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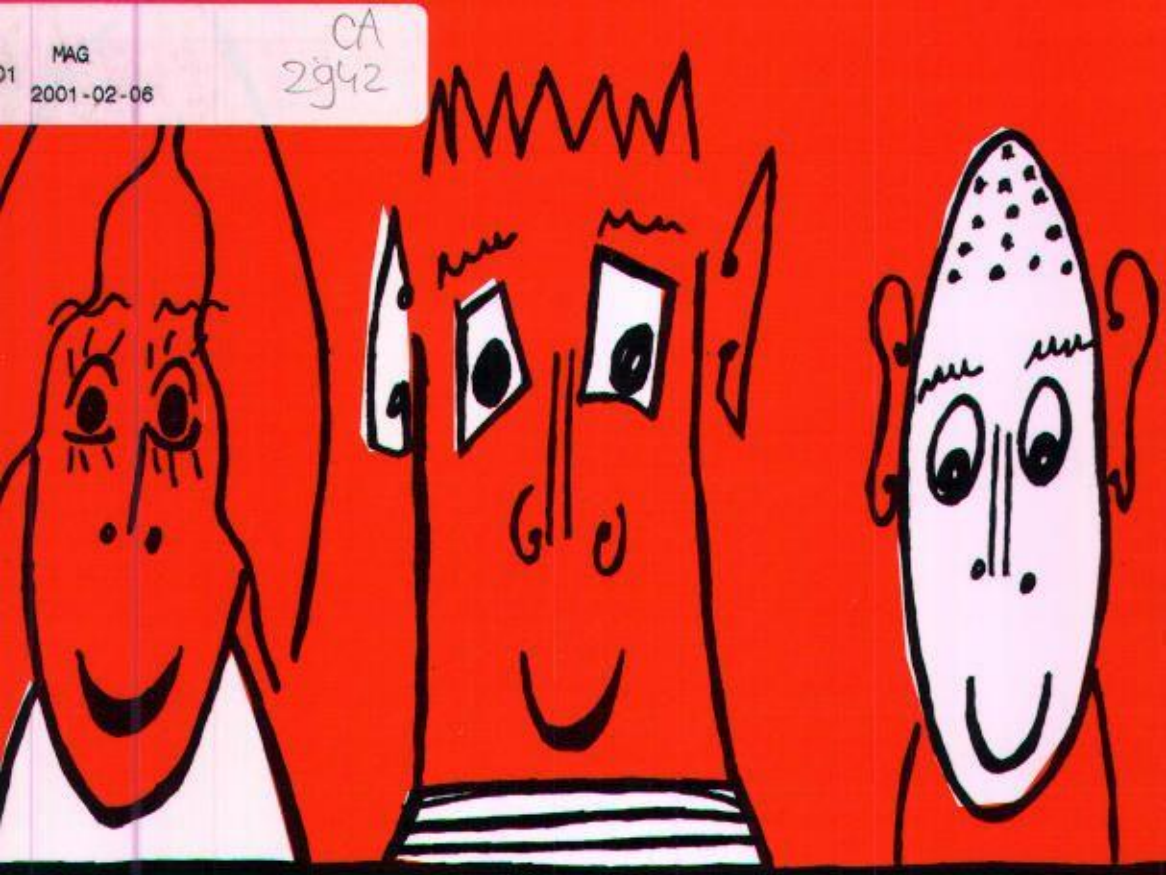

A Green Third Way?

hilosophical Reflections on Government Intervention in Non-Sustainable Lifestyles

Volkert Beekman

NIJ083201.7942

Stellingen

1) Omdat praktijken en levensverhalen zich tot onlosmakelijke gehelen verbinden in levensstijlen, valt de vraag of de overheid zich in het milieubeleid mag bemoeien met levensstijlen niet te omzeilen met suggesties dat een bepaalde vormgeving van dit beleid voldoende ruimte laat voor de ontplooiing van ofwel praktijken ofwel levensverhalen.

2) Omdat hedendaagse welvarende samenlevingen zich gelukkig kenmerken door een verfrissende veelheid aan levensstijlen, levensverhalen en consumptieve voorkeuren, zou het de overheid tot eer strekken om in het milieubeleid ook te streven naar behoud van deze veelvormigheid.

3) Ter voorkoming van onomkeerbare schade aan het natuurlijk milieu, en daarmee aan de mogelijkheden voor toekomstige generaties tot ontplooiing van hun eigen levensstijlen, dient de overheid zich in het milieubeleid op soms tamelijk dwingende wijze te bemoeien met levensstijlen.

4) De overheid laat een uitgelezen kans liggen, wanneer het milieubeleid niet poogt te voorzien in sociale en materiele voorwaarden die mensen stimuleren om een actieve en creatieve eigen bijdrage te leveren aan de vormgeving van duurzame levensstijlen.

5) De rationaliteit van consumptieve keuzes valt te verhogen door de uitwisseling van informatie over de milieugevolgen van deze keuzes te verbeteren en die milieugevolgen ook in de prijzen van consumptiegoederen te verrekenen.

6) Conceptuele fijnslijperij in termen van hermeneutische cirkels of reflectieve equilibria kan weinig toevoegen aan een kernachtige omschrijving van de filosofische methode als dialectisch proces van lezen – denken – praten – schrijven.

7) Het leerproces van promovendi zou aan inzichtelijkheid winnen door in proefschriften naast de gebruikelijke literatuurlijst ook een B-lijst met gelezen maar irrelevant of onbruikbaar bevonden literatuur op te nemen.

8) Omdat het formuleren van stellingen bij proefschriften behoort tot de schaarse oefeningen in retorica binnen de hedendaagse academische vorming, dient deze institutie niet al te lichtzinnig als archaisch terzijde te worden geschoven.

9) ~~Sommige stellingen kun je beter schrappen~~.

10) De uitbundigheid waarmee een sporter juicht na het scoren van een punt is omgekeerd evenredig met het gemiddeld aantal gescoorde punten per wedstrijd in desbetreffende tak van sport.

Stellingen behorende bij het Proefschrift *"A Green Third Way? Philosophical Reflections on Government Intervention in Non-Sustainable Lifestyles"* van Volkert Beekman, in het openbaar te verdedigen op vrijdag 23 februari 2001 des namiddags te vier uur in de Aula.

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NN08201, 2942

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Volkert Beekman

Proefschrift
ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
op gezag van de rector magnificus
van Wageningen Universiteit,
prof.dr.ir. L. Speelman
in het openbaar te verdedigen
op vrijdag 23 februari 2001
des namiddags te vier uur in de Aula.

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CENTRALE LANDBOUWCATALOGUS
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Beekman, V.

A Green Third Way ?
Philosophical Reflections on Government Intervention in Non-Sustainable Lifestyles /
Volkert Beekman
Thesis Wageningen Universiteit – With summary in Dutch
ISBN 90-5808-360-8

Cover Illustration by Twan de Vos
Printed in the Netherlands by Grafisch bedrijf Ponsen & Looijen b.v.

For
Jan
and
Monique

Acknowledgements

You can only identify the leading threads in the narrative of your (professional) life in retrospective, after the fact. You rather live than tell this narrative of self-identity. Once in a while, however, you feel inclined to make a reflexive incision in the ongoing flow of acts, choices and events in daily life. Then you actively reconstruct apparent coincidences until they become meaningful formative experiences in a coherent narrative of life.

Therefore, it seems appropriate to start these acknowledgements by expressing my gratitude to my parents and brothers Ank, Frans, Jappe and Martijn Beekman for their lifetime support. In a similar vein, I would like to thank Jan-Kees van Donge, Rien Munters and Jan Schakel. Their superior MSc-courses have been formative and lasting experiences in my academic development. Next, I would like to thank my supervisors Jozef Keulartz and Michiel Korthals for their support in writing this book. I would also like to thank the members of the organising committee of the First European Congress on Agricultural and Food Ethics - Will Bodde, Frans Brom, Joost Meulenbroek, Jan Schakel, Jan Staman, Raoul Weiler and Abbo de Wit - for providing an ideal atmosphere to recover from my worst case of PhD-blues. Next, I would like to thank the members of a social theory study circle - Jens Andersson, Alex Bolding, Gemma van der Haar, Flip van Helden, Cees Leeuwis and Edwin Rap - for sharing many inspiring thoughts and intoxicating drinks. Avner de-Shalit (Hebrew University Jerusalem) and Marcel Wissenburg (Catholic University Nijmegen) extensively commented on several arguments in this book, for which I would like to thank them. Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues at the Applied Philosophy Group (Wageningen University), the Centre for Bio-ethics and Health Law (Utrecht University) and the Agricultural Economics Research Institute (The Hague) for providing an environment to finish this book.

Earlier versions of several parts of this book were presented or published elsewhere. A pilot paper of the entire book was published in 'Filosofie & Praktijk' (Beekman, 1997a). Section 1.1 developed from a paper co-authored by Ries Breedveld, my former colleague at the Studium Generale of Wageningen University (Breedveld & Beekman, 1994). Early versions of chapter 2 were presented at the 'Environmental Justice' Conference in Melbourne (Beekman, 1997b) and the NWO 'Beyond Sustainability' Conference in Amsterdam (Beekman, 1998a), and published in 'Oikos' (Beekman, 1998b). An early version of chapter 3 was presented at the ISSEI 'Twentieth Century European Narratives' Conference in Haifa (Beekman, 1998c). Early versions of chapter 4 were presented at the First European Congress on Agricultural and Food Ethics in Wageningen (Beekman,

1999a) and the SAP/ISEE 'Moral and Political Reasoning in Environmental Practice' Conference in Oxford (Beekman, 1999b), and published in the 'Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics' (Beekman, 2000a). Early versions of chapter 5 were presented at the 18th and 19th Dutch-Flemish Philosophy Days in Rotterdam and Wageningen (Beekman, 1996a & 1997c) and the EurSafe 2000 'Two Systems - One World' Conference in Copenhagen (Beekman, 2000b), and published in 'Krisis' (Beekman, 1996b). Section 5.4.2 developed from an unpublished paper co-authored by my colleague Henk van den Belt. Some of the arguments in this sub-section may be traced to his paper for the ISHS Meeting in Leusden (Van den Belt, 1995).

Finally, I would like to thank Jan Schakel and Monique Riphagen, who have been so much more than philosophical sparring partners. I dedicate this book to them.

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1

Introduction

"Anyone can become a deconstructionist
without any knowledge whatsoever [...]
However, not to deconstruct but to construct
...that is something different,
dear deconstructionists"
(Paul van Ostaijen, 1996; 119)[1]

1.1
A Short History of Sustainable Development (1972-1987)

The year 1972 must have been a very special year indeed. The Club of Rome published its report 'The Limits to Growth' (Meadows *et al.*, 1972), the Ecologist published its 'Blueprint for Survival' (Goldsmith, 1972), and the United Nations held its first Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm (UN, 1972). These three occasions were also the first to use the notion of sustainable development with its current connotations.

The report of the Club of Rome and the 'Blueprint for Survival' represented the climax of the first, alarmist, wave in post-war environmentalism, which thought that a revolutionary change of modern industrial capitalism was necessary to prevent any further deterioration of nature and the environment. Both reports read like secular doomsday prophecies, and their apocalyptic message was that prevailing modes of production and consumption could never be sustained into the future. A fundamental break with modern industrial capitalism was supposed to be necessary to prevent the short-term breakdown of the global natural environment. These survivalist reports emphasised the limited possibilities to provide a rapidly growing human population with sufficient food, resources and energy, as well as the equally limited capacities of the environment to

[1] Throughout the book, all translations from Dutch originals are my own - VB.

absorb increasingly high levels of pollution. The kernel of their prophecies was that these natural limits to growth were real and disturbingly quantifiable. Such limits could not be transcended by any further substitution of natural resources through advanced technological development. The Blueprint listed four conditions of sustainable development: 1) minimal disturbance of ecological processes; 2) maximal conservation of energy and other natural resources; 3) stabilisation of the population growth; and 4) development of a social system in which people would perceive the first three conditions as enabling, rather than disabling, their opportunities to follow a good life. This fourth condition exemplifies that these reports saw the deterioration of nature and the environment as but one dimension of a much deeper, even existential, crisis of modern industrial capitalism that called for a revolutionary change of contemporary affluent societies.

The first UN Conference on the Human Environment, on the other hand, signalled the start of a second, more pragmatic, wave in post-war environmentalism. This conference turned international environmentalism's attention to the pursuit of adjustments within modern industrial capitalism as the pathway to sustainable development. It changed the alarmist stance of the first wave for the more constructive effort of finding solutions for the global environmental problems. For the first time in the environmental debate, the participants to this conference also emphasised the reciprocal relation between environmental degradation and economic development. Bridging the growing gap between affluent and poor countries, perceived as both cause and effect of environmental deterioration, was introduced as a major challenge for international environmental policy-making. The parties agreed that solutions for the global environmental problems should not be pursued at the cost of the legitimate aspirations of developing countries to reach a similar level of affluence as western industrialised countries. Both principled and practical reasons urged them to argue that environmental policy-making should pursue sustainable development and distributive justice as twin objectives. With the foundation of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), this conference also established an international platform for ongoing debate on global environmental deterioration.

However, the world had to await 1980 before the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) presented the first serious elaboration on the intuitively appealing notion of sustainable development in its 'World Conservation Strategy' (IUCN, 1980). This report offered the first definition of sustainable development that seriously tried to capture people's empathetic concerns about the negative repercussions of the current generation's use of nature and the environment for the opportunities of future generations to follow their own visions of the good life. It defined sustainable development as *"the management of human use of the biosphere so*

that it may yield the greatest sustainable benefit to present generations while maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations" (IUCN, 1980). Moreover, the report also provided a first attempt to carry the implications of sustainable development as a policy objective beyond the simple applications on the use of renewable resources. It extended sustainable development's field of application by suggesting that it encompassed the following principles: *"maintenance of essential ecological processes and life-support systems, the preservation of genetic diversity, and the sustainable utilization of species and resources"* (IUCN, 1980).

The establishment of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), that was to develop strategies for a global sustainable development, foreshadowed a lasting alteration of the international environmental debate. With the presentation of the WCED-report 'Our Common Future' in 1987, the notion of sustainable development gained its prospective status as a meta-objective for environmental policy-making. The report argued that the baseline for sustainable development should be that future generations deserve access to roughly the same amount of natural resources as the current generation. In order to secure this requirement, the WCED (1987) defined sustainable development as *"development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"* (43). This authoritative definition may still seem unduly broad and vague. However, it has shown enormous mobilising force. It thus firmly established the dominant interpretation of the kernel of sustainable development as articulating people's empathetic concerns about the opportunities of future generations to follow their own lifestyles and visions of the good life. This dominant interpretation of sustainable development as intergenerational justice argues that its pursuit calls for *"the existence of the ecological conditions necessary to support human life at a specified level of well-being through future generations"* (Lélé, 1991; 609). It is based on the acknowledgement that 1) natural resources are limited, 2) industrial capitalism tends to ignore these natural limits, and 3) the current generation has a moral responsibility to respect these limits for the sake of its offspring and future generations in general. Although radical environmentalists challenged, for instance, the anthropocentric bias of the dominant interpretation of sustainable development, the thin WCED-definition probably saved from oblivion the non-redundant intergenerational kernel of sustainable development as a new moral principle (Lélé, 1991; Achterberg, 1994)(see chapter 5 for a further analysis of sustainable development).

1.2
UNCED and NEPP2

The debate on sustainable development reached a new climax with the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Whereas radical environmentalists criticised this conference for its failure to make a real difference in international environmental policy-making, it nonetheless introduced the idea that sustainable development requires adjustments of people's lifestyles and modes of consumption as well as adjustments of prevailing modes of production. The 8th principle of the 'Rio Declaration' thus read: *"To achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, states should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate demographic policies"* (UNCED, 1992; 10). This principle is particularly important, since UNCED also stated that the progressive deterioration of the global environment is primarily caused by current modes of consumption and production in the affluent societies of Europe and North America.

UNCED argued that governments and NGOs (non-governmental organisations) should foster positive attitudes towards sustainable consumption by extensive public information. Providing full information on the environmental repercussions of their behavioral choices should raise people's environmental awareness. Moreover, UNCED argued that environmental problems are best tackled with the participation of all people concerned. People should not only have ready access to all relevant environmental information, but also have ample opportunities to participate in environmental decision-making. Apart from its emphasis on such communicative strategies, UNCED also recognised that it is highly unlikely that any substantial change in non-sustainable lifestyles and consumptive preferences will occur without the use of financial incentives. Economic strategies should, therefore, make people aware of the environmental costs of the use of energy and other natural resources and the disposal of waste.

The second Dutch National Environmental Policy Plan (NEPP2) presented a national translation of UNCED's emphasis on the need for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles. The NEPP2 called for a government-initiated *"public debate on the need and possibilities for a change of patterns of consumption in support of sustainable development"* (VROM, 1993; 52). It kicked off this debate by emphasising that adjustments in non-sustainable lifestyles and patterns of consumption should be stimulated primarily by means of communicative and economic strategies. It acknowledged that such adjustments would not be easy, for instance because of people's hitherto limited knowledge of their own contributions to environmental problems and about their possibilities to reduce this contribution. Moreover, the individualisation and

pluralisation of people's lifestyles and consumptive preferences in contemporary affluent societies compromise any government initiative to address the consumer with a limited number of instruments and a singular message about sustainable behaviour. However, the NEPP2 also recognised a positive point that the government should capitalise on. People are definitely concerned about the deterioration of nature and the environment. Unfortunately, although people seem readily willing to change non-sustainable behaviour, they will only go from willingness to actual change if this does not incur too great a personal cost. In view of these and other problems, the NEPP2 opted for a comprehensive mix of communicative and economic strategies for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles.

The NEPP2, on the one hand, stressed the importance of providing adequate information about the environmental repercussions of people's consumptive choices, and the importance of the availability of environment-friendly consumer goods on the market. Product information should offer people an insight into the environmental repercussions of the production, transport, use, and waste disposal of the products and services with which they fulfil their consumptive preferences. And an adequate market supply of sustainable products and services should enable them to adopt sustainable lifestyles and patterns of consumption. The idea was that adjustments of non-sustainable lifestyles and consumptive preferences will become within reach, if these adjustments are felt to be acceptable, attractive and feasible. Government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles should be about providing an adequate package of information, products and services to enable people to enact their eco-conscious attitudes in sustainable behaviour. The NEPP2, on the other hand, also emphasised the importance of financial incentives. It argued that people would probably make more environment-friendly choices, if they are confronted with environmentally correct prices in their weak moments of decision-making on the market. Therefore, the government should also develop economic strategies to instigate adjustments towards sustainable lifestyles and patterns of consumption.

1.3
Objective and Outline of the Book

Now that the stage is set after this, no doubt too sketchy, historical overview of the debate on the notion of sustainable development and its subsequent translation into the first proposals for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles, it is time to present the objective of this book. UNCED and NEPP2 instigated an extensive public debate on government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles in the Netherlands. However intense

this debate may have been since 1992, the question still remains whether the dominant communicative and economic strategies are able to provide a satisfactory reconciliation of government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles and respect for people's freedom to follow their own lifestyles. After an analysis of the Dutch public debate in these terms (see chapter 2), the objective of this book is therefore to offer such a reconciliation by presenting an outline of a green third way of government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles. This green third way presents an alternative to the first (communicative) and second (economic) ways in the Dutch public debate. It articulates and addresses people's empathetic concerns about the deterioration of nature and the environment within a broadly political liberal frame of reference.

Although this book now-and-then builds on empirical social-scientific research to address the issue of government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles, empirical analysis is not its prime objective. The book rather aims at conceptual reflection on the words, sentences and narratives that the participants in the public environmental debate use to argue their case for one of the possible strategies for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles. Although this conceptual, or narrative, approach necessarily entails extensive discussion of other people's arguments, the bulk of this book is not devoted to the deconstruction of these arguments. The prime objective of this book is rather to construct a meaningful narrative about government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles.

The narrative approach sympathises with Rorty's (1999) allegedly post-modernist but self-professedly neo-pragmatist stance that sees critical discussion as *"an encounter with an author, character, plot, stanza, line or archaic torso which made a difference to the critic's ... priorities and purposes. Such criticism uses the author or the text not as a specimen reiterating a type but as an occasion for changing a previously accepted taxonomy, or for putting a new twist on a previously told story"* (145). The narrative approach thus primarily looks for arguments, while discussing other authors, that could strengthen or make a difference in the construction of a meaningful narrative about the issue at stake. By confronting, for instance, Berlin's and Rawls's political liberal line of argument with the public environmental debate on government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles, the narrative approach mediates *"between old ways of speaking, developed to accomplish earlier tasks, with new ways of speaking, developed in response to new demands"* (Rorty, 1999; 66).

The narrative approach does not put forward any truth-claims about, for instance, the social ontology of contemporary affluent societies (*cf.* Pleasants, 1999). It rather hopes to offer a thought-provoking narrative that could be useful in public deliberations on the objectives and instruments of environmental policy-making. Although Rorty, like

Nussbaum (1997), sometimes seems to suggest that philosophers had better re-educate themselves to become novelists, this would stretch the narrative stance beyond the outer limits of reason. Notwithstanding the inspirational qualities of novels, poems or, for that matter, popular songs in the development of people's morality, it is perfectly reasonable to qualify philosophical narratives as yet another cultural thread that could, for instance, inspire moral responsibility in people's environmentally mediated relations with future generations.

Although the narrative approach presents a roughly political liberal point of view, it is perfectly willing to accept, like Rorty, that it is *"a view not from nowhere but from the special somewhere of (a certain sort of) Western political experience"* (Geertz, 2000; 260). The narrative approach spells out a green third way of government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles that should be applicable in western affluent liberal-democracies. It does not claim that this green third way is also applicable in other, non-western and probably not altogether liberal-democratic, contexts of action. Moreover, it primarily reflects on interventions by national governments, although some of the arguments may also hold true in a sub-national or supra-national context. One final restriction: the book limits itself to government intervention in people's lifestyles and patterns of consumption, and leaves aside possible interventions in the sphere of production.

However, the spatio-temporally-contingent narrative approach of this book does not imply that it merely tells another narrative about government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles. The narrative it spells out hopes to stand a better chance than other competing narratives in articulating and addressing the intricacies of environmental policy-making in contemporary affluent liberal-democracies. Therefore, this narrative should be able to gain adherents over time.

Now, let's get down to an outline of the substantial contents of this book. First, the next chapter maps the Dutch public debate on government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles. Although communicative and economic strategies dominate this debate, these strategies are seriously flawed by their hitherto ineffective attempts to evade the principled question of whether government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles entails an intolerable infringement of people's freedom to follow their own lifestyles, visions of the good life and consumptive preferences. Communicative and economic strategies are criticised on three accounts: 1) their failure to recognise the inextricable interconnectedness of attitudes and behaviour in people's lifestyles; 2) their evasion of the question of how government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles could respect people's freedom of choice; and 3) their unwillingness to investigate whether sustainable development provides sound reasons to restrict people's freedom of choice. Since both

strategies are thus incapable to provide meaningful interpretations of all key terms in the phrase 'government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles', it is no wonder that they cannot reconcile government intervention and respect for people's freedom to follow their own lifestyles. The chapters 3, 4 and 5, therefore, subsequently set out to remedy these flaws of the dominant communicative and economic strategies. Lately, luckily, a third strategy dawned in the Dutch public debate. This (institutional) strategy offers materials to develop a green third way of government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles.

Chapter 3 mainly builds on Giddens's structuration theory, his and Beck's accounts of reflexive modernisation, and Douglas's group-grid analysis to argue for a narrative conceptualisation of the notions of lifestyle and self-identity. This narrative conceptualisation 1) emphasises the inextricable interconnectedness of people's practices and narratives of self-identity, 2) stresses the duality of individual and society in the constitution of people's lifestyles, 3) changes the modernist distinction between citizens and consumers for the public-private hybrid of the citizen-consumer, and 4) maps the dazzling plurality of lifestyles in the globalising, individualising and detraditionalising affluent societies of today. The narrative conceptualisation of lifestyles thus implies that one can no longer evade the question of whether government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles entails an intolerable infringement of people's freedom to follow their own lifestyles by emphasising their freedom in either practices or identities. These practices and identities are inextricably interconnected in people's lifestyles. Therefore, one needs to fully address the question of why it is important to respect people's freedom to follow their own lifestyles in contemporary liberal-democratic societies.

Chapter 4 mainly builds on Berlin's and Rawls's political liberalism, Raz's liberal perfectionism, and Habermas's account of deliberative democracy to argue that most government interventions in lifestyles represent intolerable infringements of people's freedom of choice. This liberal account 1) argues that respect for people's freedom of choice entails a neutral and anti-perfectionist stance of the government, 2) believes that directive communicative and economic strategies of government intervention will only be justifiable, if people's behavioral choices harm others or themselves, cause distributive injustice, or are irrational, 3) accepts, in the second instance, that political liberalism is not neutral or anti-perfectionist at all, but believes that this perfectionist reappraisal strengthens the need to respect people's freedom of choice, and 4) propagates extensive public deliberation about the formation and execution of environmental policy-making to enhance people's positive freedom of choice. This account of people's freedom entails that directive strategies for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles do not show sufficient respect for people's freedom to follow their own lifestyles, unless it could be argued that the pursuit of these lifestyles harms, or does injustice to, others. Therefore, the

question of whether sustainable development, as a policy objective that aims to prevent harm or injustice to future generations, provides sound arguments to limit people's freedom of choice needs to be answered next.

Chapter 5 mainly builds on Rawls's savings principle, Wissenburg's restraint principle, Passmore's chains of love, and De-Shalit's transgenerational communities to argue for a double interpretation of sustainable development as representing both a principle of intergenerational justice and a future-oriented green ideal. This double interpretation 1) embraces the restraint principle and the argument that people cannot claim a right to destroy environmental goods to secure an environmental baseline that justifies directive strategies for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles, 2) suggests that people's empathetic concerns about nature and the environment are part of their future-oriented narratives of self-identity, which call for the deeper responsibilities that should inform non-directive strategies, 3) prefers stocktaking or listing primary environmental goods to quantifying some environmental utilisation space as a practical guideline for day-to-day environmental policy-making, and 4) concludes that the uncertainty of scientific knowledge about the unintended environmental repercussions of people's behavioral choices compromises attempts to justify directive strategies for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles beyond the minimal requirements of securing the environmental baseline of the restraint principle and the list of primary environmental goods. Sustainable development thus offers sound arguments to restrict people's freedom to follow their own lifestyles when the pursuit of these lifestyles threatens to damage this environmental baseline. Beyond the preservation of this baseline, people's freedom of choice cannot be trumped by further environmental considerations and, therefore, non-directive strategies should by called for to establish any further responsibilities towards nearby future generations.

Chapter 6, finally, returns from these rather unearthly reflections to the more mundane issues in the public debate on government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles by presenting an outline of a green third way. This green third way offers an alternative to the overly directive communicative and economic strategies for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles, and broadens the prevailing political landscape with a strategy that promises superiority in addressing the intricacies of environmental policy-making in liberal-democratic societies. Although this green third way leaves ample room to use communicative and economic instruments to secure the environmental baseline of the restraint principle and the list of primary environmental goods, these instruments are framed in a quite different perspective or set of premises now. After a summary of the main line of argument in this book, a short discussion of the Schönau Energy Initiatives serves to illustrate the kernel of an alternative strategy. This green third

way offers a non-directive strategy for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles in which the government hopes to stimulate the development of sustainable lifestyles by adjusting the social and material conditions that surround people in following their lifestyles. The green third way, thus, reconciles government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles and respect for people's freedom to follow their own lifestyles to a satisfactory degree. It accepts that the requirement to secure the environmental baseline of the restraint principle and the list of primary environmental goods justifies the use of directive strategies for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles in a limited set of conditions. However, it also emphasises that non-directive strategies should do the majority of the job. In this non-directive strategy the government should provide the social and material conditions in which a plurality of sustainable lifestyles could flourish.

One proviso: Callinicos (1999) qualified Giddens's 'The Third Way' (1998) as *"one of the worst books by a leading social theorist"* (80). This devastating qualification is not entirely off the mark. Why then call this book 'A Green Third Way'? On the one hand, because this book does present a third way in the public environmental debate on government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles. On the other hand, because Giddens's formal theory of structuration, and to a lesser degree also his substantial theory of reflexive modernisation, still provides superior inspiration in writing a book like this. On the third hand, it is a catchy title, isn't it?

2

The Dutch Public Debate

"Yes it's fucking political,
everything's political"
(Skunk Anansie, 1996)

2.1
Introduction

She, a slovenly type of woman, shuffles into her kitchen. She can't find the glasses behind her ears and is complaining, grumbling and muttering about her husband, who is a physician and has gone off with a spruce nurse (no doubt a dumb and busty blonde). The lightbulbs are flickering, the washing machine staggers through the kitchen and when she opens the refrigerator to get some milk for her coffee, it spews its contents on her.

It is time for a change, agrees the pitiful main character in the commercial of the joint Dutch energy companies from which this image is taken. The message is clear: wasting energy has no style whatsoever. The need for a change of lifestyles and a possible government intervention in lifestyles has become a topic of public debate in the Netherlands in recent years, not only because of the need to reduce energy consumption but also in view of the broader issue of sustainable development. Mainly since the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, 1992) and the second Dutch National Environmental Policy Plan (NEPP2)(VROM, 1993), the desirability of a change of lifestyles has the attention of the Dutch government, political parties, environmental organisations, social scientists and other participants in the public debate.

The central idea in most contributions to the Dutch public debate on government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles was expressed by McCluney in the context of coming to terms with the ethical issues raised by UNCED: *"Everyone wants the freedom to follow a lifestyle of one's own choice; however, some lifestyles can be injurious to self, family, friends, or society in general. [...] When one follows a lifestyle that is clearly injurious to others, or to the biosphere upon which we all depend, then some loss of this*

freedom is necessary, either by rule or law, or by the 'rules' of nature" (McCluney, 1994; 25). Thus, the idea is that if the government does not place any restrictions on non-sustainable lifestyles now, nature will eventually strike back and impose an even more severe reduction of lifestyle opportunities on us or our offspring. Therefore, the debate centres mainly on the question of which instruments should be used, if government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles is considered to be necessary.

Initially, two main positions could be distinguished in this debate. One party argued the case for a government initiative to influence people's attitudes towards nature and the environment through public information and education, hoping that this would also induce an adjustment of behaviour in a sustainable direction. Others argued for a government attempt to keep the effects of people's behaviour within sustainability limits by means of financial incentives, without denying current preferences for comfort and speed. These positions diverge on how they seek to accomplish the desired change of non-sustainable lifestyles; either by confronting people about their attitudes, or by confronting people with their behaviour. Lately, however, a third position has sprung up in this debate, which feels that sustainable lifestyles should not be discussed and shaped primarily by the government but by people themselves. The government's only task is to provide the social and material conditions in which people can take an active part in shaping sustainable alternatives. In the subsequent analysis of the three positions (2.2, 2.3 and 2.4) people will be referred to consistently as citizens, consumers and citizen-consumers (see 3.3 for an elaboration on these terms), respectively, in order to highlight the differences between the three positions. Apart from these three strategies currently propagated in the Dutch public debate, a fourth strategy is seen as a menace by the proponents of all three other strategies: some sort of coercive adjustment of non-sustainable lifestyles. Since such a coercive strategy is hardly defended by anyone in the current debate, it will not be discussed separately.

This chapter maps the Dutch public debate on government intervention by successively analysing the arguments for communicative strategies (2.2), economic strategies (2.3), and social and material conditions (2.4) as so many answers to the question which instruments best to use for this intervention. The analysis presented in this chapter focuses on the contents of the proposals defended in the public environmental debate. Without denying the importance of a strategic analysis of public debates, it seems to be a form of justified philosophical restraint and modesty to try to figure out whether the arguments in such debates can be made intelligible by looking at their contents first. Only if they cannot, and thus only in the second instance, should one resort to explanations in strategic terms (*cf.* Hajer, 1995). This analysis will take the political parties, environmental organisations, and social scientists of various denominations to be the main participants in the debate. Of course, social scientists not only participate in the

public debate, they also inform it with empirical and theoretical descriptions and interpretations of socio-cultural processes. However, most contemporary social scientists no longer live up to the strict distinction between fact and value that was so vigorously propagated by Weber (1922). As a result, descriptive and prescriptive elements are not always that clearly distinguishable in their work. The chapter ends with a summarising conclusion on the divergent and problematic assumptions underlying the various positions in the seemingly instrumental debate (2.5).

2.2
Communicative Strategies

The class of instruments that was first propagated in the Dutch public debate consists of public information and other communicative instruments. Proponents of such a communicative strategy believe that all citizens should make a change. Every citizen should drive less, produce less waste, reduce energy consumption, purchase environment-friendly products, and so on. They also believe that in order to achieve such behavioral adjustments, citizens will first have to reflect on the environmental repercussions of their behaviour. These reflections should be guided by changed attitudes towards nature and the environment. This is where the government enters the picture. It is the government that should provide citizens with lots of information and instructive material, so as to set this change of attitudes in motion and support the subsequent reflections of citizens.[2]

The criticism of current car-driving practices is paradigmatic for the views of the advocates of communicative instruments. We are too much in love with our cars, to paraphrase the title of a quite sympathetic if rather naive booklet by students from an antroposophical College (Kamper *et al.*, 1992). The proposed first task for the government is, therefore, to develop a communicative strategy to change these loving attitudes of citizens towards their cars, since it is those attitudes which cause citizens to overlook environmental repercussions when deciding whether or not they will take the car. Even if they do consider these repercussions, it will seem as if their own share in causing or solving these problems is negligible. Given that the environmental repercussions of

[2] Proponents of communicative strategies can be found among government representatives (e.g. Pe & Spanjersberg, 1996), political parties (e.g. Van der Wal *et al.*, 1993), environmental organisations (e.g. LMO, 1994; Juffermans, 1995a & 1995b; Peters, 1995) and social scientists (e.g. Midden & Bartels, 1994; Steg, 1996). The analysis in this section draws on these sources but also on Van Soest (1991 & 1993) and Spaargaren (1997), who both analysed the debate as social scientists and participated in it by criticising communicative strategies for government intervention.

current car-driving practices can only be addressed if all citizens contribute to a solution, the government should make the citizens: 1) aware of the environmental repercussions of current car-driving practices, 2) acknowledge that these repercussions are serious social problems, 3) feel responsible for causing them, and 4) convinced that they can make a difference in solving them. This communicative strategy should aim to reduce car-driving by reducing mobility, influencing the choice of means of transport, and stimulating a more efficient use of the car. The proponents of such a communicative strategy acknowledge that within the citizens' loving attitudes the car symbolises individual freedom, and that the government should not wish to restrict this freedom. However, the government could try to tempt citizens to look for another symbol to express their freedom. In short, what is proposed to the citizens is indeed to divorce their beloved cars (Peters, 1995; Steg, 1996).

The proposals to use communication and persuasion as instruments for government intervention, as illustrated in the car-driving example, can be generalised into a strategy for accomplishing adjustments in other non-sustainable practices as well. Proponents of a communicative strategy do in fact recommend public information and education, product information, certification, monitoring and feedback, and publicising the existence and advantages of alternative options as instruments to influence the attitudes on which citizens found their choices for certain behavioral options. This strategy aims at instigating a learning process among citizens, getting them to reflect more seriously on their behavioral options, judge sustainable options more positively, use new background views in addressing environmental problems, and change their deeper preferences. Thus, it focuses on the individual motivation of citizens to choose a certain behavioral alternative, and on the individual possibilities and capabilities of citizens to express their preference for certain behavioral alternatives. Besides car-driving, other travelling practices, eating, heating and using domestic electrical appliances are generally identified as the most relevant and problematic practices in terms of environmental deterioration. Juffermans (1995a), for instance, drew up a list of over twenty priorities for changing non-sustainable lifestyles. His top 5: 1) reduce car driving, 2) reduce flying, 3) reduce meat consumption, 4) reduce domestic use of electricity and gas, and 5) eat more organic food.

These proposals to use communicative instruments for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles are principally embedded in the socio-psychological attitude-behaviour paradigm (Fishbein & Azjen, 1975). Of course, social scientists on the one hand and political parties and environmental organisations on the other differ in the way they relate their proposals to theory. Whereas the formers refer explicitly to the theory in their contributions to the debate, the latter can merely be assumed to use it intuitively. However, the high level of reflexivity of lay people in contemporary affluent societies (see chapter 3) makes it quite plausible that they too are not wholly unfamiliar with the theory. Behaviour,

including its environmental repercussions, is perceived in this paradigm as resulting from the conscious and rational choices of individual citizens. This view on behaviour as primarily resulting from citizens' conscious choices implies a fixation on attitudes as the predictors of behaviour, and thus on non-sustainable attitudes as the prime variable to be influenced by the government. Hence, practices are merely seen as the result and sum of distinct and measurable intentions, motives and reasons for behaviour. These intentions, motives and reasons of citizens are conceptualised as logically independent from their actual behaviour. In addition, the focus in this paradigm is almost exclusively on singular environmentally relevant practices. The general idea deduced from this attitude-behaviour paradigm seems to be that citizens are best addressed on singular environmental issues and with simple behavioral alternatives. It is suggested, for instance, that the government should develop a personal environmental impact test to provide citizens with an insight into the environmental repercussions of their current practices, and that publicity campaigns should above all highlight specific behavioral alternatives for citizens. Once citizens' attitudes are adjusted in a sustainable direction, their practices will soon follow.

The proponents of communicative instruments often conjure up the spectre of a coercive policy to change people's lifestyles. This is quite peculiar, since hardly any party in the Dutch public debate calls for coercion as a means to accomplish the desired adjustments in non-sustainable lifestyles. The spectre does serve to illuminate one of the main assumptions of the proponents of communicative instruments. They are very keen on not injuring rights and freedoms of citizens. This is why, for instance, a stringent policy to reduce car driving appears to be politically unfeasible at the moment. The reason for this was already mentioned. The car symbolises individual freedom, and this freedom is one of the most important values in liberal-democratic societies like the Netherlands.

So, coercive strategies (i.e. commands and prohibitions) to change lifestyles are unattractive because of their poor legitimacy. Communicative strategies, which aim to gain voluntary cooperation, seem to be much more attractive in this respect. Communicative instruments can encourage citizens to take their own responsibility for nature and the environment, and create opportunities for citizens to take environment-friendly decisions. Taking such decisions, citizens will weigh up, for instance, comfort, energy consumption, prevention of waste, and prices. The government should not be allowed to make such decisions for the citizens but it is entitled, say the proponents of a communicative strategy, to influence them by providing information on the environmental repercussions of various choices. The question of whether the government is allowed to intervene in non-sustainable lifestyles is answered affirmatively, as long as such intervention is limited to public information and other communicative instruments. The government could and should appeal to the eco-consciousness of citizens.

However, a hidden agenda lurks behind this emphasis on the non-directive character of a communicative strategy. Public information and education are also propagated as a means to create social and political acceptance for more stringent policies to change lifestyles, and thus make room for policies that do restrict the individual freedom of citizens to follow their own lifestyles and practices. This hidden agenda is veiled by the claim that environment-friendly adjustments of behaviour fit into lots of lifestyles, that the definition of the good life and how it should be pursued remain in the hands of the citizens. The government is called upon to convince citizens that environment-friendly behaviour can be attractive, comfortable and convenient. This message is not that easy to communicate, however, at a time when citizens are also made to understand that the required adjustments of their practices and lifestyles include the following: drive less, fly less, heat your home less, eat less meat.

The problem of this message is that most proponents of communicative strategies aim for some predetermined and static notion of the sustainable lifestyle. Therefore, they cannot allow room for people's creativity to develop a plurality of sustainable alternatives. The ambiguity of these good news stories from the proponents of communicative instruments rings even more clearly in the call for austerity coming from several Dutch environmental philosophers. These philosophers propagate a lifestyle of caring for the earth because we borrow it from our children, and defend policies oriented at stewardship and moderation (Jansen, 1990; Klop, 1993; Schuyt, 1993; Van der Wal, 1995).

In a way these pleas for austerity as the way out of the current environmental problems are not much more than a new disguise for a culture-critical stance that is as ancient as western philosophy. It is the criticism of consumerism and hedonism that dates back at least to Plato: *'"Do you think it befits a philosophical man to be keen about the so-called pleasures of, for example, food and drink?' 'Not in the least, Socrates,' said Simmias. 'And what about the other services to the body? Do you think such a person regards them as of any value? For instance, the possession of smart clothes and shoes, and the other bodily adornments - do you think he values them highly, or does he disdain them, except in so far as he's absolutely compelled to share in them?' 'I think the genuine philosopher disdains them.'"* (Plato, 1993; 9-10).

The contemporary green version of this culture-critical stance argues that the government ought to set ecological and socio-cultural limits to the consumer society, because hedonistic feasting at the expense of fellow man, nature or culture should be forbidden. A quite apocalyptic vision of the survival of nature and the environment is voiced, which assumes that the strongly rooted and highly consumptive lifestyles in contemporary affluent societies directly threaten the quality and diversity of nature. This party believes that the deterioration of nature and the environment is essentially a cultural,

even mental problem. This deterioration can only be stopped by a change of mentality. The connection between contemporary affluent lifestyles and environmental deterioration is not accidental, because the citizens leading these lifestyles can be characterised as insatiable usurpers and desirers. The environmental problems are the result of an excessively high level of aspirations and desires. Only the logic of austerity guarantees a sustainable good life on a human scale and in peace with nature. The exhaustibility of environmental goods compels citizens to adjust their lifestyles, and give up their excessive and prodigal use of these goods. The government should motivate citizens to use their creativity in order to become more self-reliant in a small-scale economy, living in harmony with their natural environment. This implies, for instance, a personal abstinence from all sorts of luxuries (*cf.* Naess, 1989). One wonders how these admonitions and respect for the freedom to follow your own lifestyle could ever be reconciled. Unfortunately, the philosophical proponents of a moralistic communicative strategy tend to ignore such worries.

In a more general sense, all proposals of the proponents of communicative strategies for government intervention are based on the incoherent assumption of a straightforward, one-way relation between attitudes and practices that express these attitudes. Hence, the government only has to develop a communicative strategy to influence citizens' attitudes, and they will soon change their practices. Since communicative instruments do not force anything on the citizens, they remain free in their practices and thus in their lifestyles. At least, that is the suggestion.

2.3
Economic Strategies

The second class of instruments propagated in the Dutch public debate on government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles is financial incentives and other economic instruments. The advocates of an economic strategy dissociate themselves from the use of communicative instruments because of two main reasons: 1) communicative strategies don't work, are not effective, and 2) they are morally wrong, based on false assumptions. The government should not wish to change citizens' attitudes and should not try to deny current preferences for comfort and speed. The important thing is to keep the consequences of consumer behaviour within sustainability limits, and in order to achieve this goal the government should touch consumers in their weak spot, i.e. their wallet. Raise the prices of environmental goods, reduce the costs of labour, revise the fiscal system, and so

on. Without such economic incentives any appeal to people's consciousness or attitude is useless, and with these economic incentives such an appeal is no longer necessary.[3]

Their diagnosis of the environmentally problematic issue of where people choose to go for their holidays and what means of transport they use is paradigmatic for the views of the proponents of economic instruments for government intervention: long-distance travelling is way too cheap. In their view, therefore, the government's primary task is to develop an economic strategy to change the cost-benefit balancing of consumers choosing a holiday destination. As things now stand, holiday-makers can choose to travel to remote destinations by plane or car and forget about the environmental repercussions of using fossil fuels because they are cheap. Even if the consumers making such choices do care about nature and the environment, current prices will nonetheless make them opt for environmentally unfriendly behaviour on the rational grounds of their well-understood self-interest. In situations where such assessments and choices are general practice, the result is a deterioration of nature and the environment while at the same time everyone regrets this. To avoid this undesirable situation, the government should intervene in the relative costs associated with the various behavioral options. With respect to holidays by air, for instance, the government could do this by 1) raising the price of airline tickets, 2) introducing a VAT levy on international flights, and 3) introducing an excise on kerosene. In short, what is proposed is that the environmental cost of long-distance travel be charged on in higher prices (Aarts *et al.*, 1995; Van der Linde & Franke, 1996).

The proposals in the choice of holiday destination example to use higher prices and tax increases as instruments for government intervention can be generalised into a strategy for accomplishing adjustments in other non-sustainable practices as well. Proponents of an economic strategy for government intervention in fact recommend price incentives, fiscal instruments, levies, subsidies, and tax differentiation as instruments to influence the prices on which the individual consumer founds his or her choice for certain products or services, and hence for a certain behaviour. In view of current trends of individualisation, self-realisation and an aversion against lecturing, this strategy prefers to use market forces to accomplish an adjustment of consumptive practices in a sustainable direction. This way, the consumers need not be deprived of their freedom to choose practices in accordance with their budget and their own preferences. On the one hand, the advocates of an

[3] Proponents of economic strategies can be found among government representatives (e.g. Grijpma, 1996), political parties (e.g. Cramer *et al.*, 1991; Schermer, 1991; Basset, 1992; Groenveld & Smit, 1992; Van Driel, 1992 & 1993; Van Driel *et al.* (eds.), 1993; Den Hartogh, 1993), environmental organisations (e.g. Buitenkamp, 1992; Van der Linde & Franke, 1996) and social scientists (e.g. Aarts *et al.*, 1995). Again, the analysis also draws upon Van Soest (1991 & 1993) and Spaargaren (1997).

economic strategy acknowledge the inevitability of allowing the government to hamper the development of certain behavioral practices. On the other hand, they argue that *"it doesn't follow ... that it is also a permissible policy option for governments to try to change people's preferences or views of the good life"* (Den Hartogh, 1995; 88). The government should try to influence the choices of consumers by raising or reducing the costs associated with certain behavioral alternatives, but environmental policy should not in any direct way aim to change preferences. The important thing is to change consumer behaviour in so far as it entails an excessive use of environmental goods. The government had better restrict itself to reducing the negative impacts of consumer behaviour on nature and the environment, while keeping the motives for choosing certain behavioral practices outside the debate. If people choose to follow environment-unfriendly patterns of consumption, they will simply have to pay the price.

These proposals to use financial incentives and other economic instruments for government intervention are principally embedded in the social dilemma paradigm (Hardin, 1968) which stems from game theory, and are sometimes even based on the reduction of the individual into a stereotyped homo economicus. Behaviour, including its environmental repercussions, is perceived in this paradigm as resulting from the conscious and rational pursuit of self-interest by individual consumers. In this perspective, environmental deterioration is seen primarily as resulting from a situation in which the rational behaviour of individuals leads to a sub-optimal outcome for the collective. This situation has been described as a social dilemma. The tension between self-interest and the collective interest of a sustainable development results from two circumstances: 1) while the contribution of each individual to environmental deterioration seems negligible, the sum of all contributions causes severe problems; 2) the repercussions of certain practices on nature and the environment stretch across large scales of space and time. It implies a fixation on self-interest as the motivation for behaviour, and thus on prices as the prime variable to be influenced by the government. The general idea deduced from this social dilemma paradigm seems to be that the model of financial reward and punishment is the best starting point for a government strategy to intervene in environmentally relevant behaviour.

In order to back up their case, the proponents of economic instruments do not conjure up the spectre of coercion, but that of a communicative strategy. What they find particularly dreadful about a communicative strategy is the moralising tendencies it carries. This fear is illustrative of one of the main assumptions of the proponents of economic instruments. Although, like the proponents of a communicative strategy, they are very keen not to injure rights and freedoms of consumers, their emphasis is on freedom of preferences. They will not care so much, if government policies work out differently for

divergent practices. In their view, the government should neither wish to change, for instance, current preferences for remote holiday destinations, nor try to eliminate this environment-unfriendly behavioral option by coercion. The reason for this was already mentioned. The government should respect the high value attached to individual freedom in liberal-democratic societies like the Netherlands. It should only attempt to change consumer behaviour by raising the price of non-sustainable behavioral alternatives.

So, both coercive and communicative strategies to change lifestyles are unattractive because of their poor legitimacy, and an economic strategy seems to be much more attractive in this respect. Financial incentives and other economic instruments are more likely to motivate consumers to give up their environment-unfriendly habits, to subordinate their self-interest to the collective good of a sustainable development. With such instruments the government can make environment-friendly behaviour more affordable, less time-consuming and easier for the consumer. This facilitates a sustainable shift in consumption patterns from products to services, with consumers buying environment-friendly products, using and disposing products in an environment-friendly way, reducing car driving and energy consumption. The government should not be allowed to moralise about the practices of consumers, say the proponents of economic instruments. Instead, it is perfectly entitled to adopt price control measures in order to make the prices of products and services reflect the accompanying environmental costs, and thus induce consumers to make responsible choices. The question of whether the government is allowed to intervene in non-sustainable lifestyles is answered affirmatively, as long as such intervention is limited to financial incentives and other economic instruments. The government could and should make the consumers as polluters pay for their polluting practices.

However, some ambiguity rests in this emphasis on neutrality towards the various preferences, on the non-moralising character of an economic strategy for government intervention. If financial incentives are meant to change consumption patterns, and even reduce consumption of certain products and services, this implies a moralising of prices. But if the intended outcomes are not neutral, it is hard to imagine how this fits in with the professed neutrality towards the contents of the good life. This tension is veiled by the claim that consumers remain free to respond to financial incentives according to their own preferences, that they can enjoy a similar level of prosperity and satisfaction while sustaining reductions in their use of energy and other environmental goods. However, the message that an on-charging of the use of energy and other environmental goods in higher prices will not affect individuals' freedom to follow their own preferences will not be easy to communicate when consumers are made to understand that the purpose of financial incentives is to reduce car-driving, flying, eating meat, and domestic energy consumption. As with communicative strategies the problem of this message is that most proponents of

economic strategies aim for some predetermined and static notion of the sustainable lifestyle, and are unwilling to allow room for the development of a plurality of sustainable lifestyles.

Moreover, similar ambiguity rests between the social dilemma character that is ascribed to many environmental problems, and the instruments proposed by the proponents of an economic strategy to resolve these dilemmas. Therefore, Aarts *et al.* (1995) introduce significant amendments to the generally accepted story about environmental social dilemmas. Instead of merely assuming the actuality of social dilemmas in environmentally relevant behaviour, they see social dilemmas as a potentiality whose becoming an actuality depends on whether consumers will indeed adopt environment-unfriendly practices in a certain choice situation while nonetheless preferring a sustainable development. Consumer behaviour is paradigmatically perceived as intentional and rational, but Aarts *et al.* leave room for the possibility that consumers will refer to some combination of individual self-interest and other more collective interests in their considerations. This depends on the characteristics of each choice situation, i.e. 1) the availability of environment-friendly alternatives; 2) the cost of environment-friendly alternatives; 3) the perception of whether taking a decision about the alternatives is a public or private matter; and 4) the connection between environment-friendly alternatives and particular interests or strategic positions. This emphasis on the importance of the specific characteristics of each choice-situation for lifestyle choices not only presents a critique of the attitude-behaviour paradigm but also ramifies the social dilemma paradigm. With respect to cases like the choice of holiday destinations, the challenge for the government would be to detect which specific characteristics of this practice it is that keep consumers from choosing environment-friendly alternatives.

If one does not answer this challenge, one reduces individuals to the impoverished image of the homo economicus. Such a consumer is assumed to choose among behavioral options solely on the basis of individual cost-benefit balancing. If that is the case, the only remaining instrument for the government to influence consumer behaviour would be to raise the cost of environment-unfriendly behaviour, even while it continues to suggest that such financial measures do not interfere with the individual's freedom to follow a lifestyle of his or her own choice. One wonders why people should take such suggestions as gospel. The suggestion will be even less plausible, if the proponents of an economic strategy go on to say that if financial incentives do not go far enough to achieve the objectives of environmental policy, a quota system should be considered. Yet this is exactly what the proponents of an only seemingly neutral economic strategy for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles expect the consumers to believe.

In fact, the whole idea of economic instruments that do not interfere with the individual freedom of choice is based on a quite simplistic behavioral model. Whereas on the one hand, it assumes that prices relate directly to practices, these practices are not assumed to reflect on the preferences of which they are an expression. Hence, the government only has to influence the prices, and people will soon change their behaviour. Since economic instruments do not interfere with preferences, the consumers remain free in these preferences and thus in their lifestyles. At least, that is the suggestion.

2.4
Social and Material Conditions

Recently, a third position has cropped up in the Dutch public debate on government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles. It is the position of those who feel that government intervention should centre on providing social and material conditions. Although this third position has not yet fully crystallised, it may offer promising material for further elaboration. Unlike the preceding two sections, which concentrated on criticising the problematic presuppositions of the positions in question, this section will be looking for starting-points for the development of a green third way in the remainder of the book. According to the spokesmen for this third position the proponents of communicative and economic strategies do have a lot in common and thus share certain shortcomings. The principal objection is that both these strategies only make sense within narratives governed by a language of fear and control. It is only the rule of this language that makes nature and the environment appear as constraints, limiting conditions on the development of practices and lifestyles. Hence, 1) the primacy given to the government for adjusting lifestyles in a sustainable direction, 2) the fixation on the effectiveness of the proposed instruments, and 3) the tension and ambiguity in the reassurances of respect for people's freedom to follow lifestyles of their own choice. In contrast, the proposals offered by the proponents of the third strategy are governed by a language of challenge and interaction, which makes nature and the environment appear as opportunities, carrying conditions for the development of sustainable practices and lifestyles by citizen-consumers themselves.[4]

[4] Materials for the development of a third strategy for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles have been put forward by environmental organisations (e.g. Slob (ed.), 1995; Zijlmans, 1995) and social scientists (e.g. Bekkers *et al.*, 1996; Grin & Van de Graaf, 1996; Tjallingii, 1996; Spaargaren, 1997).

The views of the proponents of this third strategy for government intervention are not yet as crystallised as those presented in the preceding two sections. However, the general idea is to shift government intervention from handing out either moralising rules of conduct or financial rewards and punishments towards creating social and material conditions to achieve the desired adjustments in non-sustainable practices and lifestyles. Environmental problems are not primarily caused by individual choices made by citizen-consumers. Therefore, environmental policy should not aim to interfere with the autonomy of these choices. The aim of environmental policy should be to contribute to the creation and development of social and material conditions that facilitate individual and collective environment-friendly practices, while according directive steering instruments such as public information and economic measures only a complementary role. Such a third strategy for government intervention should encourage citizen-consumers to develop environment-friendly behavioral alternatives themselves. It should not aim to achieve finely predetermined results in terms of environmental impact, but to create conditions for a yet to be discovered plurality of sustainable lifestyles. The objectives of environmental policy are not the starting points for discussions about this policy then, but the result of these discussions. In this strategy the process of developing sustainable practices and lifestyles by citizen-consumers themselves is more important than defining the characteristics of a static notion of the sustainable lifestyle. Proponents of this third strategy for government intervention in lifestyles recommend, for instance, making adjustments to physical infrastructure, supporting experiments by early innovators, providing environment-friendly services, subsidising NGOs and moralising devices as instruments to support the development of sustainable practices by citizen-consumers themselves. Although these proposals to provide social and material conditions as a third strategy for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles are not yet embedded in any crystallised paradigm, Giddens's (1984) structuration theory seems to be a pretty promising candidate because it does not conceive of attitudes as somehow logically independent from specific practices but as inextricably bound up with these practices (see chapter 3).

2.5
Conclusion

The analysis of the Dutch public debate on government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles distinguished four different instrumental strategies:

1) communicative strategies that aim at changing citizens' attitudes;
2) economic strategies that aim at changing consumers' practices;
3) strategies that aim at creating social and material conditions for a reshaping of lifestyles by citizen-consumers themselves;
4) coercive strategies (hardly propagated in the debate and therefore not separately discussed)(*cf.* WRR, 1992).

The differences between the dominant, communicative and economic, strategies in the debate, in terms of the instruments they favour, were found to be intelligible against the backdrop of the different behavioral models employed by the proponents of these strategies: the socio-psychological attitude-behaviour and the game-theoretical social dilemma paradigm, respectively. These two strategies were also found to come with different justifications as to how they could respect the freedom of individuals to live their lives as they please.

Unfortunately, these justifications fail to provide a satisfactory reconciliation of government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles and respect for the individual freedom to follow one's own lifestyle. Instead of answering the question of whether their proposals for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles entail an intolerable infringement of people's freedom to follow their own lifestyles, the dominant strategies offer ineffective attempts to evade this question by suggesting that people remain free in either their attitudes or their practices. The failure to recognise the inextricable interconnectedness of attitudes and practices in people's lifestyles is the first account on which the dominant communicative and economic strategies were criticised. Second, since their evasion of the question of how government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles could respect the freedom of choice relied on this ill-conceived behavioral model, this is the next account on which these strategies are severely compromised. Third, the evasion forswears any serious attempts to investigate whether sustainable development might provide sound reasons to restrict people's freedom of choice. Since both strategies are thus incapable to give meaningful interpretations of all key terms in the phrase 'government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles', it is no wonder that they fail to reconcile this government intervention and respect for people's freedom to follow their own lifestyles.

Therefore, the next three chapters subsequently set out to remedy these flaws in the dominant communicative and economic strategies, and to provide more intelligible accounts of the key terms lifestyle, autonomy and sustainable development. Luckily, a third strategy dawned in the Dutch public debate. This strategy, which aims to provide social and material conditions in which citizen-consumers themselves can take active part in shaping sustainable lifestyles, serves as a take-off point for the elaboration of a green third way of government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles (see chapter 6).

3

Lifestyles and Reflexive Modernisation

"Either our lives become stories,
or there's just no way to get through them"
(Douglas Coupland, 1991; 8)

3.1
Introduction

He drives into town in his brand new convertible like a would-be James Dean, one hand on the wheel and the other around the shoulders of a spruce and busty blonde. His wife would probably object to his speeding, but well, he only had a few beers and you have got to feel this freedom. Then suddenly, just in front of him three sheep cross the street. His first thought is to be hallucinating, but then his foot already hits the break.

"Say baa-baa to bad driving", headed a Sunday Times (1996) article on the rather bizarre idea to use sheep as living speed bumps in a provincial Dutch town called Culemborg. If car driving were only about fulfilling utilitarian needs and speeding merely one of the negative externalities to be tackled by the local authorities, it would have been a bizarre idea indeed. However, car driving is also about identity construction and individual freedom. Most men would definitely consider speeding in a convertible to be quite stylish. Current public debates on government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles (chapter 2) are confused about a meaningful conceptualisation of the terms lifestyle and identity, and their relation with speeding practices. Such debates have much to gain from conceptual clarification on matters of identity in contemporary affluent societies. Therefore, this chapter attempts to answer the question of whether a narrative conceptualisation of identity and lifestyle would contribute to such clarity. This attempt builds on the materials developed in section 2.4.[5]

[5] This attempt will be illustrated with car-driving examples (based on: Peters, 1995).

A good place to start reflecting is Giddens's conceptualisation of the term lifestyle as inextricably interconnected narratives of self-identity and reflexively organised social practices. Giddens (1991) defines a lifestyle as: *"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"* (81). Further elaboration on this narrative conceptualisation of lifestyle is the prime objective of the first sub-section in this chapter (3.2.1). However, the search for a meaningful conceptualisation of identity should proceed by making important ramifications on an otherwise overly discursive, individualistic and static picture of narrative identities. First, it will be argued that the structural properties of society are both the medium and the outcome of a reflexively organised construction of narrative identities, and second, that narrative identities are not primarily constructed by atomised individuals but largely constituted by the social groups to which they belong (3.2.2). Next, the analysis will be broadened by incorporating a discussion of the term citizen-consumer as a conceptual tool to bridge the unfruitful gap in talking about citizens and consumers as if these terms don't refer to the same people (3.3). At that stage it is about time to shift attention towards a more contingent analysis of the specific characteristics of narrative identities in contemporary affluent societies. It will be argued that the processes of detraditionalisation, individualisation and globalisation profoundly influence the narrative turn in conceptualising identity (3.4.1). Then follows a labelling exercise, an attempt to order the plurality of lifestyles in contemporary affluent societies (3.4.2). Finally, the chapter ends with a summarising conclusion on the implications for the pursuit of a green third way for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles of taking the narrative character of identity serious (3.5). This conclusion will also establish the link to the reason why government intervention in lifestyles is considered to be a morally problematic issue in contemporary affluent societies (see chapter 4).

3.2
Lifestyles

The preceding chapter criticised the attitude-behaviour and social dilemma paradigms for considering attitudes to be somehow logically independent from the practices in which people engage (2.2 & 2.3). Alternatively, it argued that these attitudes, or narratives of self-identity, should rather be conceived as inextricably interconnected with specific social practices (2.4). This tentative conceptualisation of lifestyles as reciprocally constituting narratives of self-identity and practices deserves further elaboration.

3.2.1
Narrative Identities and Reflexive Practices[6]

For a further clarification on the conceptual meaning of the terms identity and lifestyle, it might be wise to start by quoting Giddens's (1991) definition of a lifestyle once again. A lifestyle 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"* (81). The notion of lifestyle thus refers to a certain coherence in people's practices. A lifestyle connects people's day-to-day behavioral options into more or less ordered patterns of choices. The maintenance of this coherence across their divergent practices is one of the prime means by which people preserve a reasonably stable sense of identity. The notion of lifestyle tries to capture this necessary coherence in people's daily life. For most men it is, for instance, simply too confusing to be at once a loving, responsible husband, and a drink-driver fooling around with busty blondes.

The notion of lifestyle also tries to capture the idea that the coherence in people's practices and identities presumes telling a narrative. The construction of a coherent self, a lifestyle, is to be understood as a process of integrating practices by a particular narrative of self-identity. Such narratives form a coherent trajectory of development from past experiences to anticipated future practices. They connect divergent behavioral choices to a particular lifestyle. People's behavioral choices are not just decisions about how to behave but also about whom to be. Or, as Taylor (1989a) puts it: *"In order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become, and of where we are going"* (47). The moral thread of establishing narrative unity in one's lifestyle is a thread of authenticity, of being true to yourself. That is the reason why government intervention in car-driving practices is such a precarious issue. This intervention is not just about interfering with people's behavioral choices but also about matters of identity, since being a mobile person is one of the leading threads in many contemporary narratives of self-identity.

A lifestyle is a reflexive project of the self, and consists in preserving a coherent biographical narrative amidst an almost infinite plurality of behavioral options. Each individual not merely has but actually lives such a biographical narrative, reflexively constructed in distinction to other possible lifestyles and identities. To have a reasonably stable sense of identity means to have a sense of reflexively grasped biographical continuity. People's identities and lifestyles are to be found in their capability to keep a

[6] This sub-section roughly follows the argument in Giddens, 1991.

particular narrative going. These inherently fragile narrative identities establish a certain unity that connects divergent practices into coherent lifestyles. So, if dominion, freedom, and speed are significant threads in most male narratives that are symbolised in cars, men will probably stick to these cars no matter how many other travel options are open to them.

One of the prime characteristics of contemporary affluent societies is that people are almost continuously confronted with changing behavioral options. This means that people need ongoing construction and reconstruction of their biographical narratives to preserve a reasonably stable sense of identity. In view of the rapidly changing circumstances in the flow of daily life, people's narrative identities have to be shaped, altered and reflexively sustained in reasonably coherent lifestyles. A reflexively organised narrative identity provides the means to establish this coherence in the changeable social conditions of daily life. People's identities form a trajectory across their divergent practices over the durée of the life cycle. These narrative identities have to be constructed, and more or less continuously reconstructed, against the backdrop of the ever-changing experiences of daily life. These experiences may even be contradictory, as when the government simultaneously tries to persuade people to reduce car driving and raises the prices of public transport.

Ricoeur (1992) elaborates on this metaphorical use of the term narrative when he argues that individuals are but characters in a story. These characters are not entities distinct from people's daily experiences. The narrative rather constructs the identity of the people and the story in the same move. The identity of the story makes the identity of the individual. Narrative and daily experiences are inextricably intertwined in synchronous processes of identity construction. The narrative unity of a lifestyle *"not only results from the summing up of practices in a globalizing form but is governed equally by a life project ... and by fragmentary practices, which have their own unity, life plans constituting the intermediary zone of exchange between the undetermined character of guiding ideals and the determinate nature of practices"* (158). The idea of gathering a lifestyle together in a narrative identity is to serve as a solid basis for conducting an individualised vision of the good life. Unfortunately, lots of visions of the good life include non-sustainable practices like excessive car driving.

Identity is a reflexively organised endeavour of actively explored and constructed choice. This endeavour presumes reflexive awareness on part of people, and has to be routinely created and sustained in their practices. A narrative identity is *"the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography"* (Giddens, 1991; 53). It presumes continuity over time and space, while people are aware of the relation between their here-and-now behaviour and spatio-temporally distant events and practices.

The more people are reflexively aware of the possibilities to construct their own narrative identities, the more they will be aware that current practices shape future opportunities. This point is worth special emphasis. It could imply that once this awareness stretches across vast spans of time-space and includes the opportunities of future generations to follow their lifestyles, this influences here-and-now-behavioral choice.

The more people make themselves as individuals, the more the very question of what it is to be an individual becomes a central question. People never just passively accept the social and material conditions for their behaviour. They more or less continuously reflect upon these conditions, reconstituting them in view of their particular lifestyle. An essential element of identity is simply that of choice in daily life. People not only follow lifestyles, they are obliged to do so: *"we have no choice but to choose"* (Giddens, 1991; 81). It is important to avoid the plausible, yet misguided impression that this argument about choice as a basic condition of daily life is typically affluent middle class. Of course, life chances always precondition lifestyle options, but this does not imply that the lower strata of society have got nothing left to choose. In the 1950s a private car may have been a luxury item, and the working class majority may have had no choice but to go by foot, bike or public transport to their jobs. Nowadays, however, car driving has become a behavioral option open to almost everyone.

Since people would not be able to get on with their lives in a world fluid of choice, they need some sense of ontological security, a sense of reality shared with other people. This ontological security is provided in the natural attitude. This natural attitude brackets out existential questions about ourselves, others and the material world, because the answers to such questions should be taken for granted to keep on going in daily life. The natural attitude is based on the routinisation of behaviour, and means that people somehow always have the answers to the existential questions anyone needs to address now and then. The development of stable contexts of daily life is crucial for the maintenance of a sense of ontological security. It depends on the excavation from daily life of the existential issues that would raise almost unbridgeable moral dilemmas. The natural attitude forms a protective cocoon, which enables people to get on with their daily practices without continuously having to reflect on a diversity of behavioral options. This might also explain why public information about the environmental repercussions of car driving is doomed to fail in talking people into a feeling of guilt. Instead of digging a hole in people's protective cocoon, it is more likely that this same cocoon reacts by shifting the blame on to others to evade any full confrontation with such highly disturbing questions about their lifestyle.

Directly linked to achieving a sense of ontological security is the notion of trust. Trust presumes commitment, a faith in others and their routines that is irreducible and especially significant with regard to spatio-temporally distanced others. That is why it is

above all important that the government, as an inherently distanced actor, is consistent in, for instance, its environmental policy to gain people's trust (see 5.5). Without such trust people would not be able to preserve a stable and coherent orientation towards others, the material world, and hence towards their own identities and lifestyles. Trust in others is the basis of experiencing reasonably stable social and material conditions, and of constructing a sufficiently coherent sense of identity.

So far, the narrative conceptualisation of identity might seem to imply that people's foremost concern is to be an authentic individual, a coherent self. This cannot be the whole story though. The divergent expectations, interests and intentions of people in contemporary affluent societies not only open up the opportunity to construct an authentic identity. This identity construction is also about ethical, moral or normative issues. This ethical dimension of identities is, for instance, quite obvious when people ask recognition for their behavioral choices and argue about the normative merits of these choices in public debates. In their choices and practices, people enact the normative projects that are attached to their lifestyles. Identity is not just about authenticity in front of others, but also about moral autonomy in public discourse. People discuss the natural, social and subjective world to construct their identities. This ethical dimension of identity presupposes a capability to participate in stable, communicative and open deliberations (Habermas, 1988; Korthals, 1992). Without the ethical dimension of identity, the government would not have the possibility to develop communicative instruments for addressing people on the environmental repercussions of their practices.

However, the ethical dimension of identity also means that respecting identity involves respecting people's moral autonomy. The government has got to face the demand that people deserve the freedom to construct their identities in their own way, no matter how repugnant these identities may turn out to be. Moral authenticity and moral autonomy are highly valued in contemporary affluent societies. Therefore, *"notions of what it is to respect people's integrity includes that of protecting their expressive freedom to express and develop their own opinions, to define their own life conceptions, to draw up their own life-plans"* (Taylor, 1989a; 25). The ethical dimension of people's identities thus poses a moral paradox for policy-makers. It both opens up space to address people on, for instance, the environmental repercussions of their car-driving practices, and severely restricts the government in exactly this kind of interference with people's choices. Despite this paradoxical conclusion, it remains important to be clear that people need a vision of the good life to make sense of their lives. This vision has to be interwoven with people's understanding of their lives as unfolding stories or narratives. People have a sense of who they are through their sense of where they stand on the good life.

After all this talking about narrative identities as reflexive projects, it is important to fight any suggestion that people's knowledgeability and capability is confined to a discursive awareness of the reasons for their behavioral choices. Instead, much of what is needed to be able to go on in daily life is carried at the level of practical consciousness, inextricably bound up with the ongoing flow of daily life. People have the capacity to understand what they do while they do it. This reflexivity hardly operates on a discursive level. What individuals know about what they do is largely carried at the level of practical consciousness. This practical consciousness consists of all the things people tacitly know about how to go on in daily life without being able to give them discursive expression. It involves recall in the durée of daily life without being able to express what he or she thereby knows. On this level of practical consciousness people do know a great deal about the conditions and consequences of what they do in their practices. However, this does not mean that they also have the capacity to discuss these conditions and consequences in, for instance, the context of a public environmental debate. Most people will probably not be able to give full discursive elaboration on their reasons to drive their cars. Therefore, if the government is to achieve an adjustment of people's non-sustainable car-driving practices, it should raise these reasons to the level of discursive consciousness. Such behavioral adjustments call for a reflexive incision in the ongoing flow of daily life.

Finally, it should be clear that the choice for a certain lifestyle is increasingly important in the construction of identity and daily behaviour, because of the pluralisation of behavioral options in contemporary affluent societies. A lifestyle, a narrative identity, provides a frame of reference in making such divergent behavioral choices as what car to drive, what meat to eat, where to go on holidays, what sex to have? At any moment in time, people can choose among an almost infinite plurality of behavioral options. Some may even use this plurality to construct a distinctive eclectic identity by integrating elements from divergent styles into a more or less coherent narrative. However, a certain segmentation of lifestyles is the more characteristic reaction to this pluralisation of behavioral options. *"Partly because of the existence of multiple milieux of action, lifestyle choices and activities very often tend to be segmental for the individual: modes of action followed in one context may be more or less at variance with those adopted in others"* (Giddens, 1991; 83). Despite this segmentation in people's practices, they still need a certain order and coherence in their overall lifestyles to maintain a reasonably stable sense of identity. This order will be stronger at the level of what Giddens calls lifestyle sectors, i.e. time-space slices of the overall lifestyle within which the consistency and coherence of practices can be adopted and enacted to a higher degree then in the overall lifestyle. Nevertheless, people also need intersectoral coherence in their lifestyles. Although some authors see in the segmentation of lifestyles enough reason to abandon the notion of

lifestyle altogether (*cf.* Munters, 1992), these authors seem to stretch their deconstructivist mood a bit too far. After yet another brand new convertible, the physician's attempts to convert the hospital canteen towards serving organic coffee loose much of their credibility.

3.2.2
The Duality of Identity Construction[7]

The preceding sub-section (3.2.1) emphasised the active and reflexive character of people's identities. Any tendency to conceive of people's behaviour as merely resulting from, or structured by, social forces was implicitly rejected. However, it should also be made perfectly clear that narrative identities are not to be understood as constructed by atomised individuals, but as largely constituted by the social groups to which they belong. Although coherence of identity and practices presumes reflexivity on part of the individual, this reflexivity in turn presumes spatio-temporal continuity of social practices. Reflexivity should thus be understood as the monitored character of the ongoing flow of daily life, in which purposive individuals have reasons for their behaviour and are capable of discursive elaboration on these reasons. However, this emphasis on people's reflexivity should not amount to an overly individualistic conceptualisation of identity. Identities are not constructed within a social vacuum. The duality of identity construction is a specific case of Giddens's (1984) notion of the duality of structure. *"Structure is the medium and outcome of the conduct it recursively organizes; the structural properties of social systems do not exist outside of action but are chronically implicated in its production and reproduction"* (374). Elaboration on the construction of identities as a specific case of this duality of structure is the prime objective of this sub-section.

First, it is important to acknowledge that whatever social and material conditions may shape people's identities, these conditions only exist in so far as they are chronically reproduced in people's practices over time and space. Whether as a result of reflexively grasped narrative identities or as a more or less unintended consequence of their behavioral choices, people reconstitute the structural properties of society in enacting their practices. These structural properties never operate entirely independent from whatever reasons people may have for their behaviour. Knowledgeable and capable people draw upon and reproduce these properties in the course of daily life. They only exist in their instantiations in people's practices. So, current car-driving practices are of course profoundly influenced by the fact that private ownership of a car is the social norm. This

[7] This sub-section by-and-large follows the argument in Giddens, 1984.

norm is also crystallised in society's physical infrastructure. Nevertheless, people always have the possibility to choose other means of transport. Once enough significant people start to choose otherwise, this will necessarily have its consequences for the reproduction of the prevailing social norms and physical infrastructure.

Daily life always involves some autonomy of people's behavioral choices, no matter how conditioned these choices may be by the structural properties of society. Each individual always has a certain integrity in his or her own behavioral choices and identity, no matter how much he or she is submitted to social constitution. This autonomy is characterised by the capability to have acted otherwise. Autonomy refers to people's capability of making whatever behavioral choices. Autonomy thus depends on people's capability to make a difference to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events. It logically involves power as a transformative capacity, as the capability to bring about intended consequences of behaviour. This power is the medium for the realisation of autonomy, freedom or emancipation.

The duality of structure implies that people not so much construct identities and practices, but rather continuously reconstruct them in expressing narratively organised selfs. In and through the enactment of their practices people reproduce the social and material conditions that made these practices possible in the first place. These conditions are drawn upon in the production and reproduction of people's practices. Although social continuity does not depend on the practices of any particular individual, society would nevertheless cease to exist when all singular-constituting practices disappeared. People's identities simultaneously draw upon and reproduce the structural properties of society. These properties are produced and reproduced in social interaction. Hence, the routinisation of behaviour is one of the prime expressions of the duality of structure in the continuity of social life. The daily traffic jams around major Dutch cities could, for instance, be seen as expressing this routinisation under a negative sign. The crystallisation of people's routines in the structural properties of commuter traffic then makes sense of people's choice to take the car at the same time of day over and over again. Another, more positive, interpretation would argue that people use the tranquillity of commuter routines as a protective cocoon to escape the exceedingly high demands of daily life in contemporary affluent societies.

The very moment of production of behaviour is also one of reproduction under the social and material conditions of daily life. On the one hand structural properties have no existence independent from individual practices. On the other hand these practices continuously produce unintended consequences. These unintended consequences are the conditions for people's prospective practices in a feedback fashion. Society only exists by virtue of spatio-temporal continuity in social reproduction. This continuity, in turn, only

exists in and through people's reflexively organised practices. Thus, social constraints only exist when people recognise and act upon them. They only exist in their instantiations in people's practices. The structural properties of society always operate through people's routines, motives and reasons, thus establishing conditions and consequences of behaviour that also affect the behavioral options of others. This is, for instance, quite obvious when the acceleration of transport and social life, exemplified in ever faster cars, asks for more space. As an unintended consequence this necessarily leaves less space for children playing, pedestrians walking, or cyclists biking. Social life is not only an intended product of individual choice. It is rather a dialectic interplay between practices and identities in which the coherence of people's lifestyles expresses and is expressed in the continuity of social life.

Second, however, the story also holds the other way around. People's positions in the wider social order are accompanied by ascribed social identities, which carry a whole range of prerogatives and obligations. People have to activate these prerogatives and obligations and carry them out. These social identities constitute the role prescriptions associated with a specific position in the wider social order. All behaviour is situated behaviour, situated in socially constructed space and time. This social context of people's behaviour connects even the most intimate aspects of their identities to the broader properties of social life. This social order is neither explicable as merely the sum of singular practices, nor fully describable in terms referring to such practices. Society is always both enabling and constraining for people's behavioral choices. All practices and identities are constructed in social contexts that encompass many aspects the individual neither helped to bring about nor has any significant control over. These enabling and constraining contexts of practices include the social and material conditions, which were appointed as the preferable loci of intervention in a green third way (2.4). With respect to car-driving practices they include, for instance, area planning and physical infrastructure.

Apart from the need to emphasise the duality in the construction of identities, another point has to be argued against individualism. Starting from the observation that identity and the good life, or lifestyle and morality, are inextricably interconnected, Taylor (1989a) argues that to know your identity is a species of knowing where you stand in the social order. People's identities are largely constituted by their commitments and identifications, which provide the frames of reference in determining what is good, valuable, or ought to be done. Any conceptualisation of identity that perceives of individuals as free from all social bonds spells an individual in the grip of an appalling identity crisis. People have narrative identities reflexively constructed in their lifestyles, but perhaps even more important is that significant others recognise these narratives as meaningful representations of the self: *"One is a self only among other selves"* (35).

People's identities can never be fully described without any reference to these others. People construct their identities by defining where they speak from: the family tree, the social order, the system of social statuses and functions, or the intimate relations to loved ones. No individual has an identity on his or her own. People only have identities in relation to significant others. The full construction of people's identities and lifestyles involves more or less explicit references to a constituting social group. Speeding in a convertible could, for instance, never symbolise a masculine and restrained identity without significant others, who construct and reconstruct this symbolic meaning of speeding practices.

The narrative conceptualisation of lifestyle and identity should not deny the social character of the practices in which people engage. These practices form the materials for the construction of people's identities. People reproduce and transform the social order in their identities. They reconstruct the continuity of social practices, instead of constructing a new social order from the blue. All behaviour is constructed and reconstructed in social practices, carried in the flow of daily life. This implies that any strategy for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles that does not give due credit to the social character of people's practices and identities is in conceptual trouble. Proposals that aim at adjusting isolated practices without regard of the social context of these practices should immediately be discredited for applying an inadequate ontology of identity. This, of course, does not forswear the pursuit of Popperian social piecemeal engineering in consumer-oriented environmental policy-making.

3.3
Citizens, Consumers or Citizen-Consumers

One final conceptual issue needs to be addressed before the analysis can shift towards a spatio-temporally contingent characterisation of lifestyles and identities in contemporary affluent societies. This conceptual issue refers to the modernist distinction between citizen and consumer, which at least dates back to the eighteenth and nineteenth century distinction between bourgeois and citoyen (*cf.* Marx & Engels, 1972; Hegel, 1996; Rousseau, 1998) and has tainted philosophy and the social sciences ever since. Therefore, it seems wise to devote a separate section on the matter, in particular because the distinction still informs the public environmental debate. Many environmentalist critiques of consumerist tendencies in contemporary affluent societies adopt this clear-cut distinction between citizens and consumers, as if these terms don't refer to the same people. After the conceptual analysis in the preceding section on lifestyles as inextricably

interconnected narrative identities and social practices (3.2), it will not be much of a surprise that such critiques are conceptually flawed. Therefore, this section suggests bridging this unfruitful gap by introducing the public-private hybrid notion of the citizen-consumer. Although the citizen-consumer is not a Latourian (1994) nature-culture hybrid, the reasons to introduce this hybrid are similar. The purification of the modernist distinction between citizens and consumers (or public and private, nature and culture) obscures more than it clarifies. It obscures because an initially analytical distinction receives an ontological, reified status.

Bauman (1987) elucidates the distinction between citizens and consumers when he tells the story of capitalist markets transforming people into atomised consumers. In this transformation process citizens' autonomy is supposed to become subordinated to market-defined and market-oriented consumptive freedom. This impoverished picture of the consumer would effectively postpone, or even remove, from the agenda the need to come to grips with the project of citizens' autonomy by emphasising the satisfaction of utilitarian needs in the consumption of goods. In the case of car driving this transformation seems to amount to an excessive individualisation and acceleration of transport, and a loss of indolence, tranquillity and solidarity. Bauman suggests that returning citizens' autonomy, identity and authenticity to where they belong could reverse the removal of these values by market dominion in contemporary affluent societies, i.e. returning them to the sphere of public debate among autonomous citizens.

Sagoff (1988) uses a similar distinction when he argues that the two roles diverge that much that the respective reasons for people's behavioral choices may support incommensurable narrative threads. As consumers people are exclusively concerned with their private interests, i.e. the pursuit of satisfying utilitarian needs. As citizens they are primarily concerned with the public interest, i.e. people see themselves as members of a political community and engage in public debates on normative issues. According to Sagoff, for instance, strategies for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles are to be proposed exclusively on the basis of the latter normative positions of citizens and not on the utilitarian preferences of consumers. This government intervention should be about an open public debate on the normative objective of sustainable development, rather than about the pursuit of hedonistic preferences. Thus, environmental policy should only involve people in their role as citizens and not in their role as consumers (see 2.2 for a quite similar argument). Hence, the inter-personal social dilemma in the case of car driving (it benefits the individual motorist at the expense of spatio-temporally distanced others) is translated into an intra-personal dilemma between people's divergent roles.

Keat (1994) offers a quite convincing critique on such talking about citizens and consumers as if these two terms don't refer to the same people. Starting from the

observation that good reasons seem to exist to question any straightforward appeal on people's eco-conscious values as the basis for environmental policy, he suggests to acknowledge the importance of consumption in contemporary affluent societies. These societies show a *"widespread, shared belief in the value of consumption for everyone, a belief that what can be achieved through consumption is at least part of 'the good life for humans', and hence that 'the good society' is one that provides ample opportunities for people to enjoy these benefits, and indeed to an ever-increasing extent"* (342). People's narrative identities, thus, consist partly in their ability to consume. Consumption is not just something people pursue for utilitarian reasons, it is also a major element in the shared values of contemporary affluent societies.

The value of consumption and the value of nature and the environment could be incommensurable, but that is not primarily because people value consumption as consumers and nature and the environment as citizens. People value both consumption and the natural environment as citizens and as consumers. Incommensurabilities between these two value thus tend to arise in both roles. The recent upheaval of a plurality of so-called consumer concerns about agro-food production processes signals these rather limited merits of drawing a strict distinction between people's roles as consumers and citizens respectively (*cf.* Brom, 2000). People's consumerist preference for, for instance, speeding in a convertible will probably not be irrelevant for their normative stance in a public debate on new physical infrastructure as a citizen. On the other hand, people's appreciation of nature and the environment as a citizen is quite likely to influence their choice for a certain means of transport as a consumer.

A tension may arise between the value of consumption and the value of nature and the environment in people's narrative identities, and such tension would not be surprising in view of the almost infinite pluralisation of behavioral options in contemporary affluent societies. This tension may be regrettable but it does not have much to do with people's divergent roles as citizens or consumers. People do not stop to value nature and the environment once being a consumer on the market, and they do not stop to have utilitarian preferences once discussing the public good of nature and the environment as a citizen. This should be reason enough to embrace the term citizen-consumer to highlight that people are public-private hybrids. Now that this final conceptual issue is settled, the analysis can shift to a spatio-temporally contingent characterisation of lifestyles in contemporary affluent societies.

3.4
Reflexive Modernisation

The narrative turn in conceptualising identity is not independent from a specific spatio-temporal context, since the processes of globalisation, individualisation and detraditionalisation profoundly influence it. The preceding analysis (3.2) might have suggested a rather static picture of identities and overly emphasised the almost infinite plurality of behavioral options in contemporary affluent societies. Therefore, this section starts to remedy this one-sidedness by first paying due attention to the profound influence of globalisation, individualisation and detraditionalisation on the specific characteristics of lifestyles and identities in contemporary affluent societies (3.4.1). Second, some order will be constructed in people's apparently infinite plurality of behavioral options. People's behavioral choices will appear to come in package deals (3.4.2).

3.4.1
Globalisation, Individualisation and Detraditionalisation[8]

Globalisation is one of the major processes with a profound influence on the constitution of people's identities under reflexive modern conditions. It can be defined as: *"the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa"* (Giddens, 1990; 64). Globalisation refers to the intersection of presence and absence, the interlacing of social events and relations at distance with local practices. The local and the global have become inextricably intertwined in the current era. Current car driving practices, for instance, on the one hand profoundly influence the lives of spatio-temporally distanced others through their contribution to global warming by emitting CO_2. On the other hand, the oil crisis of the early 1970s quite dramatically showed the influence of distant events on people's here-and-now mobility. Thus, globalisation connects people to large-scale systems as part of dialectical processes of change at both the local and the global poles. It involves an intrusion of distant events into daily life that establishes a single world where none existed before, i.e. a world where nobody is outside. This intrusion of distance into local practices radically changes the world. Although everyone lives a local life, the world has become truly global.

[8] This sub-section is primarily based on Giddens's account of reflexive modernisation (Giddens, 1990, 1994a & 1994b).

People contribute to social influences with global consequences in constructing their identities, no matter how local their specific contexts of behaviour. These globalising influences are directly bound up with far-reaching changes in the tissue of daily life. Even changes in the most intimate aspects of people's lives are directly tied up with the establishment of social relations of an ever-widening scope. Not only local communities but also the most intimate features of people's lives and identities become inextricably intertwined with social relations of indefinite spatio-temporal extension. Thus, globalisation truly is an in-here phenomenon, directly bound up with the conditions of daily life. It affects, or is dialectically related to, the most intimate aspects of people's lives. Remember, for instance, the physician who bought a brand new convertible as a libidinal attempt of identity construction, and try to imagine its environmental repercussions.

An important aspect of globalisation is the disembedding of social relations from local practices and their reconstruction across indefinite spatio-temporal spans. Disembedding mechanisms take things out of control by specific individuals or groups, and prise social relations free from the hold of specific locales. Thus, place becomes thoroughly interpenetrated by disembedding mechanisms that recombine local practices into spatio-temporal relations of ever-widening scope. Expert systems provide the prime disembedding mechanisms and have come to play an increasingly pervasive role in the construction of daily life. People have to construct their identities amidst a plurality of behavioral options provided by these expert systems. Expert knowledge is reappropriated by lay people and routinely applied in the course of their daily practices. They reflexively and selectively incorporate many elements of expert knowledge in their daily behaviour (*cf.* Beck, 1986). Without scientific experts people would not know a thing about, for instance, the contribution of their car-driving practices to environmental problems like acid rain and climate change. The accessibility of expert knowledge is thus an important structural feature of the conditions in which people have to choose their means of transport.

Individualisation has a profound influence on the constitution of people's identities. Individualisation implies that individuals have to achieve a certain autonomy in their behavioral choices as a condition of being able to go on in daily life and to construct their identities (see 4.3.1). This individualisation is also crystallised in the technological construction of society's most favoured conveyances. It is rather obvious that a private car facilitates a more individualised form of mobility than public transport could offer.

Identity and style become as evident markers of social differentiation as people's professional position in contemporary affluent societies. Whereas consumerism already broke away from the modernist idea of work as the standard bearer of identity, it still

expressed the need to construct an identity in a distorted and impoverished way. Under the individualised conditions of reflexive modernisation identity and happiness are rather promoted by security, self-respect, opportunities for self-actualisation, and the ability to love. The pursuit of happiness may even be seen as a distinctive universalisable value of contemporary affluent societies. The construction of identity has become quintessentially about the question of whether people experience their relation to social and material conditions as incapacitating or rather as generating opportunities for self-enhancement or self-renewal.

Individualisation only has this profound influence on people's identities under the further condition of detraditionalisation. The notions of identity and lifestyle only take on particular significance under reflexive modern conditions when tradition loses its hold and daily life is reconstituted in terms of a dialectical interplay between the local and the global. The notions of lifestyle and narrative identity have quite different meanings when applied to traditional or modernist societies. Detraditionalisation means that the question of 'How shall I live?' has to be answered as an intrinsic part of people's day-to-day behavioral choices. It stems from the disembedding mechanisms that propel social life away from the hold of pre-established precepts or practices. In a thoroughly post-traditional order an indefinite range of possibilities presents itself, not merely as a set of behavioral options but also as an aspect of the principal openness of social life.

Detraditionalisation implies an acceleration of people's reflexivity. Practical knowledge becomes vitally important in a detraditionalising society because reflexive people need this knowledge to filter all sorts of expert knowledge. The excavation of local contexts of behaviour and the disembedding of behavioral choices thus imply processes of intensified detraditionalisation. This is probably the first time in history that people live in thoroughly post-traditional societies as both the condition and the outcome of their very reflexivity. In such detraditionalised societies behavioral choices have to be made on the basis of a more or less continuous reflection on the conditions of daily life. Therefore, routinisation becomes meaningless unless it is geared to ongoing processes of reflection. To end up in traffic jams day after day lacks any meaning, unless the motorist is capable of discursive elaboration on the reasons to stick to his or her car-driving routines no matter what inconveniences accompany those routines.

The processes of globalisation, individualisation and detraditionalisation radically alter the balance between traditional and modernising tendencies in the constitution of people's lifestyles and identities. These processes imply that lifestyles and identities become open for ongoing critique and public deliberation. People can no longer rely on traditionally constituted definitions of reality, on religious norms, or on self-evident identities. More and more people have no choice but to take responsibility for the

construction of lifestyles and identities on their own resources, since faith and routine loose their hold on culture, social life and identity construction. All convictions, social and material conditions, and narrative identities need to be discussed with arguments and counter-arguments in the absence of any absolute truths (Keulartz, 1987). Under reflexive modern conditions individual motorists have to be ready to discuss their car-driving practices at any moment in time.

3.4.2
Plurality of Lifestyles

Cultural theory might offer the labelling tools for constructing some order in the apparently infinite plurality of people's behavioral and lifestyle options in contemporary affluent societies. Douglas's (1996) book on consumption is particularly enlightening in this respect. Her argument starts with the assertion that distinction is the foremost aspect of consumption, which reveals people as individuals with a coherent identity. People's consumptive practices are continuously and pervasively inspired by the wish to distinguish oneself from others. The basic question people have to answer is the question of what kind of society they would like to live in. Choosing consumer goods is thus also choosing between cultures: choosing one and rejecting the others. Buying a brand new convertible is, for instance, not only a choice for a certain kind of car, not even merely a choice for a culture of speed and comfort. Above all, it is the rejection of, and hostility towards, a culture of tranquillity.

Douglas's argument is heavily inspired by Bourdieu's 'Distinction' (1984). Bourdieu argues that people distinguish themselves in and through the distinctions they make between the bold and the beautiful, the distinguished and the vulgar, the sustainable and the non-sustainable, and so on. Through these distinctions people establish a coherence that unites their behavioral choices in apparently quite different practices like car-driving, eating food, or going on holidays. Both people's capability to construct distinguishable practices and their capability to distinguish and appreciate these practices, i.e. their taste, constitute contemporary affluent societies as universes of lifestyles. People's practices are both the medium and outcome of constructing coherent narrative identities and lifestyles, and inherently distinct from the practices that constitute other lifestyles or identities. Identity is continuously constructed and reconstructed in and through distinction, and people's practices owe their stylistic affinity to the fact that they are (re)constructed within the same narrative identities. Taste is thus the one constitutive aspect of a lifestyle as a coherent set of behavioral choices in, for instance, travelling, eating or making love. Taste

is the basis of the mutual adjustment of people's practices, and of a distinctive lifestyle or identity (Bourdieu, 1989).

Bourdieu holds it that the main distinction in consumption is between practices distinguished by their rarity (the practices of the economically and culturally richest people) and practices identified as vulgar, easy and common (the practices of the poorest people). The basis of all differences in consumptive practices is this distinction between the tastes of luxury and freedom and the tastes of necessity. People cannot be neutral on these tastes. What for the one is shameless and slovenly, is straightforward and unpretentious for the other. This distinction is also *"reflected in the two relations to the natural world, on the one hand the taste for natural, wild nature, on the other, organized, signposted, cultivated nature"* (Bourdieu, 1984).

Douglas, however, does not find this story satisfactory at all. She argues that the choice between lifestyles is neither a choice among an infinite plurality of options, nor a choice between only two options. Douglas erects a scheme with on the Y-axe the degree to which people believe that society is, or should be, divided in rather strict or static social positions (= grid). On the X-axe she puts the degree to which people orient themselves and feel that they belong to a constitutive social group (= group). She believes that these two variables could explain most people's behavioral choices in daily life, if put into a matrix with four cells. Although Douglas puts forward the totalising, and dogmatic, claim that these cells are entirely exclusive and present the whole plurality of lifestyles in contemporary affluent societies, a more modest option would be to perceive of these styles as ideal-types in the Weberian sense of the word.

Douglas labels the resulting ideal-types as, first, the lifestyle of the 'individualist' (= low group, low grid). This would be a lifestyle of competitive open networks, sporty, arty, risky styles of entertainment, and a freedom to change commitments. The physician speeding in a convertible may count as an example of this style. Second, the lifestyle of the 'hierarchist' (= high group, high grid). This would be a lifestyle of formality, adhering to established traditions and institutions, and maintaining a stable network of family and old friends. Third, the lifestyle of the 'egalitarian' (= high group, low grid). This would be a lifestyle against formality, pomp and artifice, rejecting authoritarian institutions, preferring simplicity, frankness and intimate friendship. Fourth, the eclectic, withdrawn but unpredictable lifestyle of the 'fatalist' (= low group, high grid). This is the lifestyle of a free isolate or, in a negative frame of reference, an alienated individual. The slovenly type

of woman shuffling in her kitchen may count as an example of this style (see 2.1).[9] Douglas holds it that those four distinct lifestyles persist in contemporary affluent societies because they rest on incommensurable organisational principles or narratives.

Now, while the vivacity of the Dutch public debate on government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles suggests that people have become truly interested in the preservation of nature and the environment, one no longer needs to wonder why this interest has had no uniform consequences for people's practices. Cultural theory shows that 'individualists' will claim that their identity is robust as long as they are not under stifling controls. Their true identity is to be free, and they will suffer if constrained. On the other hand, the lifestyle of 'fatalists' is merely maintained by an uninvolved eclecticism, whereas 'hierarchists' will argue that it is their true identity to live in organised social groups. Finally, 'egalitarians' will hold it that the same unequal structural features of society that cause the deterioration of nature and the environment also offend their identities. It is cultural distinction between these four lifestyles that explains much of the diversity and coherence in people's consumptive practices, including their environmental repercussions.

It might seem obvious to believe that caring for nature and the environment and caring for social equality would necessarily go hand-in-hand. Although this may be true, it should not be forgotten that consumerism, now criticised for its deteriorating repercussions on nature and the environment, could only take hold once enough people were liberated from sumptuary laws and traditionally routinised patterns of consumption. Consumerism started as a liberation process, in which individuals came to have their own narratives and lifestyles. Thus, consumerism is not in itself irrational. What would be irrational, is when the very people who voice concerns about nature and the environment also demand private transport in and around town.

Once you try to map the previously analysed positions in the Dutch public debate on government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles (see chapter 2) in a cultural theory perspective, you will soon notice that things are not as simple as they may seem to be. Whereas Douglas seems quite ready to argue that all environmentalists are but egalitarians in disguise (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982), the dominant communicative and economic strategies only seem to be intelligible within hierarchist or individualist frames of reference respectively. Perhaps these divergent empirical findings could be explained in terms of the different spatio-temporal contexts of the respective analyses. Notwithstanding

[9] Schulze (1997) develops a similar but far more empirically grounded characterisation of people's lifestyles in contemporary affluent societies. However, in analytical terms his scheme does not add much to the simplicity of Douglas's matrix.

this explanation, the initial absence of egalitarian contributions to the Dutch public debate is the more reason for elaboration on a green third way of government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles (see chapter 6). This initial absence of egalitarian contributions to the Dutch public debate might be explained by people's fear that egalitarianism implies a return to the massive social control in the dreadful tea-cosy culture of the 1950s (Kunneman, 1996). Douglas seems to think that egalitarianism necessarily amounts to such a narrow-minded and oppressive culture indeed, but wouldn't it be a major challenge to look for novel, reflexive modern forms of egalitarianism (*cf.* Lash, 1994). This updated egalitarianism should, for instance, perceive of non-sustainable car-driving practices as a negative aspect of an otherwise positive individualisation, and hence as a reason to take up the challenge of pursuing the public good of sustainable development. Nowadays, an unbridgeable gap appears to exist between this public good and people's private practices, but constructing novel, egalitarian social groups might bridge this gap. These groups could address people on their own creativity and responsibility in constructing sustainable lifestyles. However, this emphasis on the challenge of developing an egalitarian perspective on government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles should not be understood as an exclusive project. In contemporary pluralistic societies the most important thing is to leave ample room for a heterogeneity of strategies and the elaboration of novel forms of reflexive egalitarianism serves this objective.

3.5
Conclusion

The Dutch public debate on government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles appeared to be highly confused about a meaningful conceptualisation of the terms lifestyle and identity (see chapter 2). Since conceptual clarification on these matters of identity and lifestyle is necessary for an eventual justification of government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles, this chapter tried to answer the question of whether a narrative conceptualisation of identity and lifestyle would contribute to such clarity. It also tried to investigate what implications for a green third way of government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles would accompany such a narrative conceptualisation.

First, it has been made perfectly clear that lifestyles are to be conceptualised as inextricably interconnected narrative identities and reflexive practices. A certain coherence across people's divergent practices is necessary for the maintenance of a reasonably stable sense of identity. A narrative establishes this coherence. The construction and reconstruction of narrative unity in people's lifestyles is crucial for people's sense of

ontological security amidst an almost infinite plurality of behavioral options. The inextricable interconnectedness of narrative identities and reflexive practices in people's lifestyles implies that government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles always interferes with both practices and identities. Thus, the escape-route of disconnecting practices and identities in order to evade the question of justification (see 2.2 & 2.3) is closed.

Furthermore, it has been made clear that a narrative conceptualisation of identity and lifestyle does not mean that identity construction is merely about authenticity. Part of people's narrative identity is ethical or moral, and thus involves their stance on normative issues. However, this ethical dimension of people's identities posed a dilemma; it both opens up the space for the government to address people on their non-sustainable practices and lifestyles, and severely restricts the government in this very interference because a certain amount of autonomy should be respected. Nevertheless, any adjustment of non-sustainable practices and lifestyles seems to require some moment of discursive attention on part of the individual, notwithstanding that people's reflexive awareness of their narrative identities is largely carried at the level of practical consciousness in the ongoing flow of daily life (3.2.1).

Next, it was argued that the relation between people's practices and the structural properties of society is to be conceived as a specific case of Giddens's notion of the duality of structure. The structural context of people's practices and identities is always both enabling and constraining for their behavioral choices. Furthermore, the social groups to which they belong largely constitute people's practices and identities. This emphasis on the duality of structure in people's identity construction, and on the social character of their resulting identities, suggests that the social and material conditions of daily life should be appointed as the preferable loci of intervention in a green third way of government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles (3.2.2).

At that stage it was time to emphasise that the distinction between citizens and consumers, as if these terms do not refer to the same people, is deceptive. A conflict may arise between the value of consumption and the value of nature and the environment, but incommensurability between these values does not necessarily have got much to do with people's divergent roles as consumers or citizens. Contrary to what many contemporary critiques of consumerism seem to hold, consumption is also valued in the public sphere. Therefore, the term citizen-consumer was introduced as a conceptual hybrid to bridge the unfruitful gap in talking about citizens and consumers as disconnected entities (3.3).

Then, it had to be made clear that this narrative conceptualisation of identity and lifestyle is not logically independent of a specific spatio-temporal context. The processes of globalisation, individualisation and detraditionalisation profoundly influence it.

Globalisation means that people's here-and-now behaviour influences, and is influenced by, spatio-temporally-distanced events. Questions about the non-sustainability of people's practices only get their significance in these circumstances of ever increasing spatio-temporal extension. Individualisation results in the high value of autonomous identity construction in contemporary affluent societies. This impact of individualisation on the value of autonomy could only come about in the context of a detraditionalising society. Detraditionalisation means that tradition looses its hold on people's identities and practices, which become open for continuous critique and public deliberation, for instance with respect to their environmental repercussions (3.4.1).

Finally, it was argued that, despite people's apparently infinite plurality of behavioral options in contemporary affluent societies, these options appear to come in package deals. The four distinguished package deals, or lifestyles, in turn, quite surprisingly, neatly matched the four different strategies for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles in the Dutch public debate (see chapter 2). The elaboration of a green third way then appeared to amount to the pursuit of a reflexive modern form of egalitarianism, in which novel social groups will have to play a key role in the development of sustainable alternatives (3.4.2).

While this chapter largely had a social theoretical character, it now-and-then touched upon the normative issue of autonomy in people's identity construction and its eventual repercussions for a justification of government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles. Autonomy is one of the main reasons why people think that government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles is a morally problematic issue, and will be the prime subject of chapter 4.

4

Autonomy and Public Deliberation

"Freedom is a lax notion,
especially for the Dutch"
(Postbank Commercial)

4.1
Introduction

"Oh Johnny-boy, I'm starving, could we please stop at that hamburger-joint?" my own private Pamela asked. How could I resist? "Sure babe, but we've gotta rush, we're running late already". I pulled over, stopped at the McDrive and asked for two burgers. "Would you like a McProtex, McFibrex or McFungopie?" "What?" I couldn't help asking, but I sure wish that I hadn't triggered this guy lecturing: "The McProtex is made by Spirulina bacteria, the McFibrex by Fusarium fungi and the McFungopie from Leguminous plants. They are environment-friendly, healthy and quite tasty, if I may say so". "Let's go babe, I simply need a proper pig-meat burger. What do you think?" "No worries mate, you could of course also settle for our McImmoral, or what we used to call a BigMac. But well, it'll cost you an extra quid on top of the price of our regular burgers. Eco-tax, you know?" I don't have a clue what he's talking about and, quite frankly, I couldn't care less. Anyway, "OK, make it two of those McWhats, McMorons?" McImmorals, idiot. "Coming, do you want cokes with your burgers?" "Yes, but rush, we've gotta catch our plane to Ibiza".

Science Fiction, Ecotopia? Who knows, may be, but if it were for the engineers of the Dutch interdepartmental research programme 'Sustainable Technological Development' (STD) this story could be very real indeed by the year 2040. It is known that animal husbandry has met severe criticism over the last two or three decades. It has been accused of maltreating animals, polluting the natural environment, spoiling rural scenery, and contributing to injustice in the global food distribution. All these criticisms and accusations were thought to be answered when the STD engineers proposed to develop

novel protein foods (NPFs) to replace our piece of meat. The STD engineers reasoned that if people converted from meat to these NPFs, animal husbandry for meat production would no longer be needed. Hence, all its accompanying problems would disappear as well. The only remaining problem seemed to be how to construct an alternative with the real meat bite.

The technological fix in this specific translation of normative choices in agricultural practice is fascinating, but this chapter should rather focus on the issue of whether government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles could be reconciled with respect for people's freedom to follow lifestyles of their own choice. The proposals of the STD programme for a government-initiated conversion from meat to NPFs will thus be used to illustrate the problems of such reconciliation. In accordance with the rationale of the STD programme, this chapter will only focus on a government-initiated conversion from meat to NPFs that is motivated by long-term environmental considerations. However, the exclusion of animal welfare or global justice issues does not dismiss such issues as important reasons for questioning current animal husbandry practices. The question is whether the importance of meat consumption for the construction of self-identity in contemporary affluent societies is reason enough for not tolerating any interference with people's freedom to eat meat. In other words, this chapter will pay specific attention to the role of the government in liberal-democratic societies, and thus to the reciprocal relation between citizen-consumers and the government in the formation and execution of environmental policy.

In addressing these issues, a further introduction to the proposals of the STD programme for a government-initiated conversion from meat to NPFs will be given first (4.2). The subsequent section will then reflect on the question of why government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles is a morally problematic issue in contemporary liberal-democratic societies. The answer to this question is to be found in the need to respect people's autonomy in following their own lifestyles, people's freedom from interference with their consumptive preferences. This notion of autonomy will get a specific political liberal interpretation (4.3), which emphasises individual freedom of choice (4.3.1), embraces governmental neutrality and anti-perfectionism (4.3.2), accepts harm, justice and rationality as freedom-limiting principles (4.3.3), and sees public information and financial incentives as possibly legitimate policy instruments (4.3.4). However, further reflection will show that the anti-perfectionist stance of political liberalism rests on incoherent, or even false, premises. A modest perfectionist, though otherwise still liberal, position will be defended to remedy this flaw of the political liberal frame of reference (4.4). Finally, the liberal frame of reference needs to be left altogether to remedy a blind spot of liberalism. Whereas political liberalism rightly emphasises the

need to safeguard people's freedom from interference by others or the government, it forgets about the other side of the coin. A qualitatively symmetrical account of the proper relation between government and citizen-consumers in contemporary affluent societies should also address the question of how people could be enabled to participate in the formation and execution of the objectives and instruments of environmental policy. Here, focus will be on the Habermasian idea of a deliberative democracy as a procedural approach in which extensive public deliberation supplements the parliamentary bodies of representative democracies (4.5). At that stage, it should be possible to draw conclusions on the preferable division of responsibilities between government and citizen-consumers in shaping sustainable lifestyles (4.6).

4.2
Novel Protein Foods

In 1993 the Dutch government launched the 5-year interdepartmental research programme 'Sustainable Technological Development' (STD). Part of the STD research programme was directed at achieving a sustainable food production, i.e. food production without reduction of biodiversity, without accumulation of waste, and with a minimal use of space, energy and resources. This objective was further operationalised as the attempt to reduce the environmental impact of food production (I) by a factor of two in the year 2040. Current trends in population growth (P) and growing affluence (A) imply that environmental metabolism (= environmental impact per unit of affluence)(M) needs to be reduced by a factor of twenty to achieve this objective (I = P x A x M). According to the research programme current Dutch food production is non-sustainable in at least the following respects: 1) it wastes manure and causes eutrophication; 2) it pollutes soil and water; and 3) it uses non-renewable energy and resources. It is known that animal husbandry causes the majority of the environmental impacts of food production, e.g. it wasted 78.8 million kilograms phosphate and 142 million kilograms ammonia in 1996. Nevertheless, ninety percent of all meals contains meat, resulting in an annual meat consumption of 88.7 kilograms per person[10]. Meat is thus still the most important source of protein in our diets.

Therefore, the engineers of the STD research programme proposed to develop novel protein foods (NPFs) to replace our piece of meat. These NPFs are protein containing products made on the basis of (bio-engineered) vegetable substances or microorganisms.

[10] Figures from the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries (1997).

The production of NPFs is supposed to use less resources and energy and to cause less pollution. Thus, the environmental impact of NPFs would be a factor of five to thirty lower compared with the impact of meat production. The STD engineers did not know whether people would be willing to eat these NPFs instead of their piece of meat. They nonetheless guessed that it should be possible to achieve a conversion of five percent by the year 2005 and of forty percent by the year 2040. This would amount to an annual NPF production of 300,000 tonnes. With this prospect in mind they set out to develop specific NPFs with the rather prosaic names of Protex, Fibrex and Fungopie. The STD engineers used modern biotechnology to raise the cost-effectiveness of the developed NPFs, which resulted in an estimated cost reduction of twenty to sixty percent compared with meat production. Although the STD engineers acknowledged that people pay attention to both price and taste in choosing between meat and NPFs, they nonetheless thought that this need not imply that NPFs should also taste like meat. Nevertheless, it seems obvious that, whereas meat consumption has certain distinctive qualities, the market prospects of NPFs are adversely affected by largely negative emotional valuations. The research programme therefore concluded that it is necessary to change these negative valuations by informing people about the objective qualities of NPFs: they are tasty, healthy and easy to prepare (De Kuijer *et al.*, 1997).

Vegetarians tend to take the credo 'You are what you eat' quite literally and accuse non-vegetarians of being beasts, but a somewhat different interpretation of the relation between meat consumption and self-identity seems to be more promising. According to such an interpretation meat consumption is one of the practices in which people construct their self-identities and distinguish themselves from others. That is probably the reason why any interference with practices of meat consumption is such a precarious issue. This interference is not only about interfering with people's consumptive choices, but also about matters of self-identity and lifestyle. Furthermore, eating meat, just like car driving and going on holidays by air, is one of those practices that were reserved for the upper class in the 1950s and 1960s and have become within reach of even the lowest strata of contemporary affluent societies. Eating meat has become a leading thread in many contemporary narratives of self-identity. To put it bluntly, people express their self-identities and lifestyles in their burger (Giddens, 1991)(see 3.2.1).

Some scholars wish to question the importance of meat consumption for people's self-identities and lifestyles (*cf.* Rippe, 2000). However, you have to be sociologically disabled to think that a full account of people's preferences for meat or vegetarian dishes could be given in exclusively nutritional terms. You really should not need to argue for the inclusion of socio-cultural dispositions in understanding such preferences (Bourdieu, 1984; Douglas, 1996): *"[F]or humans to meet their need for food is not solely a matter of*

consuming a certain necessary minimum bundle of nutrients, but it is a matter of collecting, preparing, and socially consuming what are culturally recognized as foods according to the customs and standards of the people involved. So, through participating in one and the same social practice, people affirm and reproduce their cultural identities and meet their nutritional requirements" (Benton, 1999; 205).

4.3
Political Liberalism

Respect for people's freedom to follow their own self-identities, visions of the good life or consumptive practices is one of the core values in contemporary liberal-democratic societies. Therefore, any government intervention in this freedom, for instance by denying people the right to their piece of meat, needs to be justified by sound arguments. Political liberalism, with Rawls as its most prominent representative and Berlin as an early forerunner, both promises to become the dominant moral philosophy in contemporary affluent societies and is preoccupied with this respect for people's freedom. Therefore, one better starts by spelling out political liberalism's main line of thought when looking for such arguments and their implications for a government-initiated conversion from meat to novel protein foods.

4.3.1
Individual Freedom of Choice

Political liberalism's main line of argument about the need to respect individual autonomy starts by acknowledging the fact of pluralism. Contemporary affluent societies are, and will probably continue to be, characterised by a plurality of lifestyles, visions of the good life and consumptive preferences, e.g. people hold on to a plurality of views on and practices of omnivorous, piscarian, vegetarian and vegan diets (Newholm, 2000). Thus, the first crucial assumption in the Rawlsian political liberal argument to respect individual autonomy is that *"equal citizens have different and indeed incommensurable and irreconcilable conceptions of the good"* (Rawls, 1993; 303). The political liberal defence of individual autonomy could indeed be seen as a response to this fact of pluralism, to the fact that people do and will not agree on how they should live their lives. Liberal-democratic societies will inevitably and permanently be characterised by a plurality of divergent, possibly conflicting, yet reasonable lifestyles and visions of the good life.

If you do not want to accept this permanent pluralism, coercive forms of government intervention would be the only way to ensure common affirmation of one single lifestyle or vision of the good life. It is neither clear which lifestyle or vision of the good life could apply for such common affirmation in pluralistic societies, nor why people should identify with one single such lifestyle or vision anyway. Therefore, political liberalism holds it that this pluralism should be accepted as a general fact of life in democratic societies. The only alternative for ongoing political conflicts about, and coercive forms of government intervention in, the plurality of lifestyles, visions of the good life and consumptive preferences in contemporary affluent societies seems to respect the individual freedom of choice. Therefore, political liberalism endorses the freedom of choice as its core value to remove these highly divisive issues from the political agenda. Ongoing public contention of these issues would, after all, necessarily undermine the social stability of pluralistic democracies (Mulhall & Swift, 1992; Van den Brink, 1994a & 1994b).

At stake is, of course, what Berlin (1969) coined the negative freedom of individuals, i.e. their freedom from interference by others or the government. In general, political liberals strive for social conditions *"in which as many individuals as possible can realize as many of their ends as possible, without assessment of the values of these ends as such, save in so far they frustrate the purposes of others"* (153). Social conditions that maximise people's opportunities to follow reasonable lifestyles, visions of the good life and consumptive preferences ensure that people are free from any governmental constraints on, or intervention in, their choices to do something or not, e.g. people are free to choose whether to eat meat or not. This freedom of choice has overriding priority for political liberals, and could only be limited for the sake of equal liberties of other people (see 4.3.3) and never for perfectionist visions of the good life. However, this freedom from governmental interference will only be valuable, when people are also provided with the opportunities or freedom to follow their own lifestyles and consumptive preferences (Rawls, 1972 & 1993).

Political liberalism's strong emphasis on the individual freedom of choice is based on the assumption that people are above all motivated by their opportunities to frame, follow and revise reasonable lifestyles and visions of the good life. People may disagree about the way they should live their lives, but they are supposed to share the view that everyone should be equally free to choose his or her own way of life. Since people acknowledge that they disagree about lifestyles and visions of the good life, they are supposed to share the idea that it is in their best interest to be free to frame, follow and revise their own way of life. Political liberalism assumes that respect for the individual freedom to follow your own lifestyle, vision of the good life and consumptive preferences is part of an overlapping consensus in contemporary affluent societies.

Coercive forms of government intervention in these lifestyles and visions could never be acceptable, since that would imply imposing lifestyles and visions and denying people's capacities to choose their own ways of life. In other words, such policies would fail to treat people as individuals gifted with reason. Hence, such policies would never find justification in the processes of public deliberation that are characteristic for properly functioning liberal democracies (see 4.5). Similarly, when people follow lifestyles, visions of the good life and consumptive preferences that threaten the freedom of others, these same processes of public deliberation will ask them to adjust their lifestyles, visions and preferences (Kymlicka, 1990; Mulhall & Swift, 1992; Van den Brink, 1994a).

Political liberalism's emphasis on the need to respect the individual freedom of choice is based on a quite specific idea of what constitutes a person or a self in contemporary affluent societies. This is the idea of the autonomous individual for whom the freedom to make his or her own choices is more important than the substantial contents of these choices, e.g. being able to choose between meat and novel protein foods matters more than whatever choice people may make. When Berlin (1969) speaks about the positive freedom of individuals, or the freedom to, he refers to this idea of the autonomous individual who likes to be in control of his or her own life. Such an individual is a self-reflexive, thinking, willing and active person, bearing responsibility for his or her choices and able to give these choices discursive expression by referring to a particular narrative of self-identity (see 3.2.1).

Thus, the need to respect the autonomy of choices derives directly from a specific view on what constitutes a self, a person, an individual. This autonomy is not only valued for its own sake, *"but also because being in charge, running our own lives, is for most of us linked to a sense of our own worth or dignity or self-respect"* (Scoccia, 1990; 323). Respect for the autonomy of choices implies enabling people to act instead of being acted upon by others or the government. The kernel of this notion of autonomy is the right to make choices and *"the most basic autonomy-right is the right to decide how one is to live one's life, in particular how to make the critical life-decisions"* (Feinberg, 1986; 54). This right could only be restricted when people's choices harmed or limited the freedom of others (see 4.3.3). Apart from that, government intervention in autonomous and reasonable choices is always a violation of the individual freedom to follow your own lifestyle, vision of the good life or consumptive preferences. The need to respect the autonomy of choices implies that others or the government should refrain from any substantial assessment of the quality of someone's lifestyle, vision of the good life or consumptive preferences.

Berlin (1969) explains the idea of a negative freedom also with a spatial metaphor. This negative freedom refers to *"the area within which the subject ... is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be, without interference by other persons"* (121-122).

Individual freedom is the area within which people can act unobstructed by others or the government. Hence, respecting autonomy implies safeguarding a private sphere from interference by the government. The big question is of course where the frontier between the area of private consumption, or non-interference, and the area of justified public interference should be drawn, and whether or not it is right to place meat consumption on the public side of that frontier. It might be argued that, whereas such consumptive preferences used to be treated as purely private matters, the unintended repercussions of meat consumption on the natural environment justifiably move this specific consumptive preference to the public side of the frontier. Unfortunately, it is not altogether clear that such an argument would not somehow involve veiled perfectionist judgements. However, what seems to be beyond question is that a minimal area of non-interference needs to be secured to enable people to follow their own self-identities and visions of the good life.

Interestingly enough, Berlin (1969) spelled out five criteria that could be used as a diagnostic test for assessing the extent to which specific policies interfere with the individual freedom of choice. This extent depends on:

> *"(a) how many possibilities are open to me ...;*
> *(b) how easy or difficult each of these possibilities is to actualize;*
> *(c) how important in my plan of life, given my character and circumstances, these possibilities are when compared with each other;*
> *(d) how far they are closed and opened by deliberate human acts;*
> *(e) what value not merely the agent, but the general sentiment of the society in which he lives, puts on the various possibilities"* (130).

At first glance, it seems that a government-initiated conversion from meat to NPFs scores negatively on at least the first four criteria of this test:

a) such a policy aims to reduce consumptive possibilities by the possibility to eat meat; or
b) it at least tries to make this possibility more difficult to actualise;
c) eating meat is among the most important consumptive preferences in many contemporary plans of life;
d) this policy to close the possibility to eat meat is a deliberate act on part of the government.

The fifth criterion represents a communitarian view that should not be included in a political liberal test for assessing the extent to which specific policies interfere with the individual freedom of choice. Therefore, the political liberal does not need to ask what value the general sentiment of contemporary affluent societies puts on the possibility to eat meat. This overall negative assessment seems pretty good reason to be rather suspicious about such policies to change consumptive preferences.

4.3.2
Governmental Neutrality and Anti-Perfectionism

The second crucial assumption in political liberalism's main line of argument is that respecting autonomy implies that the government should be neutral between people's different lifestyles, visions of the good life and consumptive preferences. Rather than forming and executing policies on the basis of the perfectionist ideals that guide people in their daily lives, the government should deliberately refrain from using such ideals in the construction of its policies. The government should not judge how people ought to live their lives, but only provide neutral social and material conditions in which people can make their own, possibly conflicting but autonomous, choices. Therefore, the government should impartially support the social and material conditions that are necessary for everyone's pursuit of his or her lifestyle, vision or preferences.

The reason for this governmental neutrality is neither that lifestyles and visions of the good life are not important, nor that people strive for neutrality in their daily lives. It is rather that precisely because daily life is importantly non-neutral and perfectionist that the government should be neutral between these styles and visions. It is exactly because people highly value their choices that political liberalism objects to the communitarian view that the community's way of life should provide the basis for a public ranking of people's visions of the good life. The permissibility of people's lifestyles, visions and consumptive preferences should not depend on how much they adhere to this common good (*cf.* Sandel, 1984; Taylor, 1989a & 1989b; Walzer, 1994).

Many communitarian critics of the political liberal line of argument ascribe another interpretation of governmental neutrality to political liberalism than it self-consciously believes to endorse. Therefore, it is important to be clear that the idea that government policies should be neutral between different lifestyles and visions of the good life has three different versions:

> "1. *No political action may be undertaken or justified on the ground that it promotes an ideal of the good nor on the ground that it enables individuals to pursue an ideal of the good.*
>
> 2. *No political action may be undertaken if it makes a difference to the likelihood that a person will endorse one conception of the good or another, or to his chances of realizing this conception of the good, unless other actions are undertaken which cancel out such effects.*

3. *One of the main goals of governmental authority, which is lexically prior to an other, is to ensure for all persons an equal ability to pursue in their lives and promote in their societies any ideal of the good of their choosing"* (Raz, 1986; 114-115).

Most communitarians base their critique of political liberalism on the false assumption that it endorses either version 1 or version 2 of the neutrality claim, i.e. they assume that political liberalism not only aims at neutrality of opportunities but also at neutrality of effects. This misunderstanding of the political liberal position implies that communitarian critiques aim at the wrong target. Raz, however, rightly ascribes the third version of the idea of governmental neutrality to Rawls. Rawls (1993) accepts that this is the version of neutrality that he endorses, with one slight ramification: *"the state is to secure equal opportunity to advance any permissible conception"* (193 - emphasis added). He rejects the other two versions of the neutrality claim, since they suggest that government policies are not to have any effects on which visions of the good life endure and gain adherents over time. Rawls acknowledges that such neutrality of effects is a sociological impossibility. Furthermore, he restricts the third version to permissible visions of the good life, because the government is surely justified in hampering people to follow lifestyles or visions that harm other people's opportunities to follow their lifestyles and visions (see 4.3.3). Hence, environmental policy should not restrict equal opportunities to follow either omnivorous or vegetarian diets, unless one of these diets would harm others.

The Rawlsian interpretation of the third version of the neutrality claim is not that different from the first version, because this first version need not aim at neutrality of effects. It could define the neutral government as a government *"which does not justify its actions on the basis of the intrinsic superiority or inferiority of conceptions of the good life, and which does not deliberately attempt to influence people's judgement of the value of these different conceptions"* (Kymlicka, 1990; 205 - emphasis added). Such an interpretation of the first version would similarly protect people from government initiatives to enforce a vision of the good life on them, e.g. it implies that environmental policy should not deliberately favour either omnivorous or vegetarian preferences.

Another way to say that the government should be neutral between competing lifestyles and visions of the good life is that it should be anti-perfectionist in its policies. The government should not use perfectionist, or even paternalistic and moralistic, arguments to justify its policies, e.g. it should not use ecocentric visions of the good environment (*cf.* De-Shalit, 1995b) to justify a government initiative to promote vegetarian diets or have people convert from meat to NPFs. The strongest argument against such governmental perfectionism is that *"it is an insult to my conception of myself*

as a human being, determined to make my own life in accordance with my own ... purposes" (Berlin, 1969; 157). Governmental perfectionism would distort people's autonomy, disrespect their sovereignty, risk to serve vested interests and unfairly harm minority visions. Of course, the right to follow your own lifestyle should be limited by the boundary set to protect others from harm or injustice (see 4.3.3). Governmental perfectionism, however, falsely suggests that the individual freedom could even be limited beyond the point where governmental restrictions serve to protect others. It suggests that the government may intervene in individual choices on the patronising ground that it knows people's good better than they know it themselves (Feinberg, 1986; Kymlicka, 1989).

Political liberals, therefore, object to perfectionist policies to change lifestyles, visions of the good life or consumptive preferences as intolerable restrictions on the individual autonomy. It is not right to use governmental power to repress otherwise permissible lifestyles and visions of the good life. Within the limits of justice, lifestyles and visions of the good life should not be evaluated on their intrinsic value. Since contemporary affluent societies are permanently characterised by a plurality of lifestyles and visions of the good life, no perfectionist ideal could be an appropriate ground for government intervention. Such pluralistic societies are best governed by policies that do not presuppose any particular perfectionist vision of the good life. People should be free to choose themselves how they wish to live their lives.

Political liberalism does not need to object to the truism that people's choices are largely constituted by the social group or community to which they belong (see 3.2.2). However, it should object to the anachronistic communitarian view that the community's vision of the good life should have priority over people's autonomy (*cf.* Sandel, 1984; Taylor, 1989a & 1989b; Walzer, 1994). Political liberalism would rather enable people to take a reflexive stance towards their social or communitarian roots. In fact, any serious political philosophy should acknowledge the pluralism and reflexivity of people's lifestyles and narratives of self-identity in contemporary affluent societies, if it is not to be rejected as an anachronistic, conservative or reactionary body of thought (see chapter 3). Hence, anti-perfectionism is the only reasonable policy to adopt in view of the plurality of lifestyles, visions of the good life and consumptive preferences in contemporary affluent societies. The only restriction being that the government is allowed to hamper visions of the good life whose pursuit would violate the opportunities of others to follow their lifestyles and visions (Mulhall & Swift, 1992; Rawls, 1993)(see 4.3.3).

Since it is quite difficult, if not impossible, for the government to judge people's reasons for making apparently environment-unfriendly choices like eating meat, a government initiative that tries to do so anyway runs the risk of undesirable moralising.

However, the political liberal idea that the main governmental responsibility is to provide material and social conditions in which a plurality of permissible lifestyles can flourish (*cf.* Brom, 1997) is perfectly in line with the proposals for a green third way of government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles. Such a green third way suggests that, rather than by a perfectionist government-initiated conversion from meat to NPFs, environmental values are probably best served by a policy focusing on a conversion to organic or other more extensive farming practices to counteract the indeed manifold problems of current animal husbandry (see chapter 6).

4.3.3
Harm, Justice and Rationality

Political liberals are not entirely naive though. They do acknowledge that no individual freedom is possible without constraints, the paradigm case being that no political liberal would tolerate the cannibal to follow his or her consumptive preferences. Hence, the need to respect individual freedom is restricted to those lifestyles, visions of the good life or consumptive preferences that are worthy of people's support (Rawls, 1993). Worthy of people's support, what on earth does that mean? In general, political liberals recognise three permissible reasons for restricting individual freedom. These reasons are also the criteria of when a lifestyle, vision of the good life or consumptive preference counts as worthy of people's support. The following analysis of these three reasons does not intend to suggest that it is easy to judge whether or not a certain lifestyle is permissible within the political liberal framework. This is the more reason to embrace the modesty and restraint of an anti-perfectionist stance to the role of the government in pluralistic societies.

First, the government should restrict individual freedom, if people's choices harmed others: the harm principle. So, in the case of a government-initiated conversion from meat to novel protein foods things would have been different when meat consumption hampered the realisation of other people's visions of the good life. The need to respect individual freedom only calls for a respect for choices that do not interfere with the freedom of others. Thus, the need to respect individual freedom is constrained by an equal respect for the freedom of others. Political liberalism does not endorse the view that individual freedom needs respect even when someone's exercise of that freedom harms the freedom of others. The government is justified in discriminating against lifestyles and visions of the good life whose pursuit would violate the rights of others (Feinberg, 1988; Mulhall & Swift, 1992; Brom, 1997).

The harm principle secures that people do not harm each other in following their own ways of life, but that does not necessarily imply that lifestyles, visions of the good life or consumptive preferences will not harm future generations (Kymlicka, 1989). Environmental considerations might lead people to suggest that the harm principle could be broadened to include the freedom and opportunities of future generations, e.g. harm to our offspring might then justify a government-initiated conversion from meat to NPFs. However, as soon as otherwise reasonable people seem to disagree on whether or not a certain lifestyle or consumptive preference harms our offspring, the government better retains its neutrality between the divergent lifestyles and visions of the good life (Jacobs, 1992). It is not completely out of line to suggest that a government-initiated conversion from meat to NPFs could be interpreted as an attempt of certain cultural and economic elites to impose their post-materialistic values (Inglehart, 1990) on others. Douglas and Ney (1998) show that the abuse of future generations as supposedly neutral witnesses to present a case is not unfamiliar in cultural conflicts between social groups in contemporary pluralistic societies (see chapter 5).

Second, political liberalism, or at least its egalitarian branches, accepts that reasons of distributive justice could justify government intervention in the individual freedom of choice. The idea that a fair distribution of opportunities to follow your own way of life is to be safeguarded by the government, the justice principle, sets limits to which ways of life are permissible in contemporary pluralistic societies. It implies that people should not be allowed to follow lifestyles, visions of the good life or consumptive preferences that transgress the boundaries of distributive justice (Rawls, 1993).

The justice principle was originally formulated to settle issues of distributive justice within a fixed spatio-temporal context. However, it could be argued that this spatio-temporal bias should be abandoned in favour of a spatio-temporally neutral interpretation of the principle, i.e. an interpretation that includes distributive justice between generations. If people were free to follow their own lifestyles and consumptive preferences without any assessment of the repercussions of these styles and preferences on the natural environment, this might violate such a spatio-temporally neutral interpretation of the justice principle. Therefore, the government is allowed to impose restrictions on people's freedom to safeguard future generations from negative repercussions of current lifestyles on the natural environment. Such a redefined justice principle might justify a government-initiated conversion from meat to NPFs, if meat consumption implies that future generations will not get their fair share in the use of the natural environment (Achterberg, 1990; Den Hartogh, 1995; De-Shalit, 1995b; Wissenburg, 1998)(see chapter 5).

A spatial broadening of the justice principle would be less controversial and could also provide sound arguments to question current animal husbandry practices. This spatial

extension is less controversial, simply because spatially distanced others are real in a sense that future generations are not and may never be. They can voice their worries about, for instance, the injustice done by western animal husbandry and its massive transportation of nutrients around the world. Such worries offer reason enough to justify a government-initiated conversion to organic or other more extensive animal husbandry practices, if not for a government-initiated conversion from meat to NPFs.

Third, the government does not need to respect people's irrational or unreasonable choices. However, political liberals prefer a quite modest interpretation of what counts as a rational or reasonable choice, since veiled perfectionist arguments should not be allowed to invade their account of rationality. In the political liberal view, the rationality of choices mainly depends on the conditions in which people arrive at their choices, e.g. was their choice to eat meat based on adequate knowledge about the repercussions of this choice and was it arrived at in a properly functioning market? If prevailing social conditions (e.g. inadequate information or market failures) hampered people's considered judgement in making a specific choice, the government should not need to respect this choice. Contrary to the harm and justice principles, the rationality principle does not primarily serve to protect others from harm or injustice. This principle intends to protect people from doing harm or injustice to themselves. It protects people from the consequences of choices that they would not have made, if circumstances hadn't hampered their considered judgement. The rationality principle does not protect others, it protects selves (Feinberg, 1986).

4.3.4
Public Information and Financial Incentives

Political liberalism emphasises that the main governmental responsibility is to provide material and social conditions in which a plurality of permissible lifestyles can flourish (4.3.2). However, its neutral and anti-perfectionist stance leaves ample room to use public information and financial incentives in a green third way of government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles. Since the government should also promote the rationality of people's choices, it is perfectly reasonable for the government to provide them with information on the environmental repercussions of their choices or to use financial incentives in case market failures cause prices not to reflect the environmental costs of certain choices.

In fact, people's autonomy is enhanced when they are provided with adequate information on significant characteristics of the products with which they fulfil their consumptive preferences. It is in people's own best interest that the government requires

that *"information about harmful and dangerous properties of goods be clearly described on the label, or in some other suitable manner"* (Rawls, 1993; 364). The availability of such information, for instance on the environmental repercussions of animal husbandry practices, only helps people to make truly autonomous choices (Rippe, 2000). However, the government should be aware that it runs the risk of shifting public information from providing information to forms of manipulation that are not acceptable within a political liberal frame of reference (Raz, 1986).

Financial incentives could also help people to make truly autonomous choices, when prices do not reflect the environmental costs of certain products. Nothing seems to be particularly wrong with the government putting an eco-tax on meat from intensive animal husbandry to internalise the environmental costs. Or, even in case of scepticism about the adequacy of current environmental scientific knowledge about the repercussions of intensive animal husbandry practices, the reasonable political liberal should at least acknowledge that the government ought to abandon its repulsive subsidising of non-sustainable farming practices.

4.4
Liberal Perfectionism

Although the main line of argument of political liberalism certainly looks quite reasonable, further reflection shows that political liberalism's anti-perfectionist stance rests on false assumptions. Perfectionist liberalism, therefore, aims to repair this flaw in the political liberal argument, while remaining a thoroughly liberal body of thought. According to such a perfectionist liberalism, with Raz as its most eminent contemporary representative, the need to respect individual autonomy is not as neutral between the divergent lifestyles, visions of the good life or consumptive preferences in contemporary affluent societies as suggested by its political liberal advocates. Autonomy-enhancing policies in fact favour those lifestyles and visions that endorse individual autonomy as one of their core values. Hence, the emphasis of political liberals on autonomy-enhancing policies does not serve a neutral stance. As a matter of fact, none of the nineteenth-century founding fathers of modern liberalism ever meant their views to be understood as arguments for a neutral or anti-perfectionist government, for a mere modus vivendi.

The need to respect individual autonomy rather represents liberalism's own comprehensive view on how people should live their lives in contemporary affluent societies, its own perfectionist vision of what makes a life valuable. *"Instead of eschewing judgements about what makes a life valuable, liberalism consists essentially of the claim*

that a good life is one which has been freely or autonomously chosen by the person living it" (Mulhall & Swift, 1992; 32). A proper understanding of liberalism, thus, acknowledges that it is a perfectionist body of thought, which argues for a substantial view of what it means to respect the individual freedom to follow your own lifestyle, vision of the good life and consumptive preferences. Liberalism's emphasis on autonomy-enhancing policies is perfectionist because it relies on the comprehensive, specifically liberal, vision of the good life that gives individual autonomy overriding priority.

The basic normative assumption of the perfectionist liberal argument about the need to respect individual autonomy is that it would be better if people constructed their own lives, if they were the authors of their own narratives of self-identity. The liberal emphasis on freedom of choice is only valuable because it is a prerequisite for the realisation of this ideal of autonomous people who create their own lifestyles through a series of subsequent choices from a plurality of valuable options. This perfectionist ideal of the autonomous citizen-consumer implies that the good life better be an autonomous life in contemporary affluent societies, and that people's well being depends on whether they are the authors of their own narratives of self-identity (see 3.2.1).

However, this perfectionist swing to liberalism's main line of thought does not weaken the liberal argument that the government ought to respect people's freedom to follow their own lifestyles, visions of the good life or consumptive preferences. Liberal perfectionism does embrace the notion of autonomy as the substantial kernel of contemporary liberal-democratic societies. Political and perfectionist liberalism are equally eager to limit government intervention in people's lives, they merely disagree on whether the protection of people's freedom should be motivated by anti-perfectionist or by perfectionist arguments. According to Raz (1986), the *"most deeply rooted confusion leading to the intuitive appeal of the anti-perfectionist is in the thought that anti-perfectionism is necessary to prevent people from imposing their favoured style of life on others"* (161). One could not be more wrong indeed. Liberal perfectionism is perfectly compatible with a sincere respect for the plurality of lifestyles, visions of the good life or consumptive preferences in contemporary affluent societies. It could allow space for the endurance of a whole range of reasonable lifestyles and visions over time. Most prevailing lifestyles and visions of the good life will not be negatively affected by the perfectionist bias in such a properly understood liberalism.

Moreover, perfectionist liberalism is capable of securing that people can choose among enough options to make any respect for the individual freedom of choice truly valuable, whereas political liberalism remains empty-handed on this issue. Unlike most political liberals, perfectionist liberalism recognises that individual autonomy would only be valuable if a plurality of options is available. People should not only be allowed to

choose for themselves, they should also be provided with an adequate range of behavioral options. Perfectionist liberalism, of course, restricts this range of choices to those choices that do not harm others, respect the principles of distributive justice, and are arrived at in conditions assuring their rationality or reasonableness (see 4.3.3). The perfectionist liberal account of the need to respect individual autonomy *"requires that many morally acceptable options be available to a person"* (Raz, 1986; 378). The perfectionist liberal has it that it is only possible to live up to the ideal of autonomous choice under the further condition of a plurality of valuable options. It follows that for the perfectionist liberal the government also has a positive role in sustaining a diversity of options and opportunities over time. The government should, for instance, also look after the opportunity to follow both omnivorous and vegetarian diets over time, unless one of these diets would harm or do injustice to others.

Since the perfectionist liberal arguments seem to reflect an overlapping consensus in contemporary affluent societies, they should be thought to strengthen the main line of argument of political liberalism. The liberal notion of autonomy is probably the only value that could count on common affirmation, or express an overlapping consensus, in contemporary affluent societies. Therefore, a more communitarian perfectionist line of argument would ultimately boil down to this very perfectionist liberal position.

4.5
Deliberative Democracy

Whereas political liberalism rightly emphasises the need to safeguard people's negative freedom from interference by others or the government, it tends to forget the other side of the coin and largely neglects people's positive freedom to participate in public deliberations on governmental policies. Strengthening this positive freedom would enable people to become the autonomous co-authors of political opinion-formation. Hence, a full account of the proper relation between government and citizen-consumers in contemporary affluent societies should not only emphasise people's negative freedom. It should also strive for free and equal participation in public deliberations on the formation and execution of governmental policies. The government should, for instance, provide ample opportunities to discuss policies for dealing with the environmental repercussions of animal husbandry. No matter how much Rawls asserts the opposite in his 'Reply to Habermas' (1993), political liberalism remains largely empty-handed when it comes to addressing this issue of how people could be enabled to gain influence on the formation and execution of objectives and instruments of, for instance, environmental policy.

Therefore, this section focuses on the Habermasian idea of a deliberative democracy to remedy political liberalism's partial blindness and provide a qualitatively symmetrical account of the proper relation between government and citizen-consumers in contemporary affluent societies.

This deliberative model of democracy is not so much to be thought of as proposing an alternative to the prevailing parliamentary bodies of representative democracies. It is rather to supplement or strengthen these bodies with procedures for a more direct involvement of people in the formation of, for instance, environmental policies in the agro-food sector. This opinion-formation in pubic deliberations should offer fertile soil to feed subsequent decision-making processes in formalised democratic institutions. The kernel of the deliberative model of democracy is that public deliberation should be enhanced in order to enable people to (re)gain influence in the processes of political opinion-formation. Its core procedural device is that substantial political decisions should be the outcome of extensive public deliberation between free and equal citizen-consumers. The deliberative model of democracy has it that political decisions could only claim democratic legitimacy, if they are preceded and followed by extensive public deliberations. Governmental policies should always be suspectable to ongoing public scrutiny (Habermas, 1996 & 1997; De-Shalit, 1999).

Since the deliberative model of democracy is supposed to strengthen our representative democracy, it heavily emphasises the consistency between public opinion-formation and political decision-making. The general idea is that opinion-formation in public deliberations generates political influence once transformed through the periodical elections of representative democracies. This political influence is again transformed into governmental decisions through a series of legislative procedures. However, the ultimate source for the legitimacy of political decision-making is to be found in extensive deliberations in the public sphere. A government initiative to have people convert from meat to novel protein foods could only be legitimate, if 1) such a conversion has been issue of extensive public deliberation, and 2) no individuals perceive of such a policy as an infringement of their self-identities, visions of the good life or consumptive preferences. Thus, public deliberation is to mediate between individual opinion-formation and majority decision-making in the parliamentary bodies of a representative democracy. The political decisions of these parliamentary bodies should always reflect the surrounding processes of opinion-formation in the public sphere (Habermas, 1996 & 1997).

At the heart of the deliberative model of democracy is an emphasis on genuine participation of citizen-consumers in the public process of deliberation; *"a process in which citizens attempt to convince others to adopt certain policies on the basis of public reasons as they emerge in the give and take of deliberative dialogue"* (Bohman, 1996; 15).

Deliberative democracy is a means to handle politically controversial issues through dialogue rather than through violence or pre-established power-positions, a means of living together in a relation of mutual tolerance for the plurality of, possibly conflicting yet reasonable, visions of the good life in contemporary affluent societies. The STD proposals for a government-initiated conversion from meat to NPFs are tainted by the technocratic flavour that is characteristic for such think-tanks. Therefore, it is no wonder that the STD engineers appear to abuse their position as scientific experts to impose particular values, instead of showing the true respect for other values and consumptive preferences that is a prerequisite for genuine public deliberations.

Extensive public deliberation may also improve political decision-making, because it invites people to (re)consider their initial opinions in view of other people's opinions and interests. A deliberative democracy encourages people *"not merely to express their political opinions (through opinion polls, referenda and the like), but to form those opinions through debate in public settings"* (Miller, 1993; 89). Deliberative democracy asks citizen-consumers to exchange their views and discuss their reasons for supporting or opposing policies in intersubjective deliberations, and to show a willingness to revise their views and opinions once confronted with convincing arguments of others (Giddens, 1994a & 1994b; Holemans, 1999; Rawls, 1999).

Most proponents of the deliberative model of democracy would subscribe to the following four parameters to capture the kernel of a fair public deliberation or discourse:

"(P1) *Reasonable Articulation of Need-Claims: All participants in a discourse should be capable of reasonably articulating rationally any need-claim they take to be morally significant.*

(P2) *Bracketing of Power Differentials: Differences in (all forms of) power which exist between participants (both within and outside of argumentation) should not be any participant's good reason in discourse for endorsing any moral judgement.*

(P3) *Nonstrategic Transparency: All participants should be able to convey their articulations of morally significant need-claims truthfully, without strategical reservations.*

(P4) *Fusion of Moral Horizons: All participants should be able to sufficiently understand articulated need-claims in the corresponding moral horizons of whoever articulates them"* (Kettner, 1999; 34).

The approximation of these four parameters would secure that public deliberations are exchanges of opinion in which the better argument could gain support, and safeguards them from distortion by power-positions, money or strategic behaviour (Bohman, 1996; Dryzek, 1997).

Some proponents of deliberative democracy would like to add as a fifth parameter:

(P5) *Comprehensive Inclusion: Participants should make the following a constraint on what their community of discourse can accept as good reasons: that participants must anticipate whether their reasons can be rehearsed by all nonparticipant others who figure in any moral judgement that may result from the discourse"* (Kettner, 1999; 34).

This parameter seems to demand that the participants in public deliberations lay aside their narrowly motivated, self-interested opinions and only refer to generalisable interests. This condition asks the participants in public deliberations to search for universal moral rules that would impartially settle conflicts of interest. Hence, the outcome of public deliberations should only reflect arguments that are acceptable to all. Such a parameter seems unduly restrictive on the kind of interests, opinions and arguments that people may refer to in their public deliberations, seems to stretch people's responsibilities one bridge too far (Bohman, 1996; Swierstra, 1998).

The same holds true for a sixth parameter that some of deliberative democracy's proponents wish to embrace. They hold it that the participants in public deliberations should show a willingness not merely to exchange and revise their opinions but to reach consensus on the issue at stake. However, such a closure parameter is unduly restrictive on the freedom and openness of public deliberations, and makes you wonder what these public deliberations could be about when all significantly divergent opinions and interests are silenced in advance. Proponents of this parameter introduce as a substantial premise, consensus, what could only be the outcome of public deliberations that are properly structured by the four procedural parameters. To be sure, nothing is particularly wrong with a public deliberation resulting in consensus, but it is also perfectly reasonable for a public deliberation to result in disagreement on the issue at stake. The mere fact that a debate does not result in consensus does not imply, in a feedback fashion, that it has not been a good debate. In case of enduring dissensus, subsequent political decision-making should respect or tolerate this plurality of interests and opinions, which may entail a need to compromise.

Apart from the general advantages of a deliberative model over other models of democracy, scientific uncertainty about the environmental repercussions of, for instance, animal husbandry practices adds another reason why it is especially important to introduce deliberative forms of democracy in environmental policy-making. *"Given the often high levels of uncertainty and risk that social-environmental interactions display it would seem that ecological rationality requires that institutions regulating these interactions be as self-reflexive and open-ended as possible"* (Barry, 1999b; 203). So, reflexivity and openness should characterise environmental policy-making in view of the high level of

scientific uncertainty (see 5.5). The deliberative model of democracy is probably best equipped to meet these requirements, since it entails ongoing public scrutiny of the policy-making process. It is, after all, most sensitive to the possibility that people may wish to change initial political decisions because, in the second instance, they turn out to be wrong, immoral or simply bad. This sensitivity is guaranteed in deliberative democracy's opportunities for re-debating any political decision at any moment in time, for ongoing reflection on the basis of ever-new information and arguments. Consequently, public deliberation is important in all stages of the opinion-formation and policy-making process, from the definition of social problems through the formation of objectives to the execution of specific policies (De-Shalit, 1999; Holemans, 1999).

Fortunately, environmental and other non-governmental organisations have recognised the importance of extensive public deliberation and have been playing a constructive role in initiating deliberative forms of democracy. Such organisations will continue to play an important role in the extensive public deliberations of a revitalised democracy. Their primary role in a deliberative democracy is to *"open up spaces for public dialogue in respect of the issues with which they are concerned"* (Giddens, 1994a; 17). Thus, the activities of environmental organisations express and contribute to the heightened reflexivity that is characteristic for a deliberative democracy. Genuine public deliberation in the opinion-formation process could also be strengthened by experimenting with new deliberative institutions, e.g. citizens' juries, round tables, public inquiries, and so on (Giddens, 1991; Barry, 1999a).

Finally, the extensive public deliberations of a properly functioning deliberative democracy might also justify more directive strategies for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles than political liberalism could ever account for. Such deliberations might, for instance, quite reasonably conclude that the government should introduce rather restrictive policies towards environment-unfriendly animal husbandry practices. The legitimacy of such governmental policies ultimately depends on the critical judgement by free and equal people participating in a public deliberation. Although this legitimacy of the policy-making process is an essential part of the deliberative model of democracy, it is secondary to its primary objective of securing ongoing intersubjective opinion-formation among free and equal people (Bohman, 1996; Habermas, 1996).

4.6
Conclusion

This chapter set out to answer the question of whether government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles could be reconciled with respect for people's freedom to follow a lifestyle of their own choice by offering a specifically political liberal interpretation of the notion of autonomy or freedom of choice. The political liberal argument of why the government needs to respect this autonomy started by acknowledging the fact of pluralism of lifestyles, visions of the good life and consumptive preferences in contemporary affluent societies. Next, it argued that respect for the individual freedom of choice is the only alternative for ongoing conflicts about these lifestyles, visions and preferences. This negative freedom from governmental interference implies that people should, for instance, be free to choose to eat meat or not. Furthermore, the political liberal argument had it that the autonomy of choices is more important than the substantial contents of these choices. Hence, being able to choose between meat and novel protein foods matters more than whatever people may choose. This positive freedom to follow your own lifestyle was founded on the ideal of the autonomous individual for whom the ability to frame, follow and revise his or her own way of life has overriding priority. Subsequently, it was argued that respecting autonomy implies safeguarding a private sphere from governmental interference. This posed worries as to whether it is right to shift meat consumption from this private sphere to the sphere of justified public interference.

Berlin (1969) offered a final set of four criteria to assess the extent to which specific policies respect people's autonomy: 1) how many options do people have, 2) how difficult is it to follow these options, 3) how important are these options in people's lifestyles, and 4) does a policy deliberately restrict such options? A government-initiated conversion from meat to NPFs seemed to score negatively on this set of criteria. This was thought to be reason enough to be rather suspicious about such policies to change consumptive preferences.

The second major argument in the political liberal emphasis on the need to respect people's autonomy was that the government should be neutral between the different lifestyles, visions of the good life and consumptive preferences in contemporary affluent societies. This governmental neutrality was not taken to call for neutrality in the effects of governmental policies. It rather implied that, for instance, environmental policy should not deliberately favour either omnivorous or vegetarian preferences and practices. In other words, the government should not use perfectionist arguments to justify its policies. It should not use, for instance, ecocentric visions of the good environment to justify a government-initiated conversion from meat to NPFs. The main responsibility of the

political liberal, neutral and anti-perfectionist government was to provide the social and material conditions in which a plurality of lifestyles could flourish.

However, the political liberal argument did not amount to a vulgar anything goes, since it acknowledged that no freedom is possible without constraints. Three legitimate reasons for restricting people's autonomy were recognised. First, the government should restrict people's freedom, if their choices harmed others. It was questioned, though, whether this harm principle might also include harm to our offspring to justify, for instance, a government-initiated conversion from meat to NPFs. It did not seem altogether clear that such a spatio-temporally neutral interpretation of the harm principle would not somehow involve veiled perfectionist arguments (see chapter 5). Second, the egalitarian branches of political liberalism should also accept that reasons of distributive justice could justify governmental restrictions on people's freedom. Again, broadening this justice principle to include justice between generations in the use of the natural environment might justify a government-initiated conversion from meat to NPFs. But then again, it did not seem clear that this spatio-temporal extension of the justice principle would not imply projecting current preferences on future needs (see chapter 5). Third, the governmental respect for people's autonomy should be restricted to rational or reasonable choices. If people's choices, for instance the choice to eat meat, are based on inadequate knowledge about the environmental repercussions of these choices or on market failures, the government should not respect them as truly autonomous choices.

Consequently, the government was argued to have the responsibility to promote the rationality of people's choices by providing them with adequate information on the repercussions of their choices. So, the political liberal stance left ample room for the government to provide people with information on the environmental repercussions of, for instance, animal husbandry. The same was supposed to hold true for the use of financial incentives, when market failures cause prices not to reflect the environmental costs of certain products. Nothing seemed to be particularly wrong with the government putting an eco-tax on meat from intensive animal husbandry.

At that stage, a flaw in the political liberal argument for a neutral and anti-perfectionist government had to be repaired by accepting the perfectionist liberal position that autonomy-oriented policies are not neutral between lifestyles or visions of the good life. Such policies favour those lifestyles and visions that embrace the liberal notion of autonomy as one of their core values. In this modest sense, autonomy-oriented policies appeared to be perfectionist. Such policies ultimately rest on a comprehensive, specifically liberal, vision of the good life, which gives people's autonomy overriding priority. Moreover, perfectionist liberalism also offered good reasons to accept that freedom of choice will only be valuable, if people can choose among sufficiently divergent options.

Hence, it was argued that the government should sustain a diversity of options over time. The government should, for instance, look after the possibility to follow both omnivorous and vegetarian diets over time, unless of course one of these diets would harm others or do them injustice. Although these perfectionist liberal arguments traced some essential flaws in the political liberal body of thought, they were not taken to weaken the main argument that the government needs to respect people's autonomy. The perfectionist liberal arguments were rather thought to strengthen the need to respect autonomy, since they express an overlapping consensus in contemporary liberal-democratic societies.

Finally, a neglect of the need to enhance people's positive freedom to participate in public deliberation on governmental policies accompanied the political liberal emphasis on the need to respect people's negative freedom. This asymmetry was remedied by shifting attention to the Habermasian idea of a deliberative democracy. The objective of this account of deliberative democracy was to show that the government should also enhance people's opportunities to (re)gain influence in the formation and execution of the objectives and instruments of environmental policy. The government should, for instance, create possibilities to discuss different policies for dealing with the environmental repercussions of animal husbandry. The deliberative model of democracy was not introduced as an alternative for the parliamentary bodies of representative democracies, but rather as an attempt to supplement these bodies with procedures for a more direct involvement of people in the formation of, for instance, environmental policies in the agro-food sector. This deliberative model of democracy showed that the legitimacy of governmental policies ultimately rests on extensive public deliberation of the issue at the stake. Genuine participation in such public deliberations was shown to depend on four parameters. The participants in public deliberations should 1) be able to reasonably articulate their arguments, 2) not allow power differences to influence the argument, 3) argue in a non-strategic, authentic way, and 4) be able to understand other people's arguments within their frames of reference. Two additional parameters, advocated by some of deliberative democracy's proponents, were rejected. It would be unduly restrictive on the freedom and openness of public deliberations to ask people to restrict their arguments to generalisable interests or to search for consensus. A specific argument for introducing deliberative forms of democracy in environmental policy-making was found in the uncertainty of scientific knowledge about the environmental repercussions of, for instance, animal husbandry (see 5.5). The deliberative model of democracy was shown to be most sensitive to the quite obvious possibility that people may wish to revise decisions in view of new information or arguments. Finally, it was argued that extensive public deliberation on environmental policies might also justify more directive strategies for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles than political liberalism, as a

freestanding body of thought, could ever account for. Such public deliberations might, for instance, conclude that the government should introduce quite restrictive policies towards non-sustainable animal husbandry practices. However, this legitimacy of the policy-making process was supposed to be secondary to deliberative democracy's primary role of providing ample opportunities for intersubjective opinion-formation among free and equal citizen-consumers.

This chapter's account of what it entails to respect people's autonomy and to enhance their public deliberations provides the materials for a further elaboration on the proper division of responsibilities between government and citizen-consumers in a green third way of government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles (see chapter 6). First, however, the next chapter (5) will address the question of whether a spatio-temporal extension of the harm and justice principles could provide sound arguments for restricting people's freedom to follow their own lifestyles and narratives of self-identity.

5

Sustainable Development and Future Generations

"Nature ... Aha! Don't think I haven't caught on.
This nature business is another fine fraud: kill it!"
(Italo Calvino, 1981; 247)

5.1
Introduction

July 21, 20.00, Amsterdam Airport: "Good evening Sir, welcome at Venga Airways. May I ask your destination?" "Sure, I'm going to Ibiza but". "Alright, passport and ticket please. Wait here for the environmental interview". "The what?" A few minutes later, "Good evening mister Doe, may I call you John, thank you for waiting. I'm gonna ask you some questions about your flight to Ibiza. No need to be nervous though, this environmental interview is standard procedure issued by the government to establish the necessity of your flight. It's quite similar to the security interviews with which you're probably more acquainted. So John, tell me, why are you going to Ibiza?" "Well, you know, holidays: sun, beaches, parties, babes". "I see, how many times did you fly over, let's say, the last two years?" "Uh, let's see, last summer I went to Tenerife, in the autumn I went to Goa, and of course the millennium-trip to Fiji". "Sir, don't you know that's way above your personal environmental utilisation space? Aren't you aware that holidays by air, 60% of all international flights, contribute to the greenhouse effect, acid rain and the breakdown of the ozone layer?" "Well, that's not my problem, is it?" "Wouldn't you like your children to be able to live an agreeable life then?" "Don't got no children and couldn't care anyway". "I'm sorry Sir, I'm afraid we've got to cancel your flight. We cannot allow irresponsible people like you to fly all over this world for no good reason whatsoever". "Who the f♥♥♥ do you think you are to interfere with my personal freedom to decide where I wanna go on holidays".

Obviously, this chapter needs to address one final principled question before the outline of a green third way can be presented: the question of whether the notion of

sustainable development could provide sound arguments for restricting people's freedom to follow their own lifestyles, narratives of self-identity and consumptive preferences? The short history of sustainable development (see 1.1) already showed that this question amounts to the question of whether concerns about the negative repercussions of current lifestyles on nature and the environment could justify government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles. In other words, do the concerns about future generations, materialised in the world-wide support for the notion of sustainable development, imply that a spatio-temporal extension of the harm and justice principles should be included in a political liberal frame of reference (see 4.3.3)?

First, the next section will explore some of the outer skirts of the political liberal frame of reference. Much to the comfort of those environmental philosophers who are keen on avoiding any of the rather esoteric intrinsic value of nature arguments in mainstream deep ecology, Rawls himself made some minor remarks on the issue of justice between generations. Therefore, the first sub-section will discuss Rawls's savings principle as a means to address the issue of intergenerational justice (5.2.1). Whereas Rawls's initial grounding of this savings principle is defective, his latest defence of the savings principle looks much more promising for introducing intergenerational issues in a political liberal frame of reference. The next sub-section will introduce Wissenburg's restraint principle to give some substantial flesh and bone to the political liberal account of intergenerational justice (5.2.2). Although this restraint principle is still unduly abstract, it is probably the best that the spatio-temporally egalitarian branches of political liberalism can do. Moreover, unlike the popular precautionary principle and the Rawlsian maximin principle, the restraint principle does not need controversial assumptions about people's risk perceptions to establish a baseline for environmental policy-making.

An interpretation of the kernel of the notion of sustainable development as justice between generations seems to be a promising route to provide a political, not metaphysical, justification of directive strategies for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles. However, it will also draw the argument to an overly abstract and survivalist position that does not fully capture people's intuitive, more empathetic concerns about the deterioration of nature and the environment. Whereas it is important that the restraint principle provides a baseline with minimum requirements for environmental policy-making, it would be a pity if the implications of sustainable development were confined to such a minimal environmental morality. Therefore, the next section will provide a complementary narrative interpretation of sustainable development. First, focus will be on Passmore's chains of love and especially De-Shalit's transgenerational communities as materials for an account of intergenerational concerns that carries the proper empathetic intuition that the current generation owes more to nearby future

generations than mere survival (5.3.1). The next sub-section will then use these materials to redraw some of the central threads of the narrative conceptualisation of the notions of lifestyle and self-identity (see 3.2.1) to provide the complementary interpretation of sustainable development (5.3.2). While the narrative interpretation of sustainable development embraces the environmental baseline provided by the restraint principle, it insists that further environmental policies should be based on current ideals of people with narratives of self-identity that stretch beyond their own lifetimes. It will be argued that these ideals are ultimately formed in people's immediate encounters with the human and non-human other in circumstances of co-presence, and that such encounters can only provide a justification for non-directive strategies of government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles.

At that stage, it is time to shift attention from these rather unearthly issues to the more mundane problem of operationalising, or quantifying, the environmental baseline for day-to-day environmental policy-making. Therefore, the next section of this chapter will discuss two alternative operationalisations of sustainable development. First, a modest stocktaking approach that draws a tentative list of transgenerationally universal primary environmental goods as a practical guideline to prioritise among the divergent objectives of day-to-day environmental politics (5.4.1). Second, the more ambitious systems ecological attempt to quantify an overall environmental utilisation space (EUS)(5.4.2). Although both operationalisations carry the same spatio-temporally-egalitarian premises, the stocktaking approach prefers a pragmatic stance towards these premises instead of the principled stance of the EUS. Moreover, the proponents of the EUS seem to be over-ambitious in quantifying the environmental baseline, and display a somewhat anachronistic understanding of science and technology and the relation between science and politics.

The next section will, therefore, criticise the notion of an EUS for its lack of attention for the principal uncertainty of scientific knowledge in contemporary affluent societies. Building on the account of reflexive modernisation (see 3.4), it will be argued that the notions of risk and trust are essential ingredients in any argument about the proper relation between science and politics in environmental decision-making (5.5).

Finally, the chapter will draw the conclusion (5.6) that, whereas the restraint principle and a list of primary environmental goods might justify directive strategies for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles, non-directive strategies should do the majority of the job (see chapter 6).

5.2
Intergenerational Justice

The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987) defined sustainable development as *"development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"* (43)(see 1.1). This authoritative definition of sustainable development suggests that the present generation should provide future generations, through the prevention of further deterioration of nature and the environment, with the opportunities to follow their own lifestyles and visions of the good life. The notion of sustainable development thus seems to represent a spatio-temporally egalitarian intuition that the current use of nature and the environment should not harm future generations, an intuition that all individuals (no matter where or when) should have an equal right to use the natural environment.

This spatio-temporally egalitarian kernel of the notion of sustainable development lead several environmental philosophers to embrace the concerns about the opportunities of future generations to follow their lifestyles and visions of the good life as a more promising route towards an effective justification of environmental policy-making than the hitherto largely ineffective attempts to justify environmental policies on the basis of some presumed intrinsic value of nature. Since the opportunities of future generations to follow their lifestyles will be harmed in a deteriorated natural environment, it could be enough to adopt a long-term, intergenerational perspective to be able to justify environmental policies as necessary abatements of the negative repercussions of current lifestyles on nature and the environment. Such an appeal to the opportunities of future generations in order to safeguard nature and the environment from further deterioration seems to be a more promising guideline for day-to-day environmental policy-making than the rather esoteric appeals to some intrinsic value of nature. Whereas mainstream deep ecologists' preoccupation with the intrinsic value of nature reduces the practical relevance of their philosophies for everyday environmental policy-making, the issue of sustainable development and future generations invites environmental philosophers to make a difference in the real world. Moreover, the worldwide concerns about future generations, materialised in the notion of sustainable development, seem to make room to address the deterioration of nature and the environment within a liberal frame of reference. Such concerns about future generations might justify directive strategies for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles, even within a political liberal frame of reference (Light, 1996; Norton, 1996a & 1996b; Dobson, 1998; Wissenburg, 1998; Barry, 1999a).

5.2.1
A Rawlsian Savings Principle

In 'A Theory of Justice' (1972), Rawls developed a specific contractarian approach to ground principles of justice for well-ordered societies. With his famous hypothetical original position, in which the participants were to reach agreement on principles of justice under conditions of uncertainty about their position in the real-life social order, Rawls constructed a methodological device to strengthen his political liberal argument that the principles of justice should protect the worst-off in society. When knowledge about their position in the social order is precluded by a veil of ignorance, the participants in the original position were supposed to adopt a maximin strategy to hedge against the bad chance of belonging to the lowest ranks of society. Hence, they would reach agreement on principles of justice that favour the interests of society's worst-off. According to Rawls, these principles should guide the distributive policies of liberal-democratic governments.

When Rawls introduced the savings principle to address the issue of justice between generations in this contractarian frame of reference, he initially assumed that the participants in the original position should also be ignorant about their position in the succession of generations. However, he was unwilling to imagine the original position as a hypothetical conversation between representatives from all possible generations. The participants in the original position were to be contemporaries and knowledge of this present-time-of-entry should not be precluded by the veil of ignorance. Unfortunately, since the participants in the original position were to know that they are contemporaries, nothing would stop them from favouring their own interests by neglecting the opportunities of future generations. Whether or not preceding generations restrained themselves in their use of nature and the environment, the participants in the original position could not change a thing about that. Hence, no savings principle would be chosen. To avoid such a counter-intuitive conclusion, Rawls introduced the motivational assumption that the participants in the original position were to care about their immediate descendants. Then, motivated by a wish to save for their immediate offspring and a claim on their immediate ancestors to have saved for them, the participants in the original position would reach agreement on a savings principle with regard to their use of nature and the environment. With this motivational assumption, Rawls thought that he secured intergenerational justice in the emotional ties between successive generations.

However, the kernel of Rawls's contractarian approach is that he constructed an original position in which the participants were to reach agreement on principles of justice solely motivated by their self-interest. The motivational assumption, introduced to secure justice between generations, seems to be at odds with this kernel of his contractarian

approach. The participants no longer reach agreement on principles of justice solely motivated by self-interest. Rawls thus seems unwilling to remain true to the anti-perfectionist stance of his political liberal theory of justice once it comes to hard cases like the issue of justice between generations. Moreover, since Rawls grounds his savings principle on the emotional ties between successive generations, this principle would merely secure justice between a few generations in the use of nature and the environment. Rawls's principle only captures concerns about the opportunities of more immediate future generations to follow their lifestyles and visions of the good life. Such a time preference is alien to the spatio-temporally egalitarian intuition that a mere difference in time, whether someone lives earlier or later, is in itself no rational argument to refuse equal opportunities in the use of nature and the environment. The preservation of nature and the environment should not depend on possibly absent emotional ties between specific individuals in successive generations.

When you, for instance, look at going on holidays by air and focus on the environmental repercussions of the necessary use of fossil fuels, Rawls's savings principle cannot make a difference in arguments about a reduction of the number of flights as an objective of environmental policy-making. Nevertheless, it is known that planes use about 4.45 MJ/person/kilometre, i.e. more than 2.5 times as much as cars, 4 times as much as trains and 6 to 8 times as much as buses. Apart from this enormous use of fossil fuels, flying also contributes to the greenhouse effect, acid rain, and the destruction of the ozone layer by emitting 0.6 gram CO, 0.2 gram HC, 1.1 gram NO_x, 0.2 gram SO_2, and 300 grams CO_2/person/kilometre. Although technological innovations have been reducing emissions/person/kilometre over the last years, the steep growth in the number of flights will triple the total emissions of flying by the year 2015 (Raad voor het Natuurbeheer, 1994; Van der Linde & Franke, 1996; Beckers *et al.*, 1999). Still, since Rawls's savings principle is based on the emotional ties between successive generations, it could only justify policies to mitigate the short-term environmental repercussions of flying. The principle, thus, leaves policy-makers empty-handed in their attempts to address the aforementioned long-term environmental repercussions of going on holidays by air. It cannot justify any infringements of people's freedom of choice of holiday-destination on the basis of these long-term environmental repercussions.

To avoid this rather unsatisfying conclusion, English (1977), Manning (1981), Thero (1995) and others suggested that it might be better to imagine the original position as a hypothetical conversation between representatives from all possible generations. Once you abandon the present-time-of-entry interpretation and treat the position of the participants in the succession of generations as another arbitrary contingency to be hidden by the veil of ignorance, the participants in the original position would reach agreement on

a spatio-temporally egalitarian savings principle on the basis of their self-interest. Justice between generations in the use of nature and the environment would be secured. Since the participants in the original position would not know to which generation they belong, they would reach agreement on a savings principle to hedge against the bad chance of belonging to a remote future generation. Such a principle would demand long-term conservation of nature and the environment to safeguard the opportunities of immediate and remote future generations to follow their lifestyles and visions of the good life.

In his 'Political Liberalism' (1993), Rawls admits that his initial grounding of the savings principle is defective, but remains unwilling to imagine the original position as a hypothetical conversation between representatives from all possible generations. Although Rawls is not particularly informative about his reasons to hold on to the present-time-of-entry interpretation of the original position, he is probably keen on avoiding any of Parfit's (1984) non-identity paradoxes in trying to imagine a conversation between all possible generations about, for instance, environmental policies. Since any change of policy would affect the identity of future individuals, the principal instability of the identities of the participants in an intergenerational original position would frustrate any ongoing conversation. Therefore, Rawls follows a different strain of thought to address the issue of justice between generations in a political liberal frame of reference. Elaborating on English's (1977) suggestion that it is quite reasonable to assume that the choice of principles of justice by the participants in the original position will be affected by whether they can count on others to follow these principles, Rawls assumes that the choice of a savings principle will be affected by whether the participants in the original position can count on their predecessors to have followed the principle. He holds it that the participants in the original position should assume that other generations save according to the principle they choose. In fact, this seems to be a proper intergenerational equivalent of the Kantian categorical imperative that the legitimacy of moral principles depends on whether the individual can wish that all others embrace and follow these principles.

Summarising Rawls's latest defence of the savings principle, he now assumes that: 1) the participants in the original position should reach agreement on principles of justice solely motivated by self-interest; 2) they are contemporaries and know that much; 3) knowledge about their position in the succession of generations is precluded by the veil of ignorance; and 4) the participants in the original position should reach agreement on a savings principle under the further condition that they should want all previous generations to have followed that principle. Rawls holds it that these assumptions assure that the participants in the original position will choose a savings principle that is acceptable for all generations and that could guide policy-makers in addressing the issue of justice between generations in the use of nature and the environment. His fourth

assumption seems reasonable indeed, since any new generation will always enter an already ongoing social order. A basic trust that others will follow the same set of spatio-temporally overlapping moral principles, the kernel of this new assumption, is an essential prerequisite for the continuity of any social order. Hence, Rawls's reconstructed original position provides sound arguments to embrace a savings principle (Wissenburg, 1998).

Turning to the going-on-holidays-by-air case again, it should be perfectly clear that even the most stubborn neo-classical economic liberal should be willing to accept the introduction of an excise on kerosene and a VAT-levy on air tickets. No matter what some outdated Chicago Treaty may have to say on the subject, the government should establish a level playing field among the divergent means of transport (Raad voor het Natuurbeheer, 1994; Beckers *et al.*, 1999). However, Rawls's latest defence of the savings principle could also justify more restrictive environmental policies towards people's freedom of mobility, when the current generation tends to use more fossil fuels than it would grant its immediate and remote predecessors to have used. Unfortunately, Rawls's latest, and firm, grounding of the savings principle offers few leads on how to quantify what counts as excessive use of fossil fuels by the current generation. The savings principle, thus, still lacks substance.

Nevertheless, since no future generations participate in Rawls's latest reconstruction of the original position to defend a savings principle, it effectively evades Parfit's (1984) non-identity paradoxes in hypothetical intergenerational conversations. Because Rawls starts from what current generations wish to save for future generations and what they wish previous generations to have saved for them, he also evades the impossible task of specifying principally unknowable future preferences. Since *"we do not know which possible persons will be born to whom, we do not know what they will look like, what their abilities and disabilities will be, what preferences, plans of life and theories of the good they will have"* (Wissenburg, 1998; 175), such preferences could never provide guidance in answering the question of how the current generation could secure that nature and the environment provide the opportunities for future generations to follow their lifestyles and visions of the good life. Fortunately, Rawls's latest defence of the savings principle does not need to perform this impossible task anyway. However, whereas Rawls's argument for accepting a savings principle might be convincing, his procedural account of the issue of intergenerational justice lacks substantial flesh and bone. He does not have much to offer in answering the question of what, and how much, the current generation ought to save to protect the opportunities of future generations to follow their lifestyles and visions of the good life.

5.2.2
The Restraint Principle

The Rawlsian savings principle adequately represents the core idea of the spatio-temporally egalitarian branches of political liberalism that people's position in space and time does not provide rational arguments for a differential weighing of their interests. It, thus, captures the intuition that it is reasonable enough for a future individual to argue that members of the current generation should not discriminate against his or her interests in the use of nature and the environment, simply because they live now and he or she at some future moment in time. It seems to suffice to foresee the existence of future generations to argue that current generations should save some natural environment, but does the savings principle also imply *"an obligation to maintain a non-diminishing range of choices and opportunities to pursue certain valued interests and activities"* (Norton, 1999; 132-133)? Wissenburg's (1998) defence of the restraint principle answers the question of whether the savings principle calls for the preservation of the whole, or merely some of, the plurality of environmental goods with a qualified version of the first, and most demanding, option. Thereby, he gives the political liberal account of intergenerational justice its much-needed substance.

Wissenburg (1998) argues that political liberals should be willing to accept a principle that demands that claims on a physically scarce natural environment be granted in such a way that nature and the environment remain available for future claims. This principle is the restraint principle: *"no goods shall be destroyed unless unavoidable and unless they are replaced by perfectly identical goods; if that is physically impossible, they should be replaced by equivalent goods resembling the original as closely as possible; and if that is also impossible, a proper compensation should be provided"* (123). The definition of the restraint principle does not include the term future generations, because it should abstract from specific spatio-temporal contexts to operate as a principle that safeguards distributive justice in the use of nature and the environment within and between generations. The principle suggests that whenever the current generation has a choice between destroying nature and the environment and using nature and the environment without reducing the opportunities of future generations, it should choose the latter course of action. This argument about the preservation of the natural heritage is analogous to Raz's (1986) argument that if you happen to own some significant piece of the cultural heritage (e.g. a painting by Matisse or Picasso), you may legitimately choose whether to exhibit it in the private or the public sphere. However, you may not destroy it.

Although the restraint principle may seem unduly abstract, it is an accurate spatio-temporal extension of the harm and justice principles. The principle is also a practical

guideline for day-to-day environmental policy-making, since it does not demand the impossible. It clearly states that restraint in the current use of nature and the environment could be overruled by reasons of necessity. The principle, thus, assures that future generations are provided with as much opportunities to use nature and the environment as they could hope for without placing excessively high demands on the current generation. Of course, the tough question is how to define the key terms impossible and necessity. It is quite likely that once the restraint principle is accepted as a specification of the notion of sustainable development, the interpretation of these rather lax terms will be subject to further public debate.

The restraint principle, for instance, implies that the current generation should not use more fossil fuels than absolutely necessary. So, the question becomes whether being mobile or being able to go on holidays by air counts as a necessity, or a need, in contemporary affluent societies. If someone like Brunt (1991) holds it that the individual freedom of movement should never be curtailed by environmental policies, the restraint principle would suggest that this freedom only be granted under the further condition that alternative means of transport will be developed that do not need non-renewable fossil fuels to move people around the world. The development of such new means of transport should compensate future generations for the current generation's use of non-renewable fossil fuels (Aarts *et al.*, 1995).

Wissenburg argues that the potential laxity in the application of the restraint principle in environmental policy-making is largely curtailed by the fact that it puts the onus of proof for justifying destructive uses of nature and the environment on the users. Since he develops the argument for a reversal of the burden of proof partly in a critique of the precautionary principle, it is wise to pay some special attention to this principle. Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, 1992) the precautionary principle acquired international support among environmentalists as a promising instrument to challenge vested economic and political interests. The proponents of the precautionary principle suggest that the argument to put the onus of proof on the users of nature and the environment is based on a procedural account of what counts as a rational course of action in circumstances of uncertainty. O'Riordan and Jordan (1995), for instance, argue that at *"the core of the precautionary principle is the intuitively simple idea that decision makers should act in advance of scientific certainty to protect the environment (and with it the well-being interests of future generations) from incurring harm. [...] In essence, it requires that risk avoidance becomes an established decision norm where there is reasonable uncertainty regarding possible environmental damage or social deprivation arising out of a proposed course of action"* (194). From a strategic point of view it is quite understandable why environmentalists wish to embrace such

arguments. However, this quote should make it perfectly clear that the precautionary principle depends on a quite specific and substantial, risk-avoiding attitude towards uncertainty about the repercussions of current lifestyles on nature and the environment to argue for a reversal of the burden of proof. It argues that the only reasonable course of action in circumstances of uncertainty is to hedge against the worst-case scenario (*cf.* Beck, 1988; Perrings, 1991; Vollebergh, 1995). This is a quite controversial account of rationality indeed.

Environmentalists should, therefore, welcome Wissenburg's claim that his restraint principle calls for a reversal of the burden of proof without relying on such controversial assumptions about people's risk perceptions. The kernel of the restraint principle is that a right to destroy nature and the environment can never be granted, and that users, therefore, need to proof that some particular destructive use of nature and the environment is necessary to fulfil primary human needs. Hence, when it is certain that some use of nature and the environment has destructive consequences, the need to proof the necessity of this particular use should be put on the users. Unfortunately, no sound arguments seem to be available to claim that the users of nature and the environment should also always proof that their use does not imply destruction, when principal or practical uncertainty rules out such evidence. The restraint principle only justifies a halved reversal of the onus of proof, and that is not the political ammunition that environmentalists wrongly thought to have found in the precautionary principle. However, even environmentalists should try to accept the absence of a short cut to certainty.

Nevertheless, political pragmatism might lead people to grant environmentalists the benefit of the doubt in case of reasonable doubt about the destructive repercussions of some use of nature and the environment. This is exactly what people increasingly appear to do when companies and environmental organisations present competing claims about the risk of certain technological innovations.

5.3
Green Ideals

The exclusive focus on universal principles and strong negative obligations drew the spatio-temporally egalitarian interpretation of the kernel of the notion of sustainable development to the same preoccupation with the survival of the human species that characterises the apocalyptic views of radical environmentalists (e.g. Hardin, 1968; Ophuls, 1977). Although such a survivalist stance might be necessary to secure an environmental baseline, it does not fully reflect people's empathetic moral concerns about

the deterioration of nature and the environment and its negative repercussions for the opportunities of future generations to follow their lifestyles and narratives of self-identity. Toulmin (1981) and Gert (1998) signal a quite similar exclusionary focus on moral principles in applied bio-ethics and argue that this principled approach should be complemented by a more inclusive account of morality. Next to the moral obligations of principlism, moral ideals are to motivate people to move beyond the minimum requirements of morality and develop a fuller sense of responsibility. Such moral ideals invite people to follow future-oriented narratives, while at the same time provoking them to reflexively reconstruct these narratives in the ongoing flow of daily life. Moral ideals should *"guide action, not by prescribing things to do, but by inspiring agents not to be content as soon as they have satisfied the minimum requirements of morality"* (Verweij, 1998; 176).

Therefore, if survivalist minimalism is to be transcended in environmental policy-making, the principled interpretation of sustainable development should be supplemented by an account of sustainable development as a fuller, future-oriented, green ideal. This complementary account of sustainable development builds on people's empathetic concerns about the preservation of nature and the environment to argue that the current generation should strive to leave nearby future generations more than the conditions for mere survival. Moreover, people's concerns and ideals should already be involved in the application and specification of the necessarily abstract notion of sustainable development in public deliberations, for instance when this particular regulative ideal conflicts with other supposedly universal moral principles (Korthals, 2000a).

5.3.1
Transgenerational Communities

Passmore's (1980) notion of a chain of love between generations could be one the leading threads in an interpretation of sustainable development as a green ideal. He argues that people's concerns about the opportunities of future generations rest on their love for their children and their wish to look after these children. Since people love their children and grandchildren, who in turn will love their children and grandchildren, the current generation should accept a responsibility to preserve a natural environment that provides ample opportunities for future generations, up to and including the grandchildren of their grandchildren, to live a good life. Moreover, Passmore argues that the current generation also has this responsibility to future generations because previous generations preserved a natural environment in which they could live a good life. In return, the current generation

should maintain this chain of love, and pass on to the next generation a good natural environment.

Whereas the discussion of Rawls's initial defence of the savings principle (5.2.1) showed that such a chain of love cannot justify strong negative obligations to remote future generations, Passmore fortunately does not need to defend that claim to argue for a fuller responsibility towards our nearest and dearest descendants. Passmore's chains of love could never justify obligations to individuals who will live more than four generations from now. However, they do reflect a crucial part of people's empathetic concerns about the preservation of nature and the environment that should be captured by an interpretation of sustainable development as a green ideal. Hence, these chains of love could provide guidelines to address intergenerational environmental concerns that do not transcend the realm of intimacy between one generation and its immediate offspring, e.g. Passmore's account could offer leads to address the short-term environmental repercussions of going on holidays by air.

De-Shalit's (1995a) account of transgenerational communities[11] could provide a second leading thread in the articulation of people's empathetic concerns about the preservation of nature and the environment in an interpretation of sustainable development as a green ideal. De-Shalit's communitarian argument holds it that since the community, or social group, to which people belong, largely constitutes their narratives of self-identity (see 3.2.2), this constitutive community should be sustained over time. The idea is that because communities stretch across generations, thus the term transgenerational communities, the current generation should feel responsible to preserve nature and the environment in order to provide future members of the community with ample opportunities to live a good life. Just like people perceive of the common past as part of what constitutes their self-identities, they should also become reflexively aware that the future of the community is part of these self-identities. According to De-Shalit, people already identify themselves, on a subconscious level, with such future-oriented narratives and visions of the good life. He argues that if only the transgenerationally communitarian constitution of people's self-identities were raised to the level of reflexive consciousness, a responsibility to provide future generations with a good environment would become self-evident. Since the current generation belongs to a transgenerational community, it has responsibilities to future members of this community. The idea is that by extending the notion of community to include future generations, a responsibility to preserve the natural environment would rest directly on the empathetic bonds within the community.

[11] Golding (1972) was probably the first to suggest that the transgenerational extension of communities might provide sound arguments to justify environmental policy-making.

However, De-Shalit acknowledges that at a certain moment in time a stage of substantially reduced communitarian affinity will be reached, which implies that the community-based responsibilities to future generations fade away. Since communities are characterised by continuity and change, the communitarian argument for the preservation of nature and the environment looses force, say, eight to ten generations from now. Again, like Passmore's chains of love, De-Shalit's transgenerational communities cannot justify strong negative obligations to remote future generations, but his account could offer leads to capture the fuller short-term environmental responsibilities that sustainable development as a green ideal is supposed to articulate. His account may not be able to address, for instance, the contribution of going on holidays by air to long-term environmental problems like the greenhouse effect, acid rain and the destruction of the ozone layer. However, his emphasis on transgenerationally communitarian affinities does offer sound arguments for an extension of the realm of fuller intergenerational environmental responsibilities beyond the immediate intimacy of parent-children relationships.

Some scholars may raise the question of whether De-Shalit's transgenerational communities really exist. Is the plurality of lifestyles, visions of the good life, and consumptive preferences, within and between communities and societies, not enough reason to skip these imaginary transgenerational communities from the interpretation of sustainable development as a green ideal? Beckerman (1999) is surely right to assert that an *"appeal to some transcendental unique community comprising groups of people who have no contact with each other in order to provide an entity that values greater equality over generations seems to be stretching the concept of community beyond reasonable limits"* (82). However, the narrative overtones of De-Shalit's account should not be thrown out with the bath-water. He is quite right to argue that people's, socially constituted, narratives of self-identity extend after their death and into the future. This temporal extension is an important ramification of the narrative conceptualisation of the notions of lifestyle and self-identity (see 3.2.1).

People do assume, for instance, that future generations will actually come to exist, otherwise it would be quite meaningless even to have any concerns about the provision of ample opportunities for future generations to follow their own narratives of self-identity. Moreover, the current generation would welcome reflexive agreement of future generations with their visions, ideals, or uses of nature and the environment. This wish for approval from future generations might indeed be another important argument, or thread, in people's empathetic concerns about the preservation of the natural environment that should be captured by the complementary narrative interpretation of sustainable development as a green ideal (*cf.* O'Neill, 1993).

5.3.2
Current Ideals, Narrative Futures

After the discussion of Passmore's chains of love and De-Shalit's transgenerational communities it should be obvious that a full interpretation of sustainable development should also build on people's green ideals. Quite a few environmental philosophers closed this open door in their focus on deducing an intergenerational moral principle that would warrant strong negative obligations to prevent further deterioration of nature and the environment. Would these environmental philosophers still appreciate their cumbersome arguments when hiking in some area of natural beauty? Perhaps environmental philosophers and radical environmentalists have been worrying too much that their arguments for strong sustainability policies could never successfully challenge vested economic and political interests without an environmental archimedean point (*cf.* Zweers, 1995). Therefore, although the minimal requirements of the restraint principle should be embraced to obviate such worries, it should also be acknowledged that an exclusive preoccupation with spatio-temporally remote environmental harms and risks hampers the mobilising force of the notion of sustainable development. Sustainable development should also capture the empathetic concerns about nature and the environment in people's future-oriented green ideals and narratives of self-identity. Beyond the minimal requirements of the restraint principle dawns a debate on fuller responsibilities towards nearby future generations.

Hence, a full interpretation of the notion of sustainable development should also capture people's ideals of the good environment: *"Perhaps people in the future might learn to find satisfaction in totally artificial landscapes, walking in the astroturf amid the plastic trees while electronic birds sing overhead. But we cannot but believe that something horrible would have happened to human beings if they did not miss real grass, trees, and birds"* (Barry, 1999a; 102). The pursuit of sustainable development should also offer leads for the preservation of unique environmental goods as part of the natural and cultural heritage that the current generation is proud to pass on to their offspring. The deterioration of these environmental goods would have severe repercussions on current identities, since the preservation of these goods is constitutive for many people's future-oriented narratives of self-identity. Since the current generation is to decide which environmental goods to preserve for future generations, environmental policy-making is inescapably involved in the dirty business of prioritising the preservation of some over other environmental goods. This prioritising job will be tainted by current ideals and narratives, which precondition the social and material conditions of future lifestyles (Giddens, 1994a; Norton, 1996b; Arrler, 1999).

The introduction of chains of love between successive generations, transgenerational affinities, and the wish for future approval of the current use of the natural environment as leading threads in the complementary interpretation of sustainable development as a green ideal already foreshadowed a particular, previously neglected, aspect of the narrative conceptualisation of the notions of lifestyle and self-identity (see 3.2.1). People's narratives of self-identity extend beyond their own lives and into the future. People always keep an open eye on future consequences and opportunities in enacting their narratives of self-identity, following their lifestyles and making their behavioral choices. Although the future is principally unknowable, people do construct this future by anticipation in their day-to-day behavioral choices. They, at least, tend to take the existence of future generations for granted. This assumption that future generations will actually come to exist seems to be a common thread in the otherwise quite divergent narratives of self-identity in contemporary pluralistic societies, and implies that current concerns about the opportunities of future generations to follow their lifestyles are also concerns about our own identities. These concerns about the opportunities of future generations reflect the current generation's interest in being able to follow narratives of self-identity that can be framed in a long-term perspective.

The current generation finds itself in the peculiar situation that at the very same moment that the negative repercussions on nature and the environment of their behavioral choices seem to stretch across larger spatio-temporal distances than ever before in history, they also have become reflexively aware of their identities and ideals as spread over time. Long-term environmental policy-making should grasp the chance to build on this reflexive trust in social and material continuity as a leading thread in many contemporary narratives of self-identity. Such trust in the future is necessary to give meaning to any behavioral choice or narrative of self-identity whatsoever, and could fuel the fuller environmental responsibilities towards nearby future generations that sustainable development as a green ideal tries to articulate (Giddens, 1990 & 1991; O'Neill, 1993).

Another leading thread of the complementary narrative interpretation of sustainable development as a green ideal should be to acknowledge that people's empathetic concerns about the preservation of nature and the environment are ultimately constituted in their immediate encounters with the human and non-human other in circumstances of co-presence. In his famous attempt to come to terms with the horrors of the Holocaust, Bauman (1989) writes in one of his most Levinasian moments: *"Responsibility, this building block of all moral behaviour, arises out of the proximity of the other"* (184). Extending this other to include the non-human other serves to clarify why the proximity of animals and the rest of nature in people's immediate encounters represents a formative experience in the incorporation of green ideals in their future-oriented narratives of self-

identity.[12] Of course, these nature experiences, even quite similar ones, could have divergent consequences for people's narratives of self-identity. Some nature experiences may even be so threatening that they have negative consequences on the development of green ideals. Notwithstanding this ramification, the principled interpretation of sustainable development simply misses the crucial point that *"nature, both domesticated and wild non-human nature, is a source of intense and immediate aesthetic delight. Because of its immediacy, this type of aesthetic experience requires no warrant. It just is"* (Hickman, 1996; 65). Although such aesthetic experiences should be included in a full account of sustainable development, this is not to be mistaken for the deep ecological claim that some intrinsic value warrants direct obligations towards nature. Nature remains the object and not the subject of moral and aesthetic values.

The narrative interpretation of sustainable development as a green ideal holds it that a particularly important objective of environmental policy-making should be to support initiatives to have people, especially young people, experience nature in, for instance, environmental education at primary and secondary schools (*cf.* Margadant-van Arcken, 1988).[13] Such immediate nature experiences could fuel support for the idea that the current generation should leave its offspring with a good environment. Do we really need to devise ever more esoteric justifications for environmental policy-making? No, it suffices that most people feel some responsibility for the preservation of nature and the environment, and for the rest environmental philosophy better *"forswears the search for knockdown arguments that will convince absolutely everyone that natural values are important"* (Weston, 1996b; 303).

To conclude the, sometimes rather unearthly, discussion of sustainable development as both a principle of intergenerational justice and a future-oriented green ideal, it should be perfectly clear that the baseline of the restraint principle could justify directive strategies for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles. The complementary narrative interpretation of sustainable development as a green ideal, however, both calls for fuller responsibilities towards nearby future generations and could only justify non-directive strategies for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles. People in

[12] Dobson (1998) identifies a similar line of argument in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology (see also Riphagen, 1997).

[13] On a personal note; I was a member of the 'Nederlandse Jeugdbond voor Natuurstudie' (a Dutch organisation for young naturalists) as a teenager. It is my educated guess that it is no coincidence that so many members of this youth organisation became prominent Dutch ecologists, environmental scientists, conservationists, environmentalists, or, for that matter, environmental philosophers in their professional lives (*cf.* Coesèl, 1997).

contemporary pluralistic societies are bound to disagree on the perfectionist ideals of the good environment that should support such fuller responsibilities. Therefore, the narrative interpretation of sustainable development suggests extensive public deliberation about these ideals, and their materialisation in sustainable lifestyles, as a crucial element of environmental policy-making (see 4.5). Such deliberations will hopefully result in stronger demands on the current generation to secure a good environment for nearby future generations than the minimal requirements of environmental survivalism. In the case of going on holidays by air, for instance, these deliberations could address not only the use of non-renewable fossil fuels but also discuss eco-tourism as a perfectionist green ideal. It would be a disappointing restriction of the public environmental debate, if survivalist preoccupations in the interpretation of sustainable development precluded discussion about such ideals.

5.4
Stocktaking or Systems Ecology

At this stage, it is time to shift attention to the more mundane problem of how to operationalise the environmental baseline of the restraint principle in a, possibly quantified, guideline for day-to-day environmental policy-making. This section will, therefore, discuss the stocktaking approach of drawing a list of primary environmental goods and the systems ecological approach of defining an environmental utilisation space (EUS) as a modest and a more ambitious operationalisation respectively. Both alternatives start from the same spatio-temporally egalitarian premises that flavoured the restraint principle, but diverge on the issue of taking either a pragmatic or a principled stance towards these premises.

5.4.1
Primary Environmental Goods

The stocktaking approach to operationalising the environmental baseline of the restraint principle starts by acknowledging that the emphasis on the principal impossibility to be certain about future preferences (see 5.2.1) may have obscured that you do not need to be uncertain about future needs. It holds it that, whereas it is impossible to predict future preferences, lifestyles or visions of the good life, you can be quite certain that some primary goods need to be secured to follow whatever future preferences, lifestyles or

visions. According to Rawls (1972), such primary goods are *"things which it is supposed a rational man wants whatever else he wants. Regardless of what an individual's rational plans are in detail, it is assumed that there are various things which he would prefer more of rather than less. With more of these goods men can generally be assured of greater success in carrying out their intentions and in advancing their ends, whatever these ends may be"* (93). Rawls focused on primary social goods, which he listed as: rights and liberties, opportunities and powers, income and wealth, and a sense of one's own worth. However, it is rather obvious that future life also depends on a minimum of primary environmental goods being kept available from one generation to the next. Some environmental goods are essential to all human life, and environmental policy-making should prioritise the preservation of these necessary environmental conditions to form and pursue current and future visions of the good life (O'Neill, 1993; Barry, 1999a; Miller, 1999).

If environmental policy-making is to be of practical significance, it will have no choice but to prioritise the preservation of some environmental goods and accept the deterioration of other, less essential, goods. The stocktaking approach suggests that a tentative list of transgenerationally primary environmental goods be drawn to provide environmental policy-makers with a rule-of-thumb for this inescapable prioritising job. This list of transgenerationally primary environmental goods should only contain environmental goods that are necessary for the pursuit of any current or future lifestyle, and exclude the many environmental goods that are only valuable for the pursuit of certain specific narratives of self-identity or visions of the good life.

In drawing a tentative list, you may think of such environmental goods as fresh air, clean water, fertile soil, and the availability of sufficient power sources. However, listing, for instance, power sources as a transgenerationally primary environmental good does not necessarily imply that the current generation should stop all its use of non-renewable fossil fuels. It does ask the current generation to compensate future generations for usurping these power sources by developing a) better extraction techniques for fossil fuels, b) new techniques for using renewable power sources (solar and wind energy, water-power), and c) energy-saving techniques. So, listing power sources as primary environmental goods does not necessarily imply that the current generation should stop going on holidays by air, but it does imply that this use of non-renewable fossil fuels should be compensated for by the development of alternative means of transport (Dobson, 1998; Arrler, 1999).

5.4.2
Environmental Utilisation Space

The notion of an environmental utilisation space (EUS) represents a more ambitious, systems ecological, approach to the operationalisation of sustainable development. The proponents of this notion share with the stocktaking approach the spatio-temporally egalitarian outlook that also flavoured the environmental baseline of the restraint principle, but draw stronger conclusions from these premises. A discussion of the EUS notion is particularly relevant, since the second Dutch National Environmental Policy Plan (NEPP2)(VROM, 1993) officially enshrined this notion in Dutch environmental policy-making.[14]

The proponents of the EUS see this notion as an operationalisation of what Daly (1995) coined strong sustainability, i.e. the idea that the natural environment imposes limits or constraints on the pursuit of lifestyles and consumptive preferences. Whereas weak sustainability advocates think of these limits as being the products of social construction, the proponents of the EUS hold it that the laws of nature ultimately determine the limits of sustainable development. They argue that the natural environment will pose real limits on people's lifestyles and consumptive preferences, if the current generation is to secure the opportunities of future generations to follow their visions of the good life. Thus, environmental policy-making is supposed to be justified by scientific arguments.

The kernel of the EUS notion is that exploitation ceilings can be formulated for the sustainable use of renewable environmental goods. Such goods may be exploited short of impairing natural regeneration, or to the extent that exploitation is compensated by deliberate replacement. However, the use of the natural environment does not only involve the exploitation of renewable environmental goods, it also includes using the natural environment as a sink for emissions. To a certain degree natural assimilation processes can absorb this environmental strain, but environmental quality will decrease when these processes are overtaxed. Regeneration and absorption represent the life support function of the natural environment. Together they constitute the natural conditions for the pursuit of lifestyles and consumptive preferences. If you analyse environmental utilisation in these terms, a space will literally emerge. The boundaries of this space represent patterns and levels of environmental utilisation that can be sustained over time. This space, which is enclosed by a cluster of exploitation and emission ceilings, is the EUS. The proponents of

[14] Opschoor & Weterings (1994) and Van Hengel & Gremmen (1995) offer good introductions to the kernel of the EUS notion.

the EUS notion argue that sustainable development should be interpreted as the requirement to keep the environmental utilisation of each generation within the boundaries of this EUS.

It is more difficult to formulate a rule for the sustainable use of non-renewable environmental goods like fossil fuels. In this case sustainable use is strictly speaking impossible, because any use would diminish available stocks and this would have negative repercussions on the opportunities of future generations to follow their lifestyles and consumptive preferences. Therefore, sustainable development seems to demand that all generations refrain from using any non-renewable environmental goods. To avoid this rather absurd conclusion, two prominent proponents of the EUS invented the ingenious, though somewhat arbitrary, rule that *"residual stocks must be kept at (or raised to) a level sufficient for the use over a period of at least 50 years"* (Weterings & Opschoor, 1994; 224). This rule requires that in each succeeding year two percent less will be used of some non-renewable environmental good than in the preceding year. Thus, the environmental good will never become completely exhausted. It could also be possible to compensate future generations for the use of non-renewable environmental goods by bequeathing to them more knowledge and better know-how about a) the exploitation of these environmental goods, and b) the development of alternative renewable environmental goods. The 50-years rule provides a stimulus to take such compensatory measures. The rule also illustrates the ambitions of the EUS notion to quantify the environmental baseline of the restraint principle, and to justify directive strategies to abate the environmental repercussions of going on holidays by air.

One of the most striking features of the EUS notion is that it not only embraces an intergenerational egalitarianism in the distribution of environmental goods, but also argues for a strictly egalitarian distribution of the EUS among the members of the current generation. The idea is that any individual may follow his or her own lifestyle or consumptive preferences as long as he or she stays within an individualised EUS. This personal EUS is simply the total EUS divided by the number of current inhabitants of the world, and could be defined by natural scientists without invoking any particular perfectionist vision of the good environment. In a political liberal frame of reference, it surely makes sense to argue that each individual be granted an equal right to use the very same amount of each and every kind of environmental good. In the absence of a common notion of the good environment, on which a different division of the EUS could be based, this seems to be a reasonable individuation rule indeed. However, a strict application of this individuation rule is not as simple as it seems (see 5.5)(Arrler, 1999).

Unfortunately, the proponents of the EUS share the survivalist preoccupations of the spatio-temporally egalitarian branches of political liberalism. This is particularly clear

once you take a closer look at their arguments about the preservation of biodiversity. The EUS notion captures that the life support system of the human species encompasses a large number of non-human species, and that the preservation of these species is secured by the requirement of maintaining the EUS. However, the disappearance of numerous other species and habitats may not affect humanity's life support system. It bears witness to the intellectual and emotional anaemia of the EUS notion that it cannot argue for the preservation of these species and habitats. This shows that the cogency of the EUS notion in arguing for unassailable and non-negotiable limits on people's lifestyles and consumptive preferences rests on survivalist sentiments. Once survival of the human species is no longer at stake, the assumption that the EUS can be specified by the methods of objective science looses its credibility. Hence, the EUS notion cannot articulate fuller responsibilities for the preservation of a good environment in the interest of nearby future generations.

5.5
Science and Politics

While the promise of a fuller quantification of the environmental baseline of the restraint principle may speak in favour of the EUS notion, this promise is severely compromised by an anachronistic understanding of the relation between science and politics among the proponents of the EUS. They seem to assume that scientific knowledge about the natural environment, and about the repercussions of people's behavioral choices, would be enough to justify the objectives of environmental policy-making. They, thus, neglect the principal uncertainty of scientific knowledge in contemporary affluent societies. This principal uncertainty of scientific knowledge will manifest itself most clearly, when attempts are made to quantify the EUS. Therefore, any interpretation of sustainable development should address ways to deal with this uncertainty in arguing about the proper relation between scientific knowledge and normative choices in environmental policy-making.

Giddens's account of reflexive modernisation is worth discussing in this respect, since he emphasises that contemporary affluent societies are characterised by radical uncertainty about science and technology (see 3.4.1).[15] According to him, uncertainty permeates day-to-day policy-making and represents an inescapable dimension of people's daily lives in contemporary affluent societies. Although people need to use scientific

[15] The uncertainty of scientific knowledge is a recurring theme in Giddens's substantial sociology of the reflexive modern condition (Giddens, 1990; 1991; 1994a & 1994b).

knowledge in the flow of daily life, they can never be certain that some piece of knowledge will not have to be revised in the second instance. In the past people may have thought that the gradual growth of scientific knowledge would create greater certainty about social life and future developments and prospects, but now they have to acknowledge that this was wishful thinking. No scientific knowledge will ever be certain. The temporary character of each piece of knowledge is an inherent aspect of the scientific enterprise. Hence, citizen-consumers and policy-makers alike continuously need to revise, for instance, their views on the use of nature and the environment in the light of new or altered scientific claims. Whatever behavioral options may seem acceptable, appropriate or recommendable today, tomorrow's knowledge may assess them differently. Once you accept this principal uncertainty of scientific knowledge, you should also adopt a more modest position on the possibility of quantifying an environmental baseline than shown by the proponents of the EUS.

Moreover, scientific experts also routinely contest the authority of other expert claims, thus questioning the very possibility to base policy-making on the results of scientific research. This disagreement and critique among scientific experts happens to be the motor of the scientific enterprise, but it also means that policy-makers and citizen-consumers have no choice but to choose between the competing claims of rival scientific experts. In the absence of an authoritative meta-expert, it is perfectly reasonable that people opt for a rather sceptical stance towards the dazzling plurality of scientific claims. Thus, trust in science is subverted by the very scepticism that is also the motor of the scientific enterprise. The proponents of the EUS and other radical environmentalists tend to ignore this principal uncertainty of scientific knowledge and show an unwarranted trust in the capabilities of science to justify governmental policies. However, they too should acknowledge that it is principally impossible to make full scientific calculations of environmental risks, since it is impossible to predict all unintended consequences of people's behavioral choices. Moreover, any risk assessment should at least also include the risk of which experts to consult or whose authority to take as binding. Since science can never provide the certainties that the proponents of the EUS promise, a reflexive and interactive relation between science and politics should characterise environmental policy-making.

However, it should also be acknowledged that the radical uncertainty about scientific knowledge is doubled by an equally radical impact of science and technology on everyday life in contemporary affluent societies. The social and material conditions of people's daily lives increasingly become the products of science and technology. Nowadays, people live in thoroughly manufactured environments. With the expansion of scientific intervention in almost every realm of individual and social life, it has become

practically impossible to disengage from the technological systems of contemporary affluent societies. The scientific and technological reconstruction of the natural environment is so radical and total indeed that it is no exaggeration to speak of the end of nature, as a guideline for behaviour, next to the end of tradition (McKibben, 1989)(see 3.4.1).

The reconstruction of the natural environment by scientific and technological knowledge may thus have brought nature to an end, but the proponents of the EUS are surely right to argue that the tremendous expansion of human control over nature seems to reach its outer limits now. You do not need to be a doomsday prophet to acknowledge that the current generation's use of fossil fuels, for instance to go on holidays by air, cannot be sustained into the future. Nature and the environment are subject to a more far-reaching and intensive man-made deterioration than ever before in history. Unfortunately, deep ecologists and other radical environmentalists conclude from this sobering statement that the real environmental problem is people's instrumental perception of nature. They lament about the loss of nature's enchanted character as a metaphysical source of value in contemporary affluent societies. With their denial of the disenchantment or end of nature, and their retreat to some esoteric intrinsic value of nature, deep ecologists and other radical environmentalists fall prey to the naturalistic fallacy of deducing normative choices from objective facts about the natural environment. The preservation of nature can no longer depend *"on calling for a reversion to 'nature' [since] nature no longer exists!"* (Giddens, 1994a; 11)(*cf.* Keulartz, 1998).

The paradox of environmental policy-making is that the conservation of nature is embraced only at the point of its disappearance. People began to worry about the environment only once nature had all but dissolved in a thoroughgoing process of social reconstruction. However, to accept the social constitution of environmental problems does not necessarily imply that you could no longer argue against the further deterioration of the nature and the environment. The account of the restraint principle and primary environmental goods hopefully showed that much (see 5.2.2 and 5.4.1).

The twin processes of radicalising uncertainty of scientific knowledge and a far-reaching reconstruction of the natural environment by science and technology introduced the notions of risk and trust in the public environmental debate. First, the reflexive modern redefinition of the notion of risk (*cf.* Beck, 1986) articulates the idea that the negative repercussions on nature and the environment are mostly unintended consequences of people's routinely made behavioral choices. People do not go on holidays by air to spoil the natural environment. Such unintended consequences generate risks that, unlike natural disasters, are social in origin. The reflexive modern notion of risk thus emphasises that environmental problems are principally social problems mediated by the impact of science

and technology on the natural environment. It is mostly impossible to hold specific individuals responsible for these risks, and it is equally difficult to develop individuated constraints to mitigate the generation of these risks. Therefore, a straightforward individuation of the environmental risks of, for instance, usurping fossil fuels is a problematic enterprise. Since people's risk perceptions, calculations and strategies are bound to be matters of ongoing public debate in contemporary pluralistic societies, an unequivocal quantification of the EUS is an unrealistic and over-ambitious project.

Second, the renewed interest in the notion of trust probably relates to the reduced visibility of the links between risks and their causes. When these links were more visible, people's trust in political, scientific and technological systems was more routinely incorporated in the ongoing flow of daily life. At present, however, it is no longer self-evident that people trust governments, scientists or technological experts to take the appropriate courses of action to abate the spatio-temporally remote risks of the current generation's use of nature and the environment. People's trust in these expert systems seems to depend on whether these systems secure the transparency of risks and thus sustain people's opportunities to avoid these risks (Wynne, 1996). This trust in the plurality of political, scientific and technological systems is necessary to prevent risk awareness from starting down the slippery slope of socially destabilising scares. The continuous apocalyptic lamenting by the survivalist proponents of the EUS surely does not serve to sustain this trust.

For all these reasons, it seems wise to leave the principled and over-ambitious stance of the proponents of the EUS, and embrace the more modest and pragmatic approach of drawing a tentative, possibly quantifiable, list of primary environmental goods. This list offers a guideline to prioritise between the objectives of environmental politics in the pursuit of sustainable development. The narrow operationalisation provides environmental policy-making with a baseline to justify directive strategies for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles in a limited set of conditions.

5.6
Conclusion

This chapter set out to answer the question of whether the pursuit of sustainable development could justify government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles. The authoritative WCED-definition (1987) of sustainable development as *"development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"* (43) suggested that this question essentially asks

whether the objective of preventing further deterioration of nature and the environment could justify restrictions on people's freedom to follow their own lifestyles. An affirmative answer to this question would count as a justification for environmental policy-making that should be welcomed by environmental philosophers who are keen to avoid any of the hitherto unsuccessful attempts to base environmental policy-making on some presumed intrinsic value of nature.

Fortunately, it could be shown that, whereas Rawls's initial grounding of his savings principle on the emotional ties between successive generations was defective, his latest defence convincingly argues that a savings principle should be incorporated in the political liberal frame of reference as a spatio-temporal extension of the justice and harm principles to safeguard the opportunities of future generations to follow their own lifestyles. The kernel of Rawls's latest defence of his savings principle is that the participants in the original position are to reach agreement on a savings principle under the further condition that they should be willing to accept that previous generations saved according to the same principle. This is indeed an appropriate intergenerational equivalent of the Kantian categorical imperative that people should only embrace moral principles that they would welcome all other people to agree upon. Although Rawls's account provides sound arguments why the current generation should save for future generations, he remains silent about what should be saved. The restraint principle was shown to be capable to fill this gap by giving the spatio-temporally egalitarian interpretation of sustainable development as intergenerational justice its much-needed substantial flesh and bone. The kernel of this restraint principle is that people cannot claim an unconditional right to destroy environmental goods. Therefore, users should always prove that some particular destructive use of environmental goods is necessary to meet basic human needs. The principle thus puts the onus of proof on the users of environmental goods, and it does so without having to rely on controversial assumptions about people's attitudes towards risks. This reversal of the burden of proof provides environmentalists with the ammunition they wrongly thought to have found in the popular precautionary principle.

Although the restraint principle should be embraced to secure a baseline that could justify directive strategies for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles, it would be a pity if the pursuit of sustainable development were confined to these minimum requirements of environmental survivalism. Therefore, the principled account was to be supplemented by a future-oriented narrative interpretation of sustainable development as a green ideal to call for fuller moral responsibilities towards nearby future generations. Passmore's chains of love between successive generations, De-Shalit's transgenerational (communitarian) affinities, and the wish for future approval of the current use of nature and the environment were introduced as leading threads in the future-oriented narratives of

self-identity that fuel people's empathetic concerns about the deterioration of nature and the environment. Furthermore, it was argued that these future-oriented narratives or green ideals build on the aesthetic nature experiences in people's immediate encounters with the human and non-human other in circumstances of co-presence. However, it was acknowledged that such nature experiences would materialise in a plurality of visions of the good environment in contemporary affluent societies. The complementary narrative account of sustainable development as a green ideal, therefore, accepts that people's fuller responsibilities towards nearby future generations could only justify non-directive strategies for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles. These strategies should include extensive public deliberation on people's perfectionist visions of the good environment to inspire the further development of sustainable lifestyles (see 4.5).

At that stage it was time to shift attention to the more mundane issue of operationalising, or quantifying, the baseline of the restraint principle for day-to-day environmental policy-making. First, a stocktaking approach was discussed, which aims to draw a tentative list of transgenerationally universal primary environmental goods. These primary environmental goods (fertile soil, clean water, fresh air, and the availability of sufficient power sources) are necessary to follow whatever lifestyle, vision of the good life or consumptive preferences. Therefore, environmental policy-making should prioritise their preservation over the preservation of other, presumably less essential, environmental goods. Second, a discussion of the more ambitious notion of an environmental utilisation space (EUS) showed that the mobilising force of this notion depends on an unwarranted trust in the capabilities of the natural sciences to justify the objectives of environmental policy-making. The promise to quantify fuller minimum requirements for environmental policy-making is severely compromised by an anachronistic understanding of the relation between science and politics among the proponents of the EUS. A natural scientific definition of the EUS might be an attractive prospect for radical environmentalists who wish to challenge vested political and economic interests. However, the principal uncertainty of scientific knowledge, as well as the problematic individuation of the EUS, suggest a more modest role for scientific expertise in environmental policy-making.

Therefore, the over-ambitious and principled stance of the EUS should be left for the more pragmatic and modest approach of drawing a tentative, possibly quantifiable, list of primary environmental goods to justify directive strategies for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles in a limited set of conditions. Any further objectives of environmental policy-making should accept people's divergent risk perceptions to build the reflexive trust that is necessary for a voluntary adjustment of non-sustainable lifestyles in the non-directive strategies of a green third way.

The minimum requirements of the restraint principle and the list of primary environmental goods thus justify directive strategies for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles. However, non-directive strategies will probably have to do the majority of the job in calling for fuller responsibilities towards nearby future generations. One of the biggest challenges would be to broaden the spectrum of communicative and economic strategies (see 2.2 & 2.3) by presenting an outline of a reflexive egalitarianism as a green third way of government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles (see chapter 6).

6

Conclusion - Outline of a Green Third Way

"You've got to make me an offer,
that cannot be ignored [...]
You can take it or leave it...
Temptation"
(Heaven 17, 1983)

6.1
Summarising the Argument

Although it is about time to present the outline of a green third way for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles now, let's summarise the book's main line of argument first. The book kicked off by remarking that the year 1972 must have been a very special year indeed. The Club of Rome published its report 'The Limits to Growth', the Ecologist published its 'Blueprint for Survival', and the United Nations held its first environmental conference in Stockholm. These three occasions were the first to use the notion of sustainable development with its current connotations. However, sustainable development only received its lasting status as a meta-objective for national and international environmental policy-making with the publication of the WCED-report 'Our Common Future' in 1987. This report defined sustainable development as *"development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"*. Subsequently, the debate on sustainable development reached a new climax with the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. This conference introduced the idea that sustainable development asks for adjustments of lifestyles and patterns of consumption, apart from adjustments in the sphere of production. UNCED emphasised the need for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles, and the second Dutch National Environmental Policy Plan (NEPP2) translated this emphasis to the Dutch context.

UNCED and NEPP2 initiated an extensive public debate on government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles, which was dominated by communicative and economic strategies. Unfortunately, these strategies hitherto failed to reconcile government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles and respect for people's freedom to follow their own lifestyles. Therefore, this book's objective has been to provide this very reconciliation by drawing an outline of a green third way for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles. This green third way was to present itself as an alternative for the first (communicative) and second (economic) ways in the Dutch public debate. The book aimed to articulate people's concerns about the deterioration of nature and the environment, materialised in the worldwide support for the notion of sustainable development, within a largely political liberal frame of reference.

Chapter 2 mapped the Dutch public debate on government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles. This analysis showed that although communicative and economic strategies dominate the debate, these strategies are seriously flawed in their attempts to evade the principled question of whether government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles implies an intolerable infringement of people's freedom to follow their own lifestyles, visions of the good life or consumptive preferences. Communicative and economic strategies were thus criticised on three accounts: 1) their failure to recognise the inextricable interconnectedness between attitudes and behaviour in people's lifestyles; 2) their evasion of the question of how government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles could respect the individual freedom of choice; and 3) their unwillingness to investigate whether sustainable development could offer sound reasons to restrict this freedom of choice. Both strategies are, therefore, incapable of providing a meaningful interpretation of all key terms in the phrase 'government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles'. It was not much of a surprise then that they cannot reconcile government intervention and respect for people's freedom to follow their own lifestyles. Therefore, the chapters 3,4 and 5 subsequently set out to remedy these three flaws of communicative and economic strategies. Luckily, lately a third strategy dawned in the Dutch public debate. This third strategy will provide some of the materials to develop an outline of a green third way for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles in this chapter.

Chapter 3 argued, mainly inspired by Giddens's theory of structuration, his and Beck's accounts of reflexive modernisation and Douglas's grid-group analysis, for a narrative conceptualisation of the notions of lifestyle and self-identity. This conceptualisation 1) emphasised the inextricable interconnectedness of practices and narratives of self-identity in people's lifestyles, 2) stressed the duality of individual and society in the constitution of lifestyles, 3) changed the modernist distinction between

citizen and consumer for the public-private hybrid of the citizen-consumer, and 4) mapped the plurality of lifestyles in contemporary globalising, individualising and detraditionalising societies. The narrative conceptualisation of lifestyles implied that it was no longer possible to evade the question of whether government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles necessarily entails an intolerable infringement of people's freedom to follow their own lifestyles. It will not do to emphasise some remaining freedom in either practices or narratives of self-identity, since these practices and narratives are inextricably interconnected in people's lifestyles.

Chapter 4 argued, mainly informed by Berlin's and Rawls's political liberalism, Raz's liberal perfectionism and Habermas's notion of a deliberative democracy, that most government intervention in lifestyles is indeed an intolerable infringement of the individual freedom of choice. This liberal point of view 1) argued that respect for the individual freedom of choice implies that the government should take a neutral and anti-perfectionist stance, 2) held it that directive, communicative and economic, strategies for government intervention would only be justified if certain choices harmed others, caused injustice, or were obviously irrational, 3) accepted, in the second instance, that the political liberal argument is not neutral and anti-perfectionist at all, but believed that this perfectionist turn only strengthened the need to respect the individual freedom of choice, and 4) advocated extensive public deliberation on the objectives and instruments of environmental policy-making. The political liberal emphasis on the need to respect the individual freedom of choice implied that directive strategies for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles generally do not show enough respect for people's freedom to follow their own lifestyles, unless it is obvious that certain lifestyles harm others or cause injustice.

Chapter 5 argued, mainly on the basis of Rawls's savings principle, Wissenburg's restraint principle, Passmore's chains of love, and De-Shalit's transgenerational communities, for a double interpretation of sustainable development as a principle of intergenerational justice and a future-oriented green ideal. This double interpretation 1) embraced the restraint principle and the argument that no individual can claim an unconditional right to destroy environmental goods as a baseline that could justify directive strategies for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles, 2) suggested that people's concerns about the deterioration of nature and the environment articulate future-oriented narratives of self-identity that could fuel non-directive strategies to develop further responsibilities towards nearby future generations, 3) preferred to draw a list of primary environmental goods instead of quantifying some environmental utilisation space as a practical guideline for day-to-day environmental policy-making, and 4) concluded that the uncertainty of scientific knowledge about the unintended environmental

repercussions of consumptive choices casts serious doubt about attempts to justify directive strategies for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles beyond the requirement of sustaining the baseline of the restraint principle and the list of primary environmental goods. Sustainable development, thus, provided sound arguments to restrict people's freedom to follow their own lifestyles, when these lifestyles transgressed the baseline of the restraint principle and the list of primary environmental goods. However, the individual freedom of choice should not be restricted for any further environmental considerations. Non-directive strategies were thus to stimulate the development of such further responsibilities towards nearby future generations. The challenge for a green third way of government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles became to search for adjustments of social and material conditions that could tempt people to develop sustainable lifestyles. A short account of a remarkable initiative may serve to meet this challenge.

6.2
Schönau Energy Initiatives

In 1986 Chernobyl's nuclear power station exploded. This catastrophe not only shocked the world but also motivated a group of citizen-consumers in Schönau, a small town in the German Black Forest, to start a series of remarkable initiatives. Suddenly awakened by the enormous environmental and health risks of nuclear power, this group initiated a thorough reconstruction of Schönau's system of power provision. After Chernobyl, these citizen-consumers felt the urge to convert from nuclear and other non-renewable power sources towards sustainable energy. Since they acknowledged that the possibilities for energy saving are principally limited, a new system of power provision had to be developed that would preserve non-renewable resources and reduce pollution. Soon afterwards, the citizen-consumers discovered that large power stations are an inefficient way of producing electricity and they decided that small cogeneration plants should produce Schönau's electricity. These cogeneration plants produce heat and electricity at the same time and since they normally produce more electricity than can be used at the place of generation, the surpluses can be fed into the network. Other people may thus make use of these surpluses in their households.

In 1990 the citizen-consumers of Schönau founded the Elektrizitätswerke Schönau (EWS) to finance and install such decentralised power stations. This was a first major step in their initiative to buy back the local electricity network and to develop sustainable energy policies. The EWS was destined to develop into an electricity distribution system

with an environmental rationale. With this new distribution system the citizen-consumers of Schönau hoped to create the necessary social and material conditions for a successful conversion from nuclear and other large power stations to decentralised small cogeneration plants. In 1997 the EWS was able to buy the local electricity distribution system. For the first time in history an anti-nuclear organisation became the owner of its system of energy provision.

Once the citizen-consumers got hold of the distribution system, they introduced a business strategy in which profits were no longer invested where they bear the highest financial interest but in the interests of future generations. The first obligation of the EWS became to serve long-term environmental objectives instead of a short-term maximisation of profit. It introduced linear electricity tariffs to reward energy saving and higher feed-in tariffs to support cogeneration plants. People's electric meter simply runs backwards now, when they feed-in cogenerated electricity. The meter sets off used and produced electricity and one simply has to pay the difference. Consequently, the citizen-consumers of Schönau do not pay more for their electricity than they did before. Since the EWS does not produce but only distributes electricity, it also does not fall prey to the temptation of selling as much electricity as possible.

With their energy initiatives the citizen-consumers of Schönau not only reconstructed the system of power provision but also introduced new deliberative arrangements in local environmental politics. At the same time they regained responsibility for the provision of energy and enhanced their opportunities to influence local environmental policy-making. However, whereas the deliberative model of democracy sometimes seems to demand too much active involvement of all citizen-consumers (see 4.5), these energy initiatives are remarkably pragmatic and down-to-earth. They leave individuals ample room to choose from a variety of behavioral options. Although the EWS, for instance, depends on some people's willingness to install cogeneration plants, others may simply use this cogenerated electricity and contribute in a far less demanding way to the development of sustainable lifestyles (Http://www.oneworldweb.de/schoenau).

6.3
Social and Material Conditions

The story of the Schönau energy initiatives should not be misread. It does not spell out some realised ecotopia. The Elektrizitätswerke Schönau inevitably has its own drawbacks. However, this story is telling for the presentation of an outline of a green third way for

government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles. The Schönau energy initiatives tried to address one of the most inextricable environmental issues of today. The domestic use of electricity, or energy in general, is a major consumptive practice in people's daily lives with possibly irreversible repercussions on nature and the environment, and thus on the opportunities of future generations to follow their own lifestyles, visions of the good life and consumptive preferences. Next to people's use of water and waste services, their use of energy has the largest environmental impact of all domestic consumptive practices. The key to the success of the Schönau energy initiatives is the acknowledgement that people's domestic consumption of energy depends on what the DOMUS project (Chappels *et al.*, 2000) calls a socio-material system of provision. Energy, water and waste utilities are systems of provision that are crucial for the most basic practices in people's households, and therefore an ideal take-off point for the development of sustainable practices of using energy, water and waste services.

The Schönau energy initiatives exemplify that it is possible to adjust non-sustainable lifestyles and consumptive practices by reconstructing the social and material conditions in which people live their daily lives and make their consumptive choices. The success of the Schönau energy initiatives in converting to a sustainable use of renewable power sources depended on a unique combination of regaining control over the local system of power provision and exchanging large-scale non-renewable power sources for renewable energy produced by decentralised cogeneration plants. This shows the importance of allowing space for people's own creativity in reconstructing established systems of provision. The EWS not only stimulates energy-saving by introducing linear tariffs but also enables people to become co-providers of electricity by installing their own cogeneration plants. The reconstruction of the system of power provision thus confronted people with a whole new range of behavioral options. Such an incision in people's routinised practices of energy consumption calls for a welcome reflexive and critical stance towards their own domestic use of electricity (*cf.* Beckers *et al.* (eds.), 1999).

The challenge for a green third way of government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles is to generalise from the Schönau experience to develop a strategy for adjusting other presumably non-sustainable consumptive practices like car-driving, eating meat, and going on holidays by air. Although each consumptive practice has its own peculiarities, this green third way should always look for adjustments of the social and material conditions that would tempt people to develop their own sustainable lifestyles. The government should provide social and material conditions that leave ample room for a plurality of sustainable lifestyles. However, it should exclude the option of following lifestyles with irreversible repercussions on the natural environment, and thus on the opportunities of future generations to follow their lifestyles. The discussion of how to

address the environmental repercussions of livestock production for meat consumption (see chapter 4), for instance, showed that the green third way should include a directive strategy for government intervention in non-sustainable styles of animal husbandry. This policy should ensure that citizen-consumers can trust that their piece of meat is not produced in farming systems with irreversible negative repercussions on nature and the environment. This intervention, however, does not interfere with people's freedom to choose between omnivorous and vegetarian diets, and thus leaves ample room to follow a plurality of lifestyles.

Citizen-consumers started the Schönau energy initiatives. However, the government does not have to await such an initiative but could also start the reconstruction of the social and material conditions in which people follow their lifestyles and make their consumptive choices. Such a government-initiated adjustment of social and material conditions, however, does need to involve people at an early stage of environmental policy-making. Although Giddens's (1984) duality of structure implies that the adjustment of social and material conditions always depends on people's practices, the government could facilitate such adjustments with rules and regulations and by providing ample room to experiment. Here, consumer-oriented environmental politics may profit from experiences in the context of food safety policy-making. These experiences show that the government could facilitate adjustments in a sustainable direction by making it compulsory for companies to have a consumer council and to present environmental reports. Such rules and regulations facilitate that consumers and producers of, for instance, electricity not only meet at the marketplace (*cf.* Korthals, 2000b).

One of the most striking features of the Schönau energy initiatives is that its success depends on the active involvement of some people but that it does not call for a similar involvement of all people. Some people may simply profit from the adjustment of social and material conditions in a sustainable direction and consume sustainable energy for the same price as they used to pay for non-sustainable energy. Such a strategy, thus, accepts that contemporary liberal-democratic societies should leave ample room for quite divergent levels of active involvement in public deliberations about the objectives and instruments of environmental policy-making (*cf.* Munnichs, 2000). It is, for instance, perfectly reasonable that most people settle for indirect participation in the processes of environmental policy-making through their adherence to a variety of non-governmental organisations (*cf.* Dubbink, 1999).

The green third way shows some family resemblance with Achterhuis's (1998) Latourian argument for a moralising of devices as an instrument in environmental policy-making. Achterhuis, for instance, proposes to reconstruct the shower in such a way that it will combine comfort with a low water consumption, thus leaving it up to people to decide

how long they prefer to shower. The green third way suggests the similar but more ambitious approach of reconstructing society's system of water provision. It accepts the Latourian (1996) argument that devices, or material conditions in general, contain moral scripts and can make a difference to the world. In other words, these devices 'act' and may quite properly by coined as 'actants'. However, by raising the level of intervention from a singular device to whole social and material systems, it escapes the charge of either material determinism or futility. The story of the EWS exemplifies that a systems approach may leave ample room for a plurality of lifestyles to flourish and still make a real difference to day-to-day local environmental politics.

Now, it is possible to spell out the leading threads of a green third way for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles:

1) The green third way accepts that practices and narratives of self-identity are inextricably interconnected in people's lifestyles. Therefore, it is no longer possible to evade the question of whether the government should be allowed to intervene in people's lifestyles in view of the objective of sustainable development by suggesting that people remain free in either their practices or their narratives of self-identity;

2) The green third way acknowledges that contemporary affluent societies are permanently characterised by a plurality of lifestyles, narratives of self-identity and consumptive preferences. Any strategy for government intervention should leave ample room for a plurality of these lifestyles to flourish over time by securing the availability of a wide range of behavioral options;

3) The green third way embraces the environmental baseline of the restraint principle and the list of primary environmental goods to prevent any irreversible damage to the natural environment, and thus to secure justice between generations in the use of this environment. This environmental baseline justifies directive strategies of government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles in a limited set of conditions;

4) The green third way emphasises that, beyond the requirement of securing an environmental baseline, non-directive strategies should do the majority of the job in the development of sustainable lifestyles. These non-directive strategies operate primarily through the adjustment of social and material conditions, build on people's future-oriented green ideals, and imply an active, though numerically limited, involvement of citizen-consumers in the deliberative processes of environmental policy-making.

5) The green third way sees a complementary role for communicative and economic instruments. Exchange of information about the environmental repercussions of certain behavioral choices, financial incentives to repair market failures and the establishment of markets for green products should enhance the rationality of people's behavioral choices.

Hopefully, this concise 5-point programme for green third way politics sheds sufficient light on the kernel of this alternative strategy for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles. Anyway, it is about time to answer the final question of whether it is reasonable to qualify this green third way as a sufficiently non-directive strategy for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles to be acceptable for the spatio-temporally egalitarian branches of political liberalism. In other words, does the green third way show enough respect for people's freedom to follow their own lifestyles, while precluding the pursuit of non-sustainable lifestyles?

6.4
A Non-Directive Strategy?

The question of whether the outline of a green third way presents a sufficiently non-directive strategy for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles should be answered with a firm but qualified yes.

First, the qualification: green third way politics acknowledges that it is impossible to secure the environmental baseline of the restraint principle and the list of primary environmental goods without using any directive instruments. The green third way needs to interfere with people's freedom of choice to safeguard fair opportunities of future generations to follow their lifestyles, narratives of self-identity and consumptive preferences. The justification for this interference with people's freedom to follow their own lifestyles is firmly established by the need to prevent that the current generation's use of nature and the environment causes irreversible harm or injustice to the members of future generations. Moreover, the green third way accepts that financial incentives and exchange of information about the environmental repercussions of specific behavioral choices should enable people to make considered, i.e. reasonable or rational, choices. The spatio-temporally egalitarian branches of political liberalism should embrace this intervention in people's freedom of choice as a necessary means for the pursuit of sustainable development and intergenerational justice in the use of nature and the environment.

Second, the affirmation: beyond the minimal requirements of securing an environmental baseline, green third way politics operates through the provision of social and material conditions that tempt people to build on their future-oriented green narratives of self-identity to develop a plurality of sustainable lifestyles. These social and material conditions do not enforce people to adopt some particular lifestyle or perfectionist vision of the good environment, and the green third way thus respects people's negative freedom from interference with their lifestyles. Moreover, the green third way strengthens the double-role of citizen-consumers in the formation and execution of environmental policy-making. Its emphasis on extensive public deliberation about the objectives and instruments of environmental policy-making enhances people's positive freedom in contemporary liberal-democratic societies. The Elektrizitätswerke Schönau and other similar initiatives exemplify that *"the changing relations between consumers and providers* [of utilities - VB] *do not impede the greening of domestic consumption but instead offer new opportunities for consumers to 'green' their lifestyles"* (Chappels *et al.*, 2000; 138). Hence, it is reasonable to claim that the outline of a green third way presents a sufficiently non-directive strategy for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles to gain support from the spatio-temporally egalitarian branches of political liberalism.

Some radical environmentalists may argue that it is principally impossible to reconcile environmental objectives and basic democratic liberties. They will probably reject the green third way as an overly lax strategy. However, I am not a magician and the green third way is not a conjuring trick. Although environmental objectives and basic democratic liberties may conflict indeed, green third way politics prefers to emphasise the inextricable interconnectedness of these objectives in a spatio-temporally egalitarian frame of reference. Arrler (2000) nicely expressed this twin challenge of a green third way for government intervention in non-sustainable lifestyles when he wrote that *"this is probably what sustainability is about at its deepest level: the protection and continuation of a democratic process where individuals can continue to have participatory rights and a free scope which is wide enough to allow them to put unique fingerprints on their own life. But these lives will certainly have a much better chance of improvement, if they can also inherit the unique resources which have been most important to their ancestors".*

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Samenvatting

(Summary in Dutch)

Een Groene Derde Weg ?
Filosofische Reflecties op
Overheidsbemoeienis met
Niet-Duurzame Levensstijlen

In milieu-historisch perspectief moet 1972 een bijzonder jaar zijn geweest. De Club van Rome publiceert 'De Grenzen aan de Groei', de Ecologist publiceert de 'Blauwdruk voor Overleving', en de Verenigde Naties houdt haar eerste milieu-conferentie in Stockholm. Het begrip duurzame ontwikkeling wordt dan voor het eerst in zijn huidige betekenis gebruikt. Duurzame ontwikkeling krijgt haar blijvende status als overkoepelende doelstelling van nationaal en internationaal milieubeleid echter pas met de publikatie van het rapport 'Onze Gezamenlijke Toekomst' in 1987. Dit rapport definieert duurzame ontwikkeling als *"een ontwikkeling die voorziet in de behoeften van de huidige generatie zonder daarmee voor toekomstige generaties de mogelijkheden in gevaar te brengen om ook in hun behoeften te voorzien"*. Het debat over duurzame ontwikkeling bereikt vervolgens een nieuw hoogtepunt met de VN-conferentie over milieu en ontwikkeling (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Deze conferentie introduceert de idee dat duurzame ontwikkeling ook vraagt om een verandering van levensstijlen en consumptiepatronen, naast de al eerder bepleite veranderingen in produktiemethoden. UNCED benadrukt de noodzaak van overheidsbemoeienis met niet-duurzame levensstijlen, en het tweede Milieubeleidsplan (NMP2) vertaalt deze nadruk naar de Nederlandse situatie.

UNCED en NMP2 brengen een uitgebreid publiek debat op gang over overheidsbemoeienis met niet-duurzame levensstijlen, waarin communicatieve en economische benaderingen domineren. Tot op heden lukt het deze benaderingen echter niet om overheidsbemoeienis met niet-duurzame levensstijlen op bevredigende wijze te verzoenen met respect voor de individuele vrijheid tot ontplooiing van een eigen levensstijl. Dit boek stelt zich daarom ten doel om precies deze verzoening tot stand te brengen door het schetsen van een derde weg voor overheidsbemoeienis met niet-duurzame levensstijlen. Deze groene derde weg presenteert zichzelf als alternatief voor de

eerste (communicatieve) en tweede (economische) wegen in het Nederlandse publieke debat. Zij beoogt de zorgen over de aantasting van natuur en milieu, zoals die ten grondslag liggen aan het streven naar duurzame ontwikkeling, te verwoorden binnen een grotendeels politiek-liberaal perspectief.

Hoofdstuk 2 brengt daartoe eerst het Nederlandse publieke debat over overheidsbemoeienis met niet-duurzame levensstijlen in kaart. Daarbij valt op dat hoewel communicatieve en economische benaderingen dit debat domineren, deze benaderingen ernstig tekortschieten in hun pogingen om de principiële vraag te omzeilen of overheidsbemoeienis met niet-duurzame levensstijlen een niet te rechtvaardigen inmenging in de vrijheid tot het ontplooien van een eigen levensstijl, visie van het goede leven of consumptieve voorkeuren impliceert. Communicatieve en economische benaderingen worden daarom op een drietal punten bekritiseerd: 1) zij weigeren de onlosmakelijke verbondenheid van houdingen en gedrag in levensstijlen te erkennen; 2) zij ontwijken de vraag hoe overheidsbemoeienis met niet-duurzame levensstijlen de individuele keuzevrijheid zou kunnen respecteren; en 3) zij vergeten te onderzoeken of duurzame ontwikkeling wellicht geldige redenen biedt om die keuzevrijheid in te perken. Daarmee zijn deze benaderingen niet in staat tot een betekenisvolle interpretatie van alle centrale termen in de zinsnede 'overheidsbemoeienis met niet-duurzame levensstijlen'. Het wekt dan ook weinig verbazing dat zij overheidsbemoeienis niet op een bevredigende wijze kunnen verenigen met respect voor de individuele vrijheid om een eigen levensstijl te ontplooien. Daarom zetten de hoofdstukken 3, 4 en 5 in op het achtereenvolgens overwinnen van deze drie tekortkomingen van communicatieve en economische benaderingen. Gelukkig gloren sinds kort aanzetten voor een derde benadering in het Nederlandse publieke debat. Deze aanzetten leveren bouwstenen voor de ontwikkeling van een groene derde weg voor overheidsbemoeienis met niet-duurzame levensstijlen.

Hoofdstuk 3 pleit, vooral op basis van Giddens' structuratie-theorie, zijn en Beck's idee van reflexieve modernisering en Douglas' group-grid analyse, voor een narratieve conceptualisering van de begrippen levensstijl en identiteit. Deze conceptualisering 1) benadrukt de onlosmakelijke verbondenheid van praktijken en levensverhalen in levensstijlen, 2) beklemtoont de dualiteit van individu en samenleving in de ontplooiing van levensstijlen, 3) verruilt het modernistische onderscheid tussen burger en consument voor de publiek-private hybride burger-consument, en 4) brengt de veelheid aan levensstijlen in hedendaagse globaliserende, individualiserende en detraditionaliserende samenlevingen in kaart. De narratieve conceptualisering van levensstijlen betekent dat de vraag niet langer ontweken kan worden of overheidsbemoeienis met niet-duurzame levensstijlen noodzakelijkerwijs een niet te rechtvaardigen inmenging in de individuele vrijheid tot ontplooiing van een eigen levensstijl impliceert. Het gaat niet langer aan een

resterende vrijheid in ofwel praktijken ofwel levensverhalen te suggereren, aangezien deze praktijken en verhalen onlosmakelijk verbonden zijn in levensstijlen.

Hoofdstuk 4 argumenteert, vooral op basis van Berlin's and Rawls' politieke liberalisme, Raz's liberale perfectionisme en Habermas' idee van een deliberatieve democratie, dat de meeste overheidsbemoeienis met levensstijlen inderdaad een niet te rechtvaardigen inmenging in de individuele keuzevrijheid is. Deze liberale benadering 1) redeneert dat respect voor de individuele keuzevrijheid een neutraal en anti-perfectionistisch standpunt van de overheid vooronderstelt, 2) meent dat directieve, communicatieve en economische, benaderingen voor overheidsbemoeienis alleen dan gerechtvaardigd zijn wanneer bepaalde keuzes anderen schaden, onrechtvaardigheid veroorzaken, of aantoonbaar irrationeel zijn, 3) accepteert, in tweede instantie, dat haar politiek-liberale stellingname helemaal niet zo neutraal en anti-perfectionistisch is, maar denkt dat deze perfectionistische draai het pleidooi om de individuele keuzevrijheid te respecteren alleen nog maar versterkt, en 4) bepleit uitgebreide publieke deliberatie over de vormgeving en uitvoering van het milieubeleid. De politiek-liberale nadruk op het respecteren van de individuele keuzevrijheid betekent dat directieve benaderingen voor overheidsbemoeienis met niet-duurzame levensstijlen onvoldoende respect tonen voor de vrijheid om een eigen levensstijl te ontplooien, tenzij aannemelijk gemaakt kan worden dat bepaalde levensstijlen anderen schaden of onrechtvaardigheid veroorzaken.

Hoofdstuk 5 bepleit, vooral op basis van Rawls' savings principle, Wissenburg's restraint principle, Passmore's ketens van liefde, en De-Shalit's transgenerationele gemeenschappen, een dubbele interpretatie van duurzame ontwikkeling als enerzijds een principe van intergenerationele rechtvaardigheid en anderzijds een toekomstgericht groen ideaal. Deze dubbele interpretatie 1) omhelst het restraint principle en het argument dat niemand een recht kan claimen om milieu-goederen te mogen vernietigen als randvoorwaarde die directieve benaderingen voor overheidsbemoeienis met niet-duurzame levensstijlen kan rechtvaardigen, 2) suggereert dat zorgen over de aantasting van natuur en milieu een uitdrukking zijn van toekomstgerichte levensverhalen die in een non-directieve benadering de ontwikkeling van verdergaande verantwoordelijkheden jegens nabije toekomstige generaties kunnen stimuleren, 3) geeft de voorkeur aan het opstellen van een lijst met primaire milieu-goederen boven het kwantificeren van één of andere milieugebruiksruimte als leidraad voor de alledaagse praktijk van het milieubeleid, en 4) concludeert dat onzekerheid van wetenschappelijk kennis inzake de onbedoelde milieu-gevolgen van consumptieve keuzes twijfels zaait bij pogingen om directieve benaderingen voor overheidsbemoeienis met niet-duurzame levensstijlen te rechtvaardigen die uitgaan boven het realiseren van de minimale eisen van het restraint principle en de lijst met primaire milieu-goederen. Duurzame ontwikkeling levert daarmee geldige argumenten

voor een inperking van de individuele vrijheid om eigen levensstijl te ontplooien indien aannemelijk is dat deze levensstijl zich niet beweegt binnen de randvoorwaarde van het restraint principle en de lijst met primaire milieu-goederen. De individuele keuzevrijheid mag echter niet opgeofferd worden aan verdergaande milieu-overwegingen. Slechts niet-directieve benaderingen kunnen deze verdergaande verantwoordelijkheden jegens nabije toekomstige generaties gestalte geven.

In milieu-historisch perspectief is 1986 misschien wel net zo'n bijzonder jaar als 1972. Wanneer de kerncentrale van Tsjernobyl ontploft, schokt dat niet alleen de wereld op haar grondvesten maar motiveert dat ook een groep inwoners van Schönau, een klein plaatsje in het Duitse Zwarte Woud, tot het ontplooien van een opmerkelijk initiatief. Zij starten een grondige reconstructie van de energievoorziening in Schönau en zijn in 1997 in staat om de lokale energievoorziening in eigen handen te nemen. Dan wordt voor het eerst in de geschiedenis een anti-nucleaire beweging de eigenaar van haar eigen energievoorziening. Daarmee reconstrueren de inwoners van Schönau niet alleen de energievoorziening maar introduceren zij ook nieuwe deliberatieve arrangementen in het lokale milieubeleid. Dit verhaal moet niet verkeerd begrepen worden. Het verwoordt géén gerealiseerde utopie, maar is wel informatief voor het schetsen van een groene derde weg voor overheidsbemoeienis met niet-duurzame levensstijlen. Het initiatief van de inwoners van Schönau toont namelijk dat het mogelijk is om niet-duurzame levensstijlen en consumptiepatronen te veranderen door de sociale en materiële voorwaarden te veranderen waaronder mensen hun dagelijks leven vormgeven.

De uitdaging van een groene derde weg voor overheidsbemoeienis met niet-duurzame levensstijlen is om deze ervaringen te veralgemeniseren naar een benadering voor het aanpassen van andere niet-duurzame consumptieve praktijken zoals auto rijden, vlees eten, en met het vliegtuig op vakantie gaan. Hoewel elke consumptieve praktijk zijn eigen specifieke kenmerken heeft, moet een groene derde weg altijd op zoek naar die aanpassingen van sociale en materiële voorwaarden die mensen ertoe verleiden om zelf duurzame levensstijlen te ontwikkelen. De overheid moet daarbij steeds voldoende ruimte laten voor een veelheid aan duurzame levensstijlen. Zij dient echter wel de mogelijkheid uit te sluiten om levensstijlen te ontplooien met onomkeerbare negatieve gevolgen voor natuur en milieu, en daarmee voor de mogelijkheden van toekomstige generaties om hun eigen levensstijlen te ontplooien. Een 5-punten programma vat de groene derde weg voor overheidsbemoeienis met niet-duurzame levensstijlen samen:

1) De groene derde weg accepteert dat praktijken en levensverhalen onlosmakelijk verbonden zijn in levensstijlen. Daarmee is het niet langer mogelijk de vraag te ontwijken of het de overheid toegestaan moet worden zich te bemoeien met levensstijlen met het oog op duurzame ontwikkeling.

2) De groene derde weg erkent dat hedendaagse welvarende samenlevingen gekenmerkt worden door een veelheid aan levensstijlen, levensverhalen en consumptieve voorkeuren. Elke benadering voor overheidsbemoeienis moet voldoende ruimte laten voor zo'n veelheid aan levensstijlen door de beschikbaarheid van een ruime hoeveelheid keuze-mogelijkheden te garanderen.

3) De groene derde weg omarmt de randvoorwaarde van het restraint principle en de lijst met primaire milieu-goederen om onomkeerbare schade aan het natuurlijk milieu te voorkomen en rechtvaardigheid tussen generaties te garanderen. Deze randvoorwaarde rechtvaardigt directieve benaderingen voor overheidsbemoeienis met niet-duurzame levensstijlen in een beperkt aantal omstandigheden.

4) De groene derde weg benadrukt dat een niet-directieve benadering het merendeel van het werk zal moeten doen in de ontwikkeling van duurzame levensstijlen. Deze niet-directieve benadering verandert sociale en materiële voorwaarden, bouwt op toekomstgerichte groene idealen, en vraagt om een actieve deelname van burger-consumenten aan de deliberatieve vormgeving van het milieubeleid.

5) De groene derde weg ziet een aanvullende rol voor communicatieve en economische instrumenten. Een uitwisseling van informatie over de milieu-gevolgen van bepaalde keuzes en het repareren van markt-falen middels financiële prikkels kunnen de rationaliteit van consumptieve keuzes verhogen.

De vraag of de groene derde weg geldt als een voldoende niet-directieve benadering voor overheidsbemoeienis met niet-duurzame levensstijlen kan met een gekwalificeerde bevestiging beantwoord worden. De groene derde weg erkent dat het onmogelijk is de randvoorwaarde van het restraint principle en de lijst met primaire milieu-goederen te waarborgen zonder gebruik van directieve instrumenten. Daarenboven verlaat de groene derde weg zich echter op het voorzien in sociale en materiële voorwaarden die mensen ertoe verleiden hun toekomstgerichte groene idealen te verwerkelijken in een veelheid aan duurzame levensstijlen.

Curriculum Vitae

Volkert Beekman was born in De Bilt, The Netherlands, on February 12, 1968. September 1987 he started to study Rural Sociology at Wageningen University. He got his MSc-degree in November 1992, with a major in Rural Sociology and minors in Agricultural History and Applied Philosophy. From September 1993 to December 1995 he worked at the Studium Generale of Wageningen University, organising courses in the fields of agriculture, environment and nature. February 1996 he started his PhD-research at the Applied Philosophy Group of Wageningen University. He was a member of the organising committees of the 19th Dutch-Flemish Philosophy Day in 1997 and the First European Congress on Agricultural and Food Ethics in 1999. January 2000 he started a secondary occupation as project-assistant for the Transatlantic Platform for Consumer Concerns and International Trade at the Centre for Bio-ethics and Health Law of Utrecht University. He is chief-editor of the Newsletter of the European Society for Agricultural and Food Ethics (EurSafe). September 2000 he started in his current occupation as innovation and consumer policy researcher at the Agricultural Economics Research Institute (LEI) in The Hague.