviet-produced cars, the Volga was considerably more expensive and very difficult to acquire. The Estonian text used the word 'sapikas' for the Zaporozhets which was a humorous diminutive nickname.
- 9 Marat was (and is) a hosiery company in Estonia. The brand names in the extract are deliberately misspelt, to denote 'pirate' imported goods from, for example, China or Vietnam. This relatively cheap merchandise was more widespread in the early 1990s than now, its reputation having declined considerably due to the official 'anti-pirate' campaigns conducted by the Estonian police, as well as the general increase in consumers' purchasing power and knowledge about foreign brands.
- 10 *Kroonika* is a weekly tabloid magazine, which has the widest circulation of all Estonian magazines.
- 11 Muhumaa and Kihnu are small islands on the Estonian West coast, Põlvamaa and Võrumaa are provinces in South Estonia (close to the Latvian border and furthest away from Tallinn).
- 12 It is interesting to note that the newest political party, Res Publica, has chosen 'Elect Order!' as its slogan for the parliamentary elections to be held in March 2003.

References

- Bank of Estonia, URL (consulted in January, 2003): <http://www.ee/EPBE/makromajandus/index.html.et>
- Bauman, Zygmunt (1987) *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Postmodernity and Intellectuals*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Zygmunt (1988) *Freedom*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Bauman, Zygmunt (2000) *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1984[1979]) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1998) *Practical Reason*. London: Polity.
- Brubaker, Rogers (1995) *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Calhoun, Graig (1994) *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Emor Ltd (2003) 'Consumption grew by ten per cent in Estonia last year'. <http://www.emor.ee> Accessed March 2003.
- Featherstone, Michael (1991) *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*. London: Sage.
- Fromm, Erich (2002[1942]) *The Fear of Freedom*. London: Routledge.
- Giddens, Anthony (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Inglehart, Ronald (1997) *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Jansson, André (2002) 'The Mediatization of Consumption: Towards an Analytical Framework of Image Culture', *Journal of Consumer Culture* 2(1): 5–31.
- Keller, Margit and Vihalemm, Triin (2001) 'Estonian Society Carried By the Tide of Western Consumer Culture', in Raivo Vettik (ed.) *Estonian Human Development Report*, pp. 80–3. Tallinn: Tallinn Pedagogical University and Institute of International and Social Studies.
- Kolstø, Pål (2000) *Political Construction Sites: Nation Building in Russia and the Post-Soviet States*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Kutsar, Dagmar (1995) *Transformation in Estonia as Reflected in Families: Insights into Social Stress and Poverty. Dissertationes Psychologiae Universitatis Tartuensis, 2*. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- Laar, Mart (1996) 'Estonia's Success Story', *Journal of Democracy* 7(1): 96–101.
- Laitin, David D. (1998) *Identity in Formation: The Russian-speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Lash, Scott (1994) 'Reflexivity and its Doubles: Structure, Aesthetics, Community', in Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash (eds), *Reflexive Modernization. Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, pp. 110–73. Cambridge: Polity.
- Lauristin, Marju (1997) 'Contexts of Transition', in Marju Lauristin et al. (eds) *Return to the Western World*, pp. 25–40. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- Lauristin, Marju and Vihalemm, Peeter (1997) 'Recent Historical Developments in Estonia: Three Stages of Transition (1987–1997)', in Marju Lauristin et al. (eds) *Return to the Western World*, pp. 73–126. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- Lauristin, Marju and Vihalemm, Peeter (1998) 'Postkommunistlik siirdeaeg Eestis: Tõlgendusvõimalusi' (Post-communist transition period in Estonia: different interpretations), *Akadeemia* 10(4/5): 675–701 and 899–916.
- Lauristin, Marju and Vihalemm, Peeter (2002) 'The Transformation of Estonian Society and Media: 1987–2001', in Peeter Vihalemm (ed.) *Baltic Media in Transition*, pp. 17–64. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- Lauristin, Marju and Vihalemm, Triin (1997) 'Changing Value Systems: Civilizational Shift and Local Differences', in Marju Lauristin et al. (eds) *Return to the Western World*, pp. 243–63. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- Linz, Juan, L. and Stepan, Alfred (1996) *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Oushakine, Serguei Alex (2000) 'The Quantity of Style: Imaginary Consumption in the New Russia', *Theory, Culture and Society* 17(5): 97–120.
- Raag, Liis (2000) 'Karjäärikäsitluse dünaamika: Eesti ja Saksa üliõpilaste arvamused karjäärist' (The dynamics of the career concept: opinions of Estonian and German students about career), unpublished BA thesis, Department of Sociology, University of Tartu.
- Rausing, Sigrid (1998) 'Sings of the New Nation: Gift Exchange, Consumption and Aid on a Former Collective Farm in North-west Estonia', in Daniel Miller (ed.) *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter*, pp. 189–213. London: UCL Press.
- Saarniit, Jüri (2000) 'Value consciousness and its change'. Estonian national report: review of national youth policy. Tallinn: Ministry of Education, Council of Europe.

- Slater, Don (1997) *Consumer Culture and Modernity*. London: Routledge.
- Statistical Office of Estonia (2003) <http://www.stat.ee> Accessed March 2003.
- Sztompka, Piotr (1996) 'Looking Back: The Year 1989 as a Cultural and Civilizational Break', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 29(2): 115–29.
- Tallo, Annika (1998) 'Erinevad generatsioonid üleminekuperioodi Eestis' (The generations in Estonia's transition period), Eesti Inimarengu Aruanne. <http://www.undp.ee/nhdr98/et/1.2.html> Accessed September 2002.
- Toomere, Tuuli (2001) 'Väärtusorientatsioonid postsotsialistlikes riikides' (Value orientations in post-socialist countries), *Akadeemia* 13(12): 2543–60.
- Uus Maa Ltd (2003) 'Tallinna kinnisvaraturu trendid. Talv 2003' (Trends in the real estate market of Tallinn), <http://www.uusmaa.ee> Accessed January 2003.
- Vetik, Raivo (2001) 'Introduction to the Estonian Human Development Report 2001: Is Estonia Socially Sustainable?', in Estonian Human Development Report, pp. 8–12. Tallinn: Tallinn Pedagogical University and Institute of International and Social Studies.
- Vihalemm, Triin (1997) 'Changing Discourses on Values in Estonia', in Marju Lauristin et al. (eds) *Return to the Western World*, pp. 265–78. Tartu: Tartu University Press.

MARGIT KELLER is a lecturer and doctorate student at the department of Journalism and Communications at the University of Tartu, Estonia. She teaches consumer culture and branding. As part of her doctoral project she is currently researching the development of a 'Western' consumer culture in post-communist Estonia, focusing on different aspects from advertising to different discourses on shopping malls. Previously (2001) she has published, jointly with Triin Vihalemm, a study 'Estonian Society Carried by the Tide of Western Consumer Culture', in Estonian Human Development Report (Tallinn: Tallinn Pedagogical University and Institute of International and Social Studies). Address: Department of Journalism and Communication, University of Tartu, Estonia, Ülikooli Str 18, Tartu 50090, Estonia. [email: mkeller@hot.ee]

TRIIN VIHALEMM is Associate Professor at the department of Journalism and Communications at the University of Tartu, Estonia. She teaches media communication research methods and marketing communication. Her research interests concern mainly (re)construction of social identities in language and media culture, also including consumer culture. She has over 20 publications in international and Estonian journals or collections, including 'Changing Discourses on Values in Estonia' in *Return to the Western World: Cultural and Political Perspectives on the Estonian Post-Communist Transition*, ed. M. Lauristin, P. Vihalemm, K.E. Rosengren and L. Weibull (Tartu University Press 1997), and 'Estonian language competence, performance and beliefs about its acquisition among the Russian-speaking habitants of Estonia 1989–1997', *International Journal of Sociology of Language*, issue 139, 1999. [email: triinvihalemm@neti.ee]

III

Keller, M. & Vihalemm, T. (2004). Coping with consumer culture: elderly urban consumers in post-Soviet Estonia. Manuscript reviewed in *Trames*.

Coping with consumer culture: elderly urban consumers in post-Soviet Estonia

Margit Keller and Triin Vihalemm

ABSTRACT

This article discusses representations of consumer culture in today's Estonia by elderly urban consumers. The study, which draws on 30 original interviews with urban consumers over 45 years of age, outlines the clashes between the Soviet consumer culture and its current counterpart. We place the analysis within the framework of Simmel's objective and subjective culture, as well as within that of several sociological and anthropological studies. Based on this, it may be concluded that, for this group of consumers, profusion of goods and free choice are often rendered illusory, as they foreshadow new scarcities that have to be coped with on the individual level. This, in turn, generates critical representations on a continuum from micro level personal problems of financial need to a more macro level social divide, as well as on the level of Western consumer society at large.

Key words: consumer culture, objective and subjective culture, Soviet, post-Soviet, choice.

INTRODUCTION

Construction of large shopping malls and ever-widening advertising and branding are evidence that Western-style consumer culture has come to stay in post-Soviet Estonia. The main characteristics distinguishing it from the Soviet consumer world of shortage and homogeneity are freedom of choice, abundance of goods and shopping outlets. We assume that many consumers perceive a clash between the Soviet consumer culture and its current counterpart, and that this may be empirically studied.

We focus on Estonian urban consumers over 45 years of age. Since the Soviet period embraces their socialisation and decades of their active adult lives, we assume that contrasts between the memory of 'then' and the representation of 'today' are the sharpest in their eyes.

The broader question we pose in our study is: what is the underlying system of concepts used by our informants to articulate today's consumer culture?

More specifically, we seek comparisons between the Soviet past and today, both as accounts of personal experience (micro level) and as assessments of societal development on a larger scale (macro level).

On the one hand, we anticipate complex relations between the memories of the 'old' culture and today's experience of capitalist Westernized consumer culture, and on the other hand, between today's objective culture – that is new consumer goods, consumption practices, spaces as well as public constructs of some consumers as 'deprived' and 'excluded' – and its personal reappropriation or lack thereof, i.e. subjective culture.

Firstly, a theoretical outline is given, after which the selection of this particular sample – urban Estonians over 45 – is explained. Secondly, some quantitative data about this group is provided. The bulk of the article is dedicated to qualitative analysis of interviews followed by conclusions and discussion.

CLASH OF THE 'OLD' AND 'NEW' CONSUMER CULTURES

Consumer culture in post-Soviet Estonia is a complex set of interacting influences both on the spatial axis (East *versus* West) and temporal axis (the Soviet time *versus* contemporary Estonia). In order to inquire into the juxtaposition of Soviet and contemporary consumer culture by consumers themselves, we rely on various theoretical sources. Our overarching framework stems from Georg Simmel's concepts of objective and subjective culture, which are thematized with the help of several studies of societal transition and changes in the consumer world in particular (see Simmel, 1997 [1911, 1916]). We have been greatly inspired by anthropological studies by Verdery (1996) and Miller (1987, 1995), as well those of Patino (2002), Patino and Caldwell (2002), Rausing (1998), Chelcea (2002) and others. On the other hand, we rely to some extent on sociological work by, for example, C. Campbell (1987), Z. Bauman (1988, 1994, 2000), P. Sztompka (2000), M. Kennedy (2002) and J. Gronow (1997 and 2003). We find a multidisciplinary approach the only alternative in a situation where different research traditions give valuable insight into the phenomenon under scrutiny.

One of our starting points is that the Soviet consumer culture and its counterpart in contemporary capitalist Estonia are fundamentally different in various aspects. With the help of Miller's (1987) interpretations of Hegel and Simmel, we may say that, during the Soviet era, the objective culture of the consumer world could be divided into many layers. Firstly, there was the visible part of the official objective culture, consisting of the puritan ethic (see Campbell, 1987) of the communist leaders as well as the rhetoric of the fulfilment of the Soviet consumer's needs, which on actual shop counters meant a limited supply of 'grey homogenised goods'. The anthropologist Katherine

Verdery sums it up by referring to John Borneman (1992): 'Capitalism... repeatedly renders desire concrete and specific, and offers specific, if ever-changing, goods to satisfy it. Socialism, in contrast, aroused desire without focalizing it, and kept it alive by deprivation' (Verdery, 1996: 28). On the other hand, the invisible official objective culture consisted of almost 'courtly' systems of privileges to *nomenklatura*, providing coupons for deficit goods and access to special shops etc.

All this was counteracted by a 'second, unofficial' objective culture of underhanded deals of reciprocity – which has by some theorists (Gronow, 2003) been compared to the clan ethic of Mauss's (2002 [1950]) 'gift economy' – to obtain goods with complex symbolic (and often subversively romantic) value. This part of objective culture acted as a buffer that helped to support the repressive system and ideology of state power on the level of subjective culture.

Simmel claims that while a subject may be overwhelmed by the objective culture, he or she cannot reject it because 'it all belongs potentially to his cultural sphere' (Simmel, 1997 [1916]: 92). We may assume that a large part of the Soviet 'official' and deeply ideological objective culture was rejected on a subjective level, having been defined as 'not our own'. But the reappropriation of the object by the subject – the sublation – often did happen in the private sphere of consumption of these symbolic goods, which were invested with diverse meanings and acquired via elaborate practices of the 'unofficial objective culture' or 'second economy' (see Miller, 1987; Verdery, 1996). These were not gifts initiated by the giver (cf. Mauss 2002 [1950] or Bourdieu, 1998) but rather favours asked by the needy, therefore often humiliating, because a favour meant remembering and paying back at a later time with a similar favour. Many people were, however, unable to reciprocate in a similar manner due to a lack of personal connections of their own. These elaborate and often ambivalent practices embraced both, economic and symbolic exchange logics, which often caused tension (Bourdieu, 1998). However, we may conclude that the deficit goods derived their strong symbolic value partly from intense personal relations needed for their acquisition, that is objects were more personified than they are today in the impersonal money-economy of the free market (see also Ledeneva, 1998).

We may also say, based on earlier research (see Keller and Vihalemm, 2003, Kõresaar, 2003; cf. also Švab, 2002; Chelcea, 2002) and personal experience, that the 'unofficial' or sometimes 'semi-official' objective culture constituted both a pragmatic as well as subversive – even though often unreflective – practice. It was resistance on many levels. Most indirectly it was a macro-level negation of the Soviet power and affirmation of Estonian ideals of freedom. On a micro level it was a construction of personal identity 'enabling you to differentiate yourself as an individual in the face of the relentless pressures to homogenise everyone's capacities and tastes into an undifferentiated collectivity' (Verdery, 1996: 29, see also Keller and Vihalemm, 2003).

The meanings of Western goods entering Soviet circulation were not based on the messages their producers and marketers had invested in them, but on the specifics of the Soviet system. We may assume that the driving force of Soviet consumption was not the romantic ethic pushing people to seek ever new sensations and derive individualistic pleasure from specific commodities laden with complex meanings, usually constructed, in the first place, by branding and advertising. (Campbell, 1987). Instead, along with mundane utilitarian provisioning, the Soviet ideology of consumption was characterised by an often puritan frugality, which was a complex result of the official shortage – thus an imposed frugality – and perhaps a more traditional peasant ethic based on ‘only the necessary’. The romantic dimension was there as well, but was of a different nature: not so much individual desire for pleasure as negation of the Soviet power, setting oneself apart from socialism. Western goods symbolised freedom during the Soviet time and, as theorised by for example D. Slater (1997), civic freedom was often conjoined with consumer freedom.

The post-Soviet transition has changed consumer culture and subject-object relations radically. The market economy, based on – at least theoretically – consumer sovereignty, freedom of choice and monetary transactions, has brought along a cultural tension, a new gulf between the objective and subjective cultures. The old buffer of reciprocal deals, with all its humiliation and joy, has crumbled, at least in the sphere of acquisition of everyday consumer items. Rapid development of branding, advertising and construction of shopping malls, as the most vivid examples of the new objective culture, is socialising the Estonian people into a Western-style romantic ethic, which upholds the spirit of consumerism and is based on a permanent desire for novelty. This has been supported by the official ultra-liberal, utilitarian ideology of the country’s economic policy. In essence, the subject face the objective culture of consumption alone. The primary (and according to Simmel the most universal) mediator is money, but it is also one of the most impersonal means humankind has created. However, the Soviet heritage continues to exert its influence, and thus we cannot speak of any simple adoption of Western consumer cultural practices and symbols. Instead, we see a complex localised web of meanings, which brings forth new tensions between subjects and objects, between the subjective and objective culture.

Although the notions of civic and consumer freedom were partly interwoven, thus giving the ideals of freedom a strong connotation of consumer sovereignty, the current situation is far from a full realisation of the dreams of the Soviet Estonian consumers who resisted the system and its ideology. The market has been flooded with, to a remarkable extent, imported commodities. We assume that freedom of choice (both on an individual and national level) as well as objects, and cultural forms symbolising it (such as shopping), once here, are often seen today as having developed according to an immanent logic of their own, producing new tensions, perhaps even alienation. Here we find Simmel’s

concept of the tragedy of culture particularly enlightening: the ever-increasing mass of objective culture cannot be fully assimilated by people, sublation of the object by the subject is truncated in many instances and thus the culture, once expected to bring freedom and happiness, feeds feelings of failure and embitterment. As Simmel puts it: 'The infinitely growing stock of the objectified mind makes demands on the subject, arouses faint aspirations in it, strikes it with feelings of his own insufficiency and helplessness, entwines it into total constellations from which it cannot escape as a whole without mastering its individual elements' (Simmel, 1997 [1911]: 73).

In contrast to attitudes in the Soviet time, rejection of the system as a whole is very complex. It is not the easy to resist external oppressor's ideology (see Kennedy, 2002), but the independent democratic republic people supported during the Singing Revolution, that is 'our own' creation. However, many elements of it are not fully re-appropriated, and there is no full reconciliation. One of the reasons is social stratification, a differentiation of financial means that differentiates chances to participate in the consumer culture. We may assume that what P. Sztompka (2000) has termed 'cultural trauma' may be encountered here. This entails its own specific ways of meaning-creation, as well as coping strategies (both representational and practical), especially among the older generations whose Soviet experience was more extensive.

SUBJECT OF THE STUDY – URBAN ESTONIANS OVER 45

When choosing the subject of study we sought to focus on representations by informants that expressed the clash of two different types of consumer culture, as well as relations between subjective and objective culture, most vividly. Thus we decided on the group of urban Estonian consumers over 45 years of age. We took as our point of departure the fact that the consumer world constitutes a significant part of the objective culture of today against which the self is identified, i.e. it is also the source of subjective culture. As Lauristin argues: 'The dominant liberal economic success-centred ideology of the transition period has shaped people's self-positioning on the social ladder, proceeding from the criteria of economic success and competitive capacity. Transfer of these criteria and interpretation patterns from the field of ideology into the real world shapes people's subjective evaluation of belonging in social strata in relation to their opportunities as consumers' (Lauristin, 2004).¹ No doubt there

¹ Self-positioning into a social stratum was measured with the following questions: 'People's social position can be depicted as a ladder, that can take up or down. The 10th step of the ladder shows the highest position, the lowest step is for those who feel almost excluded from the society. What do you think, on which social step are you at the moment? / Where was your family 20 years ago (at the beginning of 1980s)? / On which step were your parents or grandparents at the end of 1930s?'

are better off and worse off people among our informants and one needs to be cautious with generalisations. Nevertheless we assumed that the relative financial deprivation of older respondents amplifies the conflict of two cultural experiences – that of today and that of the Soviet past – as well as between contemporary objective culture, deeply interwoven with the basic liberal-utilitarian message setting individual responsibility for one's consumption opportunities on centre stage, and subjective culture trying to assimilate and cope with the former.²

Russians living in Estonia are not analysed here, since for them the trauma caused by social change is more complicated and we assumed that the tense power relations between two ethnic and language communities may also shape the sphere of consumption. Rural population was also left aside, assuming that the urban lifestyle gives more opportunity to enter the romantic hedonistic consumer world.

We decided to focus on the people whose active socialisation period fell in the Soviet era, i.e. they were adult and active in the Soviet environment for at least ten years, being 30 or older at the time of the Soviet Union's collapse.

We also took into consideration the way in which older generations are constructed by various public texts. Based on longitudinal research, a model of the generations of 'winners' and 'losers' (the former are today under 45) has been proposed (see Titma, 1999). This model has been actively used by mass media, where the critical message of the researchers has often been transformed into simplified images: the Soviet Union collapsed and the young coped with it better than did older generations. The older generations are often represented as excluded by the profusion of consumption opportunities. Thus we were able to anticipate that, in the representations by the older generations, cultural tensions would be particularly prominent.

EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND – THE SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CONSUMPTION IN THE EYES OF OLDER URBAN ESTONIANS

Since our focus of research was on subjective meaning-creation, our empirical data was gathered and analysed qualitatively (see below). The goal of the present section is to give some empirical background regarding perceptions of social changes, self-positioning and consumption among the studied group.

² We have not directly asked to extensively describe the Soviet time, instead we have tried to catch characteristic interpretations and explanations. It has to be taken into account, that another factor influencing the representations by these people is the connotation of the Soviet time with their personal youth or active adulthood and may thus be further idealised-romanticised, some details may be overdone etc. But our focus is people's representations as repositories of cultural memory, their expressions of both objective and subjective culture.

As no specific research on the consumption culture of the older generations has been conducted in Estonia, we used the results of the survey within the research project ‘Formation of the 21st Century Media Society in Estonia’, which covered a territorially representative sample of Estonian inhabitants 15 to 74 years of age (N=1470) (Kalmus *et al*, 2004). We defined a sub-sample of Estonian inhabitants of Tallinn and Tartu over 45 since in-depth interviews were conducted with people with similar characteristics. The sub-sample comprised 171 individuals. For comparison we used the sub-sample of all Estonians³.

Comparing Estonians from Tartu and Tallinn over 45 with all Estonians, we can see that the older urban Estonians felt that they had fallen down the social ladder more often compared to all Estonians (see Table 1). At the same time, 66 per cent of urban Estonians over 45 replied positively to the question: *How do you personally evaluate the changes that have taken place in Estonian life during the last 10–15 years?* A remarkable number of older urban Estonians evaluate the change positively. Also the general evaluation of the development of the Estonian economy and of democracy is viewed positively among urban Estonians over 45 – respectively 80 and 64 per cent of respondents said that the changes had been positive in these aspects. The relevant share of positive answers among all Estonians was 77 and 60 per cent. Older urban Estonians are slightly more positive than all Estonians.

Table 1. Self-positioning on the imagined social ladder.

<i>Share of answers in per cent indicating self-positioning (step 1 to 5 and step 6 to 10 are summed up).</i>		Estonians from Tartu and Tallinn over 45	All Estonians 15–74
Self-positioning on the 10-step ladder today	lower steps (1 to 5)	65	59
	higher steps (6 to 10)	35	38
Self-positioning on the 10-step ladder in the 1980s	lower steps (1 to 5)	42	52
	higher steps (6 to 10)	58	37
Positioning on the 10-step ladder in the 1930s	lower steps (1 to 5)	35	43
	higher steps (6 to 10)	65	50

³ We chose the group of all Estonians for comparison instead of the total sample because the replies by Estonians and Russians to the questions about social change differ sharply. This would have influenced the respective indicators of the whole sample to such an extent, that the specifics of the generational dimension could not have been analysed. For example the older urban Estonians evaluate societal change more positively than average, because the Russophone respondents’ replies are more negative. At the same time, among Estonians as a whole, the older urban Estonians stand out for their more negative evaluation of the societal change.

Thus we may argue that older urban Estonians are not more negative towards the social changes, although they perceive a sharper fall on the social ladder during the transition. Indirectly this reflects an adoption of the role of the ‘loser’ and reproduces self-exclusion and a feeling that society develops according to its own logic and the person stands outside the general flow.

The perceptions and practices of older urban Estonians about consumption did not differ noticeably from Estonians in general. For example, there was no statistically significant difference in the shares of people who interpreted shopping as a means of pastime and leisure: 13.5 per cent of older urban Estonians and

17 per cent of all Estonians replied that visiting shopping centres is a means of entertainment. The personal hedonistic-consumerist practices were somewhat less characteristic of older urban Estonians compared to all Estonians (see Table 2).

Table 2. Division of the sample of all Estonians and older urban Estonians on the scale of consumerism. Shares in per cent (100% = relevant sub-sample)

Orientation to consumerism is...	Estonians from Tartu and Tallinn over 45	All Estonians 15–74
Missing	29	21
Very weak or weak	42	41
Remarkable	19	22
High or very high	2	4

Using Spearman correlation analysis, we explore the correlation between subjective self-positioning on the social ladder and consumerist orientation. Two variables were analysed: the question *On which step of the social ladder are you at the moment?* and the index of consumerism (6 steps)⁴¹. In the case of older urban Estonians, the correlation coefficient was 0.334 ($p = .001$) and in the case of all Estonians, 0.437 ($p = .001$). Thus the higher one’s self-

⁴ Under the label of ‘consumerism’ we constructed an aggregate variable – on the basis of 18 single variables, e.g.: does not buy clothes only from shops, has them also tailor-made; buys certain clothing brands, considers brand more important than price of clothes, has changed interior decoration of his/her flat in recent years, has had several holiday trips abroad during recent years, etc. We assume that in today’s Estonia these variables measure aspects of consumption that are related to consumption self-expression and life-style, where cultural and hedonistic dimensions of consumption are of significant importance (styles, brands, design as well as holiday trips and leisure shopping). We formed 6 groups according to the normal distribution of the replies: consumerism missing, very weak, weak, remarkable, strong and very strong (see also Keller and Kalmus 2004).

positioning on the social ladder, the stronger the consumerist orientation. Although for our sub-sample the correlation was statistically significant, it was weaker compared to all Estonians. On the whole, we agree with Marju Lauristin (2004) who claims that people who have adopted Western consumption patterns consider their status higher in the present Estonian society.

Thus the personal consumption possibilities are probably one source that enables people to position themselves on an imaginary social hierarchy, but for older Estonians this does not seem to be as frequent a frame of reference as for younger Estonians. It may be concluded that personal life trajectory and the development of society are, for older urban Estonians, to a certain extent, separate phenomena- an imagined personal decrease of status and lesser participation in the hedonistic-consumerist practices do not provide a basis for overall social pessimism. Opinions by elderly urban Estonians are affected, on the one hand, by more limited participation opportunities in the new consumer world and, on the other hand, by a greater difference between micro level opinions based on personal practice and macro level assessments of society. This gave us reason to anticipate unique representations (including critique) of the old and new consumer culture.

Data and method of qualitative analysis

The qualitative analysis was based on interviews conducted as part of a project dealing with Estonian consumer culture and shopping malls carried out by one of the authors (M. Keller). The set of qualitative interviews consisted of two parts: the first consisted of 12 brief interviews (with an average duration of 10 minutes) with shoppers in the two oldest and largest shopping malls of Tallinn and the largest shopping mall of Tartu. Of the informants, three were men, and nine were women. All informants were Estonian-speaking. Most of them lived in either Tallinn or Tartu. The second set of data consists of 18 in-depth interviews conducted mostly at people's homes. Among the informants there were ten men and eight women. Six of them lived in Tartu and 12 in Tallinn. Most of the informants were between 50 and 70 years of age.

Both types of interviews were coded and analysed together and according to the cross case method. Excerpts on various shopping practices, direct reflections on today's consumer culture as well as comparisons with the Soviet era were coded, whereas the coding scheme was developed after the initial reading of the interviews. The codes stem directly from the text but are developed one step further from simple descriptive codes into interpretive codes (see Miles and Huberman, 1994). The coding included not only manifest statements under each theme, but also more latent or implicit assumptions and connotations informants used to make sense of today's consumer world as well as their memories of the Soviet past. The final result of the coding was a structuring of the analysis

according to broader constructions that are termed pattern codes by Miles and Huberman (1994), which in many cases contained more than one interpretive code (for example the topic of shopping malls can be divided into sub-themes or different representations of malls as economic objects or as symbolic loci of today's consumer culture).

Under each subtopic we attempted to structure the analysis on the axis of more micro level personal experience descriptions *versus* macro level societal assessments given. In addition, we looked for juxtapositions of the 'old' culture and the 'new', i.e. Soviet memories and recent experiences. To a certain extent, the construct of the West was also explored.

REPRESENTATIONS OF CONSUMER CULTURE

Shopping malls as functional and symbolic loci

The current study constitutes a section of a broader research project focusing on the meaning of shopping malls and various shopping practices. Our assumption is that for urban consumers the massive construction of new shopping centres and its extensive media coverage form a relevant part of their everyday consumption experience. (See also Keller, 2005 forthcoming and Keller and Kalmus, 2004).

Shopping malls evoke different emotions and are never absolutely neutral. Interviews conducted on-site in the centres and in-depth interviews at other locations understandably differ somewhat. The meaning of a shopping centre for elderly people 'caught red-handed' on the spot was usually more positive, focusing on the pleasant immediate environment offering recreation and enjoyment:

Well, it is positive here... There is air and no problem when you need to go... to relieve yourself and it is possible to eat with children... all such things... It is a whole, there are many things, one can spend the whole day here... and even then there is not enough time...I do not see anything bad here. At least during the time I've been here. Lots of effort has been put into it, lots of effort...(BI, F, 60–70 Tln, pensioner)⁵

Since the format of in-depth interviews allows for more reflection, a more intricate field of meanings is revealed. The shopping mall is often articulated as

⁵ The abbreviations used after the interview excerpts are the following: BI – brief interview, IDI – in-depth interview; F – female; M – male; Tln – Tallinn; Trt – Tartu; the occupation of the informant is indicated with the full word, 50–60 or the like is the age bracket of the informant.

an economic phenomenon, responsibility for which lies with real-estate developers and managers and not with consumers. Competition between different centres is seen as welcome:

It does not concern me... this is their business who build them and who have to sell there and who have to compete... As far as I am concerned let them build as many... as many as they get... as they find customers for themselves. The more shopping centres we have, the more there is hope that there are discounts more often... and prices fall. Competition is tougher and one can get something cheaper. (IDI; F, 60–70, Tln, pensioner)

In addition to this consumer-benefit centred approach, there were numerous critical evaluations from the point of view of society at large. Firstly, shopping malls were criticised in the economic context. Their number was seen as too large for the low purchasing power of the transition country. A strong metaphor was a ‘ghost palace’, a deserted building of a bankrupt shopping centre. The architectural aspect played a role as well. Cheap and ugly buildings were seen as incarnations of greed for profit and lack of care for the urban environment:

I think it will end with a big blow-up and large bankruptcies. And what will become of those enormous faceless boxes, one can only imagine with horror. But they will be taken down and something new will be built instead... But money has to circulate fast and the owners do not care how this or that box fits into the city milieu. (IDI, M, 50–60, Tln, specialist)

At the most macro level, criticism of the shopping mall becomes a metaphor for the new society, the new social structure. The shopping mall destroys the natural environment and immediate human relations by swallowing small corner shops. It standardises and homogenises people and objects evoking nostalgia for the ‘old’ ways of selling and buying. Here we see how encountering the new objective culture in its most intense forms causes difficulties in subjective re-appropriation. A similar feeling is conveyed by the following interview fragments by people with contrasting educational and financial backgrounds:

Oh well... but it is with these small basement shops that you go there and chat a bit and take your things that you need and go on... Just like you read in pre-war Estonian novels that here you are, there was a shop where your purchase was written down on paper and on your pay-day you came and paid for your bread. But in this centre there is pressure, no time to speak to anyone... (IDI; M, 60–70, Tln, pensioner)

It is interesting, how this, let’s say seemingly practical and commercial element, profit-generating, concretely taken care of, managed, people behind it who benefit from it and are happy... But indirectly it constructs a society, it guards

and controls people and the functioning of society, regulation of people and so on... (IDI, F, 40–50, Trt, intellectual)

However, a strong concession is made to Western shopping malls, which due to their longer tradition and ‘patina’ are in a way more legitimate. They seem to fit better into the context of ‘old’ capitalist societies. Those malls are interpreted as being friendlier, less enslaving and less derivative than their post-Soviet Estonian counterparts:

My vivid positive experience is related to visiting Finnish, Swedish, Spanish and other foreign shopping malls. Because they have this specific smell of cleanliness and a pleasant, cultured atmosphere. There are no beggars or street children... In Estonian shopping malls there are negative experiences ... in them practically nothing has changed since the socialist times. (IDI; M, 40–50, Tln, specialist)

Positive or negative comparisons of Estonian malls with those of the West are directly related to informants’ personal experience with shopping abroad. A limited background for comparison with the West usually renders the informants’ constructs of Estonian malls less critical.

Shopping practices

The two basic micro level conceptual pairs evident in the shopping context are purchasing/not purchasing and enjoying/not enjoying. In many cases elderly and financially deprived consumers regard themselves as being outside the present consumer world. Shopping malls and *šoppamine*⁶ (see also Keller, 2005 forthcoming) as a (at least) partly hedonistic practice is perceived as meant for someone else – either younger or richer people – as a pensioner from Tartu puts it:

This does not apply to us... we do not go for *šoppamine*, where you specifically go to spend money. Yes this *šoppamine* is when you really go to buy... this is real buying not like where you jingle your coins... and see if you can afford this or not. This is more for the rich... (IDI; F, 60–70, Trt, pensioner)

However, the level of being switched on or off in relation to the present consumer culture does not depend only on the actual purchases made and

⁶ This is a new colloquial word in Estonian adapted from English ‘shopping’. Its semantic field is rather complex, however the main connotation is with the romantic (Campbell, 1987) pleasure and leisure oriented practice, which may involve excessive buying but, on the other hand, may involve no actual purchases at all, simply an aesthetic pleasure.

financial resources available. On the one hand, we encountered ‘virtual shopping’ on a compensatory level, particularly by elderly women with little money but lots of spare time. Descriptions of direct participation in purchasing varied from complete abstinence from buying to making occasional small purchases that were indulged in as treats (e.g. a cup of coffee or a bottle of shampoo):

Just like me sometimes, alone as I am. The weather is miserable, you cannot stroll outside, it’s very slippery. You go in just for a moment, see what there is in Stockmann, walk through all the floors. Maybe you also buy something, something small, that you happen to need. But... but... why can’t one go to a pretty, clean, warm place where there are nice, kind, smiling people [laughs] and all is clean, why can’t one go, I think this is no sin at all. (IDI, F, 60–70, Tln, pensioner)

Such compensatory practice is a way of reconciling oneself to the objective culture of consumer society. Although the limited finances of these people make them feel excluded at times, they do find ways of re-appropriating these forms of objective culture in ways accessible to them.

It has been pointed out in other research that enjoyment without making an actual purchase can be understood also in terms of deferred gratification and self-discipline, a mixture of romantic self-illusory hedonism as the main driving force of contemporary consumer culture as theorised by Campbell (1987) and a puritan ethic of restraint and self-control in the environment of an abundance of goods. This applies particularly in cases where the consumer has ample financial resources (see also Keller, 2005 forthcoming and Lehtonen, 1999). However, such constructs were more evident in interviews with younger people and did not seem to form a very relevant frame of reference for our informants over 45.

Nevertheless, it can be said that positioning of the self *vis-à-vis* the world of consumption is often characterised by varying degrees of sophistication and self-control, skills and detachment. Submersion in the consumer world cannot result in mass psychosis: self-control is always said to be retained. In these cases consumer culture provides for the construction of independent, reflexive and moral selves.

Another interesting combination – ‘I buy, but do not enjoy this’ – reveals a complex web of notions and relations between subjects and objects. On the one hand, it can be a rather mundane practice, shopping as everyday ‘labour’ which is not particularly reflected upon and therefore does not evoke the connotation of pleasure (see also Miller, 1998 and Falk and Campbell, 1997). On the other hand, the responses of our informants bring out a specific critique of the post-Soviet consumer culture that is brimming with colourful but useless, and perhaps even alienated, objects as well as new shopping centres, while lacking specific goods meant for smaller niches and more specific needs. Thus shopping

becomes a search for the necessary object, which, when finally found, may turn out to be shoddy or over-priced. A more detailed analysis on perceived lack of choice and relations to objects is outlined in the next sections.

Freedom of choice

Freedom of choice, particularly consumer freedom, has been postulated as one of the defining differences between state socialism and capitalism (see Slater, 1997; Bauman, 1988; 1994; 2000; for empirical data see e.g. Kennedy, 2002). In addition, as Bauman puts it, the current late modern society addresses its members mostly not as citizens but as consumers.

Marketing and advertising in particular generate a romantic ethic (Campbell, 1987), which is based on a self-perpetuating desire for novelty. This, in turn, creates a feeling of lack. The freedom to choose between different consumer options to fill this lack is fundamental. On the whole, macro level comparisons with the Soviet past reveal a rather uniform agreement in which, in terms of choice, the past and present stand in sharp contrast. The general feeling of remarkably better consumption opportunities also feeds general positive assessments of the transition.

However, particularly in the in-depth interviews, a critical disclaimer was often added. Life has not improved unambiguously. Bauman for example concedes that freedom to choose between mass-manufactured items may prove to be illusory (Bauman, 2000; see also Keller, 2005 forthcoming) or even financially prohibitive for large parts of society.

Naturally we cannot even compare the two systems; they are from completely different worlds. We come from an environment of total deficit, monotony and overall homogenisation. Consumption was a part of Soviet propaganda: big words and behind those a yawning void. Nowadays versatility and striving for abundance dominate, but this often proves to be an illusion, because you cannot get the necessary thing as easily as you wish... everybody's opportunity to choose. At the same time there are other restrictions, enslaving advertising and lack of money. (IDI, M, Tln, 50–60, specialist)

On a micro level elaborate descriptions are given of new deficits. Naturally the first shortage characteristic of the transition society is financial resources. The famous sentence 'before there was money but nothing to buy and today there is plenty to buy but no money' (see e.g. Hindrikus, 2000 and 2003) was also recurrent in our interviews. Lack of money can be regarded as a painful personal failure, which evokes nostalgia for the Soviet past in which one's self-esteem and perceived social status were higher. The state, the Soviet power with its 'dictatorship over needs', was one definite culprit that could be blamed for everything (see Feher *et al*, 1984; Bauman, 1994), which made resistance to

power and ideology unambiguous and rather unidimensional. A male pensioner in Tallinn laments:

Yes, nowadays it is so that you have everything, but you are stopped by the lack of money. Before it was this way that... you could have money, but you could not get anything, but then you had a great deal better feeling that this damn state and all cannot provide for you. I personally could... This money has become so important...(IDI, M, Tln, 60–70, pensioner)

But even in cases where people have the financial means to buy goods, lots of obstacles are encountered within the seeming profusion and endless opportunities. Thus the fundamental consumer right to free choice is represented as restricted. There is a perceived lack of sophisticated, high-quality goods with sensible prices in a post-Soviet market where only a limited number of mainstream brands dominate, as opposed to Western commerce, which is seen as having an infinitely better choice. Secondly, we see representations of frustration and marginalisation based on a personal lack of access to specific goods that cater to specific needs (obesity, illness etc).

The problem is that people my age... no suitable sizes are manufactured. It is thought that a pensioner will not buy anything or she will buy from the outdoor markets... I do not know, not me alone... these people who buy more, they complain that such things are simply not made, nothing fits you. (IDI, F, 66, Tln, pensioner)

Older, sicker and overweight people were seen as pushed aside, as voiceless niches that will never generate any profit for mainstream commerce. Thus the informants sensed that they did not exist as consumers and felt deeply offended.

The new liberal society, where people have been left to their own devices, feeds personal embitterment and cultural trauma. During the Soviet time the deficit was perceived as public, the 'official' objective culture (although ideological discourse postulated abundance also at those times) against which the self was identified. Acquisition of goods in short supply was achieved through private networking and an economy of favours, i.e. an unofficial objective culture fostering individual satisfaction and well-being. However, today the abundance is seen as the public and official objective culture, whereas deficit and lack have partly receded to the private world, becoming strong determinants of the reappropriation of the objective culture on the subjective level. In addition, the blame for the lack is placed on the system, which has limited choice on the small market. Whereas the Soviet system created scarcity for all, the capitalist consumer market stigmatises minorities who do not fit into the ideals of a consumer society. It seems in this context that the main source of meaning is not the age of consumers but the failure of the system to provide for the niches, and at the same time, shifts all the responsibility onto individual

shoulders. It is a question for further research as to whether this perception produces a deepening feeling of exclusion or protest and resistance practices.⁷

Meaningful and meaningless objects

Changing relations between subjects and objects, i.e. particular artefacts, are important reference points when creating meaning related to today's consumer culture (see Miller, 1987). Macro-level references to the Soviet past as well as Western – often a metaphorical American – influence are inextricably tied to micro level personal experience. The Soviet time is perceived as ambivalent. Firstly, as pointed out above, the new objective culture has changed relationships between people and objects. The new materialism has gotten in the way:

Fifteen years ago, when relations between people dominated and things were tied to people, they either existed or did not, but the direct relationship was person-to-person. I have to say with sadness that... very many objects have interfered with relationships between people and this intensity of human-to-human... I can say that... and I do not think it has to do a lot with me growing old. (IDI, F, 45, Trt, intellectual)

In addition, Soviet shortage imposed frugality upon people, which has acquired a positive connotation in the present-day context of perceived excess and waste (even if these are unattainable for a particular individual).

Partly it has become better, partly worse. From the Soviet time I have thrift in me, such a sensible thrift. On many people, however, colourful goods have had a bad influence. (IDI, F, 50–60, Trt, worker)

This Western-craze has come here, with so many commodities, production is cheap-cheap and a person heaps things together, buys and buys without knowing what exactly he or she is buying or why he or she is buying it. (IDI, F, 50–60, Trt, skilled worker)

Soviet objects were often idealised as having a much deeper involvement with human contact. Here we can differentiate between two levels of meaning. On

⁷ Another important dimension that surfaces is cultural consumption (e.g. theatre, concerts etc). Elderly people feel deprived of the possibility to enjoy (high) culture since their financial situation does not enable access to most cultural products due to prohibitively high prices. It has been claimed that (high) cultural consumption was an important feature of the Soviet consumer world, being partly a compensation for the lack of material goods and partly a value *per se*. However, in the present study there is no space to give a detailed analysis of this aspect.

the one hand old objects found in the bottoms of drawers bear a symbolism of object value: human handwork.

What came out – hand painted silk scarves, crocheted fantastic lace shawls, jewels... – handicrafts... That was natural. In short, these things that were presented or brought, even on an everyday basis, had enormous value, they were hand-made or bought from an art shop... How to say it, there were not many of these things, but you would never throw them away... And today a terrible cheapening of things has happened, in terms of material... but prices are not lower, which is very sad. (IDI, F, 40–50, Trt, intellectual)

On the other hand, Soviet objects are recalled with nostalgia because of their subjective emotional value, and the memories of the practices engaged in to obtain them. The objects (especially Western goods) could even be understood as signifiers of national ideals of freedom and/or as trophies acquired via elaborate acquisition processes consisting of reciprocal favours. They were coping skills and small individual accomplishments *vis-à-vis* the regime (see Keller and Vihalemm, 2003; Verdery, 1996; Caldwell and Patico, 2002) that positioned people, with the help of objects, according to a different logic than today.

During the Soviet time I worked at a place where I had an opportunity to obtain all I wished. Because... I had such a job and really, it was ‘me for you’ and ‘you for me’. I must say.. our family lacked nothing... there was no lack. When there was no white bread... there was such a time, I had plenty of white bread ... I remember relatives from the country came and said: ‘Oh God, Reet, you have white bread’. I said take some with you, really, I had tears in my eyes. Well I am not completely deprived today either, but those times... (IDI, F, Tln, 50–60, skilled worker)

The new market society based on impersonal transactions and seeming abundance has produced many colourful, but senseless, knick-knacks that are sold to people who are perceived as not ‘actually needing them’ (cf. the ‘gadget’, Baudrillard 1998 [1970]). So the disappearance of intense negative and humiliating relations between people and the almost metaphorical shop managers administering the flow of goods ‘under the counter’ and at their own discretion was represented as laudable. However, along with that, the positive intensity has vanished from goods as well and has been, in many cases, replaced by connotations of manipulation and impersonality.

Price of goods and status of people

As the above shows, the topic of value is significant. By value we mean here a web of notions stemming from perceived cheapness *versus* expensiveness of items. Here we cannot separate assessments of ‘pure’ use or exchange value, but instead see intertwining romantic, utilitarian and even puritan connotations of consumer items. These accounts are directly linked to the morality of a consumer, as well as social stratification. The perceived value of goods helps to make sense of one’s own social standing as well as of the general situation in today’s Estonian world of consumption.

The first dimension of meaning is tied to price and the quality of goods. Cheapness is inevitable for many financially hard-pressed people. At the same time, low-cost purchases almost always invoke a danger of low quality and a short lifetime for the commodity. Very inexpensive goods are represented as meant for seducing consumers into buying excessively and often unreasonably.

They were cheap [the scissors] but their quality was not good. They went askew somehow on first cutting and they have to be tapped now... The moral is of course very simple, do not buy very cheap things... well in such a discount store... there are all kinds of knick-knacks they sell. I do not want to buy these, they are so trivial ... all kinds of plastic trinkets and stuff... (IDI, M, 70–80, Tln, pensioner)

The ideal is a product with a ‘sensible price’, positioning its buyer as a reasonable consumer. Thus a low-priced product can be simultaneously an expression of a thrifty and moral consumer spending reasonably, as well as having a haunting low quality with an inherent danger of the item breaking down and becoming a useless piece of garbage very soon. It is moral not to overpay for one’s purchases: the vanity of lavish squander is deplored as unjustified social climbing, conspicuous consumption by those who are ‘actually’ not able to afford such ostentation. Although promotional discount campaigns like ‘crazy days’ featuring specially procured cheap goods are, on the whole, viewed in a negative light, the end of season sales or occasional discounts of quality goods are assigned a quite different meaning. Their acquisition can sometimes become even a symbol of resistance, as most of the goods are seen as overpriced and reaching their legitimate price level only when discounted.

Yes, we do follow these discount offers... When we see that prices have fallen considerably... let’s say some time ago children’s tights were very cheap, well then we do buy, yes... (IDI, F, 60–70, Tln, pensioner)

Low prices evoke a connotation of low purchasing power and poverty, even social stigmatisation, based on shopping in low-market outlets and buying the

least costly items. Representations of self-positioning on a social ladder can be placed on a continuum from completely deprived people who distance themselves from the colourful consumer market to well-off, skilful consumers who nevertheless do not waste money on the 'useless object'.

The social divide was seen as regrettable and harmful for the whole nation⁸, and commerce was accused of not providing enough for the 'average person'. These representations were often based on personal contact with poverty (on an individual or family level).

In itself it is a great pity that we have this class distinction... that this differentiation between people is so sharp. The average citizen should be satisfied, there are so few of us, Estonians anyway, and when such a large social divide emerges in this tiny nation... well more should be thought about it and more analysis is needed... (IDI, F, 40–50, Tln, worker)

Such representations present the consumer (here in an interesting fusion with the citizen) as repressed by a system, which fails to provide for them and generates social exclusion.

On the other hand, the uneducated masses rushing to discounts in department stores were often represented in a derogatory light, providing a negative reference point for the self-identification of a competent and affluent consumer:

My attitude towards 'buying rallies' and 'crazy days' is very negative because low quality goods are released to attract simple-minded poorer people. For a wealthier person like me, participating in them would be humiliating. (IDI, M, Tln, 40–50, specialist)

Here we can even see an implicit justification of social hierarchy, particularly by those who position themselves higher and do not express explicit concerns for solidarity.

Summary of critique of the 'new scarcity'

While many informants acknowledged the overall positive transformation of post-Soviet Estonia on the macro level, as well as occasionally describing their own pleasurable consumption experiences, an interesting picture emerges when summarising different types of critical reflections as those depicted in Figure 1.

⁸ It is important that the nation means here 'Estonians', that is ethnicity not a civic nation, that would include also Russian-speaking population. It may bear a connotation of constructing the latter as 'other' and different as consumers for whom the same categorizations do not apply, but the current research does not pursue this line of interpretation for the lack of material and reserves this for further research.

In each box the key words of each critical representation are outlined. They can be placed on a continuum from intimate micro level accounts to almost theoretical macro level portrayals. Definitely the informant's capacity and willingness to generalise and analyse depended, most of all, on his or her cultural capital, that is reflexivity.

The first two types of critique were based on personal experience, ranging from financial deprivation and the resultant humiliation to the feeling of (at least occasional) marginalisation based on special needs or wishes that are not catered to by the small and relatively homogeneous post-Soviet market. It is noteworthy that the memory of the Soviet era shortage and lack of goods has been transformed into an experience of 'new scarcity', be it money or specific goods or services. In both of these, Soviet nostalgia is explicit. The West does not figure as a prominent point of reference.

The third type of critique is a hybrid of micro level personal experience and more detached macro level evaluations. It is based on both financial access to foreign travel and versatile goods, as well as sophistication. It is a rather bitter transition critique in which the West (particularly Western Europe and Scandinavia) constitutes a remarkable positive reference with which Estonia has a lot of catching up to do.

The fourth type is a general critique of social stratification, as elaborated above. The fifth type is the most macro level of all and the only one where the focal point is not transition but rather capitalist consumer culture in general. Here the West ceases to be a positive role model. Sometimes even elements from the Soviet past are utilised as reference points symbolising more natural and authentic life, as depicted in the quotes above. The last type of critique does not require so much financial access to bases of comparison in the West as cultural capital and reflexivity to analyse the 'evils' of consumer society.

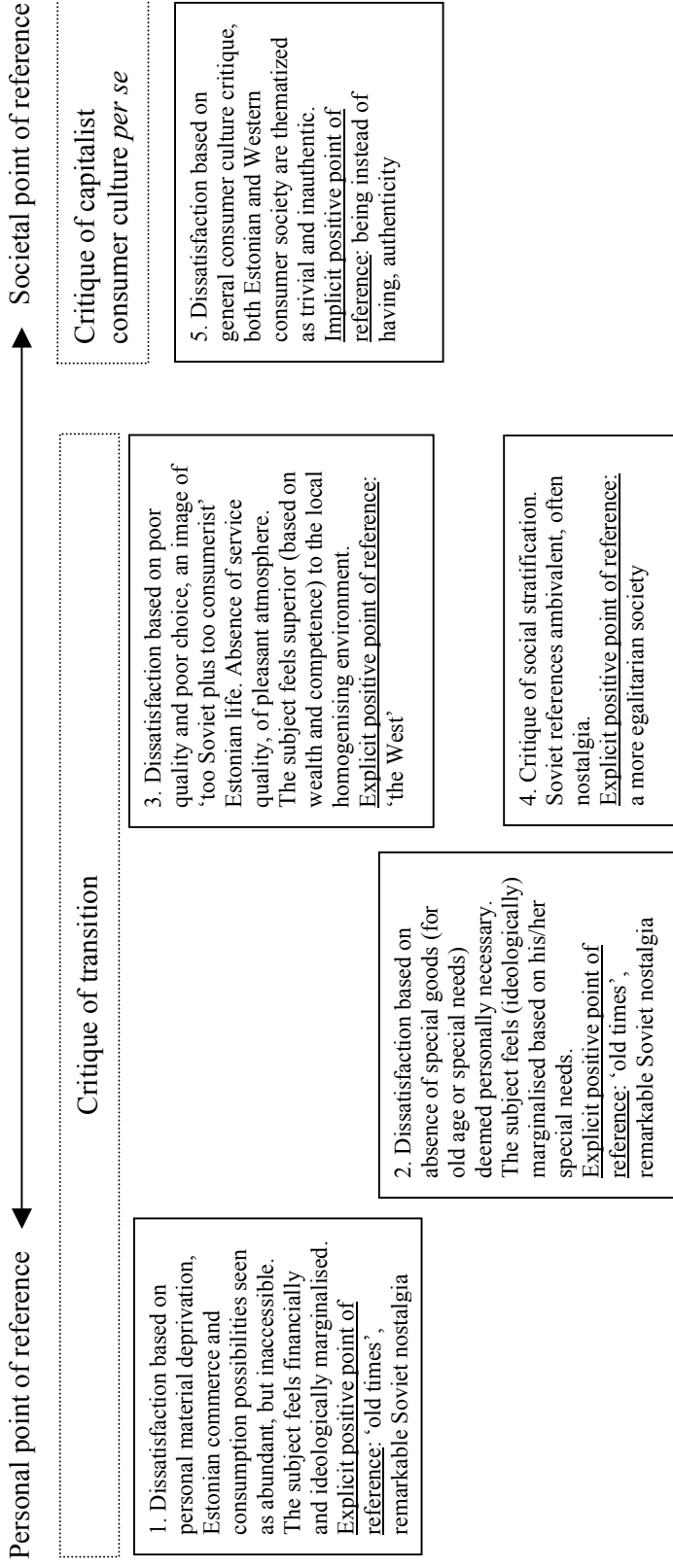


Figure 1 – Different types of critical discourse

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Our theoretical assumption was that we are faced with a tension, even a clash between the Soviet type and the present Western type of consumer culture in the representations of elderly consumers in contemporary Estonia. We saw mixed and often contradictory recollections of the relations between the 'old' objective culture in both its official and unofficial (or semi-official) version, as well as subjective culture, which form the basis for interpreting the relations between the 'new' objective and subjective culture. The new objective culture of a profusion of consumer items and various new cultural forms such as advertising and recreational shopping is seen to be backed by a powerful but almost invisible ideology of consumer society, which is a mixture of liberal utilitarian traits, in turn supported by the new economy-centred state policy as well as romantic hedonistic features fostered primarily by marketing communications. This ideology, as well as the new objective culture permeated by it, is versatile, almost impossible to pin down and can therefore neither be fully assimilated and re-appropriated nor rejected. The result of this may be a rather strong feeling of confusion, even exclusion verging on estrangement. This, in turn, is closely related to an understanding of social stratification on the macro level, as well as subjective self-positioning on the social hierarchy, which is to a remarkable extent based on personal consumption opportunities.

Our focus on elderly urban consumers justified itself, because these consumers had extensive experience with the Soviet type of consumer culture, but they are not complete outsiders (especially the urban dwellers) in today's consumer world either, as shown by the quantitative background analysis. Their attitudes and practices did not differ significantly from Estonians in general. However, their self-evaluation was substantially more pessimistic – they have partly internalised the role of 'loser' in the whirlwind of societal change. At the same time, this does not determine assessments of the whole society as unambiguously negative.

Qualitative analysis revealed the system of concepts underlying these consumers' understanding of the current consumer culture and themselves in it, shedding light on several axes on which the cultural tensions between the 'old' and the 'new' and the objective and subjective culture are played out most sharply. Different representations of critique may be interpreted as ways of coping with cultural tension and constructing competent and moral selves.

The most fundamental differentiation between the Soviet consumer culture and that of today – freedom of choice – is seen as illusory on many levels. Instead of the shortage generated by the mechanism of the Soviet objective consumer culture, which was faced by everybody, the new lack is a private problem of the subjective culture. The lack ranges from shortage of money and absence of goods which cater to niche needs to quality of service and atmosphere in new shopping outlets. The most abstract critique of capitalist

consumer culture laments the lack of the values of authenticity and personality that the new objective culture does not seem to offer on many occasions.

This reveals that relations between the subject and object are perceived as transformed. Drawing on Miller (1987) and Simmel (1997 [1911, 1916]) it may be concluded that post-Soviet consumers, particularly older generations, often encounter an incomplete objectification. They are aware of myriads of new objects on the market, but they do not recognise themselves in them: that is, these objects are devoid of human relationships dear to them or their own needs, lifestyle or memories. 'If objectification is truncated, so that we have an act of externalisation without subsequent sublation, then that act of externalisation would have to be seen as negative, as a situation of rupture, representing loss to the subject, rather than gain' (Miller, 1987: 30). Many mass-manufactured commodities remain strangers to people and can thus become metaphors for societal alienation.

In addition to the feelings of estrangement described above, adaptation practices (either compensatory 'virtual' shopping by the financially deprived or genuine enjoyment of purchases made under the, at least seeming, conditions of absolute freedom of choice) exist that help to make the 'new' culture more meaningful. It is a task for future research to compare the respective practices of younger consumers and find out how these people, who have no extensive basis for comparison between contemporary conditions and those of the Soviet regime, interpret relationships between subjective and objective consumer culture.

REFERENCES

- Baudrillard, J. (1998 [1970]) *Consumer Society*. London: Sage.
- Bauman, Z. (1988) *Freedom*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Bauman, Z. (1994) *Intimations of Postmodernity*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. (2000) *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Borneman, J. (1992) *Belonging in the two Berlins: Kin, State, Nation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998) *Practical Reason*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Caldwell, M. L. (2002) 'The Taste of Nationalism: Food Politics in Postsocialist Moscow', *Ethnos* 67(3): 295–319.
- Campbell, C. (1987) *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Chelcea, L. (2002) 'The culture of shortage during state socialism: Consumption Practices in a Romanian village in the 1980s', *Cultural Studies* 16(1): 16–43.
- Falk, P. and Campbell, C. (eds.) (1997) *The Shopping Experience*. London: Sage.
- Feher, F.; Heller, A. and Markus, G. (1984) *Dictatorship over Needs: An Analysis of Soviet Societies*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gronow, J. (1997) *The Sociology of Taste*. London: Routledge.

- Gronow, J. (2003) *Caviar with Champagne: Common Luxury and the Ideals of the Good Life in Stalin's Russia*. Oxford: Berg.
- Hindrikus, R. (ed.) (2000 and 2003) *Eesti rahva elulood I–III. (Estonian Biographies I–III)*. Tallinn: Tänapäev.
- Kalmus, V., Lauristin, M. and Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, P. (eds.) (2004) *Eesti elavik 21. sajandi algul: uurimuse Mina. Maailm. Meedia aruanne (Estonian life-world at the beginning of the 21st century. Report on the Survey Me. The World. The Media)*. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus.
- Keller, M. (2005 forthcoming) 'Needs, desires and the experience of scarcity: representations of recreational shopping in post-Soviet Estonia', *Journal of Consumer Culture* 5(1).
- Keller, M. and Vihalemm, T. (2003) 'Return to the Consuming West: Young People's Perceptions on the Consumerization of Estonia', *Young* 11(3): 195–215.
- Keller, M. and Kalmus, V. (2004 forthcoming) 'Konsumerismist tarbimisliku ükskõiksuseni: tarbimisorientatsioonid tänases Eestis.' in V. Kalmus, M. Lauristin and P. Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt (eds.) *Eesti elavik 21. sajandi algul: uurimuse Mina. Maailm. Meedia aruanne*, pp. 201–216. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- Kõresaar, E. (2003) 'Hea elu normatiivsus. Nõukogudeaegse defitsiidikogemuse kujutamisest elulugudes.' (Normativity of good life: Depiction of the Soviet shortage of goods in life stories)', in E. Kõresaar & T. Anepaio (eds.) *Mälu kui kultuuritegur: etnoloogilisi perspektiive (Ethnological Perspectives on Memory)*, pp. 150–178. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- Kennedy, M. (2002) *Cultural Formations of Post-Communism. Emancipation, Transition, Nation and War*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Lauristin, M. (2004) 'Eesti ühiskonna kihistumine (Stratification of Estonian society)' in Kalmus, V.; Lauristin, M. and Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, P. (eds.) *Eesti elavik 21. sajandi algul: uurimuse Mina. Maailm. Meedia aruanne*, pp. 251–284. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- Ledeneva, A.V. (1998) *Russia's Economy of Favours. Blat, Networking and Informal Exchange*. Cambridge Russian, Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies. Cambridge University Press.
- Lehtonen, T.-K. (1999) *Rahan vallassa. Ostoksilla käyminen ja markkinatalouden arki (Subjects of money: shopping and the everyday life in market economy)*. Helsinki: Tutkijaliitto.
- Mauss, M. (2002 [1950]) *The Gift*. London: Routledge.
- Miles, M.B. and Huberman, A.M. (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis: An expanded Sourcebook*. London: Sage.
- Miller, D. (1987) *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Miller, D. (ed.) (1995) *Worlds Apart: Modernity through the Prism of the Local*. London: Routledge.
- Miller, D. (1998) *A Theory of Shopping*. London: Polity Press.
- Patico, J. (2002) 'Chocolate and Cognac: Gifts and the Recognition of Social Worlds in Post-Soviet Russia', *Ethnos* 67(3): 345–368.
- Patico, J. and Caldwell, M. (2002) 'Consumers Exiting Socialism: Ethnographic Perspectives on Daily Life in Post-Communist Europe', *Ethnos* 67(2): 285–294.

- Rausing, S. (1998) 'Sings of the new nation: gift exchange, consumption and aid on a former collective farm in north-west Estonia', in D. Miller (ed.) *Material Cultures. Why some things matter*, pp. 189–213. London: UCL Press.
- Simmel, G. (1997 [1911]) 'The concept and tragedy of culture' in D. Frisby and M. Featherstone (eds.) *Simmel on Culture*, pp. 55–75. London: Sage.
- Simmel, G. (1997 [1916]) 'The crisis of culture' in D. Frisby and M. Featherstone (eds.) *Simmel on Culture*, pp. 90–101. London: Sage.
- Slater, D. (1997) *Consumer Culture and Modernity*. London: Routledge.
- Sztompka, P. (2000) 'Cultural Trauma. The Other Face of Social Change', *European Journal of Social Theory* 3(4): 449–466.
- Švab, A. (2002) 'Consuming Western image of well-being: shopping tourism in socialist Slovenia', *Cultural Studies* 16(1): 63–79.
- Titma, M. (ed.) (1999) *Kolmekümneaastaste põlvkonna sotsiaalne portree (The Social Portrait of the Generation of the Thirty-Year-Olds)*. Tallinn: Academy of Sciences Press.
- Verdery, K. (1996) *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* Digital Download, Princeton University Press.

IV

Keller, M. (2005, forthcoming). Needs, desires and the experience of scarcity: representations of recreational shopping in post-Soviet Estonia. Manuscript accepted for publication in *Journal of Consumer Culture*.

Needs, desires and the experience of scarcity: representations of recreational shopping in post-Soviet Estonia

ABSTRACT

This article contributes to the new area of post-soviet consumer culture studies by exploring the meanings of recreational shopping carried by the Estonian notion of *šoppamine*, adapted from the English word ‘shopping’. It draws on empirical data derived from 71 original interviews with Estonian-speaking consumers. Underlying these respondents’ normative judgements of their own and others’ shopping behaviour is a system of moral concepts in which ‘need’ and ‘restraint’ are continually juxtaposed against ‘desire’, ‘pleasure’ and ‘excess’. This opposition, whilst common to a range of consumer contexts, takes a specific form in the post-soviet conditions of Estonia marked by shift from a collectively experienced absence of consumer goods in general, to an individually perceived scarcity – either material, in the form of the money to buy available goods, or symbolic, based on an opinion that the new commodities are insufficiently sophisticated.

Key words: consumer culture, (recreational) shopping, desire, pleasure, need, post-soviet, scarcity.

INTRODUCTION

The English word ‘shopping’ has made its way into many languages, taking with it parts of its semantic network. However, in many cases it is impossible to translate the borrowed words back into English. The Estonian adaptation, *šoppamine*, is one such example. It does not carry a fixed, agreed, meaning. Rather, it is an interdiscursive field compiled from the variety of talk around the socio-cultural practices of (mainly recreational) shopping generated by consumers, professionals (retailers and advertisers) and media commentary.¹

¹ A similar phenomenon can be observed, for example, in Finnish and Swedish where the word ‘shoppailu’ or ‘shoppa’ are borrowed from English, but impossible to translate back, because they refer to more specific ideas of shopping. Although the semantic networks are presumably quite similar with the corresponding borrowing in the Estonian language, they have entered the respective languages years earlier and have become more common by today. Also, behind the entrance of this borrowed word into Swedish and Finnish is not a societal rupture, but a steady process of consumer culture development (see Lehtonen, 1999).

The present study explores how consumers living in a post-soviet context understand what *šoppamine* is.

CONSUMER CULTURE AND SHOPPING IN POST-SOVIET ESTONIA

In recent years a significant number of studies of consumer culture in post-socialist countries have been conducted, particularly by ethnologists and anthropologists.² However, relatively little has so far been written on the post-soviet countries, especially the Baltic States which during the Soviet era were known as the ‘Soviet West’ due to living standards and lifestyles that were seen as ‘more Western’ by people from Russia and the more easterly parts of the Soviet Empire. The experience within these states was rather different, however, and was characterised by conditions of scarcity and the reactions these prompted. Consequently, to properly contextualize the empirical materials presented here, it is necessary to give a brief sketch of Estonian public life during the soviet and post-soviet eras (for sources see Taagepera and Miciunas, 1993; Kõresaar and Anepaio, 2003; Kannike, 2003; Rausing 1998, 2002 as well as the three volume collection *Life Stories of Estonian People* edited by R. Hindrikus, 2000 and 2003).

The period following Soviet annexation in 1940 and the immediate aftermath of World War II was marked by extreme poverty and continual shortages of goods in the formal economy. The resulting conditions of self-denial were valourised by a peculiarly puritan official ‘communism builder’ ethic which gave birth, in turn, to an individualist counter-ideology in which consumption, and during the later periods (especially from 1970s onwards), particularly the consumption of Western goods, often facilitated by ‘under-the-

² The general research on the societal processes of transition has largely been a macro-level analysis of economic, political and social development. The cultural aspects are studied less. For cultural theoretical frameworks on transition (see for example Sztompka, 2000 and Alexander et al, 2004.) A new addition to this scarce material containing ample empirical data – although not directly on consumer culture – is Michael Kennedy’s recent book *Cultural Formations of Post-Communism* which also contains focus group data on Estonia. Material culture studies on these countries have been published for example in the collection *Markets and Moralities. Ethnographies of Postsocialism*. (2000) edited by R. Mandel and C. Humphrey as well as in an English-Russian bilingual collection *Sociology of Consumption* (2001) edited by Volckova *et al*. Also, post-socialist consumption has been dealt with in various articles here and there including works by the author of the present study (Keller and Vihalemm, 2001; Keller and Vihalemm, 2003, 2004; Keller, 2005 forthcoming; see also Rausing, 1998, 2002; Patiko, 2002; Fehérváry, 2002; Lankauskas, 2002; Oushakine, 2000; Shevchenko, 2002; Chelcea, 2002; Švab, 2002; Gecser and Kitzinger, 2002).

table' deals with staff working in the retail trades, played a key role (see Kõresaar and Anepaio, 2003; Keller and Vihalemm, 2003 and 2004; Rausing, 1998 and Verdery, 1996).

The re-gaining of independence in 1991 ushered in a transition culture (see Kennedy, 2002) based on a double movement 'from plan to market' and 'from totalitarianism to democracy'. Liberal-utilitarianism rapidly became the dominant ideology and society became strongly stratified by income and wealth. The popular construction of this situation, encountered many times in my empirical material, is summed up in the saying: 'During the Soviet time there was money, but there was nothing to buy, nowadays there is plenty to buy and no money'.

The opposition between the past experience of scarcity and the present abundance (no matter how illusory or unattainable) is nicely caught in the following life-story fragment:

For me personally the most rejoicing thing is the fact, that no matter how hard it is, everything can be obtained from shops, the only problem is money. I deeply hated the Soviet shortage-paradise where every shop assistant was accustomed to manipulate with the "under-the-counter" goods, to take bribes and their attitude to the purchaser was like towards the lowest beggar. (Karask, 2003: 207)

The new affluence has been accompanied by a new consumer landscape with shopping malls opening in all the larger cities of Estonia and a newly borrowed word from English – *šoppamine* – coming into use in colloquial as well as promotional language. As we shall see, it carries a range of connotations from a trivial leisure activity and pointless waste of time and money, stereotypically associated with women, to uncritical subjugation to Western mass culture. The arrival of *šoppamine* has sparked an intense media debate which touches on issues around the Soviet past and the satisfaction of a decades-long hunger for a wide choice of consumer goods as well as upon Estonia's present position in relation to the advanced Western capitalist countries (see Rahu, 2004). An ironic comment by an Estonian writer Tõnu Õnnepalu, published in a daily paper *Postimees* in late 2002, sums up one influential response:

Europe or not, this is not important any more. The main thing is to have a shopping centre, a hypermarket. A shopping centre is the paradise on Earth that the Soviet power promised, but never delivered... And Western people who have lived in a consumer society longer than us know the wisdom that there is no better cure for spleen than a little *šoppamine*. There, in the midst of mild music, goods and fellow consumers all troubles will be forgotten, your soul will find peace there! (*Postimees*, Nov 9, 2002)

The word's borrowed status has also caused argument among the linguistic community. *Šoppamine* has been called a 'junk-word' and the social practices associated with it 'junk-activities' brought about by what is sometimes

interpreted as Estonia's unconditional wish to mimic the West. As a result, a new word with Estonian root has been suggested to replace *šoppamine* (see Kaalep, 2004). Others (although, to a lesser extent) have defended the word as an inevitable language development under global influences and welcomed the activities it speaks to, as signs that Estonian consumers are becoming assimilated into the everyday social life of the European Union, demonstrating that Estonia's recent membership of the EU is not simply constitutional. But how do consumers themselves pick their way through these conflicting interpretations? What does *šoppamine* mean at the level of vernacular discourse and everyday practice and what light do these constructions throw on the wider question of how consumer culture is understood and appropriated in contemporary Estonia.³

OPPOSITIONAL CONCEPTS IN SHOPPING – NEEDS AND DESIRES, LABOUR AND RECREATION

The present study, although based on interviews, does not examine shopping practices. This line of inquiry has been followed to great effect by the anthropologist Daniel Miller in a series of books (see Miller 1998; 2001 and Miller *et al*, 1998). The present study is indebted to these studies, but shifts the focus from practices to representations. In 'A Theory of Shopping' (1998) Miller confronts what he calls 'the discourse of shopping', developed by critics of consumerism such as Jean Baudrillard (e.g.1998) and Zygmunt Bauman (e.g. 1994, 2000 and 2001), with the actual lived practices of shopping. In these critical accounts, Miller argues: 'The shopper is imagined engaged in pure self-indulgence following the dictates of individualised hedonism. Shopping comes to objectify a form of absolute freedom that fantasizes a separation off from being defined by any social relations and obligations' (1998: 96). In contrast, his informants saw the majority of their shopping as provisioning for the family, a complicated labour of love oriented to maintaining close relationships and regarded hedonistic, individualistic, consumption as a minor and occasional practice engaged in during tourist trips or when buying special treats for oneself in the midst of provisioning for the family.

Thus, two orientations to shopping can be identified – an economic instrumental activity of satisfying needs and a desire-oriented practice. The first constitutes shopping as labour or *shopping for*, and the second recreational

³ It must be noted that the particularly intense media debate was characteristic to early 2004, whereas the empirical material for the present study was collected a year earlier, so no direct reflections on that debate – the replacement of the word with a local coinage etc – can be observed in the consumers representations. However, the media discussion of 2004 is only a culmination of issues discussed with a somewhat lesser intensity throughout the recent years.

shopping or *shopping around* (see Falk and Campbell, 1997; Bellenger and Korgaonkar, 1980; Prus and Dawson, 1991). Campbell and Falk explain recreational shopping as ‘an autonomous realm of experience and action in which the economic (instrumental) aspect has been marginalized’ (1997: 6). Prus and Dawson’s (1991) interview study supports this argument, and shows that shopping is more likely to be seen as recreational when consumers have flexibility in their financial resources and where the activity itself is perceived as relatively relaxed and pressure free. This is one reason why window shopping and browsing for new clothes is seen as particularly pleasurable whilst shopping for food is usually seen as a laborious activity (see Campbell, 1998). As we shall see, however, the concept of *šoppamine* in Estonian is muddier than this binary division would suggest. It embodies both conceptions, but my assumption is, that it carries more pleasure- and recreation-related connotations than the English word ‘shopping’. Consequently, Estonian consumers’ representations and definitions of the concept are neither univocal nor homogeneous. Rather, differing understandings of the meaning of *šoppamine* emphasise recreation and labour to different degrees.

These contrasting understandings of shopping are underpinned in turn by concepts of need/necessity, want and desire. Colin Campbell’s re-working of Weber in his landmark book *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (1987) and his later paper of 1998 presents the ‘need rhetoric’ as ‘Puritan-inspired utilitarian philosophy of comfort and satisfaction, while the want or desire rhetoric has its origin in a Romantic-inspired philosophy of pleasure-seeking’ (1998: 235) and has become particularly associated with the desire for continuously novel and individually pleasurable experience. As both Campbell (1998) and Lehtonen (1999) point out based on empirical analysis, shoppers often merge the concepts of ‘want’, ‘wish’ and ‘desire’ with ‘need’ to give more legitimacy to their purchases. Shoppers’ reluctance to admit to ‘desire’ however, may be partly because of its sexual connotation, particularly in the Estonian language, whereas ‘need’ is perceived as an altogether more ‘respectable’ term.

Understandings of wants and desires are also often grounded in the opposition between ‘real needs’ (for ‘necessities’) and ‘artificial’ or ‘false’ demands (for excessive luxuries). This has long been a central issue in debate around consumer culture (see Campbell, 1987; 1998; Falk, 1994 and Slater, 1997a, 1997b) and as we shall see, the popular discourse of *šoppamine* in Estonia focuses on the same issues, often drawing on an essentialist viewpoint that sees needs as driven by the basic requirement for self reproduction. Indeed, the most commonly used Estonian language phrase for ‘I need’ translates directly as ‘for me there is a necessity’.

Where Campbell equates wants and desires, Belk *et al* (2003) draw a clear distinction between them. They present want as more psychological and related to the mind, and identify desire with ‘passionate imagining... that only comes

alive in a social context' (2003: 329). They point to the way that desire is often associated with various dangers and addictions as well as closely related to issues of morality and seduction, borderlines and their transgression. A significant portion of Estonian media commentary on *šoppamine* draws on similar conceptions and talks of loss of self-control, indulgence of desires, and being seduced by the glamorous world of consumer culture. As we shall see, however, consumers' own discourse is somewhat more qualified and equivocal, particularly when they are speaking about themselves rather than commenting on general social trends or the behaviour of others (see Rahu, 2004). Their talk reveals how their personal moral borderlines articulate their often tension-ridden self-positioning in the society.

The particular form this ambivalence takes in contemporary Estonia, however, is firmly anchored in historical experience. For people who have lived for decades under coercively imposed frugality, without the free choice in consumer goods that is deemed 'normal' in contemporary Western societies, it is very hard to determine whether new cars or housing are pure whimsical luxuries or something perceived as a real need by people who desperately want to raise their living standards to a level more closely approximating the Western European norm (see also Rausing, 1998).

The following empirical research examines the ambivalences, tensions and contradictions in vernacular understandings of shopping. As we will see, in the context of contemporary Estonia these tensions are grounded not only in past experiences of Soviet era austerity but also in present-day encounters with an emerging marketized economy and its 'image culture' (Jansson, 2002), which simultaneously offers new sources of goods and generates new patterns of opportunity and deprivation.

DATA AND METHOD

The present study consists of two main sets of data. The first comprises 49 brief interviews (with an average duration of 10 minutes) with shoppers in the two oldest and largest shopping malls of Tallinn (the Estonian capital with almost one third of the total population) and the largest shopping mall in Tartu (the second largest city) conducted between November 2002 and April 2003.⁴ All informants were Estonian-speaking. Most of them lived in either Tallinn or Tartu. Two thirds of the interviews were conducted in Tallinn and one third in Tartu. Although the sample gives a fair cross-section of the shoppers in these two cities, no socio-demographic representation can be claimed. The questions

⁴ Among the informants, 17 were men, 32 women. Different walks of life were represented, from top managers to workers, from secondary school pupils to pensioners. The age ranged from 15 to nearly 80.

asked related to their present visit to the mall as well as to their more general opinions on the meaning of the concept of *šoppamine*.

The second sub-set of data consists of 22 in-depth interviews conducted during the same time period. The balance between the two cities was the same. The sample aimed to obtain contrasting cases of Estonian-speaking individuals again to form a cross-section of the city people.⁵ The Russophone population was deliberately left out of this study with the aim of concentrating on them in subsequent research. All interviews were taped and transcribed. The following exploration is based on qualitative text analysis of the transcriptions.

The excerpts on various shopping practices and the direct reflection on the notion of *šoppamine* were coded using a schema developed after initial reading of the interviews. Both types of interviews were coded and analysed together in spite of the fact that in-depth interviews contained more elaborate accounts on various related topics. The codes employed stem directly from the texts but have been developed one step further from simple descriptive codes into interpretive codes that can provide the basis for a typology of different representations of *šoppamine* (see e.g. Miles and Huberman, 1994). The interview excerpts given below offer ideal-typical instances of lines of thought and representations of the cultural practice of *šoppamine* shared by many informants.

USES AND MEANINGS OF *ŠOPPAMINE*

The word was used unprompted in 12 of the in-depth interviews, which is a surprisingly high rate. Even many older and less educated people who had no command of English and whose direct experience of the West (mainly through travelling) is limited or non-existent used the word spontaneously. In the short on-site interviews the word was used spontaneously on 5 occasions, which is understandable due to their brief duration and more superficial nature. All informants, except three people had their personal viewpoint on the word's meaning.⁶

The older informants (mainly those over 45) use *šoppamine* ('shopping') or *šoppama* ('to shop') almost always with an introductory phrase indicating some unease with the word and the novelty of the practices associated with it ('whatever this new word was', 'as the most fashionable concept is'). Some of them said explicitly that they do not use the word themselves, but that their children do. The younger generations use it either in an ironical context or as a

⁵ Of the informants, 12 were women, 10 men, the age ranged from 15 to 74. Similar to the shorter interviews, different strata of society were included.

⁶ In the overall sample there were only 3 people who did not know the word (two of them due to old age and no foreign language skill and one due to the fact that his first language was Russian).

neutral term requiring no qualifying phrases to indicate a certain moral distance from the concept. A student expresses it like this:

The word *šoppamine* always contains irony for me. It is not like that: oh god, oh god I really *šoppaan* now. (IDI, F, Tln, 20–30, student)

Interestingly, more males than females claimed not to use the word. The reasons for all this are various and will be explored below in greater detail. However, the fact that its rough adaptation to the Estonian language from English has made the word one of the symbols of the sometime intrusive influx of Western consumer culture plays an important role.

The tension around the use and meaning of the word can be illustrated with the following dialogue between the interviewer and a middle-aged female academic:

Q: Do they [*the informant's husband and son*] admit it as *šoppamine*?

A: They can find as a pretext some more sensible idea... but it is generally true in the case of men in my family that they enjoy it, this is quite evident.

Q: Have you spotted them using the word?

A: Certainly not. This word most certainly does not exist. Absolutely not. This activity is looking. So that 'let's go and look what there is... or let's go and see if we need anything', which is most funny [Laughter]. (IDI, F, Trt. 40–50, academic)⁷

What follows details the various meanings of the concept focussing particularly on the moral borderlines associated with 'restraint' and 'transgression', 'needs' and 'desires', 'work' and 'recreation', the latter sometimes equated with 'unreason' and 'excess'. The first three sections focus mainly on informants' representations on their own personal relationship with *šoppamine* and its associated practices, while the last section concentrates on normative representations of others' behaviour culminating in an overarching social critique of Westernised consumer culture.

⁷ The abbreviations used after the interview excerpts are the following: BI- brief interview, IDI – in-depth interview; F-female; M- male; Tln- Tallinn; Trt – Tartu; the occupation of the informant is indicated with the full word.

ŠOPPAMINE AS A LABORIOUS ACTIVITY

Šoppamine never involves staples or everyday consumer items, it is always beyond routine. The commodities sought after are clothing, accessories, footwear, and sometimes technical goods like stereos (see also Campbell, 1998). If the activity has a specific goal of purchase at all it is always shopping for products bought more rarely and with more emotional involvement because of their close relation to the self or their importance to others, factors that makes joy or disappointment particularly intense.

The first construction of *šoppamine*, understood in terms of the effort involved in obtaining a consumer item, was evident only on a very few occasions and was mainly offered by younger, more educated and more skilful shoppers for whom the world of goods was a very familiar terrain. This kind of shopping involves a prolonged process of serious calculation, finding alternatives, comparing prices and quality. This construction is characterised by ‘thrift’, ‘skill’ as well as occasional ‘frustration’. Control of character or resources make the consumer search for the most ‘efficient’ purchase which makes the practice almost hard labour, as defined by Prus and Dawson (1991), even if it stands beyond everyday provisioning. It is a peculiar process of ‘deferring gratification’ which can be involuntary, imposed mainly by financial restrictions or absence of a sufficiently wide choice of items for these competent and demanding consumers. The seeming abundance of goods can often become illusory when the specific value for money expected by these consumers is not found.

For me *šoppamine* is roaming from shop to shop. I go, check, not necessarily buy. But I check with the aim that some time I will most probably buy. For example I go shopping for sunglasses. I go to optics shops, look, what they have, try on, observe prices and then go off. I know what this place has and maybe I’ll come back. (IDI, F, 20–30, Tln, specialist)

I have several versions of *šoppamine*. There are two criteria that influence it. One criterion is the issue of need and the other is the issue of having money. When I have a necessity and there is money, then the choices are easier to make, then I do not give much attention to whether the value for money is the best and how well justified the purchase is... But when both restrictions exist, I mean that the necessity exists but there is not much money, then it is a torture. Then it means an immense spending of time, great spending of energy. (BI, F, Tln, 20–30, specialist)

Thus the long pre-purchase period may involve a process of longing and dreaming which makes the potential purchase more pleasurable (Campbell, 1987; cf. Falk, 1994 and Lehtonen, 2000) thereby ‘intensifying the relationship with the world of commodities’ (Lehtonen and Pantzar, 2002: 228) which can

be mixed with frustration by the competent who cannot find ‘what they need’ on the limited small market.

COMPENSATORY PLEASURES OF THE ‘DEPRIVED’

On many occasions *šoppamine* was represented as something almost purely pleasurable and aesthetic, associated with free time or even a waste of time, which render the practice either an acceptable recreation or a reprehensible idleness preventing the consumer from doing something more ‘sensible’ (see also Prus and Dawson, 1991). However, there are several subdivisions within this general category of representations, depending who is speaking and from what position.

Šoppamine can be associated with the mainly visual pleasures of ‘just looking’. It is an imaginary shopping exercise in the up-market shopping malls by people who can rarely afford to buy anything from these outlets. It is a compensatory practice that has substituted the visual enjoyment and submersion in the world of goods for the actual acquisition of items which are impossible to buy under their financial circumstances caused by the new social stratifications in a transitional society. Strolling in shopping malls can be one of the few forms of entertainment they can afford. Although similar phenomena have been observed by others (Lehtonen and Mäenpää, 1997), the post-soviet imaginary shoppers are different. They are often pensioners or elderly people for whom the capitalist market stacked with colourful consumer goods was not the environment in which they have spent most of their lives. For them, the newly constructed shopping centres are often places to go sightseeing, wonder about the new commercial environment and compare it with the old days of shortage.

We are pensioners, today we came simply to stroll, we are curious to look around what is available, what kind of commodities are there – just to know. Although we have no money to buy, we can look, can’t we... It is very pleasant here and very beautiful, we look at this beauty of the shop, but a pensioner cannot afford anything. (BI, F, 70–80, Trt, pensioner)

Just for the fun of it. We go shopping with a friend, just like that, to look where and what there is and...⁸ You go to a shop and look at the prices and look at the goods and... well, with this small salary of mine you cannot buy anything, but it is still interesting to look, what, where ... Sometimes you try on something, sometimes my daughter even buys from such a place, but my salary will not allow this. (IDI, F, 50–60, Tln, worker)

⁸ In the Estonian original there is a unprompted use of the word *šoppamine*

What is characteristic of these accounts, particularly in the in-depth interviews, are the informants' memories of the Soviet era, where they had money to buy things but where the commercial environment was characterised by 'deficit'. Thus both the Soviet period and the present are characterised for them, by scarcity. The new capitalist system has created a framework of new needs, which in the case of these people are rarely satisfied. So the lacuna is filled with a compensatory pleasure-seeking in window-shopping where the future potential of purchase (strongly evident in case of the younger and wealthier groups) is almost totally eliminated by an underlying utilitarian calculus that compels them to use their limited resources to purchase staples like food and lodgings. As Belk et al point out when comparing the different ways US, Turkish and Danish informants positioned themselves in relation to global consumer culture:

Exposed to a consumer society where desiring is life-affirming, those who can neither afford nor hope to consume must either resolve to not desire or else let consumption exist only in magic and fantasy. This gives a new meaning to relative deprivation in its encounter with enchantment. (2003: 347)

THE PLEASURES OF AFFLUENCE

Younger, wealthier and more educated people's representations of *šoppamine* focus heavily on enjoyment and aesthetics, and their definition of the concept is predominantly recreational. Here, although financial resources play an important role, educational background and shopping experience in other (mainly Western) countries is more pertinent. Their claimed skills as shoppers generate aesthetic pleasure through an almost personal relationship with the goods and the (mostly imaginary) people who manufactured them, as well as with salespeople who are valued for their respect for the consumer and their ability to sell discreetly, yet effectively. It is an imaginary practice of undoing the commodity fetish, removing the disguise from the 'real' relationship between manufacturer and the object. An advertising manager's description of shopping in Italy is a good example:

Someone's philosophy can be seen through that good, well, this culture of the object is like on a different level. Naturally it covers your body and if you buy things rationally, you should not buy such things. But if you buy something well... on an aesthetic level and you want to get a mental pleasure out of it, then you get it easily. (IDI, M, 30–40, Tln, middle manager)

These accounts also often involve criticism of the Estonian retail market pointing out the relative lack of choice, poor quality and the unpleasant attitude

of the salespeople. Again we perceive a sense of ‘scarcity’, not of resources under circumstances of abundance, but rather a lack of breadth of choice and high quality goods.

An ability to consider the poverty of contemporary Estonian consumer choice is a considerable step forward – even though it is mostly confined to those with more economic and cultural capital – from the stereotypical account (exemplified by the life-story cited above) that contrasts Soviet shortage and the present day plenty.

Recreational shopping is taken as a natural pleasure of contemporary Western consumers with whom these respondents clearly identify. The same advertising manager summarises it with exceptional clarity:

Šoppamine is an enjoyable activity, buying is an unpleasant activity. I mean there is a difference here, that *šoppamine* is where you have this pleasure moment in it, where I... where I enjoy it, where I do not have to buy, but I can buy but do not have to.... I think we are postmodern people in this sense that this *šoppamine* and this small cult of things and kind of small fetish in it, that goes together with the whole thing, this belongs to this life. I mean... you have more things than you maybe need and... not all purchases are rationally justified...and this small moment of senselessness and this hedonism belongs to the whole thing. (IDI, M, 30–40, Tln, middle manager)

Often such reflections are tinted with irony and traces of ‘controlled de-control’ (see Featherstone, 1991). Even though loss of rational calculation and absence of ‘real need’ as well as waste of time in the shopping process are criticised, the shoppers forgive themselves quickly as if sudden bouts of unreasonable and abnormal behaviour were actually a ‘normal’ part of the modern consumer culture, a constant wavering between restraint and letting go which gives life flavour (cf. Lehtonen, 1999, 2000; Campbell, 1998).

Yes, some inner disease tells you that you come and take this and get some sort of a kick out of it... Usually it means spending of money and unfortunately if you do *šoppamine* in such a mood it unfortunately is not the most sensible stuff you buy. Disease because if you do not use that good you have bought for loads of money, then it has not really been a reasonable activity at all. It sometimes happens to me, but I do not suffer because of that. (BI, F, 30–40, Tln, specialist)

Thus transgression that causes no pangs of conscience actually re-affirms the borderline and is functional for moral ‘system-maintenance’ (see also Falk, 1994 and Lehtonen, 1999).

TRANSGRESSION BY 'OTHERS' AND CRITIQUES OF CONSUMER CULTURE

In many cases, people represented *šoppamine* in strongly judgmental ways drawing mainly on a discourse of needs and rational behaviour which had acquired a characteristic tint in the post-soviet environment. The roots of this critique of senseless *šoppamine* lie, on the one hand, in the general perception of the relative poverty of Estonian society and, on the other, in the experience of a different kind of society which should have enabled consumers to 'know better' and equip them to resist the lures of desire-led *šoppamine*, often seen as imposed by a locally adopted (or even aped) global consumer culture. Again the key word is 'unnecessary', complemented with 'senseless', 'excess' and 'waste'. In this construction yielding to desire means that pleasure starts to dominate over need satisfaction, that one loses self-control and gives way to an urge to get instant and material enjoyment out of excessive buying.

For me the definition of *šoppamine* is: so-called looking at senseless things and among other things also their acquisition, so that 'maybe it becomes necessary one day' or 'something like this I love', but actually there is no necessity for them, this is *šoppamine*. (BI, M, Tln, 30–40, middle manager)

These accounts tend to oppose the reasonable, purposive self to those unreasonable or misled (usually by marketing ploys) 'others' who have nothing better to do. This enables one informant to legitimise the acquisition of equipment for his surfing hobby as a 'real necessity' suggesting that whenever a 'desire', 'wish' or 'want' is successfully embraced in the concept of 'need', the purchase becomes justified and the moral tension is eased.

I do not buy things because they exist, I buy because I have a need for them... Naturally I know in advance that this is necessary... for example you buy another fin. You know you need this, you do not buy it just like that, to put on the wall and enjoy. (BI, M, Tln, 30–40, middle manager)

Sometimes informants separate themselves from the practice of *šoppamine* more sharply, projecting it onto categories of imagined others, usually 'the young', 'the richer people' or 'women'. By such representations the informants engage in an 'expert discourse' diagnosing the sheep-like consumers whom they describe as mindlessly plunging into *šoppamine*. There are numerous examples where the practice is described in a sarcastic or even derogatory light:

I think it means something pointless, for example there is this sale in the department store, so that people storm the place and buy something senseless from every box... It is buying and getting entangled in a mass psychosis. (BI, F, Trt, 40–50, specialist)

These judgements combine gender stereotypes⁹ with a deep ambivalence towards the conspicuous consumption engaged in by post-socialist consumers who desperately wish to emphasise their membership in the civilised West. Desire expressed not through relatively ‘innocent’ window-shopping – a sublimation of desires for material goods – but by actually trying on clothes, is particularly ridiculed.

...if we take women, *šoppamine* is a social form. You meet your girlfriends, go to a shop and look... you have ten *kroons* in your pocket and then you try on fur coats that cost two and a half thousand cool-cool-cool... knowing that you cannot afford this within the coming six or nine months, then you cast it off and say, sorry, it was a bit tight on the sides and you go to the shop next door and it will be repeated in every shop. (BI, M, Tln, 20–30, specialist)

The underlying ethos seems to be that people who cannot afford to buy specific items should not publicly demonstrate their ‘poor desire-management’. A trace of class stereotyping may be detected here as well, which disparages lower income people who are not sufficiently rational (cf. e.g. van Bavel and Sell-Trujillo, 2003).

Also, *šoppamine* as a recreational activity that requires command over both money and consumer competence is sometimes associated only with those who are perceived to be wealthy. Consequently, those on lower incomes see themselves as insulated from its seductions by their practical, no-nonsense, approach to purchases.

This does not apply to us... we do not go for *šoppamine*, so that you specifically go to spend money. Yes this *šoppamine* is when you really go to buy... this is real buying not like that you roll your cents... and see if you can afford this or not. This is more for the rich... (IDI; F, 60–70, Trt, pensioner)

Comparable accounts by lower class Turkish informants can be found in Belk et al.’s (2003) analysis of consumer desire.

The borderline between the creative search for new experiences enriching an individual’s life and crass materialism is seen as fragile and blurred. On one occasion such a deeply critical and ironic reflection was, to our surprise, brought forward spontaneously in one of the 10-minute shopping mall interviews:

Šoppamine is far worse than SARS, because it involves all strata including three or four-year-olds and I think all this is caused by the fact we have a very liberal

⁹ The present study knowingly does not analyse the gender dimension of *šoppamine* since it is the object of a separate analysis covered in the MA thesis (supervised by the author of the article) of Katrin Rahu (2004), a master’s student of the Department of Journalism and Communications at the University of Tartu.

democratic society, all sorts of senseless dreams have been brought to the surface that one tries to fulfil and realise ... so that once we had nothing and now we have everything and now we all walk around and are happy and smile in big shopping malls and buy trinkets that we probably do not need at all. This is *šoppamine*. (BI, M, 20–30, Trt, student)

Here we see an individual juggling the discourses of needs and desires. The young man outspokenly disparages items that are not ‘needed’ but have been rendered necessary by the new consumer culture and compares the Soviet past of scarcity that made people long for Western goods with the seeming but often meaningless abundance of today. Thus the joy of wide choice and the return to market ‘normality’ is intermixed with a fundamental ambivalence towards the seducing and often senseless consumer culture which is frequently seen as imported from the West. As one elderly interviewee said:

All this Western stuff. I am no kind of communist, but... but I remember, in the old days it was said that this degenerate Western culture and really... this prevails actually, this mass culture and I cannot understand how it is tolerated. (IDI, M, Trt, 70–80, pensioner)

This type of critique draws heavily on historical experience, but portrays the Soviet regime with ambivalence. On the one hand, it appears as a culprit, which by distorting people’s relationship with consumer goods has made the transition society particularly vulnerable to all kinds of new attractions. On the other hand, the Soviet era also represents a ‘purer’ and more ‘civil’ time not corrupted by the painfully stratifying consumer market.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

The present study has concentrated on the multiple meanings that have accreted around the term – *šoppamine* – recently ‘translated’ into Estonian from the English word, ‘shopping’, focussing particularly on how consumers make sense of this novel concept. The interview materials demonstrate that the network of meanings around this term is moral and normative. However, contrary to Miller’s (1998) emphasis on the unitary nature of the ‘discourse of shopping’ the perceived unease with the word displayed by many informants, together with its widespread familiarity and quite extensive spontaneous use, suggest that in the context of present-day Estonia talk about shopping embodies a range of expectations, emotions and anxieties about the general process of transition as well as about actual acts of purchase.

In place of a single discourse we saw a constellation of different representations linked by an underlying web of concepts with strong moral connotations:

‘necessary’ *versus* ‘unnecessary’, ‘reasonable’ *versus* ‘unreasonable’, ‘labour’ *versus* ‘waste of time’, ‘excess’ or ‘pleasure’.

This suggests that contemporary talk around *šoppamine* is a field of unresolved tension. On the one hand, it articulates the basic moral issues involved in contemporary consumer culture – grounded in the fundamental clash between the discourses of need and desire. On the other, it provides resources for articulating ambivalent valuations of the general process of transition from scarcity to abundance, central control to individual volition, relative equality to growing economic stratification.

This new concept and its versatile but anxiety-ridden connotations provide a particularly resonant way of thinking and feeling through social transition and linking biography to history. During the Soviet era recreational shopping in abundant shopping malls was unknown – only dreamt about from watching Finnish TV or occasional trips abroad. At the same time, by promoting individual choice over social cohesion, this new landscape of opportunity is also thought to encourage a crassly materialistic ethos and to erode the ‘civility’ seen to have been prevalent during the Soviet time (see Kennedy, 2002).

The relative equality of that time, although coercively created, is today often nostalgically remembered and contrasted with the deepening social stratification generated by the unequal distribution of the material wealth. Consequently, at one extreme we see those who ‘cannot afford anything’ immersing themselves on in a richly textured visual environment of shopping centres. The previous collectively experienced shortage of goods is replaced with an individual scarcity of the means to buy the new goods which often makes elderly people nostalgic of the ‘old times’ when all the blame could be put on the shoulders of the state, not on individual failure. During the Soviet times these people often practised a mundane coping strategy acquiring scarce goods via underhand deals based on social capital, thus experiencing everyday individual triumphs over the oppressive system and overcoming the feeling of deprivation. Nowadays engaging in compensatory pleasures on ‘just strolling and looking’ has become a new coping strategy on its own. However, it remains a further question for research, to what extent these people’s experience of deprivation and the feeling of being teased by the profusion of consumer goods within one’s reach but nevertheless inaccessible, is alleviated or aggravated by illusory consumption – that is spending time, but not money – in the new colourful shopping malls.

As the other extreme we see the educated and relatively wealthy (though not necessarily young) consumers for whom the small and limited post-soviet domestic marketplace provides only an illusory freedom of choice (see also Keller and Vihaelemm, 2004). For them the outward bounty of commodities is indelibly marked by an absence of style and poor value for money, signalling a sale’s attitude that ‘shoddy’ goods are good enough for uncritical and incompetent post-soviet consumers who simply want to satisfy the hunger created

by decades of little or no consumer choice during the Soviet era. This yearning for a deeper meaning in goods represents a different kind of deficit, experienced by those who can afford most of the goods on sale (or at least those embraced in the concept of *šoppamine* like clothing or footwear) and want to purchase things ‘on an aesthetic level’. They seem to seriously ponder on the appropriateness of certain material objects for their social position and personal identity. Their everyday life is aestheticized or stylized to a remarkable degree (see Featherstone, 1991), and being a consumer of highly valued objects is an important part of their self-expression and lifestyle. However, they believe that true recreational shopping can still, to a large extent, only be done in the malls of the West.

Thus we see that just as a collectively perceived absence of consumer choice during the Soviet regime was functional to the system’s collapse (see Slater, 1997a; Bauman, 1988; Keller and Vihalemm, 2003), the lack of ‘meaning’ in goods felt by the well-to-do is functional for sustaining the constant search for novelty that keeps the capitalist system running. At the same time, the compensatory visual pleasures of the ‘imaginary consumers’, moneyless pensioners in the shopping malls, marks a system failure, if not in the symbolic sense of perpetuating the values of consumerism, then definitely in the economic sense of actual financial participation in the market.

Nevertheless, it seems that the basically recreational discourses of *šoppamine* have come to stay in Estonia as ‘transition culture’s central postulate ‘from plan to market’ (Kennedy, 2002) has socialised people into more or less fully-fledged Western-style consumers. It remains to be seen how discussion in the media and among consumers themselves over the practice of *šoppamine*, as well as over the appropriateness of such a borrowed word in Estonian, develops. If local words suggested by the linguists or invented by consumers themselves, are adopted, the rich field of emotional connotations detailed here is likely to be replaced with a new set in which contrasts with the austerity of the Soviet era and ambivalences towards Western cultural formations lose their purchase on popular constructions. Reference points are likely to shift anyway now that the country has officially joined the European Union, and by extension has symbolically become a full member of the capitalist West. Nevertheless, the popular talk around *šoppamine* detailed here will continue to provide a valuable resource for anyone wishing to understand how the initial phase of transition was experienced and understood at the level of everyday life in post-socialist Estonia.

REFERENCES

- Alexander, J.C.; Eyerman, R.; Giesen, B.; Smelser, N. J. and Sztompka, P. (2004) *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. The University of California Press.
- Baudrillard, J. (1998 [1970]) *Consumer Society*. London: Sage.
- Bauman, Z. (1988) *Freedom*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Bauman, Z. (1994) *Intimations of Postmodernity*. London: Routledge.
- Bauman, Z. (2000) *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. (2001) 'Consuming Life', *Journal of Consumer Culture* 1(1): 5–29
- Belk, R.; Ger, G. and Åskegaard, S. (2003) 'The Fire of Desire: A Multisited Inquiry into Consumer Passion', *Journal of Consumer Research* 30: 326–351.
- Bellenger, D. N and Korgaonkar, P. K. (1980) 'Profiling the Recreational Shopper', *Journal of Retailing* 56(3): 77–92.
- Campbell, C. (1987) *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Campbell, C. (1998) 'Consumption and the Rhetorics of Need and Want', *Journal of Design History*, 11(3): 235–246.
- Chelcea, L. (2002) 'The culture of shortage during state socialism: Consumption practices in a Romanian village in the 1980s', *Cultural Studies* 16(1): 16–43.
- Falk, P. (1994) *The Consuming Body*. London: Sage.
- Falk, P. and Campbell, C. (eds.) (1997) *The Shopping Experience*. London: Sage.
- Featherstone, M. (1991) *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*. London: Sage.
- Fehérváry K. (2002) 'American Kitchens, Luxury Bathrooms, and the Search for a 'Normal' Life in Postsocialist Hungary'. *Ethnos* 67(3): 369–400.
- Gecser, O. & Kitzinger, D. (2002) 'Fairy sales: The Budapest international fairs as virtual shopping tours', *Cultural Studies* 16(1): 145–164.
- Hindrikus, R. (ed) (2000 and 2003) *Eesti rahva elulood I–III. (Estonian Biographies I–III)*. Tallinn: Tänapäev.
- Jansson, A. (2002) 'The Mediatization of Consumption. Towards an analytical framework of image culture', *Journal of Consumer Culture* 2 (1): 5–31
- Kaalep, Ain (2004) 'On olemas ka rämpsõnad' ('Some words are junk words'). *Eesti Päevaleht*, May, 5.
- Kannike, A. (2003) *Kodukujundus kui kultuuriloomine. Etnoloogiline Tartu-uurimus. (Home Decoration as Culture Building. An Ethnological Study of Tartu)* Tartu: Eesti Rahva Muuseum.
- Karask, K. (2003) 'Kaja Karask, born 1935' in R. Hindrikus (ed) *Eesti rahva elulood II (Life Stories of Estonian People)*, pp. 200–208. Tallinn: Tänapäev.
- Keller, M. (forthcoming in 2005) 'Freedom calling: telephony, mobility and consumption in post-socialist Estonia', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*.
- Keller, M. and Vihalemm, T. (2001) 'Estonian Society Carried By the Tide of Western Consumer Culture', *Estonian Human Development Report*, pp. 80–83. Tallinn: Tallinn Pedagogical University and Institute of International and Social Studies.
- Keller, M. and Vihalemm, T. (2003) 'Return to the Consuming West: Young People's Perceptions on the Consumerization of Estonia', *Young* 11(3): 195–215.
- Keller, M. and Vihalemm, T. (2004) 'Coping with Consumer Culture: elderly urban consumers in post-Soviet Estonia' a paper submitted to *Trames. Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*.

- Kennedy, M. (2002) *Cultural Formations of Postcommunism. Emancipation, Transition, Nation and War*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kõresaar, E. and Anepaio, T. (2003) *Mälu kui kultuuritegur: entoloogilisi perspektiive. (Ethnological Perspectives on Memory)*. Studia Ethnologica Tartuensia 6. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- Lankauskas, G. (2002) 'On "Modern" Christians, Consumption, and the Value of National Identity in Post-Soviet Lithuania', *Ethnos* 67(3): 320–344.
- Lehtonen, T.-K. (1999) *Rahan vallassa. Ostoksilla käyminen ja markkinatalouden arki (Subjects of money: shopping and the everyday life in market economy)*. Helsinki: Tutkijaliitto.
- Lehtonen, T.-K. (2000) 'Desire, Self-Discipline and Pleasure: the tension between freedom and restriction in shopping', *Research in Consumer Behavior* 9: 197–225.
- Lehtonen, T.-K. and Mäenpää, P. (1997) 'Shopping in the East Centre Mall' in P. Falk and C. Campbell (eds.) *The Shopping Experience*, pp. 136–165. London: Sage.
- Lehtonen, T.-K. and Pantzar, M. (2002) 'The Ethos of Thrift', *Journal of Material Culture* 7 (2): 211–231.
- Miles, M. B. and Huberman, M. (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis. An Expanded Sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Miller, D. (1998) *A Theory of Shopping*. London: Polity Press.
- Miller, D.; Jackson, P.; Thrift, N.; Holbrook, B. and Rowlands, M. (1998) *Shopping, place and identity*. London: Routledge.
- Miller, D. (2001) *The Dialectics of Shopping. (Lewis Henry Morgan Lecture Series)*. University of Chicago Press.
- Oushakine, S. A. (2000) 'The Quantity of Style. Imaginary Consumption in the New Russia', *Theory, Culture & Society* 17(5): 97–120.
- Patico, J. (2002) 'Chocolate and Cognac: Gifts and the Recognition of Social Worlds in Post-Soviet Russia', *Ethnos* 67(3): 345–368.
- Prus, R. and Dawson, L. (1991) 'Shop 'til you drop: Shopping as recreational and laborious activity', *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 16(2): 145–164.
- Rahu, K. (2004) *Gendered Representations of Šoppamine in Estonia*. Unpublished Master's thesis. Department of Journalism and Communications, University of Tartu.
- Rantala, K. and Lehtonen, T.-K. (2001) 'Dancing on the Tightrope', *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 4(1): 69–83.
- Rausing, S. (1998) 'Sings of the new nation: gift exchange, consumption and aid on a former collective farm in north-west Estonia', in D. Miller (ed.) *Material Cultures. Why some things matter*, pp. 189–213. London: UCL Press.
- Rausing, S. (2002) 'Re-constructing the "Normal": Identity and the Consumption of Western Goods in Estonia' in R. Mandel and C. Humphrey (eds.) *Markets and Moralities. Ethnographies of Postsocialism*, pp. 127–142. Oxford: Berg.
- Shevchenko, O. (2002) '"In case of fire emergency": Consumption, security and the meaning of durables in a transforming society', *Journal of Consumer Culture* 2(2): 147–170.
- Slater, D. (1997a) *Consumer Culture and Modernity*. London: Routledge.
- Slater, D. (1997b) 'Consumer Culture and the Politics of Need' in M. Nava, A. Blake, I. MacRury and B. Richards (eds.) *Buy This Book: Studies in Advertising and Consumption*, pp. 51–63. London: Routledge.

- Švab, A. (2002) 'Consuming Western image of well-being: shopping tourism in socialist Slovenia', *Cultural Studies* 16(1): 63–79.
- Sztompka, P. (2000) 'Cultural Trauma. The Other Face of Social Change', *European Journal of Social Theory* 3(4): 449–466.
- Taagepera, R. and Miciunas, R. J. (1993) *The Baltic States. Years of Dependence 1940–1990*. London: Hurst & Company.
- Van Bavel, R. and Sell-Trujillo, L. (2003) 'Understanding Consumerism in Chile', *Journal of Consumer Culture* 3(3): 343–362.
- Verdery, K. (1996). *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* Digital download. Princeton University Press.
- Volchkova, L., Gronow, J. and Minina, V. (eds.) (2001) *Sotsiologija potreblenija (Sociology of Consumption)*. St Petersburg: Sotsiologicheskoe obshchestvo im. M.M. Kovalevskogo.
- Õnnepalu, T. (2002) 'Essee: ideaal ja spliin (Essay: Ideal and Spleen)', *Postimees*, November 9.

v

Keller, M. & Kalmus, V. (2004) Konsumerismist tarbimisliku ükskõiksuseni: tarbimisorientatsioonid tänases Eestis. In V. Kalmus, M. Lauristin ja P. Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt (eds.) *Eesti elavik 21. sajandi algul: Ülevaade uurimuse* Mina. Maailm. Meedia tulemustest. Tartu: Tartu University Press.

KONSUMERISMIST TARBIMISLIKU ÜKSKÕIKSUSENI: TARBIMISORIENTATSIOONID TÄNASES EESTIS

Margit Keller, Veronika Kalmus

1. Teoreetilised alused

Kaasaegsed käsitlused tarbimiskultuurist lähtuvad sellest, et tarbimise puhul ei ole üheski ühiskonnas tegemist pelgalt praktiliste vajaduste rahuldamisega, vaid tarbimisel on alati sügavalt sotsiokultuuriline tähendus. Nii materiaalsete kui mittemateriaalsete kaupade ostmise ja kasutamise kaudu positsioneeritakse end sotsiaalses keskkonnas, kujundatakse oma identiteeti ja elustiili. Nn lääneliku tarbimiskultuuri aluseks on vaba turumajandus, mis vähemalt teoreetiliselt tagab indiviididele võrdse ligipääsu kaupadele. Tarbija suveräänsust, tarbimisvabadust mõistetakse hilismodernse lääneliku ühiskonna kodanikuvabaduste ühe kesksema ilminguna.

Nimetatud tunnustele vastav tarbimiskultuur on Eestis pärast Nõukogude Liidu lagunemist jõudsalt arenenud. Ometi ei saa me rääkida ühest lääneliku kultuuri pealetungist. Nõukogude pärand, Eesti Vabariigi arendamisega seotud kohalik kogemus ning Lääne mõju on omavahelises keerukas vastastoimes, mis kujundavad just meile iseloomulikku postsovetlikku tarbimiskultuuri.

Tarbimist on Eestis seni uuritud üsna mitmest eri aspektist. Turu-uuringufirmad on mitmesuguste organisatsioonide (peamiselt ettevõtete) tellimusel teinud tarbijakäitumise kohta palju kommertsuuringuid, kuid valdav enamik neist ei ole üldsusele ega ka teistele uurijatele kättesaadav. Statistikaameti ja uuringufirmade avaldatud andmed on viimastel aastatel suuresti finantsinstitutsioonide eestvedamisel käivitanud ületarbimise diskussiooni, mis esmapilgul jätab mulje, et Eestis on palju neid, kes (lähimõtleमतult) lubavad endale suures mahus tarbimist. Teisalt moodustab tarbimise, sageli õigupoolest küll tarbimisvõimalustest ilmajäetuse uurimine olulise osa Eesti sotsioloogide poolt läbiviidavates deprivatsiooni, kihis-

tumise, edukuse-ebaedukuse ja vaesuse uuringutes (vt nt Kutsar jt 1999; Einasto 2002; Pavelson & Luuk 2002; Öun 2002). Seni on Eestis sotsiaalteaduslikult väga vähe uuritud tarbimise kultuurilisi ja sümbolilisi aspekte (v.a kommertsuuringud, mis teaduspublikatsioonides kajastust ei leia). Lisaks TÜ ajakirjanduse ja kommunikatsiooni osakonnas tehtavale (vt Keller & Vihalemm 2001, 2003; Keller 2005) on jõudsalt arenemas ka tarbimisuuringute antropoloogiline suund TÜ etnoloogia õppetoolis (vt Kannike 2002; Kõresaar & Anepaio 2003). Olulist täiendust tarbimise tähtsuse kohta Eesti ühiskonna kihistumisel lisab käesoleva aruande 15. peatükk, mille keskne hüpoteeski seob positsioneerumise ühiskondlikul redelil ja indiviidi võimalused tarbijana.

Küsitluses *Mina. Maailm. Meedia* on püütud selgitada Eesti inimeste tarbimisorientatsioone, kasutades muuhulgas deprivatsiooniuringutes levinud küsimusi raha jätkumise kohta erinevateks kulutusteks toidust kuni arvuti ostuni. Püüame selgitada erinevate kulutuste prioriteetsust erinevates sotsiaal-demograafilistes gruppides, samuti mitme tarbimiskäitumise koondnäitaja (indeksi) seost inimeste väärtusorientatsioonide, elulaadi ning identiteediga. Kolm viimatinimetatud aspekti on leidnud sageli käsitlust ka rahvusvahelistes tarbimisuuringutes, kuna tarbimine kui sotsiokultuuriline praktika on tihedalt seotud inimese väärtushinnangute, elulaadi ning identiteediga antud ühiskondlikus, kultuurilises ja majanduslikus ruumis. Neist mõistetest moodustub antud kontekstis teoreetiline tervik.

Peamiseks, n-ö makrotasandi eesmärgiks, on leida seoseid tarbimiskäitumise ning laiemate sotsiokultuuriliste eelistuste, käitumismustrite ja praktikate vahel, lähtudes eeldusest, et tarbimine on alati ka kultuuriloome ja kommunikatsioon. Samas on käesolev kvantitatiivne analüüs vaid

fragment tervikpildist, millest parema ettekujutuse annavad kvalitatiivsed uuringud, sh TÜ ajakirjanduse ja kommunikatsiooni osakonnas teoksil olevad (nt K. Rahu magistritöö (2004) ja R. Roo bakalaureusetöö (2004)).

Ühe olulise mõistena, sh indeksi nimetusena, on kasutusel sõna *konsumerism*. See tuleneb inglisekeelsest sõnast *consumerism*, millel on mitmeid tähendusi. Enamasti pakuvad sõnaraamatud selektuseks *tarbijakaitse liikumine*, *tarbija huvide eest võitlemine* või ka *käsitlus, kus kasvavat tarbimist vaadeldakse majandussüsteemile kasuliku nähtusena*. Samas on sotsiaalteoorias ning inglise (osalt ka eesti) tavakeeles enam levinud konsumerismi kasutamine ennekõike sümbolilist väärtust omavaid kaupu haarava eneseväljendusliku tarbimise tähenduses. Sageli on tavakeeles sõnal ka halvustav tähendus (seda kannab eestikeelne vaste *tarbijalikkus*), mis seostub ületarbimise, keskkonnakahjude, autentse kultuuri hävimisega massikultuuri tingimustes ning paljude muude Lääne kriitilistele teooriatele omaste temadega. Käesolevas aruandes kasutame konsumerismi mõistet eelkõige Z. Baumanist (1992) lähtuvalt. Bauman defineerib mõiste järgnevalt:

Konsumerism tähendab sümboliliste kaupade tootmist, levitamist, ihaldamist, omandamist ja kasutamist. /.../ Tarbimine ei ole lihtsalt materiaalse ahnuse rahuldamine, kõhu täitmine. Küsimus on sümbolitega manipuleerimises väga mitmesugustel eesmärkidel. Elaviku tasandil on eesmärgiks identiteedi konstrueerimine, mina konstrueerimine ning teiste inimestega suhete konstrueerimine. Ühiskonna tasandil on eesmärk säilitada institutsioonide, gruppide, struktuuride ja muu taolise jätkuvus. Ning süsteemi tasandil on eesmärk kindlustada tingimuste taastootmine, milles kõik eelõeldu oleks võimalik (Bauman 1992: 223).

2. Analüüsimetoodikast

Empiirilises analüüsis lähtume küsimuste blokist *Kuivõrd Teil, teie perel jätkub raha järgmisteks väljamakseteks*, milles vastajatel oli võimalus hinnata raha piisavust 23 kauba- või teenuseliigi eest tasumiseks 4-pallisel skaalal (1 – Üldiselt jätkub, 2 – Mõnikord jätkub, mõnikord mitte, 3 – Ei jätku, oleme pidanud sellest loobuma, 4 – Ei vaja seda, ei kuluta sellele). Kuna vastusevariantide jaotused näitavad eelkõige respondentide poolt tajutud rahalisi võimalusi ja piiranguid, mille detailsem vaatlus ei ole meie analüüsi peamine eesmärk, oleme tarbimisprioriteetide väljaselgitamiseks koostanud nn **kulutuste**

pingeread, järjestades kaubad ja teenused nii kogu valimis kui peamistes sotsiaal-demograafilistes rühmades nende respondentide osakaalu alusel (suurimast protsendist väikseimani), kes vastasid, et neil või nende perel selle kauba või teenuse eest tasumiseks raha üldiselt jätkub. Tabelites 12.1–12.3 on toodud *Üldiselt jätkub* vastanute protsentuaalne osakaal ning kauba-teenuse koht pingereas. Lähitud on eeldusest, et piiratud rahahulga tingimustes võib neid kaupu ja teenuseid, mis sattusid pingerea ülaossa, pidada tinglikult prioriteetsemaks, st sellisteks tarbimisobjektideks, ilma milleta oma elu ette ei kujutata, mille jaoks raha leitakse esmajärjekorras. Pingerea tagaosas asuvad kaubad-teenused, mida tajutakse kas kõige kallimana või mida sotsiokultuurilise ja majandusliku konteksti poolt mõjutatuna mõistetakse sellisena, et neist on piiratud raharessursi juures kas mõistlik, lihtsam või ka ootuspärasem loobuda (nt auto ostmine). Pingeridade variatiivsus sotsiaal-demograafiliste gruppide lõikes näitab sotsiokultuuriliselt tingitud kulutuste prioriteetide erinevust. Samas ei anna antud küsitlus meile mõistagi andmeid selle kohta, missugune on nii nende kaupade, mida saadakse endale lubada, kui ka nende, milleks raha ei jätku, emotsionaalne ja sotsiaalne tähendus vastanute jaoks. Kaup, millest ollakse loobunud, võib olla unistuste objekt (nt reis) ja seega subjektiivses emotsionaalses pingereas esikohal, kuigi see reaalse ostuna ei pruugi teoks saada. Seega peegeldab antud pingerida pigem vastanute hinnangut selles osas, milleks üldiselt raha n-ö peab jätkuma, et antud ühiskondlikus tähendusruumis toime tulla.

Analüüsis on kesksel kohal ka kaks indeksit: konsumerism ja tarbimislik ükskõiksus. **Konsumerismi indeks** on moodustatud jaatavatest vastustest järgmiste tegevuste kohta esitatud küsimustele (kokku 18 indikaatorit): meelelahutuslikul eesmärgil ostukeskustes, kauplustes käimine ja reklaami jälgimine; ilu ja tasakaalu leidmise eesmärgil reklaamide jälgimine; rõivaste õmmelda laskmine; kindlate rõivafirmade, brändide eelistamine; rõivaste ostmine välismaal käies; rõivaste ostul sobivuse ning kaubamärgi olulisemaks pidamine hinnaga võrreldes; teadlik stiili jälgimine ning disaineri nõuannete või sisustuselase kirjanduse kasutamine korteri sisustamisel; korduvalt välismaal puhkuseleil käimine; kindla firma kosmeetika eelistamine; isikliku juuksuri, kosmeetiku ja massööri olemasolu; jõusaalis, shapingu ja aeroobikas käimine. Oluline on märkida, et konsumerismi indeksiga püüame mõõta tarbimise nn baasvajadusest eristuvat, eneseväljenduslikku ja elustiiliga seotud aspekti, kus inimeste jaoks asub rolli mängima tarbimise kultuuriline ja hedonistlik

pool (elustiilid, brandid, disain, aga ka nn šoppamine ja puhkuseraisid).

Tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse (mittevajamise) indeks moodustus vastustest *Ei vaja seda, ei kuluta sellele küsimuste bloki Kuivõrd Teil, teie perel jätkub raha järgmisteks väljaminekuteks*. Põgusalt on analüüsis kasutatud ka **rahapuuduse (vajalikust loobumise) indeksit**, mis moodustus vastustest *Ei jätku, oleme pidanud sellest loobuma* samas küsimuste bloki.

3. Kulutuste prioriteedid

Minimaalsete variatsioonidega moodustavad kulutuste pingerea esikolmiku kõigis vaadeldud gruppides korralik toitumine, eluaseme kulud ning rohtude ostmine, tervise eest hoolitsemine. Pingerea järgmise kolme artikli (laste koolitamine, oma välimuse eest hoolitsemine, riiete ostmine) osas ilmnevad juba mõnevõrra suuremad gruppidevahelised erinevused. Pingerea viimased kaks kategooriat esinevad kõigis vastanute rühmades peaaegu ühesuguselt. Need on kõige kulukamana tajutud reisimine ning auto ostmine, uuendamine (vt tabelid 12.1a–12.1c).

3.1. Rahvuslikud erinevused

Nn prioriteetsemates kauba-teenusekategoriates on nende venelaste osakaal, kel raha antud kauba või teenuse jaoks üldiselt jätkub, eestlaste osakaalust 10–15% võrra väiksem (vt tabel 12.1a). Huvitavad erinevused ilmnevad rahvuse järgmistes kategooriates: ajakirjanduse tellimine asub eestlaste pingereas 7., venelastel aga 13.–15. kohal. Seevastu raamatute ostmisega on olukord vastupidine: eestlastel 16.–17. kohal ning venelastel 8. kohal. Erinevus on suur ka auto hooldamise puhul, mis on eestlastel 10., venelastel aga 18. kohal. Samuti torkab silma tõenäoliselt kultuurilisest erinevusest tingitud vahe lähisugulaste toetamise aspektis: eestlastel on see alles 21.–22. kohal, venelastel aga 11.–12. kohal.

3.2. Soolised erinevused

Võrreldes mehi ja naisi (tabel 12.1a) näeme, et naistel jätkub peaaegu kõigis kauba-teenusekategoriates raha üldiselt vähem kui meestel. Mõne tunnuse puhul ulatub erinevus isegi paarikümne protsendini. Näiteks välimuse eest hoolitsemine asub nii meeste kui naiste kulutuste pingereas sarnasel kohal (vastavalt 4. ja 5. koht). Meestest tun-

nstab 53%, et neil üldiselt jätkub raha välimuse eest hoolitsemiseks, naistest vastab samamoodi vaid 28%. Ilmselt on paljuski selle põhjuseks erinevad arusaamad sellest, mis on piisav välimuse eest hoolitsemine, ning nende teenuste erinev hind. Ligikaudu samasugune erinevus ilmneb ka riiete ostmise puhul. Üldiselt on erisused naiste ja meeste kulutuste pingeridades väiksemad, kui täheldasime rahvuse puhul. Suurimad erinevused esinevad tunnuse *Sportimiseks* puhul (meestel 10., naistel 14.–15. koht) ning õppimise ja enesetäiendamise puhul (meestel 15., naistel 10. koht).

3.3. Vanuselised erinevused

Vanusegruppide osas näeme (tabel 12.1a), et ootuspäraselt on nooremate seas (eriti vanusegrupis 15–19) pingerea ülaosas lastega (laste koolitamine ja laste harrastused) ning õppimisega seotud tarbimisotsused. Vanemates vanusegruppides need taanduvad ning asemele tulevad näiteks korteri sisustamise ja remondiga seotud kulutused. Lisaks suhteliselt muutumatutena püsivatele pingerea esi- ja lõpukolmikutele ei esine pingereas vanuserühmiti märkimisväärtset kõikumist ka elustiilist sõltuvates tarbimisaspektides nagu näiteks raamatute ostmine, teatris ja kontserdil käimine, külaliste kutsumine ja kingituste tegemine.

3.4. Erinevused elukohati

Elukohtade lõikes (tabel 12.1b) näeme suuri protsentuaalseid erinevusi pingerea esikolmikus (toitumine, eluaseme kulud, rohud ja tervise eest hoolitsemine), kus vastuse *Üldiselt jätkub* osakaal erineb kõigi muude vastanute ning Kohtla-Järve, Sillamäe ja Narva elanike vahel 12–27% võrra (kõige enam eluaseme kulude osas). Üldtendentsina on nii Ida-Virumaa linnades kui ka maal elavate inimeste hulgas *Üldiselt jätkub* vastanute osakaal enamiku kaubakategooriate osas Tallinna, Tartu ja Pärnu ning nende ümbruse vastavatest näitajatest mõnevõrra madalam.

Suurimad erinevused kaupade-teenuste pingereas elukohtade lõikes on täheldatavad ajakirjanduse tellimise osas: maaelanikel on see 6. kohal, Ida-Virumaa linnades ning Tallinnas aga 9.–11. kohal. Olukord on vastupidine raamatute puhul (Tallinnas ja Ida-Virumaal 8.–9. kohal ning maal 20. kohal). Arvatavasti on siin põhjusena olulisem rahvuslik, mitte niivõrd regionaalne tagapõhi. Rahvuse tunnuse alusel enim eristunud lähisugulaste toetamine on erineva tähtsusega ka elukoha lõikes: näiteks maa- ja väikelinnade ning Tallinna,

Vastusevariandi "Üldiselt jätkub [raha]" % ja koht pingereas

Paksu kirjaga on esile tõstetud märkimisväärsed erinevused võrreldavate rühmade vahel.

Tabel 12.1b. Eesti tarbijate kulutuste prioriteetidid (elukoharühmades)

Vastusevariandi Üldiselt jätkub [raha] % ja koht pingereas															
N		Koguvalim		Elukoht											
		Tallinn		Tartu, Pärnu		Tln, Trt, Pärnu ümbrus		Narva, K-Järve, Sillamäe		Väikelinn		Maa			
		453		166		186		177		276		324			
		%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht
	Korralikuks toimumiseks	72	1.	77	1.	71	2.	77	1.	53	1.	75	1.	73	1.-2.
	Eluaseme kuludeks	69	2.	71	2.	72	1.	70	2.	46	2.	73	2.	73	1.-2.
	Rohtudeks, tervise eest hoolitsemiseks	55	3.	59	3.	57	3.	60	3.	41	3.	54	3.	53	3.
	Oma välimuse eest hoolitsemiseks	40	4.	43	4.	44	4.	42	4.	37	4.	37	4.-5.	36	4.
	Riiete ostmiseks	34	5.	38	5.	41	5.	36	5.-6.	27	5.	31	6.	31	7.
	Laste koolitamiseks	33	6.	33	6.-7.	33	6.	33	7.	26	6.	37	4.-5.	35	5.
	Ajakirjanduse tellimiseks	28	7.	26	9.-10.	32	7.	36	5.-6.	16	10.-11.	28	7.	32	6.
	Külastate kutsumiseks, kingituste tegemiseks	26	8.	33	6.-7.	30	8.	25	9.	23	7.	25	8.-9.	18	10.-11.
	Laste harrastusteks	24	9.	26	9.-10.	24	9.	27	8.	20	8.-9.	25	8.-9.	22	8.
	Õppimiseks, enesetäiendamiseks	20	10.	23	14.	21	12.-13.	19	13.-14.	16	10.-11.	19	12.	18	10.-11.
	Sportimiseks	19	11.-13.	24	11.-13.	22	11.	19	13.-14.	13	13.-15.	20	11.	13	12.-14.
	Meelelahutuseks, harrastusteks	19	11.-13.	24	11.-13.	23	10.	21	11.-12.	13	13.-15.	17	13.	13	12.-14.
	Teatris, kontserdil käimiseks	19	11.-13.	24	11.-13.	21	12.-13.	21	11.-12.	15	12.	16	14.	12	15.
	Raamatute ostmiseks	18	14.-15.	27	8.	15	16.	15	16.-17.	20	8.-9.	13	16.	7	20.
	Auto hooldamiseks, sõitmiseks	18	14.-15.	19	15.	14	17.	24	10.	6	20.-21.	21	10.	19	9.
	Uue olmetehnika muretsemiseks	15	16.	18	16.-17.	16	15.	17	15.	12	16.-17.	11	17.-18.	13	12.-14.
	Kohvikus, restoranis käimiseks	14	17.	17	18.	18	14.	15	16.-17.	13	13.-15.	14	15.	8	18.-19.
	Lähisugulaste toetamiseks	12	18.	18	16.-17.	9	19.	8	22.	12	16.-17.	10	19.-20.	6	21.-22.
	Remondiks	11	19.	13	19.	9	20.	11	18.-19.	11	18.	11	17.-18.	9	16.-17.
	Arvuti ostmiseks, hooldamiseks, täiustamiseks	10	20.	12	20.	8	21.	10	20.	4	22.	10	19.-20.	9	16.-17.
	Korteri meelepäraseks sisustamiseks	9	21.	11	21.-22.	13	18.	11	18.-19.	6	20.-21	8	21.	8	18.-19.
	Reisimiseks	8	22.	11	21.-22.	6	22.	9	21.	7	19.	7	22.	6	21.-22.
	Auto ostmiseks, uuendamiseks	6	23.	7	23.	5	23.	7	23.	1	23.	6	23.	5	23.
Paksu kirjaga on esile tõstetud märkimisväärsed erinevused võrreldavate rühmade vahel.															

Paksu kirjaga on esile tõstetud märkimisväärsed erinevused võrreldavate rühmade vahel.

Tartu ja Pärnu ümbruse elanike seas (kes on valdavalt eestlased) on see kuluartikkel 19.–22. kohal, samas kui Sillamäel, Kohtla-Järvel, Narvas ja Tallinnas (kus venelaste osakaal on kõrge) on lähisugulaste toetamine 16.–17. kohal. Pingereas ilmneb suur erinevus ka auto hooldamise aspektis: maal, väikelinnades ning Tallinna, Tartu ja Pärnu ümbruses on see 9. või 10. kohal, samas Ida-Virumaa linnades 20.–21. kohal. Ilmselgelt on maal ja suurlinnade ümbruses elavatel inimestel vajadus auto järele suurem, kuid kindlasti mängib siin rolli ka Ida-Virumaa suuresti venekeelse elanikkonna tuntavalt madalam elatustase.

3.5. Hariduslikud erinevused

Hariduse lõikes (tabel 12.1c) võib täheldada, et *Üldiselt jätkub* vastanute osakaal ei erine märkimisväärselt alg- või põhiharidusega ning keskkharidusega vastanute vahel (v.a tunnuse *Rohtudeks, tervise eest hoolitsemiseks* puhul). Samas nende osakaal, kel mitmesugusteks kaupadeks ja teenusteks raha üldiselt piisab, kasvab hüppeliselt kõrgharidusega vastanute puhul (v.a eelmainitud tervise tunnus). Erinevused ongi suurimad pingerea esiosas. Kui näiteks neid, kel korralikuks toitumiseks raha üldiselt jätkub, on alg- või põhiharidusega vastanute seas vaid 63%, siis kõrghariduse puhul tõuseb vastav osakaal 87%-ni. Kaupade-teenuste pingereas väga tähelepanuväärseid erinevusi pole, v.a kultuuritarbimise – haridusest ehk enim mõjutatud kulutuste rühma – osas. Näiteks teatris ja kontserdil käimine on kõrgharidusega vastanute jaoks 9. kohal, alg- või põhiharidusega inimeste jaoks aga 15.–17. kohal. Samas ei ole erinevus nii suur raamatute ostmise puhul (vastavalt 10.–12. ja 13.–14. koht). Suurim on erinevus laste harrastuste osas: kõrgharidusega vastanute jaoks on see 15. kohal, alg- kuni keskkharidusega inimeste seas aga 8.–10. kohal. Võib oletada, et kõrgharidusega vastanute seas kasvab laste koolitamiseks ning harrastusteks olemasolevate võimaluste paljususe tajumine, mistõttu rahalisi ressursse laste arendamiseks peetakse suhteliselt vähepiisavaks.

3.6. Erinevused sissetulekurühmade lõikes

Sissetulekugruppide osas (tabel 12.1c) on mistahes kauba või teenuse tarbeks raha üldiselt jätkuvaks hinnanute osakaalud ootuspäraselt kõige erinevad, üldjuhul mitmekümne protsendi võrra. Kui kuni 1500-kroonise kuusissetulekuga grupis jätkub korralikuks toitumiseks raha üldiselt 52%-l vastanutest, siis alates 4000-kroonisest kuusissetu-

lekust on vastav osakaal juba üle 90%. Veelgi dras-tilisema näitena jätkub vähima sissetulekuga grupis oma välimuse eest hoolitsemiseks raha üldiselt 19%-l vastanuist, samal ajal kui suurimas tulugrupis on vastav osakaal 80%. Sissetulekurühmade kulutuste pingeridades ilmnevad suurimad erinevused lastega seonduvate teenuste osas. Vähi-ma sissetulekuga grupis on laste koolitamine 4. kohal, suurimas sissetulekugrupis aga 16. kohal. Sama kehtib laste harrastuste puhul: vastavalt 5. ja 19. koht. Suurimates tulugruppides asetseb lastega seotu pingereas korteri sisustamise ja remondiga kõrvuti, samas kui madalaima sissetulekuga rüh-mades paiknevad kulutused lastele kõrvuti tervise ning oma välimuse eest hoolitsemisega pingerea tipus. Fenomeni seletus on üsna proosaline: 75% kõrgeimasse tulurühma kuuluvate vastajate perezdes ei ole alla 18-aastaseid lapsi.

4. Kulutuste prioriteedid äärmistes sissetulekurühmades

Analüüsima, kuivõrd lisaks objektiivsetele võimalustele (sissetuleku suurus) mõjutavad inimeste tarbimiseelistusi teatud sotsiaal-demograafilised tunnused, koostasime kulutuste pingeread madalaima (kuni 1500 krooni pereleikme kohta kuus; tabel 12.2) ja kõrgeima (üle 6000 krooni; tabel 12.3) sissetulekurühma piires rahvuse, soo ja haridustaseme lõikes.

Tuleb täheldada, et esmatarbekaupade osas (korralik toit, eluaseme kulud, arstimid) erinevad eestlaste–venelaste hinnangud raha piisavusele ka sama sissetulekurühma piires, seda eeskätt väikseima sissetulekuga rühmas, kuhu kuuluvad venelased kalduvad sagedamini vastama, et on pidanud nendest kaupadest loobuma (nt väidab 15% pereleikme kohta kuni 1500 krooni teenivatest venelastest, et on pidanud loobuma korralikust toidust; sama sissetulekuga eestlaste hulgas on vastav osakaal 5%). Eestlaste–venelaste kulutuste pingeridades valitsevad suurimad erinevused ajakirjanduse tellimise ja raamatute ostmise osas: nii madalaimas kui kõrgeimas tulurühmas kulutavad eestlased raha pigem ajakirjandusele, venelased aga raamatutele (jõukaimate venelaste tarbimisorientatsioonide pingereas on raamatud koguni 3.–5. kohal). Lähisugulaste toetamine on madalaimas sissetulekurühmas venelaste jaoks olulisemal kohal (12.–13., eestlastel 20.–22. koht), kõrgeimas tulurühmas on see erinevus kadunud.

Meeste-naiste võrdluses väärib märkimist, et ka sama sissetulekurühma piires on naiste hinnangud raha piisavusele üldiselt pessimistlikumad (nt väidab 80% kõrgeimasse tulurühma kuuluvatest

Tabel 12.1c. Eesti tarbijate kulutuste prioriteetidid (haridus- ja sissetulekurühmades)

Vastusevariandi Üldiselt jätkub [raha] % ja koht pingereas																												
Koguvalem				Haridus						Sissetulek pereliikme kohta																		
		Alg. põhi	Kesk	Kõrg		Kuni 1500		1501–2500		2501–4000		4001–6000		Üle 6000														
N	1470	326	807	294	480	406	295	154	83																			
	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht
Korralikuks toimumiseks	72	1.	63	1-2.	70	1.	87	1.	52	1-2.	73	1.	87	1.	93	1.	94	1.										
Eluaseme kuludeks	69	2.	63	1-2.	66	2.	81	2.	52	1-2.	70	2.	79	2.	87	2.	93	2.										
Rohtudeks, tervise eest hoolitsemiseks	55	3.	53	3.	44	3.	53	4.	34	3.	52	3.	71	3.	79	3.	84	3.										
Oma välimuse eest hoolitsemiseks	40	4.	32	4-5.	38	4.	54	3.	19	6.	36	4.	55	4.	64	4.	80	4.										
Riiete ostmiseks	34	5.	28	6.	30	6.	51	5.	17	7.	25	6-7.	50	5.	55	5.	73	5.										
Laste koolitamiseks	33	6.	32	4-5.	32	5.	35	8.	31	4.	27	5.	39	7.	33	10.	43	16.										
Ajakirjanduse tellimiseks	28	7.	23	7.	25	7.	42	6.	13	8.	25	6-7.	38	7.	42	7.	63	7.										
Külastuste tegemiseks, kingituste tegemiseks	26	8.	21	8.	24	8-9.	37	7.	12	9.	20	8.	36	8.	47	6.	65	6.										
Laste harrastusteks	24	9.	19	9-10.	24	8-9.	27	15.	20	5.	19	9.	32	9.	25	17.	39	19.										
Õppimiseks, enesetäiendamiseks	20	10.	19	9-10.	17	10.	30	10-12.	11	10.	14	12.	30	10.	27	13-15.	49	14-15.										
Sportimiseks	19	11-13.	15	12.	16	11-14.	30	10-12.	7	12-15.	15	10-11.	22	15.	32	11-12.	58	8-10.										
Meelelahutuseks, harrastusteks	19	11-13.	16	11.	16	11-14.	28	14.	8	11.	15	10-11.	25	13.	32	11-12.	58	8-10.										
Teatris, kontserdil käimiseks	19	11-13.	11	15-17.	16	11-14.	34	9.	7	12-15.	12	13-14.	28	11.	36	8-9.	55	13.										
Raamatute ostmiseks	18	14-15.	13	13-14.	16	11-14.	30	10-12.	7	12-15.	12	13-14.	27	12.	27	13-15.	57	11.										
Auto hooldamiseks, sõitmiseks	18	14-15.	13	13-14.	15	15.	29	14.	7	12-15.	11	15.	23	14.	36	8-9.	58	8-10.										
Uue olmetehnika muretsemiseks	15	16.	11	15-17.	13	16.	23	17.	6	16.	10	16.	18	16-17.	26	16.	49	14-15.										
Kohvikus, restoranis käimiseks	14	17.	11	15-17.	11	17.	24	16.	5	17.	9	17.	17	18.	27	13-15.	56	12.										
Lähisugulaste toetamiseks	12	18.	10	18-19.	9	18-19.	22	18.	4	18-19.	6	19-20.	18	16-17.	21	18.	37	20.										
Remondiks	11	19.	10	18-19.	9	18-19.	17	21	4	18-19.	7	18.	13	19.	19	20-21.	41	17.										
Arvuti ostmiseks, hooldamiseks, täiustamiseks	10	20.	6	22.	7	20-21.	18	19-20.	3	20-22.	6	19-20.	11	20-21.	20	19.	36	21.										
Korteri meelepäraseks sisustamiseks	9	21.	8	20.	7	20-21.	18	19-20.	3	20-22.	5	21-22.	11	20-21.	19	20-21.	40	18.										
Reisimiseks	8	22.	7	21.	6	22.	13	22.	3	20-22.	5	21-22	9	22.	15	22.	31	22.										
Auto ostmiseks, uuendamiseks	6	23.	4	23.	4	23.	11	23.	2	23.	3	23.	5	23.	12	23.	26	23.										

Paksu kirjaga on esile tõstetud märkimisväärsed erinevused võrreldavate rühmade vahel.

Paksu kirjaga on esile tõstetud märkimisväärsed erinevused võrreldavate rühmade vahel.

Tabel 12.2. Kulutuste pingerida madalaimas sissetulekurühmas (kuni 1500 EEK)Vastusevariandi *Üldiselt jätkub [raha]* % ja koht pingereas

	Kogu- valim		Keel				Sugu				Haridus					
			Eesti		Vene		Mehed		Naised		Alg-, põhi		Kesk		Kõrg	
N	480		299		181		198		282		142		277		47	
	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht
Korralikuks tootumiseks	52	1.-2.	61	2.	37	1.	58	1.	48	2.	54	1.	50	2.	57	1.
Eluaseme kuludeks	52	1.-2.	63	1.	35	2.	53	2.	52	1.	53	2.	52	1.	50	2.
Rohtudeks, tervise eest hoolitsemiseks	34	3.	41	3.	23	3.-4.	41	3.	30	3.-4.	35	3.	33	3.	41	3.
Laste koolitamiseks	31	4.	36	4.	23	3.-4.	33	4.	30	3.-4.	31	4.	31	4.	30	4.
Laste harrastusteks	20	5.	22	5.	17	5.	22	7.	18	5.	17	6.-7.	20	5.	17	8.-11.
Oma välimuse eest hoolitsemiseks	19	6.	20	6.	16	6.	28	5.	12	6.-8.	17	6.-7.	17	6.	28	5.-6.
Riiete ostmiseks	17	7.	18	7.	14	7.-8.	24	6.	12	6.-8.	18	5.	16	7.	17	8.-11.
Ajakirjanduse tellimiseks	13	8.	17	8.	6	14.-15.	17	8.	10	9.-10.	11	10.	11	8.-9.	28	5.-6.
Külastuste kutsumiseks, kingitusteks	12	9.	11	9.-10.	14	7.-8.	14	9.	12	6.-8.	12	9.	11	8.-9.	13	12.-14.
Õppimiseks, enesetäiendamiseks	11	10.	11	9.-10.	11	10.	12	10.	10	9.-10.	13	8.	10	10.	9	16.-18.
Meelelahutuseks, harrastusteks	8	11.	8	13.	6	14.-15.	8	15.-16.	7	11.	6	12.-14.	5	15.-16.	17	8.-11.
Sportimiseks	7	12.-15.	9	12.	4	16.	10	14.	6	12.	8	11.	6	13.-14.	13	12.-14.
Teatris, kontserdil käimiseks	7	12.-15.	7	14.	8	11.	11	11.-13.	5	13.-15.	4	15.-19.	6	13.-14.	19	7.
Raamatute ostmiseks	7	12.-15.	3	20.-22.	13	9.	11	11.-13.	4	16.-20.	4	15.-19.	5	15.-16.	17	8.-11.
Auto hooldamiseks, sõitmiseks	7	12.-15.	10	11.	3	17.-21.	11	11.-13.	5	13.-15.	6	12.-14.	7	11.-12.	9	16.-18.
Uue olmetehnika muretsemiseks	6	16.	5	16.	7	12.-13.	8	15.-16.	5	13.-15.	4	15.-19.	7	11.-12.	7	19.
Kohvikus, restoranis käimiseks	5	17.	6	15.	3	17.-21.	6	17.-18.	4	16.-20.	6	12.-14.	3	17.-21.	9	16.-18.
Lähisugulaste toetamiseks	4	18.-19.	3	20.-22.	7	12.-13.	5	19.-20.	4	16.-20.	4	15.-19.	3	17.-21.	13	12.-14.
Remondiks	4	18.-19.	4	17.-19.	3	17.-21.	6	17.-18.	3	21.-22.	4	15.-19.	3	17.-21.	11	15.
Korteri meelepäraseks sisustamiseks	3	20.-22.	3	20.-22.	3	17.-21.	2	22.-23.	4	16.-20.	3	20.	2	22.	6	20.-21.
Reisimiseks	3	20.-22.	4	17.-19.	3	17.-21.	5	19.-20.	3	21.-22.	2	21.	3	17.-21.	6	20.-21.
Arvuti ostuks, hooldamiseks, täiustamiseks	3	20.-22.	4	17.-19.	2	22.	3	21.	4	16.-20.	1	22.-23.	3	17.-21.	4	22.-23.
Auto ostmiseks, uuendamiseks	2	23.	2	23.	1	23.	2	22.-23.	2	23.	1	22.-23.	1	23.	4	22.-23.

Paksu kirjaga on esile tõstetud märkimisväärsed erinevused võrreldavate rühmade vahel.

meestest, et riide ostmiseks raha üldiselt jätkub, naistest on samal arvamusel 61%). Kulutuste pingeridades meeste-naiste vahel väga suuri erinevusi ei ole, v.a sportimise osas, mis kõrgeimas tulurühmas on meeste jaoks tunduvalt olulisem.

Sama sissetulekurühma piires mõjutab inimeste tarbimisorientatsioone vaadeldud sotsiaal-demograafilistest tunnustest enim haridus, eriti kõrghariduse omamine. Madalaimas ja kõrgeimas tulurühmas ilmnevad seejuures teatud eripärad. Väikseima kuusissetulekuga inimeste hulgas (ta-

bel 12.2) paistavad kõrgharidusega vastajad silma tugevama orienteerituse poolest ajakirjanduse tellimisele, teatris-kontserdil käimisele, raamatute ostmisele ja lähisugulaste toetamisele, samal ajal kui kulutused külastele-kingitustele, õppimisele-enesetäiendamisele, auto ülalpidamisele, laste harrastustele ning riide ostmisele on nende tarbimisorientatsioonide pingereas võrreldes kesk- ja algvõi põhiharidusega inimestega mõnevõrra tagapool. Kõrgharidusega vastajate suhteliselt pessimistlikum hinnang raha piisavusele laste harras-

Tabel 12.3. Kulutuste pingerida kõrgeimas sissetulekurühmas (üle 6000 EEK)

Vastusevariandi Üldiselt jätkub [raha] % ja koht pingereas

	Kogu- valim		Keel				Sugu				Haridus					
			Eesti		Vene		Mehed		Naised		Alg-, põhi		Kesk		Kõrg	
N	83		70		13		55		28		13		19		51	
	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	Koht	%	K
Korralikuks toitumiseks	94	1.	96	1.-2.	85	2.	98	1.	86	2.	92	1.-2.	89	1.	96	2.
Eluaseme kuludeks	93	2.	96	1.-2.	77	3.-5.	95	2.	90	1.	92	1.-2.	74	2.	100	1.
Rohtudeks, tervise eest hoolitsemiseks	84	3.	83	3.	92	1.	87	3.	79	3.	77	4.	67	3.	92	3.
Oma välimuse eest hoolitsemiseks	80	4.	80	4.	77	3.-5.	84	4.	72	4.	69	5.	58	5.-7.	90	4.
Riiete ostmiseks	73	5.	73	5.	69	6.	80	5.	61	6.	46	13.-14.	58	5.-7.	84	5.
Külaliste kutsumiseks, kingituste ostmiseks	65	6.	66	6.-7.	62	7.-11.	63	8.-9.	68	5.	85	3.	42	12.-13.	68	6.
Ajakirjanduse tellimiseks	63	7.	66	6.-7.	46	14.-17.	69	6.	52	9.	62	6.-11.	58	5.-7.	65	8.
Sportimiseks	58	8.-10.	60	8.	46	14.-17.	66	7.	43	13.-14.	62	6.-11.	37	14.-17.	63	10.
Meelelahutuseks, harrastusteks	58	8.-10.	57	9.-10.	62	7.-11.	63	8.-9.	46	11.-12.	62	6.-11.	47	8.-9.	60	11.
Auto hooldamiseks, sõitmiseks	58	8.-10.	57	9.-10.	62	7.-11.	59	10.-13.	55	7.	62	6.-11.	37	14.-17.	64	9.
Raamatute ostmiseks	57	11.	54	13.	77	3.-5.	59	10.-13.	54	8.	39	15.-19.	63	4.	58	13.
Kohvikus, restoranis käimiseks	56	12.	55	12.	62	7.-11.	59	10.-13.	50	10.	62	6.-11.	47	8.-9.	59	12.
Teatris, kontserdil käimiseks	55	13.	56	11.	54	12.-13.	59	10.-13.	46	11.-12.	39	15.-19.	37	14.-17.	66	7.
Õppimiseks, enesetäiendamiseks	49	14.-15.	50	14.	46	14.-17.	55	14.	39	15.-16.	62	6.-11.	37	14.-17.	51	15.
Uue olmetehnika muretsemiseks	49	14.-15.	49	15.	54	12.-13.	54	15.	43	13.-14.	39	15.-19.	42	12.-13.	54	14.
Laste koolitamiseks	43	16.	40	17.-18.	62	7.-11.	44	18.	39	15.-16.	54	12.	44	10.-11.	37	20.
Remondiks	41	17.	41	16.	39	18.-21.	47	17.	30	18.	23	20.-22.	32	18.-19.	48	17.
Korteri meelepäraseks sisustamiseks	40	18.	40	17.-18.	39	18.-21.	49	16.	21	22.	23	20.-22.	22	20.	50	16.
Laste harrastusteks	39	19.	39	19.-20.	46	14.-17.	41	19.-20.	36	17.	46	13.-14.	44	10.-11.	35	22.
Lähisugulaste toetamiseks	37	20.	37	21.	39	18.-21.	41	19.-20.	29	19.-20.	39	15.-19.	21	21.-22.	43	18.
Arvuti ostuks, hooldamiseks, täiustamiseks	36	21.	39	19.-20.	23	23.	39	21.	29	19.-20.	23	20.-22.	32	18.-19.	42	19.
Reisimiseks	31	22.	31	22.	31	22.	33	22.	25	21.	39	15.-19.	16	23.	36	21.
Auto ostmiseks, uuendamiseks	26	23.	23	23.	39	18.-21.	32	23.	17	23.	21	23.	21	21.-22.	30	23.

Paksu kirjaga on esile tõstetud märkimisväärsed erinevused võrreldavate rühmade vahel.

tusteks on tõenäoliselt seotud teravamalt tajutud vastuoluna väikese kuusissetuleku ning laste huvitegevuse vajalikkuse, võimaluste paljususe ning kalliduse vahel: kõige sagedamini (39% juhtudest) möönavad selle vastajarühma esindajad, et laste harrastusteks raha mõnikord jätkub, mõnikord mitte.

Suurima kuusissetulekuga inimeste hulgas (tabel 12.3) asetavad kõrgharidusega vastajad teatris ja kontserdil käimise oma tarbimisorientatsioonide pingereas samuti suhteliselt kõrgele kohale, sama ei saa aga väita lähisugulaste toetamise ega

raamatute ostmise kohta (viimase poolest paistavad kõrgeimas tulurühmas silma keskharidusega vastajad, kelle kulutuste pingereas on raamatute ostmine 4. kohal). Märkimisväärne erinevus ilmneb riiete ostmise puhul: kõrg- ja keskharidusega vastajate tarbimisorientatsioonide pingereas paiknevad kulutused riiete ostmisele suhteliselt olulisel (vastavalt 5. ning 5.-7. kohal), alg- või põhiharidusega respondentide hulgas aga alles 13.-15. kohal. Jõukaimate kõrgharidusega inimeste märkimisväärne eripära avaldub laste koolitamiseks ja harrastusteks tehtavate kulutuste asetumises

tarbimisorientatsioonide pingerea lõpuossa – vastavalt 20. ja 22. kohale. Nagu eelpool (alaosas 3.6), võib seda nähtust ka siinkohal seletada asjaoluga, et 82% selle vastajarühma peredes ei ole alla 18-aastasi lapsi (kõrgeimas tulurühmas tervikuna ei ole allaalisi lapsi 75% peredes).

5. Eelistused kaubagruppide osas

Lisaküsimustele rõivaste ja kosmeetika tarbimise spetsiifika kohta vastasid ainult need, kes olid eelnevalt küsimustele *Kas Teil jätkub raha riiete ostmiseks / oma välimuse eest hoolitsemiseks?* valinud vastusevariandi *Üldiselt jätkub või Mõnikord jätkub, mõnikord mitte* (kokku vastavalt 82% ja 70%).

Kaasaegsetes tarbimiskultuuri ja ka turunduse käsitlustes peetakse kasvavaks trendiks enese identifitseerimist ning elustiili konstrueerimist läbi mitmesuguste brändide. Rõivad on kahtlemata üks olulisemaid elustiili ja eneseväljendusega seotud tarbimisartikleid. Huvitav on jälgida tarbijate rõivabrändilojaalsuse (küsimus: *Kas on kindlad rõivafirmad, brändid, mida eelistate?*) seost sotsiaal-demograafiliste tunnustega (vt lisatabelid 12.1a ja 12.1b). Näiteks on kindla eelistusega tarbijate osakaal suurem meeste hulgas (21%, naiste seas 14%) ning venelaste hulgas (21%, eestlaste seas 15%). Kindla rõivabrändi eelistusega vastanute osakaal on ootuspäraselt suurim noorima eagrupi hulgas (33%) ning vähim vanimate vastanute hulgas (5%). Nagu näha, on nooremad põlvkonnad tuntuvalt sotsialiseeritud läänelikku, paljuski brändikesksesse tarbimismaailma. Elukohtade lõikes on kindla brändi valijaid jällegi ootuspäraselt enim Tallinnas (24%) ning kõige vähem maal (11%). Samuti on olemas selge seos brändieelistajate osakaalu kasvu ning sissetuleku vahel. Vähimas tulugrupis on nende osakaal vaid 13%, suurimas aga 32%. Mõistagi on suurema sissetulekuga tarbijatel rõivaste osas suurem valikuvõimalus ning seega eeldused oma brändieelistuste väljakujundamiseks.

Pilt on mõnevõrra erinev kosmeetika puhul (lisatabelid 12.1a ja 12.1b), millel on juba sõnana tuntav feminiinne konnotatsioon. Ootuspäraselt eelistab kindla firma kosmeetikat rohkem naisi (30%) ja vähem mehi (15%). Samuti on kindla eelistusega tarbijaid enam venelaste (29%) kui eestlaste (19%) seas. Eagrupiti on olukord samasugune kui rõivaste puhul: vanuserühmas 15–19 on kindla eelistajaid 29% ning rühmas 65–74 vaid 14%. Elupaigati on kindla firma kosmeetika eelistajaid enim Ida-Virumaa linnades (30%). Huvitav on märkida, et kui rõivaste puhul kasvas kindla brändi eelistajate osakaal sissetulekugrupiti tuntuvalt, siis kosmeeti-

ka puhul sama täheldatav ei ole. Madalaima tuluga grupis on eelistajate osakaal 25% ning suurima tuluga rühmas 21%.

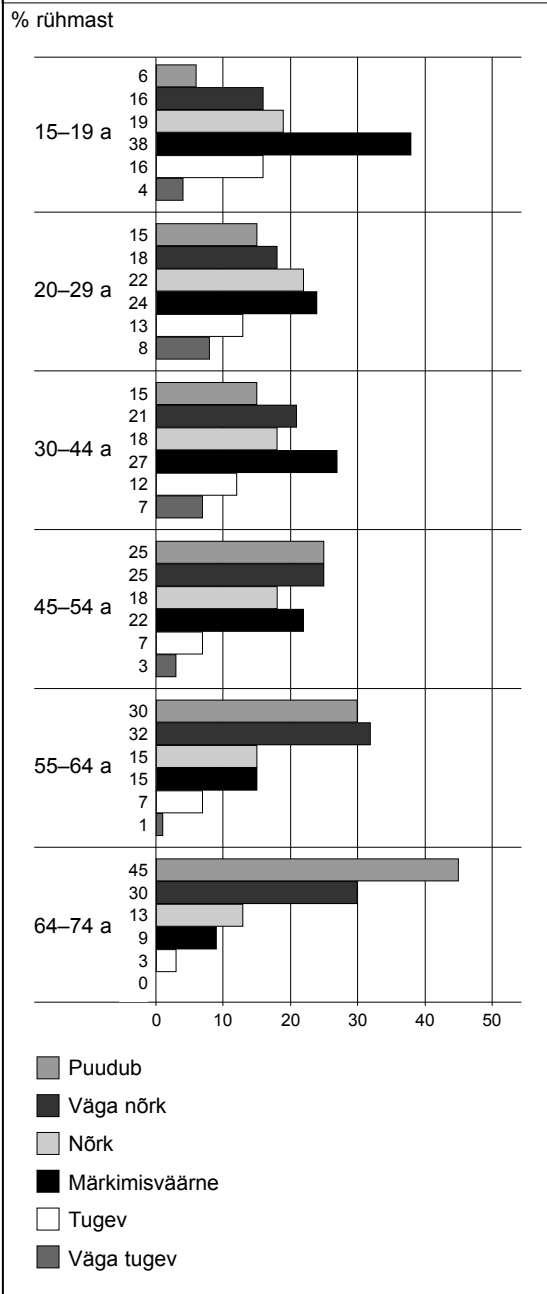
Tunnuse *Kas ostate rõivaid ka välismaal käies?* puhul on suurim erinevus just tulugruppides (lisatabel 12.1b). Kui kuni 1500-kroonise sissetulekuga grupis ostavad välismaalt riideid 19% vastanuist, siis üle 6000-kroonise tuluga grupis on vastav näitaja 50%.

Võrreldes rõivaste ostul hinna ja sobivuse olulisust, peab umbes pool vastanuist (praktiliselt kõigi sotsiaal-demograafiliste tunnuste lõikes) võrdselt oluliseks mõlemat (lisatabelid 12.1a ja 12.1b). Kõige vähem peetakse hinda sobivusest olulisemaks vanuserühmas 20–29 (7%) ning enim tähtsustab hinda vanim rühm (23%). Samas on 20–29-aastaste vanuserühmas 39% neid, kes peavad hinda olulisemaks kui kaubamärki. Ka kõige suurema tuluga rühmas on hinna kaubamärgist tähtsamaks pidajaid 33% ning kaubamärgi tähtsustajaid kõigest 19%, samas kui sobivust peab hinnast tähtsamaks selles tulurühmas 47%.

6. Konsumerism

Erinevalt tarbimise mitmest muust aspektist (vt ülal), kus rahvus mängis küllaltki suurt eristavat rolli, näeme konsumerismi indeksi puhul eestlaste ja venelaste jaotuse sarnasust (lisatabel 12.1a). Kummaski grupis on väga tugeva konsumerismiga inimesi vaid mõni protsent (eestlastest 4%, venelastest 5%) ning konsumeristlik praktika puudub 22%-l vastanuist. Ka naiste ja meeste vahel puuduvad siin suured erinevused. Seevastu eagrupiti kerkivad esile väga suured erisused (vt joonis 12.1): märkimisväärne kuni väga tugev konsumerism esineb 58%-l 15–19-aastastest vastanuist, kõige vanemate hulgas on sama osakaal vaid 12%.

Ootuspäraselt ilmnevad suured erinevused ka sissetulekugruppides (lisatabel 12.1b). Märkimisväärselt kuni väga tugeva konsumerismi tasemele paigutub madalaima tuluga grupis kokku 25%, suurima tuluga rühmas aga tervelt 63% vastanuist. Ka elukohtade lõikes on küllaltki suured erinevused. Märkimisväärselt kuni väga tugeva konsumerismiga vastajaid on Tallinnas 47%, Ida-Virumaa linnades 33% ning maal kõigest 27%. Sama suured erisused ilmnevad ka hariduse lõikes (lisatabel 12.1a). Alg- või põhiharidusega vastajate grupis on vastav näitaja 27%, kõrgharidusega vastajate hulgas aga 48%.

Joonis 12.1. Konsumerismi indeks vanuserühmades


7. Tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse indeks

Tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse indeksi moodustumisel andsid suurima panuse järgmised tunnused (reastatuna vastusevariandi *Ei vaja seda, ei kuluta sellele esinemissageduse alusel*): sportimine (34%), laste harrastused (32%), kohvikus, restoranis käimine (31%), õppimine, enesetäiendamine (30%), laste koolitamine (29%), auto ostmise, uuendamine (28%), auto hooldamine, sõitmine (27%), arvuti ostmise, hooldamine, täiustamine (27%), lähisugulaste toetamine (21%), reisimine (19%), ajakir-

janduse tellimine (19%), meelelahutused, harrastused (15%), teatris, kontserdil käimine (14%), raamatute ostmise (13%), korteri meelepärase sisustamine (10%), oma välimuse eest hoolitsemine (9%) ja uue olmetehnika muretsemise (9%).

Konsumerismi ning tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse indeksite puhul on tegemist osaliselt (kuigi mitte üksüheselt ja täielikult) vastandsuunalisi nähtusi peegeldavate näitajatega. Indeksivaheliste seoste eripära avaldub tabelis 12.4: koondtunnuste vahel esineb tugev negatiivne korrelatsioon (hii-ruutstatistik väärtusega 156,4 ning Pearsoni korrelatsioonikordaja väärtusega -0,26 on olulised nivool $p = 0,000$), st tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse suure või väga suure tasemega kaasneb väga sageli puuduv või väga nõrk konsumerism. Samas leidub pea-aegu kõiki kaupu-teenuseid vajavate (tarbimislik ükskõiksus puudub) vastajate hulgas küllaltki palju (55%) neid, kel konsumerism puudub, on nõrk või väga nõrk. Seda vastajate rühma ($n = 214$) iseloomustab ühtlasi majanduslikult depriveeritud suur osakaal (54%-l on rahapuuduse indeksi näit suur või väga suur, st nad on pidanud loobuma 8-23-st vajalikuna tunduvast kaubast-teenusest). Sellest vastajate rühmast 47% valisid ankeedi täitmiseks vene keele, 44% kuusissetulek pereliikme kohta on kuni 1500 krooni.

Erinevalt konsumerismi indeksist esineb tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse puudumise osas oluline erinevus eestlaste ja venelaste vahel (vastavalt 22% ja 33%, $p = 0,000$; vt lisatabel 12.1a). See on osaliselt seletatav sellega, et vene keelt kõnelevad vastajad kalduvad sagedamini valima vastusevarianti *Ei jätku, oleme pidanud sellest loobuma* (nendest vastustest moodustuv rahapuuduse indeks on suur või väga suur 41%-l venelastest ja 26%-l eestlastest, erinevus on oluline nivool $p = 0,000$), eestlased valivad sageli pigem vastusevariandi *Ei vaja seda, ei kuluta sellele*, kogudes seeläbi rohkem tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse indeksi punkte.

Konsumerismi ja tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse jaotused on sarnased eagruppide lõikes: eagruppides 15-44 on tarbimislik ükskõiksus väga suur vaid 6-9%-l. Vanemates gruppides kasvab see näitaja aga hüppeliselt, grupis 65-74 on tarbimislik ükskõiksus väga suur tervelt 43%-l vastanuist (lisatabel 12.1a).

Elukoha lõikes ei ole suuri erinevusi, tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse puudumine on veidi suurem Ida-Virumaa linnades (34%, maal 21%). See seletub venelaste suure osakaaluga sealses rahvastikus.

Tarbimislikus ükskõiksuses mängib olulist rolli sarnaselt eaga ka haridus. Kui alg- või põhiharidusega vastanuist on ükskõiksus tarbimise vastu väga suur 23%-l, siis kõrgharitudte hulgas

Tabel 12.4. Tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse esinemine konsumeristliku hoiaku eri tasemetel

%					
Konsumerism	Tarbimislik ükskõiksus				
	Puudub	Vähene	Märkimisväärne	Suur	Väga suur
Puudub	17	11	20	24	39
Väga nõrk	19	15	21	29	34
Nõrk	19	22	17	17	16
Märkimisväärne	24	26	27	21	9
Tugev	12	21	11	7	1
Väga tugev	9	5	4	2	0

Tabel 12.5. Väärtuste faktorite faktorkaalude keskmised konsumerismi indeksi väärtusklassides

Konsumerism	N	F1: Isiksuslik ja sotsiaalne tasakaal	F2: Keskkond ja füüsiline heaolu	F3: Hingeline tasakaal	F4: Materiaalne kindlustatus ja heaolu	F5: Enese-kehtestamine
Puudub	322	-0,14	0,01	0,17**	0,02	-0,27**
Väga nõrk	344	-0,02	0,05	0,07**	-0,06	-0,05**
Nõrk	261	0,04	-0,04	-0,09**	0,05	-0,02**
Märkimisväärne	329	0,09	-0,03	-0,08**	-0,01	0,11**
Tugev	147	0,01	0,06	-0,12**	0,10	0,27**
Väga tugev	66	0,13	-0,08	-0,16**	-0,17	0,52**

** Keskmised erinevad võrreldavates rühmades olulisuse nivool $p \leq 0,01$.

Tabel 12.6. Väärtuste faktorite faktorkaalude keskmised tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse indeksi väärtusklassides

Tarbimislik ükskõiksus	N	F1: Isiksuslik ja sotsiaalne tasakaal	F2: Keskkond ja füüsiline heaolu	F3: Hingeline tasakaal	F4: Materiaalne kindlustatus ja heaolu	F5: Enese-kehtestamine
Puudub	386	0,01	-0,07	0,09**	0,10*	0,17**
Vähene	172	-0,09	0,04	-0,10**	-0,11*	0,22**
Märkimisväärne	388	0,01	0,01	-0,12**	0,05*	0,08**
Suur	319	0,04	0,03	-0,01**	-0,10*	-0,24**
Väga suur	205	-0,03	0,04	0,16**	-0,05*	-0,30**

** Keskmised erinevad võrreldavates rühmades olulisuse nivool $p \leq 0,01$.

* Keskmised erinevad võrreldavates rühmades olulisuse nivool $p \leq 0,05$.

vaid 6%-l. Erinevused on huvitavad ka tulurühmade lõikes. Madalaimas tulurühmas on tarbimislik ükskõiksus väga suur 15%-l, 1501–2500-kroonise kuusissetulekuga rühmas 20%-l, suurima tuluga grupis aga vaid 4%-l vastanuist (vt lisatabelid 12.1a ja 12.1b).

8. Konsumerismi ja tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse seosed väärtustega

Suurema ülevaatlikkuse saamiseks vaatleme järgnevas analüüsis konsumerismi ja tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse indekseid seoseid väärtushinnangute koondtunnuste – faktoritega, mida võime nimetada väärtusorientatsioonideks (vt 2. peatükk).

Tabelites 12.5 ja 12.6 on esitatud väärtuste faktoranalüüsi 5-faktorilise lahendi faktorkaalude keskmised, mis väljendavad konsumerismi/tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse skaala erinevatele astmetele paigutatud respondentide “keskmist” seotust vastavate väärtusorientatsioonidega.

Tabelist 12.5 nähtub, et konsumerism on tugevas positiivses seoses orientatsiooniga enesekehtestamisele (üksikväärtustena kuuluvad vastavasse faktorisse *võimu omamine*, *ühiskondlik tunnustus* ja *huvitav elu*) ning negatiivses korrelatsioonis hingelise tasakaalu (*lunastus*, *võrdsus*, *kaunis maailm*) väärtustamisega. Teisisõnu: mida tugevamalt on vastaja orienteeritud tarbimisele, seda rohkem väärtustab ta motivatsioonilise eesmärgina enesekehtestamist ning seda vähem peab ta oluliseks

Tabel 12.7. Identiteedi faktorite faktorkaalude keskmised konsumerismi indeksi väärtusklassides

Konsumerism	N	F1: Võrgusti- kuline	F2: Sarnast positsiooni omavatega	F3: Vaimne	F4: Globaalne	F5: Edukatega	F6: Idaeuroop- lastega
Puudub	322	-0,20**	0,19**	-0,03	-0,15**	-0,07**	0,00
Väga nõrk	344	-0,06**	0,15**	0,03	-0,06**	-0,07**	-0,01
Nõrk	261	0,10**	0,02**	-0,10	0,09**	-0,07**	-0,06
Märkimisväärne	329	0,07**	-0,20**	0,05	0,02**	0,03**	0,03
Tugev	147	0,20**	-0,24**	-0,01	0,13**	0,16**	-0,01
Väga tugev	66	0,10**	-0,29**	0,14	0,24**	0,53**	0,13

** Keskmised erinevad võrreldavates rühmades olulisuse nivool $p \leq 0,01$.

Tabel 12.8. Identiteedi faktorite faktorkaalude keskmised tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse indeksi väärtusklassides

Tarbimislik ükskõiksus	N	F1: Võrgusti- kuline	F2: Sarnast positsiooni omavatega	F3: Vaimne	F4: Globaalne	F5: Edukatega	F6: Idaeuroop- lastega
Puudub	386	-0,04	-0,04**	0,02	0,04**	0,06	0,15**
Vähene	172	0,10	-0,17**	-0,10	0,14**	0,08	0,12**
Märkimisväärne	388	0,07	-0,10**	0,02	0,07**	-0,01	-0,01**
Suur	319	-0,05	0,11**	0,05	-0,05**	-0,01	-0,17**
Väga suur	205	-0,06	0,25**	-0,08	-0,26**	-0,15	-0,09**

** Keskmised erinevad võrreldavates rühmades olulisuse nivool $p \leq 0,01$.

hingelist tasakaalu. Analooigne tendents ilmneb tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse indeksi seostes samade väärtusfaktoritega (tabel 12.6): tarbimise suhtes ükskõiksed inimesed kalduvad väärtustama enesekehtestamist keskmisest madalamalt, hingelist tasakaalu aga kõrgemalt. Huvitav seos ilmneb tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse ning materiaalsele kindlustatusele ja heaolule (*jõukus, mugav elu*) orienteerituse vahel: jõukust ja mugavat elu väärtustavad keskmisest kõrgemalt nii need, kel tarbimislik ükskõiksus puudub (kes vajavad kõikvõimalikke kaupu-teenuseid), kui ka need, kelle ükskõiksus on märkimisväärne.

9. Konsumerismi ja tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse seosed identiteediga

Konsumerismi ja tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse ning identiteetide seoste uurimisel lähtusime samuti eelnevalt läbi viidud faktoranalüüsi tulemist – keskmistest faktorkaaludest, mis võimaldavad võrrelda konsumerismi / tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse skaala erinevatele astmetele paigutatunud respondentide “keskmist” seotust kuue selgelt eristunud identiteedifaktoriga (vt 3. peatükk).

Tabelist 12.7 ilmneb, et konsumeristlik eluhoiak on tugevas positiivses korrelatsioonis globaalse eneseidentifikatsiooni ja edukatega samas-

tumisega ning negatiivses seoses sarnast positsiooni ja (tegevus)ruumi omavate inimestega ühtekuuluvuse tundmisega, st suuremal määral tarbimisele orienteeritud inimesed samastavad end keskmisest rohkem *eurooplaste, põhjamaalaste ja inimkonnaga* (globaalne identiteet) ning *ettevõtjate, millegi eest vastutavate inimeste ja edukatega* (samas- tumine edukatega), tundes keskmisest nõrgemat ühtekuuluvust *tööinimeste, reakodanike, oma kodu- koha elanike, vaeste inimeste, naabrite, eakaaslaste, kõikide Eestis elavate inimeste ja kaaskodanikega*. Konsumerismi madala tasemega kaasneb ühtlasi keskmisest nõrgem võrgustikuline kuuluvustunne – samastutakse vähem *sõprade, perekonna, suguvõsa, kolleegide, eestlaste ja õpingukaaslastega*.

Tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse indeksi puhul ilmnevad analoogsed seosed globaalse ja sarnase positsiooniga inimestega samastumisega: tarbimise suhtes väga ükskõiksed vastajad identifitseerivad end oluliselt nõrgemini globaalsel tasandil ja tunnevad suuremat ühtekuuluvust sarnast positsiooni ja (tegevus)ruumi omavate inimestega. Samasuunalised tendentsid avalduvad ka võrgustikulise ja edukatega samastumise puhul: suure tarbimisliku ükskõiksusega inimesed tunnevad mõnevõrra nõrgemat ühtekuuluvust edukatega ning tavapärast sotsiaalset võrgustikku moodustavate inimestega, ent kõikide rühmade võrdluses (kombineeritud ANOVA) ei ole keskmiste erinevus

Tabel 12.9. Konsumeristliku hoiaku tase elulaadiklastrites

%								
Konsumerism	Mitme- kõlgelt aktiivne	Tööle orien- teeritud, kultuuri- lembeline	Hasartne, meele- lahutuslik	Tehniliselt harras- tuslik	Uue mee- dia, seltsielu- keskne	Kodu- keskne, traditsioo- niline	Kirjasõ- nakeskne, traditsioo- niline	Passiivne
Puudub	8	11	19	17	10	29	25	44
Väga nõrk	13	16	10	21	16	33	30	33
Nõrk	17	20	25	19	21	17	17	12
Märkimisväärne	29	23	26	28	32	19	20	9
Tugev	21	19	10	13	16	1	5	2
Väga tugev	12	11	9	2	5	0	3	0

Tabel 12.10. Tarbimislikult ükskõikse hoiaku tase elulaadiklastrites

%								
Tarbimislik ükskõiksus	Mitme- kõlgelt aktiivne	Tööle orien- teeritud, kultuuri- lembeline	Hasartne, meele- lahutuslik	Tehniliselt harras- tuslik	Uue mee- dia, seltsielu- keskne	Kodu- keskne, traditsioo- niline	Kirjasõ- nakeskne, traditsioo- niline	Passiivne
Puudub	39	33	30	29	28	12	26	22
Vähene	21	17	13	14	13	11	6	4
Märkimisväärne	26	27	36	35	34	18	22	20
Suur	13	17	13	16	19	40	24	22
Väga suur	0	6	8	6	6	18	22	33

statistiliselt oluline. Tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse indeksi puhul ilmneb ühtlasi tugev seos idaeurooplastega samastumisega: vastajad, kes väidavad end vajavat praktiliselt kõiki kaupu-teenuseid, tunnevad oluliselt tugevamat kokkukuuluvust *Venemaa* ja *Eesti venelaste* ning *endise sotsialismileeri* inimestega.

10. Konsumerismi ja tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse seosed elulaadiga

Järgnevas analüüsis kasutame klasteranalüüsi meetodil väljatöötatud elulaadide tüpoloogiat (vt 6. peatükk).

Lähtudes konsumerismi ja tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse tasemete protsentuaalsest jaotusest elulaadiklastrites (tabelid 12.9 ja 12.10), võime elulaaditüübid võtta kokku kolmeks üsna selgelt eristuvaks rühmaks.

- Esimese rühma moodustavad mitmekõlgelt aktiivse või tööle orienteeritud, kultuurilembese elulaadiga inimesed, kelle hulgas esineb märgatavalt sagedamini tugevat või väga tugevat konsumerismi ning tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse puudumist või vähesust. Neist omakorda on "konsumeristlikumad" mitmekõlgelt aktiivse elulaadiga inimesed.

- Teise rühma moodustab kolm elulaaditüüpi (hasartne, meelelahutuslik; uue meedia, seltsielu

keskne; tehniliselt harrastuslik), mida iseloomustab keskmisest suurem pühendumus kindlatele harrastustele. Suurim osa nende elulaadide esindajaist väljendab nõrka või märkimisväärset konsumeristlikku eluhiakut, samas esineb selles rühmas suhteliselt palju nii neid, kelle tarbimislik ükskõiksus on märkimisväärne, kui ka neid, kes pole ükskõiksed ühegi kauba ega teenuse suhtes.

- Kolmandasse rühma kuuluvad elulaaditüübid, mille esindajad tegelevad keskmisest aktiivsemalt vaid üksikute, suhteliselt vähe materiaalseid ressursse nõudvate harrastustega (kodukeskne traditsiooniline ning kirjasõnakeskne traditsiooniline) või on harrastuslikult võrdlemisi passiivsed. Valdavat osa sellesse rühma kuuluvatest vastajatest iseloomustab väga nõrk või puuduv konsumerism, väga suurt osa ka tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse kõrge tase. Nii kirjasõnakeskse kui passiivse elulaadi esindajate hulgas leidub siiski üsna palju ka neid, kel tarbimislik ükskõiksus puudub (vastavalt 26% ja 22%).

11. Ostukeskustes käimine meelelahutuse eesmärgil

Eraldi toome välja üksiktunnuse *Ostukeskustes, kauplustes käimine* ühe võimalusena meelelahutuse, ajaviite otsimisest. Antud teema seostub tugevalt nii Eesti kui rahvusvahelises massimeedias

ning ka tarbimisuuringutes päevakorral oleva teemaga nn šoppamisest kui meelelahutusest ning selle sotsiokultuurilisest tähendusest.

Koguvalimist 21% vastas jaatavalt ostukeskustes käimisele kui ühele nende poolt kasutatavale meelelahutusvõimalusele (lisatabel 12.1). Osakaal on suurem venelaste hulgas võrreldes eestlastega (vastavalt 29% ja 17%). Ootuspäraselt on taoline meelelahutus rohkem noorte inimeste tegevus. Noorimas grupis on nende osakaal 32% ja vanimas rohkem kui poole võrra väiksem – 14%. Veidi vähem kasutavad sellist meelelahutusvõimalust kõrgharidusega inimesed (18% võrreldes teiste haridustasemetega 22%-ga). Märkimisväärne on see, et erinevates tulugruppides antud aspektis suuri erinevusi ei ole. Kuna tegemist ei ole niivõrd ostmise, vaid pigem jalutamise ja vaatamisega, on antud tegevus kättesaadav kõigile tulugruppidele.

Kokkuvõte

Käesolevas peatükis koostasime küsimuste bloki *Kuivõrd Teil, teie perel jätkub raha järgmisteks väljaminekuteks?* vastuste *Üldiselt jätkub* alusel tingliku kulutuste pingerea. Tabelites 12.1–12.3 on toodud *Üldiselt jätkub* vastanute protsentuaalne osakaal ning kauba-teenuse koht pingereas. Lähтусime sellest, et protsentuaalsete osakaalude alusel saab konstrueerida kaupade ja teenuste tingliku hierarhia, st piiratud rahahulga tingimustes “panevad” inimesed raha jätkuma neile kaupadele, mida tajutakse prioriteetsemana. Pingeridade ülemised ja alumised osad sotsiaal-demograafiliste tunnuste lõikes märkimisväärselt ei erine, küll aga ilmneb pingeridade keskosas mitmeid huvitavaid, sotsiokultuuriliselt determineeritud erisusi.

Nende hulgas, kel rõivaste ostmiseks ning oma välimuse eest hoolitsemiseks raha *Üldiselt jätkub* või *Mõnikord jätkub, mõnikord mitte*, on tarbimisorientatsiooni uuritud veidi täpsemalt hinna, sobivuse ja kaubamärgi eelistamise aspektist. Ootuspäraselt on kindlate brändide eelistajaid rohkem nooremate ja jõukamate seas.

Peatüki olulise osa moodustab kahe indeksi – konsumerismi ning tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse – vaatlemine erinevate sotsiaal-demograafiliste gruppide lõikes, samuti oleme analüüsinud nende indeksi seoseid väärtuste, identiteetide ja elulaadi koondtunnustega. Konsumerismi kõrge tase iseloomustab enim noori, tallinlasi ning kõrge sisetulekuga inimesi (vt ka 15. peatükk), tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse puudumine aga venekeelseid vastajaid. Huvitavad ning vastajaid üsna tugevalt polariseerivad seosemustrid ilmnevad konsumerismi ja tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse indeksite ning

teatud väärtusorientatsioonide, identiteetide ja elulaadi tüüpide vahel: konsumerismi kõrge tasemega kaasneb sageli tugevam orientatsioon enesekehtestamisele (ja nõrgem orientatsioon hingelisele tasakaalule), tugevam ühtekuuluvuse tundmine edukate inimestega, sotsiaalse võrgustikuga ja globaalsel tasandil (ja vähene samastumine sarnast positsiooni ja (tegevus)ruumi omavate inimestega) ning kuulumine kahe aktiivseima elulaaditüübi esindajate (mitmekülgsetel aktiivsetel või tööle orienteeritud, kultuurilembestel) hulka. Seevastu tarbimisliku ükskõiksuse kõrge nivooga kaasneb üldiselt hingelise tasakaalu kõrgem (ja enesekehtestamise ning materiaalse kindlustatuse ja heaolu) madalam väärtustamine, tugevam samastumine sarnase positsiooniga inimestega (ning nõrgem globaalne ja Ida-Euroopa identiteet) ning kuulumine kolme üldiselt passiivseima elulaadi (kodukeskse traditsioonilise, kirjasõna-keskse traditsioonilise või passiivse) esindajate hulka.

Kasutatud kirjandus

- Bauman, Z. (1992). *Intimations of Postmodernity*. London: Routledge.
- Einasto, M. (2002). Sissetuleku- ja ilmajäetusevaesus 1994 ja 1999. Rmt: Kutsar, D. (toim) *Elutingimused Eestis viis aastat hiljem: NorBalt II*. Tartu Ülikool, Rakenduslike Sotsiaaluuringute Instituut FAFO (Norra). Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 101–122.
- Kannike, A. (2002). *Kodukujundus kui kultuuri-loomine. Etnoloogiline Tartu-uurimus*. Tartu: Eesti Rahva Muuseum.
- Keller, M., Vihalemm, T. (2001). Eesti lääneliku tarbimiskultuuri hoovuses: kas tingimusteta omaksvõtt. Rmt: Vetik, R. (toim) *Eesti inimarengu aruanne*. Tallinn: Tallinna Pedagoogiline Ülikool, Rahvusvaheliste ja Sotsiaaluuringute Instituut, 80–83. <http://www.iiss.ee/nhdr/2001/sisukord.html>
- Keller, M., Vihalemm, T. (2003). Return to the Consuming West: Young People's Perceptions on the Consumerization of Estonia. *Young*, 11 (3), 195–215.
- Keller, M. (ilmumas 2005). Freedom Calling: Telephony, Mobility and Consumption in Post-Socialist Estonia. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*.
- Kutsar, D., Käärik, E., Tiit, E.-M., Trumm, A. (1999). Vaesusega uude aastatuhandesse. Rmt: Vetik, R. (toim) *Eesti inimarengu aruanne, 1999*. Tallinn: ÜRO Arenguprogramm, 75–79. <http://www.iiss.ee/nhdr/1999/EIA99est.pdf>

- Kõresaar, E., Anepaio, T. (2003). *Mälu kui kultuuri-
tegur. Etnoloogilisi perspektiive*. Tartu: Tartu Üli-
kooli Kirjastus.
- Pavelson, M., Luuk, M. (2002). Tõrjutud pered: sei-
sund, probleemid ja tugivõrgustik. [http://
www.riik.ee/rahvastik/lopppavelson.html](http://www.riik.ee/rahvastik/lopppavelson.html),
vaadatud märtsis 2004.
- Rahu, K. (2004). "Šoppamise" sooline representat-
sioon. Magistritöö. Tartu Ülikool, ajakirjandu-
se ja kommunikatsiooni osakond.
- Roo, R. (2004). Tarbijakäitumine ostukeskuses Tar-
tu Lõunakeskuse ja Tallinna Rocca al Mare näi-
tel. Bakalaureusetöö. Tartu Ülikool, ajakirjan-
duse ja kommunikatsiooni osakond.
- Õun, M. (2002). Subjektiivset edu ja ebaedu mõju-
tavad faktorid. Rmt: Saar, E. (toim) *Trepist alla
ja üles: edukad ja ebaedukad postsotsialistlikus Ees-
tis*. Tallinn: Teaduste Akadeemia Kirjastus,
59–77.

Lisatabel 12.1a. Tarbimiseelistused, -hoiakud ja -võimalused (keele-, soo-, vanuse- ja haridusrühmades)														
% rühmast														
	Kogu- valim	Keel		Sugu		Vanus						Haridus		
		Eesti	Vene	Mehed	Naised	15–19	20–29	30–44	45–54	55–64	65–74	Alg, põhi	Kesk	Kõrg
Kindlate rõivafirmade, brändide eelistamine*	17	15	21	21	14	33	25	19	11	5	5	15	18	19
Kindla firma kosmeetika eelistamine**	22	19	29	15	30	29	23	24	23	17	14	16	25	21
Rõivaste ostmine ka välismaal käies*	26	23	34	29	24	32	35	30	23	17	9	21	25	37
Ostukeskustes, kauplustes käimine meelelahutuse eesmärgil	21	17	29	13	28	32	28	22	17	15	14	22	22	18
Hind vs sobivus rõivaste ostul*														
Hind on olulisem	13	13	14	12	14	11	7	13	15	16	23	17	13	9
Sobivus on olulisem	33	32	34	34	32	37	35	35	34	25	25	28	33	37
Ei tea, mõlemad võrdselt	51	52	51	51	52	49	54	54	49	56	49	51	51	51
Hind vs kaubamärk rõivaste ostul*														
Hind on olulisem	47	51	39	44	50	39	39	45	46	65	56	48	47	46
Kaubamärk on olulisem	9	8	10	11	7	10	11	12	6	7	5	8	9	9
Ei tea, mõlemad võrdselt	39	35	47	40	37	46	43	39	43	24	32	38	39	38
Konsumerism														
Puudub	22	22	22	24	20	6	15	15	25	30	45	29	21	15
Väga nõrk	23	24	23	22	24	16	18	21	25	32	30	26	24	21
Nõrk	18	18	17	18	17	19	22	18	18	15	13	18	18	16
Märkimisväärne	22	22	23	23	22	38	24	27	22	15	9	18	24	24
Tugev	10	10	9	8	11	16	13	12	7	7	3	8	9	14
Väga tugev	5	4	5	5	4	4	8	7	3	1	0	1	4	10
Tarbimislik ükskõiksus														
Puudub	26	22	33	28	25	36	26	31	28	19	14	23	26	30
Vähene	12	12	12	11	13	13	12	18	15	4	1	6	12	17
Märkimisväärne	26	26	27	27	26	30	33	30	26	23	11	22	28	27
Suur	22	25	16	22	22	16	20	15	21	33	31	26	21	20
Väga suur	14	15	12	12	15	6	9	6	10	21	43	23	13	6
* Küsimus esitati vaid neile, kes olid küsimusele <i>Kas Teil jätkub raha riiete ostmiseks?</i> vastanud <i>Üldiselt jätkub</i> või <i>Mõnikord jätkub</i> , <i>mõnikord mitte</i> (kokku 82%).														
** Küsimus esitati vaid neile, kes olid küsimusele <i>Kas Teil jätkub raha oma välimuse eest hoolitsemiseks?</i> vastanud <i>Üldiselt jätkub</i> või <i>Mõnikord jätkub</i> , <i>mõnikord mitte</i> (kokku 70%).														
													Jätkub...	

Rahapuudus	Kogu- valim	Keel		Sugu		Vanus						Haridus		
		Eesti	Vene	Mehed	Naised	15–19	20–29	30–44	45–54	55–64	65–74	Alg- põhi	Kesk	Kõrg
Puudub	18	20	13	23	13	32	19	16	15	18	11	17	15	26
Vähene	20	23	15	24	16	25	22	17	19	19	21	20	18	23
Märkimisväärne	31	31	31	29	34	24	33	35	27	30	35	28	32	33
Suur	20	18	24	16	23	12	19	20	24	22	21	23	22	12
Väga suur	11	8	17	8	14	6	7	13	15	11	12	12	13	5

% rühmast												
	Kogu- valim	Elukoht						Kuuissetulek pere liikme kohta				
		Tallinn	Tartu, Pärnu	Tln, Trt, Pärnu ümbrus	Narva, K-Järve, Sillamäe	Väikelinn	Maa	Kuni 1500	1501–2500	2501–4000	4001–6000	Üle 6000
Kindlate rõivafirmade, brändide eelistamine*	17	24	19	19	16	16	11	13	14	17	29	32
Kindla firma kosmeetika eelistamine**	22	25	14	21	30	20	19	25	19	23	25	21
Rõivaste ostmine ka välismaal käies*	26	38	23	20	29	23	15	19	23	29	32	50
Ostukeskustes, kauplustes käimine meelelahutuse eesmärgil	21	26	20	14	27	25	12	24	18	19	23	18
Hind vs sobivus rõivaste ostul*												
Hind on olulisem	13	12	14	10	9	11	18	17	17	9	8	1
Sobivus on olulisem	33	33	35	35	40	31	29	25	30	37	41	47
Ei tea, mõlemad võrdselt	51	52	47	54	50	55	51	54	51	52	47	47
Hind vs kaubamärk rõivaste ostul*												
Hind on olulisem	47	41	49	51	41	53	51	48	49	50	42	33
Kaubamärk on olulisem	9	9	8	10	14	9	8	9	9	7	10	19
Ei tea, mõlemad võrdselt	39	40	38	37	33	34	37	37	38	39	41	40

* Küsimus esitati vaid neile, kes olid küsimusele *Kas Teil jätkub raha riiete ostmiseks?* vastanud *Üldiselt jätkub* või *Mõnikord jätkub, mõnikord mitte* (kokku 82%).

** Küsimus esitati vaid neile, kes olid küsimusele *Kas Teil jätkub raha oma välimuse eest hoolitsemiseks?* vastanud *Üldiselt jätkub* või *Mõnikord jätkub, mõnikord mitte* (kokku 70%).

Jätkub...

JÄRG: Lisatabel 12.1b. Tarbimiseelistused, -hoiakud ja -võimalused (elukoha- ja sissetulekurühmades)												
	Kogu- valim	Elukoht						Kuusissetulek pereliikme kohta				
		Tallinn	Tartu, Pärnu	Tln, Trt, Pärnu ümbrus	Narva, K-Järve, Sillamäe	Väikelinn	Maa	Kuni 1500	1501– 2500	2501– 4000	4001– 6000	Üle 6000
Konsumerism												
Puudub	22	18	22	21	25	17	30	29	25	17	10	6
Väga nõrk	23	18	24	20	25	27	28	28	29	17	15	10
Nõrk	18	17	19	24	18	18	14	16	15	18	23	21
Märkimisväärne	22	26	21	19	22	24	19	19	19	30	25	21
Tugev	10	14	8	10	7	11	6	5	9	11	20	18
Väga tugev	5	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	6	8	24
Tarbimislik ükskõiksus												
Puudub	26	28	25	25	34	27	21	26	24	25	28	34
Vähene	12	13	11	15	8	10	12	11	9	14	17	7
Märkimisväärne	26	27	30	27	28	23	25	26	23	29	27	30
Suur	22	20	22	23	18	21	27	21	23	20	24	26
Väga suur	14	12	12	10	12	19	15	15	20	12	4	4
Rahapuudus												
Puudub	18	21	17	22	9	20	15	6	11	24	35	55
Vähene	20	19	23	20	15	22	19	12	19	24	27	30
Märkimisväärne	31	32	28	30	34	30	33	31	38	35	27	12
Suur	20	18	19	21	24	20	20	29	24	12	8	1
Väga suur	11	10	13	7	18	8	13	23	7	5	3	1

VI

Keller, M. (2004). Tarbimiskultuuri pinged tänapäeva Eestis.
Akadeemia 16(10), 2228–2253.

TARBIMISKULTUURI PINGED TÄNAPÄEVA EESTIS

Margit Keller

Tarbimiskultuur on osa argikultuurist ning täidab turumajanduslikus ühiskonnas väga olulise osa inimese elust. Suhete loomine, identiteedi kujundamine ning enese positsioneerimine ühiskonnas on väga tihedalt seotud tarbimisotsustustega, hõlmates nii korteri- ja autoostu kui laste kooli valikut.

Ka Eestis on selline tarbimiskultuur pärast N. Liidu lagunemist jõudsalt arenenud. Võime seda analüüsi hõlbustamiseks tinglikult nimetada “läänelikuks”. Defineerivad mõisted on siin turumajandus ja tarbimisvabadus, mida mõistetakse ühe olulisema kodanikuvabadusena ning realiseeritakse eeskätt indiviidi eraelus. Samuti on läänelik tarbijakultuur vähemalt teoreetiliselt impersonaalne ehk võimaldab kõigile, kel leidub raha, ligipääsu mis tahes kaupadele (vt Slater 1997).

Ometi ei saa rääkida lääneliku kultuuri pealetungist selles mõttes, nagu jäljendaksime üksüheselt meile tahes või tahtmata eeskujuks olevaid lääneriike, olgu need siis Soome, Rootsi või USA. Nõukogude aja pärand, Eesti Vabariigi arendamisega seotud kohalik kogemus ning läänemaailma mõju on keerukas vastastoides, mis kujundab just meile iseloomuliku postsovetliku tarbimiskultuuri.

Kui küsida, kas Nõukogude Eestis tarbimiskultuuri polnudki, siis võib öelda, et praeguses läänelikus tähenduses kindlasti mitte. Siinne artikkel käsitlebki tarbimiskultuuri muutust kõige laiemas mõttes, s.t kultuurimudeli muutust, mis on toonud kaasa uued väärtused ja sotsiaalsed suhted ning teisendanud oluliselt ka inimese ja kauba suhet.¹ Kahe eri laadi tarbimiskultuuri — nõukogude

¹Eesti sotsioloogid on teinud mitmeid deprivatsiooni, kihistumise, edukuse-ebaedukuse ja vaesuse uuringuid, kus tarbimine moodustab olu-

ja praegusaegse — kõrvutamine toob esile kultuuridevahelise dialoogi ja konfliktid, mida inimesed oma isiklikes elumaailmades läbi elavad ning mis on jälgitavad ka avalike diskursuste tasandil. Siiski ei teki praegusaja tarbimiskultuuri pingeväljad mitte ainult nõukogude aja kogemusi sisaldavast kollektiivsest ja isiklikust mälust, vaid ka üldisematest moraalsetest pingetest, mida kätkeb läänelik tarbimiskultuur. Need aga võimenduvad omakorda meie nõukogude kogemuse taustal, sest erinevalt stabiilsetes kapitalistlikes ühiskondades üleskasvanud ja elanud tarbijaist on suurel osal meie inimestest unikaalne võimalus võrrelda eri ühiskonnatüüpe. Pidevad enese ja lähedaste tarbimispraktika ning kogu ühiskonna kõrvutused ajateljel nõukogude aeg *versus* praegusaeg ning ruumiteljel praegune Eesti *versus* “arenenud Lääs” moodustavad koordinaadistiku, millel Eesti inimene iseennast tarbijana ning meie tarbimiskultuuri tervikuna mõtestab.

Alljärgnev on kokkuvõte minu viimaste aastate uuringutest, mida ühendavaks metodoloogiaks on tekstianalüüs. Esimene uuring (Keller, Vihalemm 2003) keskendub sellele, kuidas noored inimesed, enamasti üliõpilased, nii intervjuude (kokku 25) kui esseeide (kokku 45) vormis käsitlevad tarbimiskultuuri arengut taasiseseisvunud Eestis. Teine uuring põhineb *Eesti Ekspressis* ilmunud mobiilside trükireklaamtekstide analüüsil aastaist 1992–2001 ning keskendub vabaduse kui reklaamis pakutava väärtuse sisu transformeerumisele aastate jooksul (Keller 2005b, ilmumas). Kolmanda uuringu (Keller 2005a, ilmumas) huvikeskmes on uus, lausa rämpssõnaks nimetatud mõiste *šoppamine*, täpsemalt see, kuidas tarbijad selle mõiste tähendust mõtestavad. Uurimuse empiirilise andmestiku moodustavad 71 Tallinna ja Tartu eesti-keelse tarbijaga tehtud lühi- ja süvaintervjuud. Neljanda uurimuse peateema on üle 45-aastaste eesti keelt kõnelevate Tallinna ja Tartu elanike (intervjuusid kokku 39) arusaamad praegusest tarbimismaailmast, ostukeskustest, valikust ning ka kriitikast tar-

lise osa (vt nt Kutsar *et al.* 1999; Einasto 2002; Pavelson, Luuk 2002; Õun 2002). Seni väheuuritud tarbimise kultuuriliste ja sümboliliste aspektidega tegelevad eeskätt Tartu Ülikooli etnoloogia õppetool (vt Kanike 2002; Kõresaar, Anepaio 2003) ning kultuuri-uuringuline (*cultural studies*) suund, mida edendatakse TÜ ajakirjanduse ja kommunikatsiooni osakonnas.

bimisühiskonna aadressil (Keller, Vihalemm 2004). Tähelepanu keskmes pole mitte see, mida tarbijad kaupu ostes ja kasutades n-ö päriselt teevad, vaid see, kuidas eri tekstiloojad, s.t needsamad tarbijad ise või ka reklaamitegijad, tarbimist ja sellega seotud teemasid mõtestavad, ehk representatsioon. Viimase mõiste käsitus lähtub Briti kultuuriuuringute suurkujult Stuart Hallilt (vt Hall 1997), kelle järgi on representatsioon sotsiokultuuriliselt determineeritud tähenduste loomise protsess, mis toimub mitmesuguste märgisüsteemide kaudu. Siinkohal on selleks verbaalne keel ning pildiline keel trükireklaamides.

OBJEKTIIVNE JA SUBJEKTIIVNE KULTUUR: NÕUKOGUDE JA TÄNASE TARBIMISKULTUURI ERINEVUS

Edasiste teoreetiliste ja analüütiliste mõttearenduste juures tuleb mees pidada, et tegemist on eri tekstidest esilekerkivaid representatsioone mõtestada aitava ülevaatega, mitte püüdega rekonstrueerida “tõest ja täielikku” pilti kas siis nõukogude aja või praegusaja tarbimispraktikatest.

Kahe ühiskonna tarbimiskultuuri võrdluseks on inspiratsiooni andnud Saksa sotsioloogiaklassik Georg Simmel (1997) ning teda interpreteerinud Briti tarbimisanthropoloog Daniel Miller (1987).² Simmel on oma 20. sajandi algusaastatel avaldatud kultuurifilosoofilistes esseedes jaganud kultuuri kahte ossa — objektiivne või ka objektide/asjade kultuur (*objektive Kultur*, tema varasemates teostes *Sachkultur*) ning subjektiivne, isiksuse kultuur (*subjektive Kultur*, ka *Persönlichkeitskultur*). Esimene on kõik inimeste loodu, s.t kultuurilise tegevuse produktid, mida struktureerivad kultuurivormid. Objektiivse kultuuri alla ei hõlma Simmel mitte ainult esemeid, nagu kunstiteosed või tarbekaupad, vaid ka näiteks seadused, normid, traditsioonid — kõik see, mis on subjektiülene,

²Simmeli ja Milleri käsitlusele lisaks on abiks olnud muudki sotsioloogide ja antropoloogide uurimused (antropoloogidest näiteks Verdery 1996; samuti Patino 2002; Rausing 1998; Chelcea 2002 jt; sotsioloogidest Campbell 1987, 1998; Bauman 1988, 1992, 2000; Sztompka 2000; Kennedy 2002; Gronow 1997, 2003).

elab mingil ajaperioodil mingis kindlas ühiskonnas justkui oma elu. Teisalt inkorporeerivad üksikisikud neidsamu objekte, kultuurivorme oma isiklikku ellu, arendavad ja täiendavad ennast ning loovad sedakaudu ka uusi objekte. Toimub pidev ringlus, mille ideaalne tulemus peaks Simmeli järgi olema isiksusele sisemiselt omase harmoonia ning täiuse maksimaalne avaldumine. Simmeli üheks põhiküsimuseks kujuneb see, mil määral saavad inividid modernse maailma ülimalt keerukast ja mahukast objektiivsest kultuurist osa, mil määral suudavad nad sellest endale kasulikku ja täiustavat ammutada ning mil määral sunnib modernse elu keerukus, objektide rohkus neid alla vanduma ning võõrduma sellest, mida nad enam hoomata ei suuda. Simmel on modernse, detailsel tööjaotusel ning rahamajandusel põhineva ühiskonnakorralduse suhtes juba 20. sajandi algul üsna pessimistlik ning tõdeb, et sageli areneb üha rafineeritumaks muutuv objektiivne kultuur justkui oma sisemise loogika järgi, millest inimesel on raske aru saada. Subjekti ja objekti n-ö taaskohtumine muutub keeruliseks. Seda nimetab ta kultuuritragöödiaks: “Objektiveerunud vaimu üha lõpmatult kasvav hulk esitab subjektile nõudmisi, tekitab temas kaugeid püüdlusi, annab talle teravalt mõista, et ta on ebaadekvaatne ning abitu, mässib ta totaalsetesse võrgustikesse, millest tervikuna, ilma üksikelemente valdamata, ei ole võimalik põgeneda” (Simmel 1997/1911: 73).³

Sellisest skeemist lähtudes võib proovida mõtestada, missugune oli tarbimiskultuur Nõukogude Eestis.⁴ Tollast objektiivset tarbimiskultuuri, s.t indiviidiüleseid norme, tegevusi ja tavasid ning ka materiaalseid objekte (samuti nende tootmist ja jaotust/müüki), on võimalik jaotada mitmeks kihiks. Ühelt poolt näeme tarbijate meenutustes (ning kas või *Eesti rahva elulugude* kogumikus) selgesti ametlikku objektiivset kultuuri, mis ühelt poolt koosnes omamoodi puritaanlikust (Campbell 1987, 1998) ning vähenõudlikule tööle orienteeritud kommunismiehitaja eetikast, mida täiendas nõukogude inimese vajaduste igakülgse ra-

³ Autori tõlge Simmeli teksti ingliskeelsest versioonist.

⁴ Nõukogude aja all mõtlen siin eeskätt nn küpset sotsialismi (1970. ja 1980. aastaid, mitte näiteks vahetult sõjajärgset aega vms), millele implitsiitselt viitab ka suurem osa empiirilisest materjalist, kus mõiste “nõukogude aeg” esile tuleb.

huldamise ametlik retoorika. Tegelikel poelettidel aga haigutas tühjus, see vähene, mida pakuti, oli hall ja homogeenne. Järjekorrad ning defitsiit ehk kaubakülluse ja -valiku puudumine olid peamised märksõnad. Sellel tasandil oli peamine käibiv kapitaliliik — kui kasutada Pierre Bourdieu (2003) jaotust — nagu kapitalistlikes ühiskondadeski majanduslik kapital. Seda iseloomustab käibefraas “tollal oli raha palju, kuid osta polnud midagi”. Raha näiline rohkus tekkis tema madalast väärtustatusest ihaldatud, defitsiitsete kaupade hankimisel, sest ainult raha abil oli väga raske defitsiidiühiskonnas toime tulla. Teisalt eksisteeris kõigile teada ja tuttav, kuid formaalselt olematu, objektiivse kultuuri ametlikult nähtamatu pool. See koosnes nomenklatuurile antud privileegidest, eripoodidest, orderitest ja ostulubadest. Teisisõnu sellest, mis andis väljavalitutele ligipääsu enamikule kättesaamatuks jäänud või väga harva kätte saadud hüvedele ja kaupadele. Sel tasandil käibis peamiselt isikliku lojaalsuse ja ideoloogilise “sobivuse” poliitiline ja ka sotsiaalne kapital.

Nõukogudeaegset nn teist majandust (vt nt Verdery 1996) ehk siis letialuse, defitsiitse kauba liikumist tutvuste kaudu võib Simmelist lähtudes nimetada ka “mitteametlikuks” objektiivseks kultuuriks. Seal ringlesid näiteks Lääne kaubad, millel oli keerukas sümboliline, sageli ka ametlikule korrale vastuseisu tähistav tähendusvõrgustik. Valitsesid vastastikustel teenetel ja tutvustel (seega sotsiaalsel kapitalil) põhinevad suhted. Mõned uurijad on seda võrrelnud lausa Marcel Maussi (2002/1950) “kingitusemajandusega”, kuid nende kahe võrdsustamine oleks liialdus. Enamasti ei olnud tegu kinkijapoolse initsiatiiviga, vaid teenete palumisega, millele vastuteene osutamise võimatus (näiteks kui endal ei olnud ligipääsu atraktiivsetele kaupadele, õigeid tutvusi) tekitas frustratsiooni ja ebameeldivat võlatunnet. Ometi võib öelda, et kõiges oma ilus ja alanduses oli see objektiivse kultuuri osa otsekui puhver, mis aitas defitsiidikogemust ja puudust, repressiivse ideoloogilise süsteemi igapäevaelulist väljendust kergemini taluda või vähemalt selle tingimustes kuidagimoodi hakkama saada.

Simmeli (1997/1916) ning Milleri (1987) põhjal võime järeldada, et suur osa nõukogudeaegsest ametlikust objektiivsest ning sügavalt ideoloogilisest tarbimiskultuurist tekitas indiviidi subjek-

tiivsel tasandil vastuseisu. Miller on olulisena välja toonud objekti ja subjekti taasühinemise, objekti taasomaksvõtmise (*reappropriation*) mõiste. See toimub erasfääris subjektiivse kultuuri tasandil, justkui suleb ringi ja pakub tarbijale tähenduslikku osasaamist ümbritsevast tarbimiskultuurist. Nõukogude ühiskonnas oli selles protsessis märkimisväärne osa sümbolkaupadel, mis olid enamasti hangitud mitteametliku objektiivse kultuuri institutsionaliseerunud "lätialuse teenetemajanduse" abil ja said sedakaudu eriti tähenduslikuks ja "omaks". Kuigi oli olemas rahaline vahetus ning tutvuste kaudu kaupu hankides oli rahal oma koht — sümbolilise ning majandusliku vahetuse vastandlikud loogikad eksisteerisid kõrvuti ja omavahelise põimumise kaudu pingeid tekitades (vt ka Bourdieu 2003; Baudrillard 1976) —, võime siiski väita, et sel viisil saadud kaubad, olgu nendeks siis banaanid, teksased või autod, olid sageli just oma personifitseerituse, sotsiaalse kapitali kaasatuse tõttu tugevama sümbolilise laenguga kui praegused, raha abil impersonaalselt ja universaalselt turult hangitud tooted ja teenused. Viimaste (vähemalt ostueelne ja ostu mõjutav) pseudopersonaalsus on aga tekitatud professionaalsete turundajate ja brändiloojate poolt reklaamitööstuse mitmesuguste promotsioonitekstide kaudu ega tulene mitte niivõrd konkreetsetest isiklikest suhetest.

Mitmesuguseid keerukaid teid pidi hangitud defitsiitsete kaupade tarbimist võib mõtestada omamoodi vastuhakuna režiimile, olgugi et see oli sageli teadvustamata, seda ei reflekteerita (vt Keller, Vihalemm 2003; Kõresaar, Anepaio 2003; vrd ka Švab 2002; Chelcea 2002). Kõige kaudsemalt oli tegu vabaduse väljendusega, nõukogude võimu eitamisega, kuid isiklikul, mikrotasandil ka personaalse identiteedi ja staatuse loomisega üldise ühtlustamispüüde tingimustes. Nagu ütleb Verdery, "see andis võimaluse sul eristada end kui indiviidi oludes, kus visalt püüti homogeniseerida kõikide võimalused ja maitse ühetaoliseks inimhulgaks" (Verdery 1996: 29, vt ka Keller, Vihalemm 2003).

Postsovetlik siire on tarbimiskultuuri ning subjekti ja objekti suhteid radikaalselt muutnud. Vaba konkurentsisga turumajandus, mille aluspostulaatideks — vähemalt teoreetiliselt — on tarbija suveräänsus, täielik valikuvabadus ja universaalsus ehk siis raha kaudu peaaegu kõige kaubastamise ja omandamise võimalikkus (vt Slater 1997), toob esile nõukogude aja

mälestuste ning praeguse rahal põhineva tarbidiskultuuri pinge. Ühelt poolt näeme uut objektiivset kultuuri, mida täidavad uued kirevad materiaalsed objektid: bränditud ja rohkelt reklaamitud kaubad, krediitkaardid jpm, ning uued kultuurivormid nagu reklaam, nn šoppamine, turismireisid kaugetesse paikadesse või kas või pulmad Stockmannis. Uut laadi kaubastatud objekte, uusi materiaalseid objekte ja kultuurivorme sünnitab ning taastoodab kapitalistliku majanduse tihe konkurents, mis sunnib kasutama jõulisi ja sümboliliselt keerukaid turundusvõtteid. Viimastes on domineerivaks orientatsiooniks, briti teoreetiku Colin Campbelli järgi koguni konsumeristlikku Läänt üldse elushoidvaks mootoriks, nn romantiline eetika, mis kutsub indiviidi kaupu ostes ja kasutades rakendama oma kujutlusvõimet (reklaami abiga mõistagi) ning andma voli ihale, et elada võimalikult naudinguküllast elu. Midagi sellist ja sellises ulatuses nõukogude aja objektiivne kultuur, ei oma ametlikul ega mitteametlikul tasandil, ei pakkunud.

Kuidas toimub nende uute objektide ja vormide (taas)omaks-võtmine ja nende abil enese arendamine ning õnne otsimine praegusaja inimeste subjektiivse kultuuri tasandil, ongi allpool vaadeldud uuringute üks peaküsimus. Arvata võib, et siit leiame siirdetsepsidele, kiiretele muutustele iseloomuliku lõhe vähemalt mingi osa elanikkonna puhul. Endise “letialuse” mitteametliku objektiivse kultuuri ning selle subjektiivsete avaldumisvormide kokkuvarisemine on ühelt poolt suur rõõm, sest ei ole enam vaja tunda defitsiidiga kaasnevat alandust. Samas on peaaegu ainsaks vahendajaks nüüd raha, mis annab vähemasti enamiku kaupade hankimisel küll vabaduse isiklikest sõltuvustest, on universaalne ja impersonaalne, mida aga paljudel ei ole piisavalt. Vaba tarbija seisab vähemalt teoreetilise mudeli tasandil silmitsi rahaga ja objektiivse kultuuriga. Viimase sisemisest loogikast tulenev surve maksimaalselt tarbida, end tarbimise kaudu defineerida on tugev, sest ülalmainitud romantilisele orientatsioonile asub siin tugevaks paariliseks utilitaristlik ja liberalistlik ideoloogia, mis kutsub üles ise hakkama saama ning tõstab pjeestaalile majanduslikult edukaid (vt alapeatükki “Sotsiaalne kihistumine”).

Uus kultuur tekitab võõristuse ja ehk isegi võõrdumise tunde eriti vanemates ja väiksema sissetulekuga tarbijates, kelle jaoks subjekti ja objekti tähendusliku ja väärrika taaskohtumise protsess

jääb poolikuks, kauplustest ei leita endale sobivaid või taskukohaseid kaupu. Noorematele, jõukamatele ning laialdasema Läänes ostmise/tarbimise kogemusega tarbijatele pakub praegune tarbimiskultuur, näiteks šoppamine, mitmesuguseid lõbusid ja eneseteostusvõimalusi, kuid kohati ollakse ka väga kriitilised. Niisiis, Simmeli objektiivse ja subjektiivse kultuuri mõisteid nõukogude aja ning praeguse tarbimiskultuuri puhul rakendades võime väita, et tollase ja praeguse erinevusi võib mõista ka erinevustena objektiivse kultuuri sisus ning selles, kuidas, milliste tegevuste, normide ja suhete kaudu indiviid objektiivse kultuuri oma subjektiivse kultuuri tasandile toob, kuidas seda omaks võtab või tagasi lükkab. Selline mudel on küll üsna abstraktne, kuid allpool vaadeldud, empiirilisest andmestikust väljakoорuvad mõisted ja teemad aitavad seda illustreerida.

VABADUS JA SELLE TÄHENDUSE MUUTUMINE

Praegust tarbimiskultuuri nõukogude-aegsest väga teravalt eristav märksõna on vabadus. See on paljuski just tarbimisvabadus, valikuvabadus, mis ühelt poolt on võimaldanud uue objektiivse kultuuri teket ning teisalt annab isikutele oma subjektiivse kultuuri arendamiseks, objektide ja kultuurivormide — olgu need siis uued tehnoloogiad või reisimisvõimalused — enda huvides omandamiseks ja ka uute loomiseks hoopis teistsugused võimalused kui totalitaarne ühiskond. Mitmed Lääne teoreetikud, sealhulgas üks väljapaistvamaid tarbimiskultuuri mõtestajaid Don Slater (1997), on öelnud, et nõukogude ühiskonnas tajuti tarbimisvabadust sageli ühe peamise argise kodanikuvabaduse väljendusvormina, millest puudust tunti ja unistati. Temagi väidab, et nii mõnigi kord kandsid Läänest pärit või ka kodumaised, kuid defitsiitsed kaubad tugevat raudse eesriide taguse vaba maailma hõngu, unistusi vabanemisest, milles, nagu antropoloog Sigrid Rausingu (1998) uurimused näitavad, oli tagasipöördumine “normaalsusesse”, s.t tarbimisvabaduse olukorda, üks kesksemaid telgi.

Viimasele 12 aastale tagasivaatavate üliõpilasesseede põhjal võib teha järelduse, et nõukogude aja lõpul võis sümbolilise jõuga defitsiitsetele kaupadele, lisaks individuaalse ja grupieristuse (*distinction*) loomise funktsioonile kaudselt omistada ka mõningase

rolli kollektiivse vabanemise, “normaalse” läänemaailma osaks saamise unistuse kandmisel:

Lääne kaubad sümboliseerisid läänelikku arusaama vabadusest, demokraatiast ja valikuvabadusest. Piiride avanemise aegu, kui müüt Läänest eriti võimsaks muutus, tekkis ka kõige tühisemale sealt saadud vidinale maagiline väärtus (ESS; M, ajak., 01).⁵

1990. aastate algul ostsid kõik banaane, just... banaan oli olnud nõukogude ajal läänemaailma võimas sümbol (INT, N, kunst, 01).

Vabaks kodanikuks olemise igapäevane, praktiline väljendus oli vaba valikut realiseeriv tarbijakäitumine. Samas näitavad nii needsamad esseed kui ka mitmed intervjuud nooremate ja vanemate tarbijatega (vt Keller, Vihalemm 2003, 2004) üsna selgesti, et nüüd, kui tarbimisvabadus on saabunud, tajutakse, et see ei ole kõigile ühtemoodi kättesaadav. Kogutud materjal annab tunnistust sellest, et tarbijate arusaamades on sümbolilistelt kaupadelt ammu kadunud kollektiivse defitsiidikogemuse ja rahvusliku vabadusejahu ilme. Praegu nähakse neid — näiteks bränditud rõivaid või kalleid autosid — suurelt jaolt eristuse loomise, enese sotsiaalses keskkonnas positsioneerimise ning kihistumise tootmise ja taasootmise vahendina. Nagu ütleb üks naisüliõpilane:

Kui Kroonika kangelasel juba demonstreerivad oma sisekujundaja tehtud ning kõrgkunstiga kaunistatud magamistube, siis “tavalise inimese” unistusi täidavad tõenäoliselt siiski talupoja stiilis täispuidust mööbel või isegi pseudo-baroksed Itaalia magamistoakomplektid. Kuid nooremate, pisut jõukamate ja trenditeadlikumate linlaste unistused on — vähemalt minu tutvusringkonnas — üsna minimalistlikud ja kroomiläikelised (ESS; N, PR, 00).

Muu hulgas olen uurinud vabaduse representatsiooni 1992.–2001. aasta mobiilside trükireklaamides. Vabadus kui väärtus oli paljude aastate vältel üheks märkimisväärses, tollal veel uue ja tugeva sümbolilise laenguga kauba — mobiilside — reklaamimise vahendiks. Ilmselgelt ei vajanud reklaamitegijad siis

⁵ESS — essee, INT — intervjuu, M — mees, N — naine, ajak. — ajakirjandusüliõpilane, kunst — kunstüliõpilane, PR — suhtekorraldusüliõpilane, 01 — essee kirjutamise aasta on 2001, 00 — essee kirjutamise aasta on 2000.

kuigi sügavaid uuringuid selleks, et mobiiltelefoni ning äsja “kättevõidetud” tarbimisvabaduse vahele paralleele tõmmata ning mobiiltelefoni reklaamimiseks vabaduse mõistet kasutada. Selle mõiste tähendus aga ei ole püsinud 1990. aastate vältel ühtlane, vaid toimunud on üsna selgesti täheldatav nihe.

Perioodi esimese osa jooksul, s.o umbes 1996. aastani, domineerisid vabaduse käsitamisel otseselt nõukogude minevikuga seotud konnotatsioonid: räägiti vabadusest rahvusvaheliselt reisisida ning koos välispartneritega äri teha. Seega oli isolatsiooni lõpp (ning seda kaudse meenutusena veel 1996. aastal) oluline teema, mille kaudu mobiilsidet kui inimest vabalt liikuma aita- vat, sõna otseses mõttes “traadist” vabastavat tehnoloogiat müüa. Erich Frommist (2002/1942) lähtudes võib öelda, et tollal domineeris reklaamikeeles *freedom from* ehk vabanemine ikkest. Seda võib tinglikult nimetada nn kollektiivseks või institutsionaalseks vabaduseks, mis moodustas ühiskondliku korralduse laiema raamistikku.

Prominentne kangelane tollastes reklaamides oli noorepoolne mees, kelle peamine eneseteostuse allikas oli töö, ehk siis läänelik modernne ettevõtja-kangelane (vt ka Bauman 1988). Tema realiseeris vabadust teha karjääri, töötada iseenda heaks, teha ületunde, saamata sealjuures külge praegu üsna häbiväärset “töönarkomaani” tiitlit:

Tom on noor ja edukas. Sellegipoolest ei taha ta nõustuda väitega, nagu oleks ta töönarkomaan. Ise peab ta end täiesti terveks, normaalseks inimeseks. Loomulikult ei saa ta eitada, et töökoormus on küllaltki suur — mõnikord 16 pingelist töötundi järjest. Aga enne ajab ta kas või ööpäevaringselt Oma Asja, kui rabab kellegi teise aluvuses üheksast viieni. [...] Sest ülekõige siinilmas armastab Tom vabadust (on vist üleliigne lisada, et Tom on vallaline). (Radiolinja reklaam oktoobrist 1995.)

Perioodi teine osa, mida võib arvata alanuks 1997. aastal (olulise piirjoone tõmbab kolmanda operaatori, Q-GSMi turuletulek selle aasta aprillis) toob kaasa vabaduse tähenduse muutumise. Domineerima hakkavad hedonistlikumad, postmaterialistlikumad, mitte enam peamiselt edu, ärireiside ja tööga seotud konnotatsioonid. Näeme, et mobiiltelefone ning liitumislepinguid müüakse nüüd juba eneseväljenduse (nt vahetatavad värvilised te-

lefonikorpused) või üsna otseselt naudingute kaudu. Niisiis on nüüd tegu vabadusega end väljendada, puhata, naudelda. *Freedom from* on muutunud enesestmõistetavuseks, “suured” teemad rahva vabanemisest, Eesti kohast maailmas on tagaplaanile vajumas. Kuid ka vabadus millekski, s.t *freedom to*, mis eelmisel perioodil tähendas peamiselt tööd ja Läänes reisimist, on muutunud. Orientatsiooniks saab puhkus, eneseväljendus (mille keskne vahend on tarbimine), nautlemine. Vabadus on omamoodi privatisiseerunud ning keskendub ihale ja naudingule orienteeritud hedonistlik-isiklikule tarbimisvabadusele.

Q-GSMi turuletulekukampaania meeldejäävaimaks tegelaseks oli kiilaspäine “kanistrimees”, kes 1997. aasta aprillis kuulutas tavalisele inimesele saabunud rääkimise aega ning “vabadust, mille eest ei pea palju maksma”. EMT visuaalse identiteedi muutmise kampaaniad, mis vaadeldavas valimis justkui i-le täpi peale panevad, hõlmasid pilte vannis mõnulevatest naistest ning kiikuvatest lastest, mitte enam ülikonnas ärimeestest. Visuaale täiendas alljärgnev tekst:

Mis on ühist väikesel värvikal lepatriinul ja kõrgtehnoloogilisel kommunikatsiooniteenusel? Lepatriinul on koht meie kõigi unistustes ja mälestustes. Temaga seostuvad päikseline suvepäev, õnnelik lapselõlv. [---] Selline on uus EMT, väike värvikas detail lihtsamas ja mugavamas maailmas (EMT reklaam maist 2001).

Kahtlemata on veel vara väita, et modernistlik edu- ja töokeskus on Eesti ühiskonnas taandumas, kuid mitmed uuringud näitavad hedonistlikuma orientatsiooni järkjärgulist kasvamist koos tarbimiskultuuri rafineeritumaks muutumisega, kompetentsi, nõudmiste ning elatustaseme tõusuga (vt nt Kalmus, Vihalemm 2004). Niisiis võib ühe, küll oma üldistusjõult piiratud, kuid sümbolilise laengu poolest olulise kauba trükireklaami analüüsi alusel tõdeda järgmist: see, mida turundusteksti tootja näeb olulisena, s.t sellisena, mis võiks tarbijas tekitada soovi, iha või ka midagi, mida tajutakse vajadusena, ei ole ammu enam eufooriline ahelaist vabanemise ja taasläänestumise kogemus, vaid hedonistlik eneseväljendus ja nautlemine, mis on Läänegi objektiivse tarbimiskultuuri ühes olulises osas — reklaamis — üsna tavaline müügiargument.

VALIKUVABADUSE NÄILISUS, UUS “DEFITSIIT”

Omaette teema on see, kui paljudele ja mil määral on selline piiramatuid naudinguid pakkuv tarbimisvabadus kättesaadav ning kas ja kuidas pakutavaid kaupu ning nende promotsioonilisi tekste mõistetakse ja tähendustatakse tarbimisvabaduse täieliku realiseerimisvõimalusena või hoopis valikuvabaduse piiramisena, sest pakkuja lähtub peamiselt oma kasumist, mitte tarbijale optimaalsetest lahendustest. Võib eeldada, et kaubaküllus ja täielik valikuvabadus on paljude meelest vaid teoreetilised mõisted, millega suhestumine igapäevatasandil toob kaasa mitmesuguseid probleeme. Esimene, otseselt ka allpool käsitletava kihistumisega seotud teema on rahapuudus. Eredamad näited siinses kontekstis seostuvad näiteks pensionäridega või madalapalgaliste inimestega (valdavalt naistega), kes uutes ostukeskustes aega veedavad, ilma et neil oleks võimalik sealt midagi osta. Nagu räägib üks proua Lasnamäelt:

Käin sõbrannaga, šoppamas niisama tead, vaatamas, kus ja mis on ja. . . No väikse palga juures midagi osta nagu ei saa, aga huvitav on ikka vaadata, mis, kus, mida. . . Mida annab ja toob siia nagu Eestisse kaupa, mis kvaliteet on ja kuidas istub ja ja. . . Midagi vahest ikka proovid ka selga, no tütar vahest ikka ostab niहुksest kohast, aga minu palk ei luba seda (N, 50–60, Tln, tööline).⁶

Samuti leidub ka neid, kes kaubanduskeskusi ning šoppamist endale täiesti kättesaamatuks peavad. Selgeimalt tulevad need tendentsid välja vanemaid linnaeestlasi käsitletud uuringus (vt Keller, Vihalemm 2004).

Rahapuudus pole aga ainus, mis väikesel postsotsialistlikul turul ostjaid kimbutab. Ulatusliku nõukogude kogemusega informandid tõid mitmel korral välja selle, et enam pole võimalik poodidest leida paljusid kaupu, mida “vanasti”. Seega on pakutav võõras — sageli toodi siinses kontekstis just “odavate vidinate” või “kirju lääne rämps” paralleel — ning ei vasta paljuski nende väljakujunenud ootustele ning üsna kasinatele rahalistele

⁶Tln — küsitlus on läbi viidud Tallinnas, Trt — küsitlus on läbi viidud Tartus. Küsitlute enda poolt vastusevariantidest valitud eluala on märgitud lühendatuna.

võimalustele. Samuti leidis näiteid, kus just vanemad ning näiteks tervisest tulenevate erivajadustega küsitletavad kurtsid nende vajadustele vastavate, taskukohaste kaupade puudumist. Sellised tarbijad tunnevad end nn meinstriimi järgi joonduva turu ideoloogia poolt marginaliseerituna. Sageli kohtab nostalgilisi viiteid “vanadele aegadele”, mil tunti end kompetentsemana ja paremini hakkama saavana. Tollal oli defitsiit üldine, kollektiivselt tajutud kogemus, milles sai üheselt ja selgelt süüdistada riiki. Praegu on aga tegu paljude eripalgeliste, sageli rahapuudusest ja piiratud turu võimalustest kantud privatiseerunud defitsiitidega, mille seostust enda isikuga, enda “ilmajäetusega” tuntakse palju teravamalt. Seda illustreerib järgmine Tallinna pensionäri tsitaat:

Noh, nüüd on nii, et sul on kõik olemas, aga sa jääd raha taha pidama. Enne oli nisuke asi, et isegi võis raha olla, aga sa ei saand, aga siis oli juppmaad parem tunne, et kuradi riik ja värk ei suuda sulle muretseda, aga tegelikult ma võiksin. See moment, et see raha nii oluliseks on nüüd muutunud (M, 60–70, Tln, pensionär).

Mõistagi leidub hulgaliselt ka neid, kelle jaoks pakutav valik on piisav, sinne kirjeldus ei pretendeeri esinduslikkusele. Ometi tuleb nentida, et kriitikat praeguse tarbimiskultuuri ja turu kohta tehakse palju. See on sfäär, mis on tihedalt seotud igapäevise isikliku ja igapäevaeluga, siin on inimestel palju kogemusi, igäüks saab end pidada eksperdiks.

Suurema rahalise ressursiga ning ulatuslikuma Läänes reismise ja ostukohtade külastamise kogemusega tarbijate kriitika on mõnevõrra teistsugune. Esile tõuseb nurin selle üle, et kohalikud kaubanduskeskused ei paku piisavalt laia kaubavalikut, soovitud või vajatud asja peab liialt kaua otsima, et hinna ja kvaliteedi suhe pole kompetentsele ja nõudlikule ostjale sobiv. Teisalt kritiseeritakse ka siinset teenindust ja ostupaikade õhustikku. Positiivse näitena tuuakse sageli nn vanade kapitalistlike riikide ostukeskusi. Kui on tegemist jõukama ning end pädevaks pidava tarbijaga, kes end sealsetes kaubanduskeskustes võõra ja kohmetuna ei tunne, teenivad sealsed ostupaigad kiitust võrreldes siinsete analoogidega, mida mõnel äärmuslikul juhul isegi “nõukogudeaegseteks” nimetati:

Eredad positiivsed kogemused on seotud Soome, Rootsi, Hispaania ja teiste välismaa ostukeskuste külastamisega. Sest neis on lihtsalt eriline puhtuse lõhn ja meeldiv, kultuurne atmosfäär. Pole kerjuseid ega hulkurlapsi. Eesti ostukeskustest on negatiivseimad kogemused seotud Tartu, Pärnu ja teiste maakonnalinnade ostukeskustega. . . aga ka Rocca al Marega. . . neis pole sisuliselt sotsialismiajast midagi muutunud (M, 40–50, Tln, spetsialist).

Nõudlikud ja ka haritud tarbijad viivad kriitika oma isiklike ostukogemuste pinnalt mõnikord ka kogu ühiskonna tasandile, nagu järgmisest tsitaadist nähtub:

Loomulikult ei saa kahte süsteemi isegi võrrelda, need on täiesti erinevatest maailmadest. Me tuleme totaalse defitsiidi, üheülbalisuse ja üleüldise tasalülitamise keskkonnast. Tarbimine oli üks osa nõukogude propagandast: suured sõnad, mille taga haigutav tühjus. Nüüd on valitsevaks mitmekülsus ja külluse püüd, mis sageli osutub illusiooniks, sest vajalikku asja ikkagi ei saa kätte nii lihtsalt kui soovid, igäihe võimalus valida. Kuid samas toimivad teised piirangud, milleks on orjastav reklaam ja rahapuudus (M, 50–60, Tln, intellektuaal).

Mõistagi on selline reflektiivsuse tase intervjuudes haruldane. See tsitaat võtab üsna hästi kokku selle, mida vanema põlvkonna tarbijad praeguse ja nõukogude aja võrdluses ning praegusi kogemusi analüüsides väljendavad. Niisiis on valikute arv tegelikult ikkagi piiratud, olgu piirajaks raha vähesus või müüjate ja tootjate poolt etteantud võimaluste väike hulk.

SOTSIAALNE KIHISTUMINE

Nagu valikute osalt illusoorseks osutumise kriitikast nähtub, on sotsiaalse kihistumise teke taasiseseisvumise järel üks väärtusamaid teemasid, mis selgub nii tudengiesseedest kui paljudest küsitlustest. Paralleelina väärib siinkohal märkimist ka TÜ aja- kirjanduse ja kommunikatsiooni osakonna poolt 2003. aasta algul läbiviidud ankeetküsitlus “Mina, maailm ja meedia”, mille tulemusi analüüsides on Marju Lauristin väitnud, et siirdeperioodil valitsenud liberaalne, majandusedu-keskne ideoloogia on kujundanud arusaamad inimeste positsioneerumisest ühiskondlikul

redelil lähtuvalt majandusedu ja konkurentsivõime kriteeriumidest. Nende kriteeriumide ja tõlgendusskeemide ülekandumine ideoloogialt isiklikku subjektiivsesse kultuuri kujundab inimeste kihtikuuluvushinnangu vastavaks oma võimalustele tarbijana (Lauristin 2004). Uuest objektiivsest, tarbekaupadest küllastunud kultuurist osasaamine on muutunud mõõdupuuks, mille alusel subjekt end kihti asetab. Kui osalus on tema enda arvates puudulik, paigutab inimene end madalamasse sotsiaalsesse kihti. Niisiis on konsumerism, see, kuidas tarbitakse just nn esmavajadusest eristuvaid, suurema sümbolilise väärtusega kaupu ja teenuseid, üks olulisi indikaatoreid, mille abil analüüsida sotsiaalset kihistumist Eestis.

Lisaks isiklikule ilmajäetuskogemusele väljendatakse hinnanguid kogu ühiskonna tasandil. Uued võimalused ja vaba valik (olugi mõnikord piiratud) loovad positiivse erinevuse nõukogude ajast, kuid kihistumine on selgeim negatiivne kontrast. Paljusid kaupu nähakse liialt kallina või siis oma hinnale vastamatuna:

Sellepärast, et selleks pidi seisma pikki järjekordi, et saada elementaarseidki toiduaineid, rääkimata mingisugusest muust tarbekaubast. Et kus siis kellel oli tutvused, kust siis seda saadi, et selles mõttes praegu on nagu lihtsam ja on iseenesest parem. Et ma hindan seda positiivselt, aga kindlasti võiks olla meil suurem valik ja kindlasti võiksid olla hinnad kohandatud eesti inimesele. Iseenesest on väga kahju, et meil on nagu see klassivahe, ehk see diferentseerumine inimeste vahel nii järsk ja et peaks olema ikka see keskmine kodanik ikka rahuldatud, sest eestlaseid on niigi vähe ja kui veel tekkivad nii suured klassivahed selle näputäie rahva hulgas et, noh et tuleks rohkem mõelda, analüüsida (N, 40–50, Tln, spetsialist).

Jõukamate tarbijate puhul, kellel puudub otsene põhjus ilmajäetuse üle kurta, sõltub suuresti nende kultuurilisest kapitalist ja refleksioonivõimest, kas nad toovad sotsiaalse kihistumise uue ühiskonna probleemina välja või mitte. Erinevate ostukohtade jaotumine sotsiaalse redeli astmete kaupa ei ole kuigi levinud, välja arvatud see, et küsitletud Tallinnas ning pealinnast pärit või seal elavad esseekirjutajad eristavad selgelt ostukohtade skaala madalamat ja kõrgemat otsa: vastavalt siis turg ja Säästumarket ning Stockmann. Kuivõrd viimast Tartus pole, sealsete küsitletute hulgas nii selgeid kontraste ei ilmnenud. Leidus ka äärmuslikke

näiteid, kus enese otsene asetamine kõrgemasse kihti, s.t nende hulka, kes Säästumarketis ei käi ning osturallisid põlgab, ka otse välja öeldi:

Üldiselt on Tallinna ostukeskused suhteliselt demokraatlikud, vaid Stockmannis on publik veidi tõusiklikum. . . Ilmselt kõige rahvalikum on Sikupilli, Norde Centrum on rohkem soomlaste jaoks, Järvel on igasugust rahvast, ehk siis rohkem noori inimesi. . . Rocca al Mare on aga eriti suviti palju Tallinna lähiasulate tõusikuid. Kristiines on aga jälle vaesemaid inimesi ja lapshulguseid näha. . . Suhtun osturallidesse ja hulludesse päevadesse väga negatiivselt, sest siis paisatakse müüki kehva kvaliteediga kaupa lihtsameelsete vaesemate inimeste ligimeelitamiseks. Minusuguse jõukama tarbija jaoks on neis osalemine alandav (M, 40–50, Tln, spetsialist).

Niisiis on kihistumise teema valusaim ning pakub tarbijate poolt selgelt tajutud terava kontrasti nõukogude ajaga. See näib olevat ka teravaim pinge- ja mureallikas, mida praeguses ühiskonnas nähakse.

TARBIJA MORAALSED DILEMMAD POSTSOTSIALISTLIKUS TARBIMISÜHISKONNAS: VAJADUSED *VERSUS* SOOVID

Läänelik tarbimiskultuur pole moraalsetest pingetest laetud mitte ainult nõukogude kogemuse taustal, probleemidega seisavad silmitsi ka päris noored inimesed, kelle nõukogude-mälestus on parimal juhul üürike või puudub üldse. Uue kultuuri mõistmiseks olen valinud intrigeeriva kultuurivormi, šoppamise, mis kajastab üht kesket subjekti (tarbija) ja objekti (kauba) suhestumise teemat — vajaduse ja iha diskursuse vastandumist.⁷ Tuleb märkida, et minu intervjuud on tehtud 2002. a lõpul ja 2003. a esimesel poolel, seega ei peegelda nad just 2004. aasta kevadel eriti teravaks muutunud väitlust Eesti massimeedias, mille üheks tulipunktiks muutus vaidlus selle üle, kas võiks eesti keeles kasutusele võtta

⁷Tarbimissotsioloogid ja antropoloogid on selle teema avaldumismorme mitmel maal üsna palju uurinud (vt Miller 1998; Miller *et al.* 1998; Prus, Dawson 1991; Falk, Campbell 1997; Campbell 1998; Lehtonen 1999).

Ain Kaalepi pakutud omasõna “ostlemine” rämpssõnaks nimetatud laenu “šoppamine” asemel. Šoppamine oma tugeva emotsionaalse laengu ning paljudele justkui ebamugavust tekitavate konnotatsioonidega (kas või Kaalepi määrang annab sellest tunnistust) on hea “lukuauk” vaatamaks, kuidas tarbijate arusaamad sõna tähendusväljast representeerivad nende identiteeti ning arusaamu erinevatest moraalsestest piiridest tarbimismaailmas. Samuti eeldasin, et praegusele moesõnale keskendudes kerkivad lisaks hetkepingetele esile erinevused praeguse ning nõukogudeaegse tarbimiskogemuse vahel. Siinkohal toon välja kaks peamist telge, mis on selgesti eristatavad ka teoreetilises kirjanduses.

Inglisekeelses maailmas kasutatava sõna *shopping* tähendusväli on laiem, selles sisalduvad n-ö skaala mõlemad otsad ehk siis *shopping* kui lõbu, mida vastavalt teoorias nimetatakse *recreational shopping* ning *shopping* kui igapäevane tarbekaupadega varustamine, mille kohta on enim levinud termin *shopping as labour* (vt nt Falk, Campbell 1997; Prus, Dawson 1991). Eesti “šoppamise” mõistel on mitmesuguseid konnotatsioone, kuid nad on valdavalt siiski seotud *recreational shopping*’uga ehk siis ei hõlma toitu ja esmatarbekaupu, vaid pigem rõivaid ja näiteks püsikaupu.

Nii tarbijaintervjuud kui juba viidatud diskussioon meedias (sh veebiportaalides) näitab, et šoppamisega seostub mitmeid moraalselt laetud mõisteid ja mõistepaare. Järelikult on aja veetmisele ning selle käigus nii kaupade kui ka mitmesuguste elamuste ostmisele suunatud tegevus ambivalentne, kui tarbija selle üle veidigi järele mõtleb. Suhtumine šoppamisse ei ole üldjuhul neutraalne. Esile kerkivad mõisted nagu näiteks “vajadus” *versus* “soovid, tahtmised” (vähem on eesti keeles kasutusel sõna “iha”, mis oleks ingliskeelses kirjanduses selles kontekstis enamasti kasutatava *desire* täpne vaste); “mõttetus” *versus* “mõistlikkus”, “aja ja raha raiskamine”, “lõbu ja mõnu”, “liiga palju”.

Lähtudes eespoolgi viidatud Colin Campbelli teooriast (1987, 1998), näeme siin puritaanlike ning utilitaristlike juurtega vajaduse diskursuse ning romantismi taustaga iha või soovide diskursuse kokkupõrget. Vajaduste rahuldamist, s.t tegevust, mis taastab töötava keha ning ei otsi naudinguid ja lõbu, on protestantlikus kultuuriruumis peetud legitiimsemaks tegevuseks kui ihadele ja soovidele järeleandmist, mille tulemuseks on nauding. Campbell

püstitab teesi, et just romantism rajas tee nn romantilisele hedonistlikule eetikale, mis keskendub isiku oskusele oma emotsioone valitseda ja intensiivistada ning nõnda kaupadest saada-vat naudingut maksimeerida. See omakorda annab tänapäevasele tarbimislikkusele hoogu. Nagu eespool juba ütlesin, lähtub tänapäevane turunduspraktika, praeguse objektiivse tarbimiskultuuri üks võimsamaid koostisosi, just sellisest ihadele orienteeritud eetikast.

Šoppamine on tegevus, mis toob esile moraalse piiri. Ühel pool on vajadused, eesmärgistatus, ning teisel pool soovid, ihad või ka lihtsalt hetkeimpulsid midagi spontaanselt osta. Oma-moodi põrkuvad utilitaristlik (maksimaalne kasu, efektiivsus ja mugavus), puritaanlik (vähenõudlikkus, eneseohjeldamine) ning romantiline alge (intensiivsed naudingud, ihale voli andmine). Siit nähtub, kuidas konstrueeritakse ennast ja teisi kui moraalseid subjekte, kuidas mõistetakse sotsiaalseid norme äsja konsumeriseerunud ühiskonnas.

Levinud on oma hetkeihade ning soovide ratsionaliseerimine vajadusteks (vt nt Lehtonen 1999). Mis tahes asja kohta on võimalik öelda, et “mul on seda vaja”, ning seega legitimeerida ost ning vähendada moraalset pinget. Selline lähenemine iseloomustab tarbijaid, kes niisama lihtsalt ei tunnista enese lõbudele ja naudingutele järeleandmist ning kiivalt “kaitsevad” vajadusediskursust:

Ma ei osta asju sellepärast, et nad on, vaid sellepärast, et mul on neid vaja (M, 20–30, Tln, juht).

Nooremad ja jõukamad tarbijad, kes end ostukeskuste kirevas maailmas üsna koduselt tunnevad, konstrueerivad oma isiklikest kogemustest rääkides piiri šoppamise kui ajaveetmise ja lõbu ning vajalike asjade ostmise kui töö, sageli ka üsna tüütu tegevuse vahel. Seejuures aga mõnutundele ja ihale järeleandmist ei taunita:

No võib-olla ongi niuke, et lähed lihtsalt kuhugi keskusesse ja vahid ja siis tegelikult nagu eesmärki osta ei olegi lausa, aga ise ostad ka, et no see on šoppamine. Natuke niuke piiri ületamine, tegelt väga vaja ei olegi, aga ikka ostad (N, 20–30, Tln, arst).

Piiri teadmine ja selle ületamine ning seejärel justkui siia-poole piiri tagasi tulemine, “kontrollitud kontrolli kadu” (*controlled de-control*, vt Featherstone 1991) on kompetentse tarbija tunnus, šoppamise nautimine on moraalselt lubatud, sest oma rahalisi piiranguid tuntakse ning end usaldatakse. Ning isegi kui ostetakse “mõttetuid” asju, siis seda ei “põeta”. Niisiis ei pälvi hedonism nende tarbijate silmis hukkamõistu. Sellised tarbijad tunnevad end piisavalt kompetentsena, et kasutada nii soovide kui ka vajaduste diskursust just sellisena, nagu parajasti sobivam tundub:

Šoppamine on mõnus tegevus, ostmine on ebameeldiv tegevus. Et selles mõttes, et siin on see vahe, et šoppamine on see, kus see mõnu moment on juures, kus ma. . . nagu naudin, kus ma nagu ei pea ostma, et ma võin osta, aga ma ei pea ostma. Et ma nagu käin ja võib-olla leian midagi ja võib-olla ostan kaks asja rohkem kui ma tahtsin, võib-olla ma ka ei leidnud midagi. . . aga mul jääb hea tunne sellest asjast, vot see on šoppamine. . . Ma arvan, et oleme postmodernsed inimesed, selles mõttes et see šoppamine ja see natuke väike asjade kultus ja mingisugune väike fetiš selles asjas, see nagu käib selle asja juurde. . . et sul on asju rohkem kui võib-olla sul tarvis on ja. . . ja kõik ostud ei ole ratsionaalselt põhjendatud, et sa tunned ostmisest mõnu ja. . . ja see väike mõttetuse moment ja see hedonism käib selle asja juurde (M, 30–40, Tln, spetsialist).

Samas on levinud tugevalt normatiivne representatsioon “teis-test”, kes ostavad mõttetult, laskuvad Hulludel Päevadel eneseunustusse ja lasevad end mitmesugustel odavatel pakkumistel võrgutada. Neis kirjeldustes on tegu inimestega, kellele piiriületamine on sotsiaalse normi rikkumine, mittelegitiimne tegevus. Neid representeeritakse kui palju ostvaid, mõttetult raha ja aega raiskavaid inimesi. Selline selgelt vajadusediskursusest kantud hukkamõiste, sageli irooniline esitus kehtib aga vaid teistest rääkides, enda kohta selliseid formuleeringuid ei kasutata. Sellisel määrangutel on sageli ka tuntav sooline, naisi kui esmajoones šoppamist harrastavaid tarbijaid stereotüpiseeriv konnotatsioon⁸:

⁸Seda teemat käsitleb lähemalt Katrin Rahu magistritöö, mis on valminud TÜ ajakirjanduse ja kommunikatsiooni osakonnas.

Šoppamine on nagu noh... ütleme kui võtta naiste puhul, siis šoppamine on lihtsalt selline... sotsiaalne vorm. Saad oma sõbrannadega kokku, lähed kuskile poodi ja vaatad... sul on tagataskus kümme krooni ja siis proovid endale selga mingeid kahe ja poole tonniseid kasukaid fa-fa-fa... poose-poose-poose... teades, et sa ei suuda nagunii mingi lähema poole või kolmveerand aasta jooksul seda ära osta, siis viskad selle ära ja ütled: *sorry*, natuke külgedelt pigistas ja siis lähed vastaspoodi ja niimoodi kordub see iga poe juures. Vot see on šoppamine (M, 20–30, Tln, spetsialist).

Mõnikord paisub selline mõistlikkuse ja mõttetuse, ressurside raiskamise ja nende aruka kulutamise pideva konflikti tunnetus ning enda kui tarbija moraalse mina otsimine lausa kogu ühiskonna tasandile üldistavaks tarbimiskriitikaks. Üllatusena tõi sellise kujundirikka ning iroonilise käsitluse esile üks Tartus õppiv noormees suisa kaubanduskeskuses tehtud lühiküsitluse käigus:

[Šoppamine on] hulga hullem kui SARS, kuna haarab kõiki kihte, kaasa arvatud juba ka kolme- ja nelja-aastased, ja mina arvan, et kõik on tingitud sellest, et on väga liberaalne demokraatlik ühiskond meil... on toodud välja mõttetud unistused, mida püütakse täita ja realiseerida sellega, et kunagi meil midagi polnud ja nüüd on kõik olemas ja nüüd me kõik käime ringi ja oleme õnnelikud ja naeratame suurtes kaubakeskustes ja ostame asjakesi, mida meil võib-olla üldse vaja ei ole... See ongi see šoppamine (M, 20–30, Trt, tudeng).

Niisiis on šoppamise representatsioonid täis pingeid. Ühelt poolt on need tingitud vajaduse ning soovide-ihade diskursuste fundamentaalsest kokkupõrkest. Teisalt on see omamoodi uksepragu, mis toob nähtavale inimeste konfliktid ning ambivalentseid arusaamad ühiskondlikest siirdeprotsessidest, mille raames on liigutud kaupade defitsiidist külluslike ostukeskuste maailma, tsentraalse ülikontrolli tingimustest üksikisiku (sageli just tarbija) tahte, kompetentsi, võimaluste ja vastutuse ühiskonda. Endise, olgugi et kesk võimu abil kehtestatud võrdsuse asemel on kujunenud terav sotsiaalne kihistumine, mis eriti selgelt avaldub tarbimises.

KOKKUVÕTTEKS

Tarbimiskultuur on argine ja näiliselt triviaalne, ometi toovad inimeste mõtestused Eesti tarbimismaailmast ja iseenesest selle

keskel esile fundamentaalsed probleemid, pinged ja dilemmad. Nõukogude aja meenutustes ei tule pinnale mitte ainult see, kuidas konkreetne üksikisik elas, vaid ka tollane objektiivne kultuur, mille märksõnadeks olid defitsiit, järjekorrad, valikuvaaduse puudumine, eripoed nomenklatuurile, tutvusvõrgustike kaudu “leti alt” hangitud suure sümbolväärtusega või ka lausa igapäevased kaubad, mida totaalset ideoloogiast kantud tootmis- ja ümberjaotamissüsteem “leti peale” tulla ei lasknud. Domineerisid vastastikused teened, sõltuvused. Lisaks rahamajandusele oli tähtis koht ka sotsiaalsel ja poliitilisel kapitalil. Tollase kogemuse taustal suhestub praegune subjekt praeguste objektide ja kultuuri-vormidega — olgu selleks siis meelelahutusasutuseks muutunud kaubakeskused, brändimine, šoppamine või tohututes hulkades kaupa.

Tarbimiskultuur on muutunud universaalseks ja impersonaalseks, peamine vahend, mille kaudu seda objektiivset kultuuri subjekti tasandile saab tuua, on raha, majanduslik kapital. Seda aga ei ole paljudel piisavalt ning siit saab alguse tänapäeva Eesti tarbimiskultuuri üks simmellikest tragöödiatest. Suur osa elanikkonnast mõtestab oma kohta ühiskonnas tarbijana; tarbimiskultuuri objektidest ja vormidest osasaamine või sellest ilmajäämine muutub isklikuks mõõdupuuks, mis võib ebarahuldavate “mõõtmistulemuste” korral põhjustada frustratsiooni, eemaldumist, tahtmist teisiti elada. Kuid raha pole ainus, mis tänapäeva Eestis subjekti ja objekti, tarbija ja kauba harmoonilist taaskohutumist raskendab. Ka raha olemasolu korral on praegugi mitmesugust defitsiiti, kuigi see ei ole enam ideoloogiline, kollektiivselt tajutud üleüldine puudus. Tegemist on privaatse probleemiga, mille puhul inimene ei leia endale seda kaupa või teenust, mis on talle taskukohane ja meelepärane. Väikese turu võimalused pühivad vajadused ja soovid keskpõrandale kokku ning ääred jäävad müüjatel-pakkujatel sageli märkamata. Ka see on tarbimiskultuuri simmellik kriis või konflikt — objekte on palju, kuid nad on kas kallid või hingetud ja vähe kvaliteetsed ning subjektid ei leia sealt oma. Tulemuseks võib olla võõrdumine ja kibestumine või ka lihtsalt blaseerunud tõdemus, et “Läänes on ikka parem”.

Samas on see meie oma, mitte võõrvõimu ideoloogia kehtetatud tarbimiskultuur. Seda iseloomustavad kogu kriitikast hoo-

limata siiski vaba valik ja kaupade rohkus ning nende omandamise võimalus vaid ebaisikliku raha, mitte isiklike, sageli alanust kaasa toonud suhete abil. Rohkete kaupade ja teenuste taasomaksvõtmine isiklikku elumaailma pakub hulgaliselt enese-teostusvõimalusi ja naudinguid, ka pingeid otsustusprotsessis, kui tuleb valida vajaduse ja iha vahel ning otsustada, kas šoppamine on töö või meelelahutus. Sellistes valikutes mõtestab tänapäeva tarbija end moraalse, teatud kultuurikontekstist tähenduslikult osa-saava inimesena, kellel on oma koht ning oma viisid vajaduste rahuldamiseks. Kogu praegusest rahulolematusest ja endiste aegade nostalgias hoolimata ei kohanud ma uuringuid tehes ühtki tarbijat, kes nõukogulikku mudelit üksüheselt tagasi oleks tahtnud.

On hilismodernse ajastu paratamatus, et enamik meid ümbritsevatest objektidest on tööstuslikult toodetud ning väga paljud kultuurivormid on ühel või teisel viisil kaupade tarbimisega seotud, kaubastumas on haridus ja meditsiin, puhkusest ja meelelahutusest rääkimata. Ainult täielik isolatsioon, n-ö elu metsas võimaldaks sellest paramatusest mööda hiilida. See aga ei tähenda, et hilismodernse ajastu tarbimiskultuur oleks ainult tühi ja kiretu. Objekti omakstunnistamine subjekti poolt on loov akt, mis toob justkui kauge ja võõra objektide loogika alusel ringleva asja subjekti värvikasse ja emotsionaalsesse isiklikku ellu. Ka masstoodetud kaup — olgu selleks siis arvuti, mobiiltelefon või uus kostüüm — võib sellisel viisil saada osaks subjekti maailmast ning olla seal väärikal ja tähenduslikul kohal. Asjadel on läbi aastatuhandete olnud hing. Kuigi tööstuslik tootmine ja ebaisiklik rahamajandus on kaupade hinge peaaegu nähtamatuks muutnud, on argises tarbimiskultuuris siiski suur potentsiaal — võimalus armastust ja ühte kuuluvust väljendada, sisemiselt täiustuda, anda oma loomingu- lisele energiale väljund. Teha just seda, mida Simmel pidas kultuuri ülimaks eesmärgiks.

Mõistagi on tarbimiskultuuri võrgutavas jõus ka suur oht, et masstoodetud kaup ning tema masstoodetud-turundatud tähendus koloniseerivad tarbija elu täielikult, jätmata ruumi tegevustele ja loomingu- le, milles ei domineeri kaubastumise loogika. Et säilitada tasakaalu nende maailmade vahel, mida saab raha eest osta ning mida raha eest osta on võimatu, peab tänapäeva Eesti tarbija aga kõvasti pingutama. Oleks kõigile parem, kui selles

pingutuses ei lasuks kogu vastutus üksiktarbija õlul, vaid kaasa aitaksid nii tootjad, müüjad, reklaamijad, tarbijakaitsjad, massimeedia kui ka teadlased. Ning kõigi nimetatute ühine eesmärk võiks olla inimest täiustav kultuur, seesama, millest rääkis Simmel sada aastat tagasi, ja mitte üksnes raha.

Kirjandus

- Baudrillard, J. 1976. *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. Gallimard
- Bauman, Z. 1988. *Freedom*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press
- Bauman, Z. 1992. *Intimations of Postmodernity*. London: Routledge
- Bauman, Z. 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity
- Bourdieu, P. 2003. *Praktilised põhjused: Teoteooriast*. Tlk L. Tomberg. [Tallinn:] Tänapäev
- Campbell, C. 1987. *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*. Oxford: Blackwell
- Campbell, C. 1998. Consumption and the Rhetorics of Need and Want. — *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 11, No. 3, pp. 235–246
- Chelcea, L. 2002. The culture of shortage during state socialism: Consumption practices in a Romanian village in the 1980. — *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 16–43
- Einasto, M. 2002. Sissetuleku- ja ilmajäetusvaesus 1994 ja 1999. — D. Kutsar (toim.). *Elutingimused Eestis viis aastat hiljem: Norbalt II*. (Tartu Ülikool, Rakenduslike Sotsiaaluuringute Instituut FAFO (Norra)). Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, lk 101–122
- Falk, P., C. Campbell (eds.). 1997. *The Shopping Experience*. London: Sage
- Featherstone, Michael 1991. *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*. London: Sage
- Fromm, Erich 2002/1942. *The Fear of Freedom*. London: Routledge
- Gronow, J. 1997. *The Sociology of Taste*. London: Routledge
- Gronow, J. 2003. *Caviar with Champagne: Common Luxury and the Ideals of the Good Life in Stalin's Russia (Leisure, Consumption and Culture)*. Berg Publishers
- Hall, S. (ed.) 1997. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage
- Kalmus, V., T. Vihalemm 2004. Eesti siirdekultuuri väärtused. — V. Kalmus, M. Lauristin ja P. Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt (toim.). *Eesti elavik 21. sajandi algul: Ülevaade uurimuse "Mina. Maailm. Meedia" tulemustest*. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus. [Ilmumas]

- Kannike, A. 2002. *Kodukujundus kui kultuuriloomine: Etnoloogiline Tartu-uurimus*. Tartu: Eesti Rahva Muuseum
- Keller, M. 2005a. Needs, desires and the experience of scarcity: Representations of recreational shopping in post-soviet Estonia. — *Journal of Consumer Culture*. [Ilmumas]
- Keller, M. 2005b. Freedom calling: Telephony, mobility and consumption in post-socialist Estonia. — *European Journal of Cultural Studies*. [Ilmumas]
- Keller, M., T. Vihalemm 2003. Return to the Consuming West: Young people's perceptions on the consumerization of Estonia. — *Young*, Vol. 11, No. 3, pp. 195–215
- Keller, M., T. Vihalemm 2004. Coping with consumer culture: Elderly urban consumers in post-Soviet Estonia. — *Trames*. [Esitatud avaldamiseks]
- Kennedy, M. 2002. *Cultural Formations of Postcommunism: Emancipation, Transition, Nation and War*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
- Kutsar, D., E. Käärrik, E.-M. Tiit, A. Trumm 1999. Vae-susega uude aastatuhandesse. — R. Vetik (toim.). *Eesti inimarengu aruanne, 1999*. Tallinn: ÜRO Arenguprogramm, lk 75–79. Vt <http://www.iiss.ee/nhdr/1999/EIA99est.pdf>
- Kõresaar, E., T. Anepaio 2003. *Mälu kui kultuuritegur: Etnoloogilisi perspektiive*. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus
- Lauristin, M. 2004. Eesti ühiskonna kihistumine. — V. Kalmus, M. Lauristin ja P. Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt (toim.). *Eesti elavik 21. sajandi algul: Ülevaade uurimuse "Mina. Maailm. Meedia" tulemustest*. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus. [Ilmumas]
- Lehtonen, T.-K. 1999. *Rahan vallas: Ostoksilla käyminen ja markkinatalouden arki*. Helsinki: Tutkijaliitto
- Mauss, M. 2002/1950. *The Gift*. London: Routledge
- Miller, D. 1987. *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*. Oxford: Blackwell
- Miller, D. 1998. *A Theory of Shopping*. London: Polity Press
- Miller, D., P. Jackson, N. Thrift, B. Holbrook, M. Rowlands 1998. *Shopping, Place and Identity*. London: Routledge
- Patico, J. 2002. Chocolate and cognac: Gifts and the recognition of social worlds in post-soviet Russia. — *Ethnos*, Vol. 67, No. 3, pp. 345–368
- Pavelson, M., M. Luuk 2002. Tõrjutud pered: seisund, probleemid ja tugivõrgustik. Vt <http://www.riik.ee/rahvastik/lopppavelson.html>, vaadatud märtsis 2004

CURRICULUM VITAE

Citizenship: Estonian
Date of Birth: August 2, 1971
Marital Status: Married
Address: Department of Journalism and Communication, University of Tartu, 18 Ülikooli St., 50090 Tartu, Estonia
Telephone: +372 7 375 190; +372 50 62 801
Fax: +372 7 376 355
E-mail: margit.keller@ut.ee

Education

1989–1995 Undergraduate study, Department of English Philology, University of Tartu
Feb. 1995 *Baccalaureus artium* in English philology, University of Tartu
1997–1999 Graduate study (master's level), Department of Journalism, University of Tartu
June 1999 *Magister artium* in Media and Communications, Department of Journalism, University of Tartu
1999–2004 Graduate study (doctoral level), Department of Journalism and Communications, University of Tartu

Professional Employment

2000–present Lecturer at the Department of Journalism and Communications, University of Tartu
1995–1999 Senior Account Executive, Hill & Knowlton Estonia
1994–1995 Public Relations specialist, Estonian Privatization Agency

Special Courses

Jan.–March 1999 Visiting graduate study at Loughborough University, UK, Department of Social Sciences.
May–June 2004 'Canon of Classics', *PhD* school on consumer culture theory organized by NorFa Consumer Culture Network, Nyborg, Denmark.

Scientific Activity

Main research areas:

Development of Western consumer culture in post-socialist Estonia, consumption practices and representations, shopping practices and representations, advertising texts, brands and branding as symbolic devices and processes in the present-day consumer culture.

Participation in international projects:

Coordination Action for Increasing User Awareness for Sustainable Consumption “Sustainable Consumption Research Exchanges (SCORE!)”; EU Framework Programme 6. Project in negotiation phase, proposed date of beginning – January 2005.

Membership in Professional Organisations

European Sociological Association (ESA)
Network of Sociology of Consumption of ESA
Association for Cultural Studies
Nordic Network for Consumer Culture (NorFa)
Estonian Public Relations Association

CURRICULUM VITAE

Kodakondsus: Eesti
Sünniaeg: 2. august, 1971
Perekonnaseis: abielus
Aadress: Ajakirjanduse ja kommunikatsiooni osakond, Tartu Ülikool,
Ülikooli 18, 50090 Tartu
Telefon: 7 375 190, 50 62 801
Faks: 7 376 355
E-post: margit.keller@ut.ee

Haridus

1989–1995 Bakalaureuseõpe, inglise filoloogia osakond, Tartu Ülikool
Veebruar 1995 *Baccalaureus artium* inglise filoloogia alal, Tartu Ülikool
1997–1999 Magistriõpe, ajakirjanduse osakond, Tartu Ülikool
Juuni 1999 *Magister artium* meedia ja kommunikatsiooni alal, ajakirjanduse osakond, Tartu Ülikool
1999–2004 Doktoriope, ajakirjanduse ja kommunikatsiooni osakond, Tartu Ülikool

Erialane teenistuskäik

2000–praeguseni Lektor, sotsiaalse kommunikatsiooni õppetool, ajakirjanduse ja kommunikatsiooni osakond, Tartu Ülikool.
1994–1995 Vanemprojektijuht, Hill & Knowlton Estonia
1994–1995 Avalike suhete spetsialist, Eesti Erastamisagentuur

Enesetäiendus

Jaan.–märts 1999 Külalistudeng (magistriõpe) Loughborough University, Sotsiaalteaduste osakond, Suurbritannia.
Mai–juuni 2004 “Canon of Classics”, tarbimiskultuuri teooria alane doktori-kool, organiseerija: NorFa Consumer Culture Network, Nyborg, Taani.

Teadustegevus

Teadustöö põhisuunad:

Lääneliku tarbimiskultuuri areng taasiseseisvunud Eestis, tarbimispraktikad ja representatsioonid (sh ostupraktikad ja -epresentatsioonid), reklaami- jm promotsioonilised tekstid, brändid ja brändimine kui sümbolilised vahendid tänapäevases tarbimiskultuuris.

Osalus rahvusvahelistes projektides:

Coordination Action for Increasing User Awareness for Sustainable Consumption “Sustainable Consumption Research Exchanges (SCORE!)”; EL 6. raamprogramm. Projekt on läbirääkimiste faasis, prognoositav algus: jaanuar 2005.

Kuulumine erialastesse organisatsioonidesse

European Sociological Association (ESA)
Network of Sociology of Consumption of ESA
Association for Cultural Studies
Nordic Network for Consumer Culture (NorFa)
Eesti Suhtekorraldajate Liit

**DISSERTATIONES
DE MEDIIS ET COMMUNICATIONIBUS
UNIVERSITATIS TARTUENSIS**

1. **Epp Lauk.** Historical and sociological perspectives on the development of Estonian journalism. Tartu, 1997, 184 p.
2. **Triin Vihalemm.** Formation of collective identity among Russophone population of Estonia. Tartu, 1999, 217 p.