



Gunta Darbiņa

**PRACTICES OF POSTSOCIALIST
CONSUMPTION IN SUBURBAN
MILIEU: DESIRE FOR A NEW
SUBURBAN HOUSE IN PIERĪGA
AND ITS FULFILMENT**

Summary of the Doctoral Thesis
to obtain doctoral degree in social sciences
Speciality – Sociology

Rīga, 2014



RĪGAS STRADIŅA
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	4
1.1. Topicality and scientific novelty of the Doctoral Thesis	4
1.2. Objective and tasks of the Doctoral Thesis	8
1.3. Scope and Structure of the Doctoral Thesis	8
2. PRACTICE THEORY – THEORETICAL SUBSTANTIATION OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS	11
3. FACTORS AFFECTING PRIVATE HOUSE CONSUMPTION PRACTICE	19
4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	23
4.1. Use of the Grounded Theory	23
4.2. Criteria for the Selection of Respondents and Social Milieu Characteristic.....	26
4.3. Data analysis methods	30
5. REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS.....	33
5.1. Motivation and Process of Private House Consumption Practice	34
5.2. Interaction between Private House Consumption and the Lifestyle	40
5.3. Challenges of suburban private house consumption practice	45
CONCLUDING REMARKS	50
PUBLICATIONS IN PEER-REVIEWED JOURNALS	56
PRESENTATIONS AT SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCES	58
REFERENCES	60

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Topicality and scientific novelty of the Doctoral Thesis

With rapid changes in political and economical system inhabitants of socialism countries got into a kind of intersection – post-socialism, and neoliberal politics opened an *ocean of possibilities* inviting, promoting and persuading that consumption, namely, “purchasing” is the only index of whether the individual belongs to the society of capitalistic economy. No doubt, on one hand consumption develops the production, however, on the other hand – consumption creates risks and crises, which in their turn threaten welfare. A new suburban private house, built around the year of 2000, for many post-socialism consumers became the proof of a new status of social middle class and showed joining the standards of Western life. A private house is a specific phenomenon in research of consumption, since a house contains memories and desires, idealisation, emotional and physical, positive and negative evaluation, and creates the context for analysis of social and consumption practise (Mallett 2004:70).

At the end of 90s of the 20th century research in consumption culture became very popular in the Western world, and a lot of scientific publications appeared: journals “*Consumption*” and “*Markets and Culture*”, but since 2001 “*Journal of Consumer Culture*”. In 2010 a great publication, “*Consumption*”, of 4 volumes was published. In 2011 “*Journal of Consumer Culture*” paid serious attention to the studies of daily consumption, based on the practice theory. The practice theory has appeared in studies of consumption as a promising approach that, according to Alan Warde, gives the possibility to move the aspect of individual consumer to common aspects of consumption, and from studies of impressive and striking consumption dimension to the dimension of routine and daily consumption. Application of practice theory is suitable not only for studies in stability of consumption practices, but also for

getting the idea what kind of practices exist and what kinds are still developing, which is especially significant in relation to new consumption practices in post-socialism countries.

Theoretical understanding of consumption in Latvia was activated in 2005 in the conference “Consumerism in Latvia: trends and alternatives”, organized by University of Latvia. In the introduction of the Conference proceedings¹ it is stated that the aim of the conference was to find out how consumption affects structure and organisation of the contemporary social life, to generally evaluate welfare and consumption, and what consequences (consumption) consumerism has. Consumerism, according to Skaidrīte Lasmane, professor, manifests as commercialisation of people’s private and social life (Lasmane 2006:11). This Doctoral thesis does not include profound analysis of consumerism, as the work is aimed at research in consumption practices, without paying attention to general negative tendencies of consumption. In the Doctoral thesis the essence of consumption is emphasized, which turns out in consumption practices, studying their formation, occurrence, differentiation, or possible disappearance, and this is the area of sociological research to seek answers to the questions *what? how? why?* people do something. Tālis Tisenkopfs, a sociologist, states that one of the functions of sociology is *to illustrate individual experience*, characterising individual’s situation in the contemporary world, so that, analysing the experience, we would look at the society through the subject’s emotional and interpretation prism, thus catching *society embodied in experience* (Tisenkopfs 2010b:22). Studies in consumption practices enable us to understand family desires and strategies for improvement of individual life conditions. However practices of great consumption usually envisage financial investigation, mainly ensured by

¹ Patērniecība Latvijā: tendences un alternatīvas. Sērija „Agora”, 5, LU Akadēmiskais apgāds: 2006

mortgage loans, which includes risk in paying back and may affect both familial daily life and state economics.

At the beginning of the new millennium a lot of families participated in the practices of acquisition, use and maintenance of the real estate, often underestimating the risk related to big loans. Speaking about surveys carried out by research centre *SKDS* in 2005 and 2008, where respondents were asked about activities to improve their life, T. Tisenkopfs stresses that *strategy of augmentation of personal material welfare* marked out of the 22 given activities, which may be named with the word “to consume” (Tisenkopfs 2010a:366). This strategy is characterised by taking loans, acquisition of real estate, money saving, health and life insurance. This strategy is still topical since, according to the “Review of macro-economic processes” by the Bank of Latvia in October, 2012, this is the private consumption which in the near future could maintain the leading role in the increase of GDP. In 2009 Roberts Zīle, politician, Dr. oec., expressed his conviction that the cause of the crisis is not the budget deficiency, but private consumption². Involvement in high level private consumption in order to fulfil a desire for private house consumption caused many families in Latvia to make decisions on risky mortgage loans. According to Zīle, a debt which lasts for tens of years, or even the rest of life, demoralizes a person. Part of the debtors avoids legal employment, but a lot of them choose work in other country to pay their mortgage, and leave Latvia.

Thus the basic research problem stands out – post-socialism consumption practice has caused serious challenges to private house consumers and suburban milieu, as implementation of consumption practices has often been based on emotions rather than on knowledge and experience, and is related to special, neoliberal features in economics, social area and development of suburban milieu, which is characteristic to post-socialism.

² <http://www.ekonomika.lv/krizes-celonis-ir-nevis-budzeta-deficits-bet-privatais-paterins/> (accessed: 03.06.2013.)

Thus, already at the initial stage of the study, a conclusion forms that consumption patterns more profoundly base on individual's motivation to consume, though impact of neoliberal politics is also significant. Consumption practices, studied in this Doctoral thesis, are realized in post-socialism suburban zone, and consumption is studied in interaction with sub-urbanization processes affected by neoliberal politics. At present in Pierīga, suburban zone of the capital Riga, in many places one can see unfinished construction villages, as the proof of such interaction between land purchasing, entrepreneurship and the local political power, where real estate market has set its own rules. Expanding rapidly, 'the new Pierīga' has developed as a 'sleeping-place community' for people whose aim has been to combine country-side (house and environment) and the city (work, social infrastructure, free time conveniences).

This Doctoral thesis gives contribution to the theoretical approaches of consumer culture and consumption practice in sociology and to the development of empiric studies of private consumption practices in Latvia. Such research direction in Latvia is new, and the doctoral dissertation gives expanded theoretical and methodological view for studies of consumption practices. In the Doctoral thesis, a significant topical social problem in Latvia is analysed – social challenges of credit liabilities and their impact on many families. Basing on the study data it is possible to identify great consumption practice risks, stimulating education of society and discussion in public, as well as motivate local government to seek solutions for '*meadow villages*' ("*pļavu ciemi*"), developed in the result of unsuccessful construction, and the abandoned buildings under construction, which seriously affect suburban environment. Study of daily social and consumption practices is a new research direction in Latvia which can reveal true and current picture of the ideas of Latvian inhabitants on economic culture.

1.2. Objective and tasks of the Doctoral Thesis

The **objective** of the Doctoral thesis is to analyse the post-socialism consumption practice of owning a suburban private house and the factors that affect it.

The following tasks are put forward in order to attain the objective:

1. To give insight in the theoretical analysis of social practice, basing on the renewed topicality of practice theory in research, conducted in social sciences.
2. To analyse reception of findings in classic practice theories in sociology.
3. To analyse processes of social practices and transformation in connectedness with consumption.
4. To analyse factors affecting private house consumption practice.
5. To study motivation and process of private house post-socialist consumption, in relation with new social practices and lifestyle of families.
7. To analyse relation of residents of new private houses with suburban area outside the boundaries of the house.
8. To identify the local political practice in relation with the development of suburban zones in post-socialism.
9. To identify satisfaction or disappointment of individuals in relation with private house consumption practices.

1.3. Scope and Structure of the Doctoral Thesis

The Doctoral thesis is written in Latvian, and its structure is comprised by introduction, 5 chapters, conclusions, and 3 appendices. The text includes 44 figures. The scope of the Doctoral thesis is 170 pages without bibliography and appendices. The bibliography lists 198 sources.

The introduction substantiates the choice of the theme and its novelty, as well as the importance of this research for consumption practice sociology in Latvia, and tasks set for the study.

Chapter I deals with description and analysis of consumer culture and its study, including discussion of theorists. Historical dimension of the development and understanding of consumer culture, as well as relation between consumer culture and post-modernism are explained. In the discussion section, viewpoints of well-known theorists in consumption research - Veblen, representatives of Frankfurt school, Bourdieu, Galbraith – are reviewed.

Chapter II of the Doctoral thesis analyses consumption phenomenon, social practice phenomenon, as well as topicality of practice theory in studies conducted in social sciences. The development of practice theory and reception of classic theoretical conclusions in consumption sociology are analysed. Consumption as a social practice and consumption as a political practice are reviewed in relation with their effect on Western and Latvian social processes.

In Chapter III, factors affecting suburban private house consumption practice are analysed. Theoretical analysis of motivation to consume *a house as a thing* and its social stratification context are given. Relations between emotions and consumption are analysed. Understanding of *belonging to a place* has been studied, as well as development of suburban zones in relation with sub-urbanisation processes in Western and post-socialism environment.

Chapter IV describes criteria of respondent selection, the method of data acquisition and the course of empirical research. Attention has been paid to the grounded theory. Mixed research methods are analysed, paying more attention to the *triangulation* design, used in this research. Analysis of pictures as a method of visual research is reviewed.

Chapter V describes results of the empirical research. Categories acquired in empiric data coding and their relations are analysed: *Nexus of normality comprehension and memory – motivation of house implementation; Home feeling, evolved in house building practices; House - possibilities for consolidating family; Creation of the environment for home; House implementation – satisfaction/disappointment in consumption practice*. Several

other categories and their interrelation are analysed: *Belonging to the milieu outside the house; Living place based cooperation; Impact of politics on the development of suburban zones.*

The Conclusion Chapter summarizes conclusions made during the research.

2. PRACTICE THEORY – THEORETICAL SUBSTANTIATION OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

Goods and services are confessors of the identities and a type of communication. The concept *consumer culture* emphasizes that the world of objects and its principles are the main criteria for understanding of contemporary society. It includes culture dimension based economics, which perceives the material aspect not only as being useful, but also as communication. Secondly, the concept includes market principles, based on the demand, store of capital, competition and monopolization. Consumer culture has developed in relation with post-modernism, characterized by human desire to consume more images, styles, fantasies and dreams rather than to consume objects. Trentmann considers that consumption is a new lifestyle, in which consumption takes a significant place in self-development. Consumer culture, involving active lifestyle and body care, is related to social mobility and physical activity, to seeking job, as well as to new possibilities for leisure time activities. Transformation conception, including transformation of living space, relations, identity and body, is the main in consumer culture. Transformation, in its turn, requires more financial investments therefore we live in “debt culture”.

Research of consumer culture and consumption theoretically is still basing on theorists taking the criticising position. Critical opinions are being doubted, as theorists of the critical direction have failed to evaluate sufficiently consumers’ deliberate action and consequences, and consumers often are depicted too homogeneously. Veblen is related to the beginning of theories on status consumption. His approach to research is based on hierarchic social structure in status competition, in which status is determined by wealth. Bourdieu’s *habitus* is one of the research approaches that as if reconciles *exhausted* consumers with good consumption result, as *habitus* is responsible not only for action, but also for thoughts, understanding, motivation and

perception. Theorists of Frankfurt school considered that culture is led by producers, emphasizing that requirement for profit leads culture products that are formal and banal, but have enormous audience. According to Baudrillard information technologies fill social relations with culture signs in such amount that it is impossible to speak about *normality*. Advertisements have especial possibilities to attach images, such as romance, exotics, desires, beauty, togetherness, etc., to daily consumption goods. Therefore emotions in consumer culture and consumption practices take a significant place, often excluding *practical sense*.

In the 90s of the 20th century in research of consumption market analyses were reduced, as opinion started to prevail that goods and consumption are ensured by new models of social organisation, and therefore consumption should be studied in other way, not only as *purchasing*. In the foreground came use of goods, services, consumer satisfaction and sources of consumption (Halkier et al. 2011:4). A. Reckwitz stressed that practice theory is an ideal way, able to make new conclusions (Reckwitz 2002). Reckwitz's theoretical contribution is recognized as particularly significant in bringing practice theory nearer to sociologic approach in consumption studies, but publications by T. Schatzki on issues in practice show him as an interpreter of systemic practice theory.

Practice is a timeless phenomenon in space and time, as it was stated by Schatzki, as practice does not consist of number of concrete actions in real time. Reckwitz, in his turn, has also developed a definition of social practice: "A 'practice' (*Praktik*) is a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge" (Reckwitz 2002: 249).

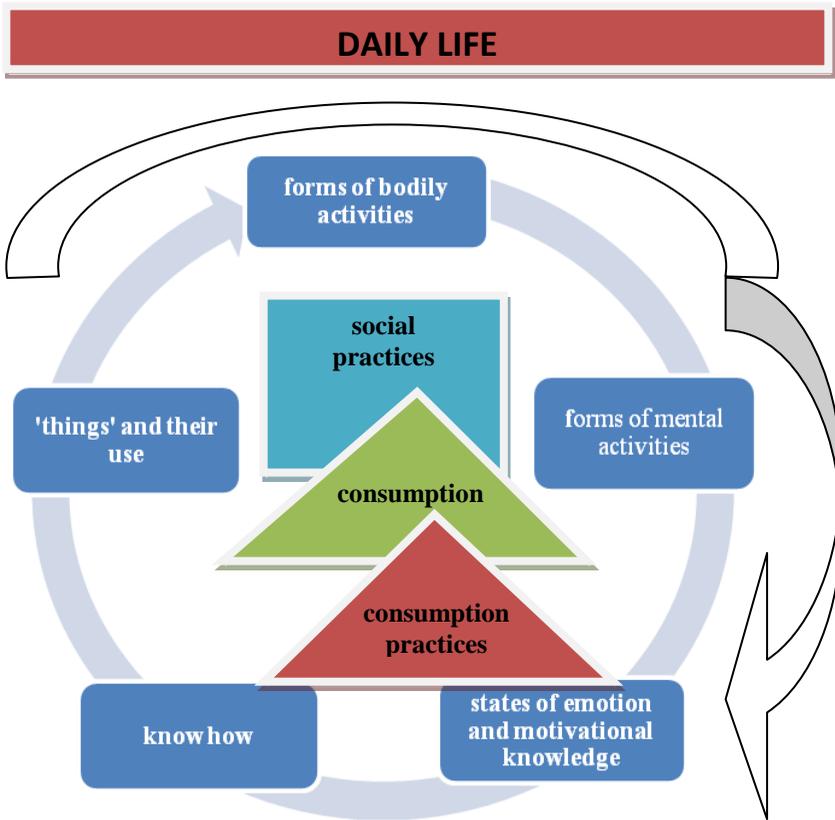


Fig. 2.1. Interconnected elements that form social and consumption practices (according to Reckwitz' practice definition)

Not all social practices are consumption practices, but almost all social practices include consumption. As practice is not bodily behaviour only, it includes also understanding, skills and desires, which are practice elements and qualities, but are not individual's own qualities. Researchers Goldkuhl and Julkunen represent the opinion that practices should be perceived as *emergent* phenomena which are gradually changing, and one can expect in them considered and planned human intervention as well (Goldkuhl & Julkunen 2011).

Practice theory has developed as the sequel of scientific discussions on structures and social agents in social theory and philosophy. The roots of this research direction should be sought in Heidegger's, Wittgenstein's philosophy and in early works by Bourdieu, Giddens, late Foucault, as well as in Schatzki's philosophy. Revived interest in practice theory was signalled by Schatzki with his rhetoric announcement in 2001 "*practice has returned in contemporary social theory*". Since 2000 the concept of practice and its derivatives have been applied to different empiric studies that described, interpreted and explained social processes and behaviour. Practices are generally accepted to be social, and participation in them leads to the social area, though participation in practice can be explained disputably and depending on whether each practice is looked at per se or as phenomena similar to each other (Southerton et al. 2012). A. Warde's article "Consumption and Theories of Practice", 2005, has been evaluated as the first work which offers theoretical prospective of social practice in order to analyse consumption.

Practice theory has rapidly developed as a challenge to the existing ways of reasoning on human life and sociality, which up to now has focussed on individual's mind, social structure, work of systems and discourses. Social practices in relation with such realities as action, institutions, structure and their understanding reveal their context, and it is – human coexistence and the *social* phenomenon (Schatzki 1996: 11-13). Schatzki bases his practice theory on two conclusions: "firstly, the social order is established under the influence of social practices and, secondly, mind is the central dimension in this process" (Schatzki 2001b: 51). First condition mainly serves as the context in which the second one develops. The role, which is played by socially constituted mind in practice organisation, proves the role of practice as a social order. Schatzki notes two different understandings of social order. One marks out cognition problem of social order, related to formation and maintenance of stable, regular and predictable behavioural patterns. The other understanding of the social

order wonders what keeps society together, what ensures relatively stable, but not forcible human coexistence (Schatzki 2001b). And it is the *social order* as an agreement, where realities are connected to each other spatially and causally, as well as deliberately, violently, promoting or oppressing each other in their activities. In this way social order organises in social practices.

In the last decade practice theory has been developed by Reckwitz and Schatzki, as well as other theorists (Elizabeth Shove, Stephen Kemmis), whose philosophical conclusions are based on Heidegger's and Wittgenstein's philosophy. They comprise a group whose theoretical viewpoint is marked by three common directions. Firstly, these practice theorists consider **that a practice is an organised constellation of different people's activities**. Practice is a *social* phenomenon in the significance that it includes a lot of different people. The second commonality is based on conclusion that **important features of human life must be understood as forms as rooted in human activity – not in the activity of individuals, but in practices**. The third common principle of the above mentioned theoreticians stresses that **human activity rests on something that cannot be put into words** – non propositional something are rules *know-how* (Schatzki 2012:13). In Bourdieu theory this phenomenon is *habitus*, in Giddens' – *practical consciousness*, but in Wittgenstein's theory - *ruminations on rule*.

In other words, according to Schatzki, practice theory includes understanding of practice as organised activities, awareness that phenomenon of the *social* and psychological characteristics of human life are related to practices, and the opinion that the base of human activity is non propositional bodily abilities, as well as the understanding that human body combines person's mind and action, as well as recurrent individual activities and socially manifold activities. Practice theory understands "practice" as a link between organised activities, and this link forms from 1) *practical sensibility* – what people speak and what they do; 2) accurately expressed *rules, principles*,

instructions; 3) the result of *teleoaffective structure* – projects, tasks, aims, beliefs, emotions; 4) *general understandings* (Schatzki 1996:89; 2012:15).

Explanations of *practical sensibility* are well seen in classical theoretical views on practice. For Bourdieu it is *habitus*, which can be explained as *practical sense* and for Giddens it is *practical consciousness*. Bourdieu and Giddens are different in their judgements on the range of human activity in relation to perception abilities. Giddens expresses the opinion that *practical sense* determines routine activities only, but Bourdieu states that actor's '*sense for the game*' determines all human activity. Bourdieu explains that *habitus* is in certain extent practical hypotheses, founded in the previous experiences, and attaches too big significance to the previous experience. Moment by moment *habitus* structures a new experience in relation with structures, developed by previous experience, which are changed by the new experiences and which are determined by selection (Bourdieu 2004). The most important in Bourdieu theory is *habitus* as the selection principle in practice (Schatzki 1997: 287). Bourdieu considers that actions chosen by *habitus* are reasonable and acceptable, and it first of all means that actions are acceptable in the concrete situation. Secondly, Bourdieu theory stresses that *dispositions*, inherited by the actor, have developed in certain practices (Bourdieu 2004: 77–85). Bourdieu relates his theory with internal differentiation of practices, focussing on contrasts of social classification, availability of practice and adaptation to practice.

Rules in theoretical visions of practices mean clearly expressed directions, instructions or orders. Giddens considers that practices expand and become more diverse and continuously create new rules, which in their turn determine practice borders and content (Giddens 1999). Rules that can be both laws and norms and codes, according to Giddens' theory are used methodologically and as general activity procedures they are involved in practical activities of daily life. Rules and resources organise practices,

manifesting themselves in direct actions, which form timespace of social practices, expanded as much as possible (Giddens 1999; Schatzki 1997). Majority of the rules is used by action performers without expressing them verbally: they know *what to do*. „Verbal expression of a rule is already its interpretation” (Giddens 1999: 54). According to Giddens, knowledge that is non propositional and that orientates people in their activities means being aware of rules. Majority of rules accumulate in practical consciousness, which is not directly available to the structure of rules (Giddens 1999: 70–73). Practical consciousness is all that is understood by agents, but they cannot express it verbally, whereas discourse consciousness is all that is understood by actors, and they can express it verbally. According to Giddens’ theory there are two types of resources: non-material resources that develop in the result of coordinated human actions, and material ones that develop managing material products. Resources as the other component of *structure* is a means, as stated by Giddens, with which *social* power is realized, and thus it has possibility of causing changes.

Practices are a range of human actions, but *actions*, according to Schatzki, are events. *Actions as events* differ from *only events*, since *actions as events* are specially planned and voluntary (Schatzki 2012:18). *Action as an event* is temporalspatial event, its elements are results, aims, motivations, places or trajectories, and these are common to all practice participants in order to achieve the same results, goals and motivations (Schatzki 2012:20).

Comparing theoretical views of Bourdieu and Giddens, one can conclude that Bourdieu’s system determines type of practice depending on what, when and where is done and what determines the order, structuring reasonable choice of actions. Analysis of the role of rules and resources in Giddens’ theory shows how expanding of practice is regulated in space and time, and how actions are understood in practical consciousness.

By *teleoaffective structure* adepts of practice theory mainly understand purposeful *teleological* action hierarchy (a combination of aim–plan–actions),

which is required or accepted in the concrete practice. Such hierarchy shows how in the practice process participants plan and perform separate actions in order to achieve the concrete result (Schatzki 2012:16). In its turn, teleoaffective itself (emotional and logical purposefulness), as states Schatzki, includes emotions and moods, necessary for people realizing a certain practice and, possibly, showing their emotions as well. Precise form and complexity of teleoaffective which leads human actions, depends on the scope of living conditions, determined by actions (Schatzki 1997:302).

General understandings means abstract awareness of a presumption, for example, of beauty of a concrete consumption product.

Practices are a certain dimension of the human co-existence and are not separated from individuals and their interrelations. Individuals are interrelated in both practices and in relation with practices. General practice theory tends to be idealised, abstract and insufficiently attentive to social processes involved in creation and reproduction of social practices.

Spending itself is not a practice, but it is significant in each practice. **Involvement of individuals** in practice rather than personal decisions on practice management **explains nature and process of consumption** (Warde 2005). Bourdieu's *habitus* conception in relation with sensation, embodied and structured in the action, includes a view on coordination and predictability of human action (Warde 2005:140). Referring to the present study, it can be concluded that if acquisition of a private house worth 100 000 Ls has been implemented without seeing the environment around it, then, possibly, in post-socialism conditions, *predictable unpredictability* appears as a consumption strategy. In different way practices also develop in case of imitation (for example, desire of people in post-socialism countries to emulate Western daily life practices), but these practices also are affected by regulation, interpretation and transformation (Halkier et al. 2011). Practice theory helps to focus on the created conditions, in which there is a need for consumption (for example, lack of apartments and family houses in post-socialism).

3. FACTORS AFFECTING PRIVATE HOUSE CONSUMPTION PRACTICE

Daily consumption practices are historically filled with political and moral sense, which cannot be equated with the generally accepted division between market, people and politics. Frequently, political consumption practices together with neo-liberal politics develop the belief that market is the most effective judge of social values. Historical and political conditions form daily consumption practices with a political and moral meaning, and they are updated and activated not only by consumers and advertisements but also by journalists, of the local community opinion leaders, public organisations and politicians (Thompson 2011:140). The common features, proved by previous studies on conditions of post-socialism countries in relation with new capitalistic consumers' culture, reveal that with transformation of political system, also Western social and consumption practices have been adapted. One of the most significant characteristic features of consumer culture in the first half of the 20th century is - to develop the house as a typical woman's environment, and consider being a *housewife* as a respectable profession for a woman (Giles 2004).

Socialism changed the Western development started by Latvia. In the communistic country developed specific socialism consumption models which were different for communistic elite and common people. Dull uniformity of life, forced by socialism, promoted the desire for Western lifestyle and consumption.

With breakdown of socialistic system neo-liberalism became the ideological dogma of post-socialism countries. Not only political elite and the local power, but also people communities and families had to find possibility of getting on with neo-liberalism in their daily life (Creed 1998). Inspired by neo-liberalism in Latvia, it was the political elite that around 2004 – 2007 promoted society to inconsiderate consumption. Consumption developed as political

practice, in relation with estate market, encouraging bank lobbyism, development of construction enterprises, trade of construction materials. Neo-liberalism in post-socialism has its own specifics: it supports entrepreneurship as the process by itself and idealises conception of family. These features can be identified as significant factors which in the last decade have developed new habitable territories in Pierīga. To study implementation of a private house, model approach has been used in the research work, since practice can be analysed also as a symbolic model which combines different practices and includes separate, often unique, actions or simple spending that reproduces practice (Reckwitz 2002). In the empiric part of the research, implementation of consumption practices is studied, analysing respondents' private experience, but individuals' convictions can be understood, comprehending conditions affecting them and experiences as a wider social structure which affects individuals (Irwin 2008).

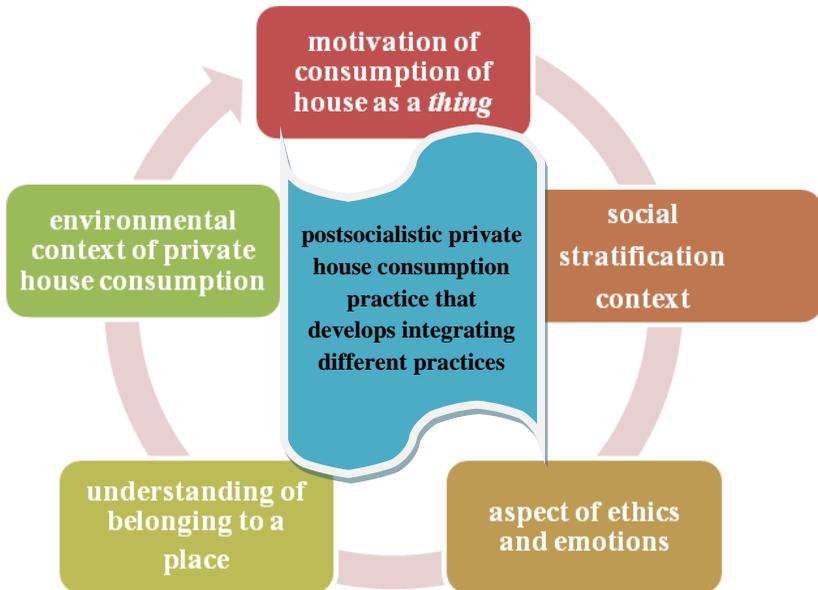


Fig. 3.1. Factors affecting private house consumption practice

Private house consumption practice in post-socialism suburban zone is affected by several general factors and their interrelation: a house as a *thing* and its consumption motivation, social stratification context in private house consumption, the aspect of ethics and emotions in consumption, understanding of belonging to a place, context of a suburban zone as practice environment.

House as consumption *thing* become a symbol of modernism, middle class status and prosperity according to I. Woodward, and develop as the store of person's experience, but the basic conflict develops between the desire with the help of the house to express status and the wish to maintain comfortable and true home environment (Woodward 2003). Contradiction between socialistic *normality* understanding and still *abnormal* post-socialism environment creates *heterotopia* – unrelated time and space experience. *Heterotopic* means formation of a kind of space in unfitted context that develops in the result of trying to create a place which is absolutely different and is in full contrast with the environment around (Foucault 1967). Thus with the conception *heterotopia* one can characterise post-socialism desires for *normality* of the small world – a modern private house, often in an unarranged, even damaged environment. However a family house in a suburb, as K. Fehérváry notes, not only anew defines conditions for belonging to the new middle class, but also is an instrument to develop and legitimise this new class. House property and social stratification in relation to the life space and place has already worked for a long time as the status markers, states Fehérváry, but they form middle class culture as well.

Among the factors affecting social practices are emotions and ethics. Each social practice, including consumption practices, includes a certain emotionality specific to the practice, and, according to Wittgenstein, it is one of the dimensions – teleoaffective (emotional and logic purposefulness) – which, together with practical sensibility and rules, organizes and regulates practice. In C.Campbell's opinion consumption is a creative and hedonic activity where the

main role is played by imagination and emotions, and a modern human has specific mental skills to create these dreams (Campbell 1987). However activity itself, not only desires, is the true model of consumption implementation. Theorists of consumer culture stress that modern images are elaborated into unique consumption products, with pleasure as the main principle. And self-conceptualism creates the belief that a consumer can take responsibility for own uniqueness through consumption, thus consumption features as the base of post-modern consumer culture.

Suburban zone as an environment of private house consumption is also a factor that affects practice of private house implementation. In the research of Western urban environment, sub-urbanisation is defined as the process of population decentralisation, which occurs when middle class families are seeking higher life quality. However in post-socialism, sub-urbanisation does not take place in relation with the increase in prosperity, therefore, in many post-socialism suburbs, significant state capital investments in the infrastructure are not made. In the Doctoral thesis it is substantiated that a living place is not a restricted reservation of social relations, but a coordination place of a range of different social processes at different levels and different time periods (McDowell et al. 2006), which in addition is significant in person's self-categorization.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Theoretical justification of the Doctoral thesis is based on approach of practice theory, which is considered to be a branch of culture theory in relation with Bourdieu and Giddens' theories on relations between structures and individuals, but for data acquisition and analysis, methodology of the grounded theory has been used (Glaser & Strauss 1967). Implementation of social and consumption practices can be found out basing on interviews or observations, therefore the qualitative method was chosen for conducting empiric studies. The data, acquired in in-depth semi-structured interviews, has been added by analysis of photos taken in the field study, as well as by results of previously carried out quantitative study – telephone interviews. All data was qualitatively analysed with mixed study method.

4.1. Use of the Grounded Theory

The aim of the qualitative analysis is to assess the qualitative content analysis, applied in order to analyse narrations and different texts (records of interviews, observations and cases, as well as life stories). Strategies of the grounded theory methodology encourage faster analytical reasoning and maintain the researcher in interactive relations with data and emerging analysis, states K. Charmaz, since the grounded theory methodology stresses the process of analysis and the development of theoretical categories rather than focuses on research results only (Charmaz 2008). The research methodology that promotes emergent results serves for studies of such issues which raise understanding of social world or its different aspects at higher level. New phenomena in society require application of research methods with creative approach to data analysis, in order one can perceive and analyse them, consider S. Hesse-Biber and P. Leavy (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2008: 4). Such approach was also justified by Doctoral thesis topic on new social and consumption practices in daily life in

post-socialistic milieu and challenges related with them. Newly emerged research topics enable us to understand the nature of consumption, as individuals depict the appearance of something new through meanings and images, which are significant in consumer culture.

Strategies of grounded theory methodology enable one to look deeper: comparing data to discover hindering moments in theory development, to enrich the emerged ideas and form categories from data analysis. The approach, characteristic to this theory in the process of data collection and analysis, which is related to returning back to already existing data and acquisition of new data, increases the level of new discoveries in analysis (Charmaz 2008). The research confirmed Strauss' and Corbin's conclusions on emerged topic and equal worth of researcher's personal experience in the study, as this is the preliminary knowledge which has enabled the researcher to see new, significant problems, for example, respondents' avoidance of relations with neighbours, noticed during the interviews. In the process of data procession, several previous conclusions had to be overcome, for example, new suburban residents *green thinking* in relation with the environment.

In-depth semi-structured interview was chosen for acquisition of data, since this type of interview helps to advance the respondent deeper into the problem to be studied. A semi-structured interview as a research method enables the researcher to understand the subject better and to enlighten more the topics that have emerged in the course of the study. The initial research direction of the Doctoral thesis was more related to evaluation of changes in the suburban environment in relation with the new politically supported consumption processes. However first interviews with new private house owners directed the research course into deeper analysis of consumption practices. The conclusion was made that individuals' experience and involvement in consumption practices more truly reveal post-socialistic consumption models than evaluation of impact of neo-liberal politics only.

Respondents' narration during the interviews within the study included both individual's need to share their personal problems, describing how crisis situations were or were not overcome, and desire to create a positive self-image, but more critical image of other family members. In the stories about their social practices and experience, the respondents reveal how they evaluate achievements, how they overcome troubles, explain success and losses. That is the area where 'people from aside' are usually not let in.

First interviews within the study led to the conclusion that not always the respondents can objectively describe their house milieu or public space outside the house therefore it was decided to ask permission, during visiting the private houses, to take photos of the house environment and the territory around. The photos were taken during the house visits as well as during special visits in the new construction sites in Pierīga. The visual material makes it possible to judge on new construction practices in suburban zone, as well as on the style and post-socialism environment. Photos of house owners and dwellers were not taken deliberately to ensure anonymity of the respondents involved. In the study, 250 photos were taken. Using digital camera, photographic study was carried out in the course of more than one year, from May, 2011 till August, 2012. Part of the photos, taken in the field study, characterizes private houses as consumption practice *thing*, revealing respondents' taste and possibilities of *dream house* realisation. Such pictures are subject-produced images and fix the family's daily life situation in concrete time and place. The visual material gives possibility of having a look in the performance of house realization practice and sites of *daily life rituals*, as, for example, a kitchen is the place where *eating ritual* takes place. But photos which show Pierīga environment are documentary and the situations, seen in them, are understandable mainly in a wider context, as the context is significant, for example, describing abandoned new constructions, seen in the photos, or clusters of private houses, built in swampy meadows. Obtaining of photos was carried out in the context

of observation. The aim of observation is to understand respondent's actions and their sense. For example, the villages built in the meadows of Pierīga got the nickname "meadow villages", which actually is a figurative description, if the true characterization of this construction practice is unfamiliar. In the study interviews, the respondents, who had acquired their houses in places with bad infrastructure, speak about it evasively, without giving a more detailed description of the place, therefore it is the description of photos which helps to understand "meadow village" context precisely. Methods of visual study up to now have been little applied in sociologic studies, although they expand the range of methods in material analysis, and, of course, presentation possibilities (Kalniņa 2010).

4.2. Criteria for the Selection of Respondents and Social Milieu Characteristic

In Latvia, mainly outskirts of the capital have developed as a suburb from the point of view of classical urban theories. In this study, the suburb *Pierīga* means the territory of the former Riga district which as the second level municipality was reorganised after administratively territorial reform in 2009, its territory is 3058 km². It is comprised by 17 regions with around 180 000 inhabitants: Ādaži, Babīte, Baldone, Carnikava, Garkalne, Inčukalns, Krimulda, Ķekava, Mālpils, Mārupe, Olaine, Ropaži, Salaspils, Saulkrasti, Sēja, Sigulda, Stopiņi. Active construction of new houses in Pierīga started around 2000, when land market developed rapidly. As developers of construction were guided by market demand mainly, but local municipalities, designing plans for territory construction, predicted enormous increase in new construction, appeared scattered construction territories and the so called *meadow villages* that do not have common planning and infrastructure. In the last decade number of population in Pierīga has grown by 21% and it is comprised by both people from the capital and those from other regions of the country who have moved

here. Influx of inhabitants has occurred in relation with construction of new houses, which has been promoted by easily accessible mortgages in the last decade. According to data from LR Central Statistics Bureau, for example, in 2007 of all living houses built in Latvia 37% were built in Pierīga.

The author of the Doctoral thesis in 2009 made up an analytical publication on Pierīga “Ideas for better life in Pierīga”. In relation with this project research centre *SKDS* study was conducted “Attitude to life in own municipality: telephone survey of Riga region inhabitants”, in which the author of the Doctoral thesis participated as well. It was a study on satisfaction of Riga district inhabitants with their life in 23 Pierīga municipalities shortly before the administratively territorial reform. In the framework of the study in 2009 in each of the 23 Pierīga municipalities 50 inhabitants were chosen at random for telephone inquiry. The survey studied satisfaction of the inhabitants with life in their municipality, evaluation of the municipality, awareness of the municipality, opinions on availability of services in the living place after implementation of the administratively territorial reform, as well as their belonging to the living place. These data of the quantitative study has been used also as addition to the qualitative data design in this dissertation.

The objective of the Doctoral thesis is to analyse the post-socialism consumption practice of owning a suburban private house and the factors that affect it.

Thereby, according to the aim, consumption practices of the new middle stratum in post-socialism have been analysed, as well as the effect of post-socialistic understanding of *normality*, motivation related to it, emotions and socially economic aspect of suburban milieu.

For the qualitative part of the study the author interviewed Pierīga inhabitants from May 2011 till July, 2012, obtaining 26 in-depth semi-structured interviews. Communicating with both local municipalities and addressing the possible respondents in social network, Pierīga inhabitants were

sought and included in the study, who had involved in a wide-scale private consumption practice, realizing their desire for a private house. A significant criterion for selection of respondents was the acquired house in Pierīga in the last decade with the help of mortgage. Mortgage was a significant criterion as Pierīga suburbanisation developed mainly in relation with easily accessible credits, which for many families in situation of the economic crisis and unemployment significantly worsened living conditions. In selection of respondents it was important to include multiform consumption practice experience, involving maximum different cases, as the practice is affected by gender, age, situation in the family, the chosen living place, volume of house realisation, previous experience in managing a real estate. Thus a strategy of maximum comparison has been used, which allowed finding out as many as possible differences. According to Warde, social practices are internally different, the same as persons in different situations perform the same activity differently (Warde 2005:145). For this purpose in the research was included a respondent, presently living in suburb Syke of Bremen (Germany), who 20 years ago moved to Germany, participated there in private house realization practice, having the previous experience in consumption practice in Pierīga.

In Pierīga, the interviewed persons' private house area is from 140 m² up to 460 m², house-hold plot from 900 m² to 4000 m², indebtedness from 50 to 800 euros per month. It was important to reach confidence between a respondent and an interviewer, because unsuccessful consumption practice for several respondents resulted in both loss of the property and breakdown of the family. A semi-structured interview was comprised by 35 basic questions. During the interviews the respondents were asked about data characterizing the real estate, emphasizing consumption amount and effect on daily life. Each conversation took for about 2.5 hours. Names of the all interviewed persons in the study have been changed. All interviews were digitally recorded and textually decoded. Detailed characteristics of the respondents, their status in the

family and description of the private house as a real estate, not comparing it with Land Register data, have been included Appendix 2 of this Doctoral thesis.

The research involved 15 households, 7 of which were represented by 1 respondent and from 8 households 2 to 4 respondents were interviewed. At the moment of the interview 2 respondents had their house alienated by credit establishment due to unpaid credit, and the respondents were living in temporary settlements. Two respondents had implemented their houses being in legally free person's status (divorced), but 1 respondent at the time of the interview had started divorce process. Age of the interviewed persons was from 32 to 63; two young people at the age of 17 and 19, who lived with their parents in the new private houses, also participated in the interview. Approach of the grounded theory does not foresee previously determined selection amount, as number of respondents is affected by their openness and ability to communicate on the study subject. The interviewed persons were very positive about possibility of participating in the investigation and were aware of significance of the theme for both their life and that of the state.

In the initial data analysis, one category came out as the important one – a private house as an emotional and vital need, which justifies emotional character of consumption. Further data analysis revealed a significant category of real estate consumption – environment outside the house borders. Therefore, analyzing already existing data, new research themes came out, which had to be provided with new data, so interviews with 6 local municipality deputies were also included in the research. The official of Riga Planning Region was also interviewed in order to reveal more objectively the role of the local power in Pierīga development, as development plans of regions were designed in cooperation with Riga Planning Region.

4.3. Data analysis methods

The emergent process of the grounded theory in data analysis starts with data coding. In this research, as is characteristic to the grounded theory, coding was started at the beginning of the investigation, continuing addition of new data and checking of the codes in relation with the acquired data, thus the data advances coding. Initial coding was done comparing episodes and coding” line-by-line”, which directs the researcher into depth of the phenomenon, as considers Charmaz (2006). Mixed coding was used – part of the text was coded according to “case by case” principle, but parts of interview texts, in which the respondents had emotionally and personally revealed their emotional experience in consumption practices, were coded “line-by-line”, particularly stressing respondents’ expressions characterising new consumption practices. First codes related to possibilities of acquisition of a house after breakdown of socialism in Latvia and creation of feeling home. Further on a house appeared as an emotional desire and the mortgage as a threat. Coding included a text describing visual data as well. Further coding process related to selection of the coded data. Strauss and Corbin suggest a specific technique for coding in three levels. In the early coding level the characteristic qualities and dimensions of the text fragments should be identified, which helps to arrange codes in hierarchy, thinking that all significant parts of the text have been coded and all questions answered. Hierarchy helps to include a great number of codes in analysis and better reveal their relations (Strauss & Corbin 1998). At the second level, theoretical coding is performed, seeking relation between codes. After that categories are expressed in more general categories, which are able to include the previously included categories as well (Kropļiņš & Raščevska 2004). In this approach a researcher collects data in order to study a phenomenon, identifies categories, which only defines after a repeated revision of the collected data and checking of new data, and then in further process, as it

is characterized by Gleiser and Strauss, category saturation occurs. Then the link is sought between more general categories or notions, and theory is defined on these relations.

In the third level coding one or several central categories are determined. Applying three level coding to the present study, it was possible to analyse gradually and purposefully the text material obtained during the interviews and develop a theory in relation with the grounded theory approach. Initially two categories appeared to be as the central ones (“Private house as an emotional and vital necessity” and “Relation between a house and a family”). Comparing the codes and then categories, as well as doing saturation, “Nexus of *normality* comprehension and memory – motivation of house implementation” was advanced as the core category, which justified the theory on teleoaffective dimension of consumption practices. Teleoaffective, which leads human activity, depends on living conditions, which develop in close link with individual’s actions (Schatzki 1997: 302). The rest of the categories developed in relation with the central one.

Mixed-method research is characterised as models for data obtaining and analysis, combining quantitative and qualitative data, which allows better understanding of the research problem (Plano Clark, Creswell et al. 2008:364). Combination of methods in research can cause more assuring evaluation of the phenomenon to be studied, since it combines statistics results with narrations or quotations and thus can address bigger audience. Deep interviews and surveys can ensure different view on human understanding in relation with separate events or condition of things, and then different evaluation can be developed with data obtained in different approach (Irwin 2008).

The method applied in this Doctoral thesis has not been used in sociological research in Latvia up to now – it is a qualitative study that combines analysis of semi-structured interviews with the image as a visual research method, and their analysis. Then all the obtained qualitative data and

quantitative data obtained in Pierīga survey have been interpreted with the combined research method, applying the *triangulation* design. Such approach allows more profound understanding of the existing processes in both families of Pierīga new houses and in suburban zone. Data, obtained from the interviews, on ecologic situation in Pierīga, on physical safety in the new detached houses, and on cooperation with the local power were different when respondents' statements were compared, as well as when the quantitative data were compared. The mixed-method research *triangulation* design for integration of different data groups is suitable in the situations when for data of one type is planned a supporting, secondary place in the study (Plano Clark et al. 2008: 374). *Triangulation* design occurs when the researcher uses concurrent timing to implement the quantitative and qualitative strands during the same phase of the research process. In the following data of one type are included in data of other type in order to improve the design of the primary data and then to interpret it further. In this Doctoral thesis, both, the qualitative data, obtained and analysed for this study, and quantitative data which was obtained and analysed previously as a separate study and is not resulting from the qualitative data, were consolidated. Together with data, acquired in the interviews, textual descriptions of the photos were also coded, and further on in the qualitative study data, the quantitative study results were included to supplement design of the qualitative data.

5. REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

Theoretical approach in practice research suggests doing research in several dimensions. In this study, first dimension of private house implementation practice is related with increase or decrease in practice performers, understanding how and why people participate and how much time and what resources they devote to the practice. The second dimension refers to the spread of the practice and differentiation of its implementation process. The third analytical dimension refers to confidence of practice participants, satisfaction or disappointment in the practice. Participation structure can include a small number of dedicated participants, as well as a great number of accidental practice participants. Impact of different structures can also be evaluated.

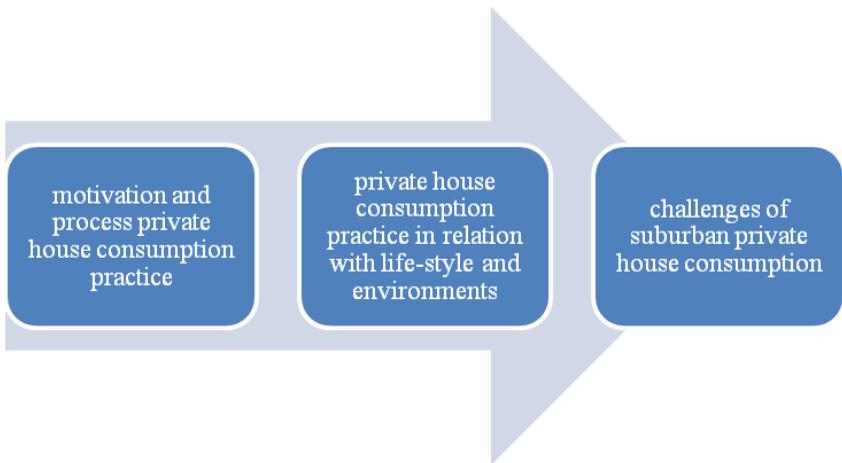


Fig. 5.1. Three dimension promotions of practice study. Model developed by the author in accordance with Southerton's approach (Southerton et al. 2012)

Relating three dimensions of house consumption practice study with interpretation of data obtained using mixed methods research, categories characteristic to each dimension appear. Categories: *Nexus of normality*

comprehension and memories; Home feeling, evolved in house building practices; A house – possibility for family consolidation; Creation of the environment for home – analyze a private house as the provider of better life, allowing understanding of how? and why? people involve in house consumption practice, at the same time conceptualizing area characteristic to the practice – daily life. Several other categories: Changed lifestyle; Family models of new private houses and gender socialization; Belonging to the environment outside the house – appear in relation with other dimension – practice implementation, which changes lifestyle and social relations. Challenges, created by consumption practice, in their turn, reveal themselves in categories: Relation between the ‘site’ and politics; Debt – the companion of consumer culture; House implementation – satisfaction or disappointment. In these categories private house consumption is studied in relation with the third dimension – satisfaction or disappointment of practice participants and changes in practice expansion.

5.1. Motivation and Process of Private House Consumption Practice

According to contemporary Western understanding a house is a physical structure or a place of residence as a building, flat, institution or trailer. That is a place where space and time are controlled and structured functionally, economically, aesthetically, and morally, family’s or a separate individual’s practices are implemented (Giddens 1999; Mallett 2004: 66).

Nexus of normality comprehension and memory – motivation of house implementation. House function realizes in complicated and sometimes controversial social and cultural relations with other people, family, place, space and things, as stated by Shelly Mallett. Socialistic consumption was comprised by state developed and forced public morals and regulation of the most part of private life (Patico & Caldwell 2002:288), thus home was

idealized as an autonomous place and a shelter from state obtrusion and abnormal social conditions. As one of the respondents considers:

Since the end of the soviet system any Latvian has tried to get out of those multi-flat cages. Me, too. I had a dream – a family house. It, possibly, was a matter of prestige. In my opinion it has always been in our nation – to live in one’s own house. (Rolands)

Individuals are never separated from their past. The borderline between the past and present is a transition period during which boundaries of reasoning, self-understanding and behavior have become more compliant, opening the road to something new (Czepczyński 2010). Desire to acquire a private house and satisfaction about its existence is explained by several respondents as being related to past emotions and possibilities of new life, although memories cannot be a safe measure, since often they are nostalgic desire for something that could have been the ideal in the past. Memories on parents’ or grandparents’ houses often form the image of *a dream house*. But it can also be a desire to withdraw from a well-known, related to the childhood, environment if it had not been lovely and protecting. Relations between the house and memories are complicated and vague, and significance of house experience and memories should be evaluated in different stages of life in relation with the kin and family. In the coding of interview texts, several topics appeared whose interrelations pointed at motivation for house realization. One of the topics was “*what is suburb – countryside or a city?*” Differences in feelings about a suburb as a living place allow individuals to realize private house consumption with different emotional and logic action teleoaffective in practice realization. Several respondents relate private house in suburb with the *countryside*, but others stress that they do not want to live *in the countryside* and therefore consume a house in the suburb. Stereotypes about the countryside and a city are multidimensional and include requirements to the environment, construction,

availability of resources, costs of economic activities, life quality, contacts between individuals, values and possibilities (Küle 2008)

Home feeling, evolved in house building practices. According to Woodward a house as an *thing* and home style go beyond material and aesthetic area, giving consumption objects a moral strength whose boundaries are determined and maintained by the consumer.

„I wanted my house to be different from others so that everything was natural, from natural materials. The fachwerk that we wanted turned out with high ceiling. There is also the attic of about 100 square metres which were not used. It was built by restorers, cost estimates were growing day by day, also prices. We wanted a big house, it turned out even bigger, 280 m² with the garage.“
(Maira)

Choice of materials used for construction also expands boundaries, as owners prefer natural materials, for example, timber, stone plates, reed roofs, opposite to mass production that was used in construction in socialism time. With breakdown of socialism, changes in production of construction materials created an abyss between houses built by their owners by themselves and those built by building companies in the “new times”. Several respondents tell that they had not wanted to participate in the house building process and delegated the process to building companies or acquired already built house in the village with new construction. Such private house consumers often choose ready house models which do not have smart style or any special requirements for house construction.



Fig. 5.2 –5.3. Pierīga private houses characteristic to the new middle social class style.

Construction of suburban houses characterizes by both several store houses and one - store houses. How the house fits in the surrounding landscape has not always been important to the owner.

House – possibilities for consolidating family. A lot of families moved to their *dream house* little by little, at first acquiring the land for construction, then coping with problems, implemented house construction.

We took first 10 thousands and put the foundation, got water, boring well and electricity, then we mortgaged the land with the foundation and got the next sum, the other credit, they gave us about 33 thousand euros and then we built the house..... (Marija)

The idea of house acquisition often relates with establishment of a new family. Individuals' biographies and political system change consumptions on house implementation practices, and the development of a settlement can be as well started at middle age. In socialistic country, acquisition of a separate dwelling place at middle age was typical. In post-socialism as well, a lot of families and individuals realize their *dream* of having their own house close to the retirement. In the study, one of the respondents had acquired a house being close to the retirement, in addition, being "a free man" as a divorced person.

The house consolidates, if there is a family. Also one person can be “consolidated”- you know every corner, how everything was built how much soil has been moved, how the surroundings were developed. (Matīss)

Thus a house becomes a testimony of gender-sociality, in this case masculinity, and social status. In addition, as a social practice house implementation gives enormous moral satisfaction and pleasure about the performance. Several respondents stress that nothing keeps family, also extended one, together more than construction done together, and there is no better possibility of developing different technical skills as to construct by themselves. House owners learn to install, to repair electricity, master plumber’s work.

Post-socialism consumption offered to families a new form of interrelations – shared credits. Credits are shared by parents and their adult children, forming almost inseparable links between the members of extended family. In the families having experienced socialism, the link with the *house* develops emotional rather than affected by practical, a lot of biographical and political aspects. Sometimes human activity is not well coordinated with conditions, and it is affected by emotions and moods, which do not always allow them to be successful in the concrete practice.

Creation of the environment for home. To define the essence of home, focussing on practice, means to understand how people in different ways develop and feel home not what they think of the house (Ingold 2000). Here relations between individuals and objects appear in accordance with understanding and experience, which in the daily life context develop a dwelling place into “home” (Despres 1991: 101). These processes of contemporary life include certain activities (arrangement of the house, care), also seasonal (garden works) and cyclic events (different festivities). In the arrangement of new suburban houses style differences are determined by understanding of values and taste based on the previous family experience.

Younger owners try to arrange their houses more *modern*, using metal, glass, flagstones on the floor, furniture also characterizes with functional and laconic features. In middle-aged families one can see nostalgia for objects related to history and memories. To arrange the living place means to make long-term decisions and it is not simple at all, as acquisition of consumption goods often involves disappointment, since “the dream about a house” is based on the beautiful, comfortable and suitable. Respondents’ answers can almost precisely be divided into two approaches to acquisition of household goods: marked austerity and doubts on the chosen subject or high level consumption expectations and their realization. Family members are connected with common daily consumption practices and usually understand “practical logic” similarly. Theoretically, some edges of *habitus* create the sense of the practical while other edges for the same *habitus* come from other area and can become the leading ones. So several dwellers of the new private houses in their arrangement apply a strategy in which they combine the existing household subjects with some exclusive subjects, referring to a specific life philosophy. Consumers describe their *desires* with different metaphors and thus motivation comes out. In addition, metaphors can justify *desires* making perceive them as *needs*.

...I'd like to live in a palace. I'd like luxury, a big space, I want that somebody serves me, a maid at home, a gardener. (Marija)

Accept of the phenomenon of desires differs essentially from logic and utilitarian behaviour of consumers. These fantasies about self -“what I could be”- give nice feelings by themselves. The internal side of the house remains a secret for an accidental passer-by. However objects inside the house, including a style or taste, more possess the role public status, states Woodward. They serve for the development of family relations or self-respect. Some respondents recognized that entering anybody’s home for the first time, they observe whether the dwellers buy mass production or at least try to obtain something

more valuable. It is explained by conspicuous nature of consumption which promotes competition in consumption.

5.2. Interaction between Private House Consumption and the Lifestyle

A house should be managed, land cultivated as well as salaried work should be done, to which suburban residents commute every day by their cars, on the way taking their children to kindergarten or school, on the way back buying food and other goods.

Lifestyle: own land – own house – own car. The lifestyle *land – house – car* (Riddell 2004: 195) establishes as the dominating in the suburb. Acquisition of the land, a private house, different technological devices for home and garden care, driving a car – all that overtake suburban life, consumption patterns, reasoning. Lifestyle changes, however those new private house residents who formerly lived in a city flat, cannot change their habits and home life practices so easily.

There is a lot of land. At work we spend a hard day, when we come back we don't want to do anything. It would be good to have a gardener to put in order everything here, we don't have aptitude for that. (Juris)

Garden works are enthusiastically discussed by several respondents, as it is a new experience to observe how a couple of beds grow and become green. None of the interviewed families has so far planned to use the land for production of food. Gardens are cultivated for children to get acquainted with processes in the nature. Cultivation of gardens and construction of greenhouses appear as a new social practice that gives satisfaction. Everybody can gain satisfaction from any practice they are involved in (Warde 2005: 148), and it is not important which place the practice takes in the prestige hierarchy.

We are old fools, others go to the seaside, we only talk about the house. I like grubbing about beds. (Līga)

In the territories of houses whose owners are successfully developing consumption practice, gradually green lawn is tended, gardening enterprises are organised or they themselves grow decorative plants and flowers, some of them have fountains and ponds. In the gardens social enterprises are organised, promoting communication in the middle level of society.

Life in the suburb introduces a range of changes in the lifestyle in relation with access to food-stores, medical services, schools and kindergartens. It requires coordination of life organisation in the family. Purchase of food for many Pierīga residents is more related with supermarkets in Riga. A significant service, affecting life in the suburb, is the possibility of getting medical aid. Telephone interviews with the residents show that health care in the dwelling place is different in each region. Therefore we cannot base on several respondents' opinion only, since there is a possibility that new private houses have not been built in the territory of historical villages and thus it is problematic to receive services ensured by the local municipality. Telephone interviews show that possibilities of visiting the family doctor are best in Sigulda district (73%) and Sēja district (71%), where new housing areas has not spread so much. Access to school and kindergarten is essential in the changed lifestyle in the suburb.

The school is about 15 km far, we take children by car. When they grow up, they will possibly have their own cars or the eldest brother will take them. (Rolands)

Respondents tell about their individual experience, which reveals confidence basically in themselves or close relatives to take children to schools or kindergartens.

Patterns of the new private house families and gender socialization.

In Western context young people achieve time when they leave the family house. Leaving home due to starting independent life is determined by culture and history. Stories of the respondents, involved in the study, about house

implementation practice reveal family relations, significantly affected by acquisition of the house, if adult children's family unites with parents' family. Implementation of a private house with severe financial obligations can involve also an expanded family. The interviews revealed strategies used by the respondents in order to adjust to consumption situation based on mortgage – to live in an expanded family, to increase work load, to accept financial support from parents, including the retired ones.

Our granny helps us, she works also as a baby-sitter. She is retired, but still works to give money for the mortgage. Husband works in several places so that he could earn more. He works without holidays. One should have good relationships to overcome all that. (Liene)

Child status in middle-class families is getting more and more significant showing changing of mental environment of home together with the modern design of the house. It requires also a new consumption in relation with the pattern *living – consuming – thinking*, which, according to Malett's opinion, is being developed increasingly involving children's needs. Emphasizing the changed attitude to children and specific child home environment, still disputable is the understanding of home and gender in relation with work, consumption, home space, a house as property and status proof. In the development of home one can observe impact of gender and relations on house design, interior and technologies. Although the house for a man is the base of his status, the job and other activities in public space provide the man with alternative and significant identities. However due to unsuccessful social practices or in case of breakdown of the family the man's passive role is blamed. Great scale consumption practices, based on mortgages, are a serious test for family existence.

Belonging to the milieu outside the house. The house, undoubtedly, includes also feeling of belonging to the place. Such phenomena as *sense of place* and *attachment to place* are used to characterize complicated relations

developing between people and the environment, and often they contain a lot of strong emotions which affect human perception of the environment, experience and values. In the second half of the 20th century established a new approach of Western society to belonging to the living place – ‘*elective belonging*’, based on economic considerations thus affected by consumption.

G.Burgmanis and J.Šķilters have concluded that Pierīga residents have not developed yet the link with the environment, and that is revealed by their difficulties to identify “own home”. In Pierīga study it is more difficult to use the category as a “real place”, as the concept *Pierīga region* is comparatively new, in addition, geographically it is very vague. Secondly, Pierīga dwelling territories function mainly as territories for sleeping, in which residents arrive in the evening and leave it early in the morning for work in Riga or other near city (Burgmanis & Šķilters 2011). Thus people develop a superficial link with the environment of the living place.

I wouldn't say that I am the local. I'm more local in my countryside where I have not lived for 20 years now. (Valda)

Surprising is respondents’ alienated attitude to their living place, including coincidences and unusual motivations. Telephone interviews, in their turn, show Pierīga as a very desirable living place, as majority of Pierīga residents are satisfied with their living place – averagely 81% of the respondents would suggest their friends to live there. In this case the quantitative study reveals more general viewpoint on life in Pierīga, but the qualitative study reveals respondents’ personal experience, including difficulties and disappointment. Respondents’ expressions in the qualitative study on available infrastructure in the living place suggest that in many houses in the suburb residents have to reconcile to the lack of household conveniences.

Water is municipal, sewerage our own. No gas. No Lattelecom. These three houses here, the land was owned by one person. They sold the land to the

company that built these houses. The road, leading to our house, is private, we ourselves clean snow in winter, it's real madness. (Liene)

The different provision with infrastructure is, of course, related to the site of the house. The local municipalities, responsibility of design and building companies, as well as whether the house is placed in the territory of a historical village or *meadows* are the factors affecting the infrastructure. In many places of post-socialism suburban zones there are no significant state investments in the infrastructure (no asphalt-paved streets, no centralised water-pipes and sewage).

Living place based cooperation. Places require to people to master getting on with each other and it can be realized only applying certain living practices that base on both confidence and upbringing. Such partner relationships are called “living place based cooperation” (Cheng et al. 2003:87). Respondents of the qualitative study give rather similar opinions on their relationship with neighbours – we do not fight, but neither we seek particular friendship with our neighbours. In evaluation of neighbours one can notice several features: first of all, whether the neighbours are at the same social level, whether a practical cooperation is possible, whether children are friends and it develops communication among adults. Another feature that appears shows that the base of cooperation can be similar private emotional experience.

We don't visit each other. We haven't reached the level at which they feed our dog when we are away. We look for our acquaintances. The surrounding people are of our level, but common intellectual conversations are doubtful. (Aleksis)

If one works all the time and stays among people, on Saturday and Sunday it seems I don't want to see and hear anybody. (Silvija)

When the author of this work was visiting Bremen suburb in Germany, there were several possibilities of participating in the events of several

communities and of observing patterns of neighbour relationship. The events showed that people willingly organize and participate in common activities. Karin from Syke (a Latvian, within 20 years has adjusted herself to the local German environment and even actively organizes enterprises of the local community):

An important thing in Bremen suburb is the local community, each village has it. It organises different societies, for example, sports society in my Syke does great work with boys in their free time, there is also riflemen society, singers and theatre society. Societies are usually established when a problem appears in the community, then unite both well-off people and the poor ones. Neighbours are very important in German suburbs. About four times a year all community come together.

Majority of Pierīga respondents stressed that they do not have feeling of togetherness in the living place, also accidental conversations with neighbours are superficial. Relation with the living place as weak was evaluated also by respondents in the quantitative study. Only 5% of all Pierīga respondents have joined a local nongovernmental organisation, society, association, parish, 5% of the respondents participate in amateur groups.

5.3. Challenges of suburban private house consumption practice

Place is a powerful player in political games. And, possibly, if “living place based cooperation” is weak, political decisions are often made ignoring interests of the residents or the concrete place.

Impact of politics on the development of suburban zones. The countryside – city outskirts are not only geographical areas around the capital, they are territories in which country area experiences changes “as the result of competing combinations of political, economical, social and culture relations” (Kūle 2008:11). All local politicians, involved in the study, stressed that the local power actually was powerless in managing new construction processes in

Pierīga, since everything was determined by land owners, and the local deputies lobbying them.



Fig.5.4. Meadow village in Adaži



Fig.5.5. Landscape degradation

The photos show that house construction has taken place in the former agricultural and forest territories and with the end of construction the landscape has not acquired elements, typical for the place of residence, but, on the contrary, it has been destroyed.

Forest land is transformed to construction coverage, the owner divides it into construction sites and sells them. Only the land. Money in the pocket, and what happens next is not important. So that happens. Then construction starts, no, one owner constructs. Then around like trenches remain, it is the worst that construction is not done in complex. (deputy/Sigulda)

In many places in Pierīga, construction of new houses has been done in clusters, often in meadows, divided into pieces of land, therefore they have got a folk name “meadow villages”, as well as into small villages not having infrastructure and being out of historically dwelt places. The new private house with a post-modern design and domestic technologies in such village is like *heterotopic* (different place) space in post-soviet environment. Desire for *heterotopic* space – according to small world *normality* in a new private house, appeared as a socialistic understanding that unusual goals can be reached with Western standards.

Meadow villages, should be about 20 to 30, in which there are 3 or 4 houses. There, going to the river, was a big meadow. People came and “pressed” us to

divide it into pieces of 0.2 hectares. Thank God, everything stopped, and nothing was started there, there was peat layer. (deputy / Inčukalns)

Landscape is one of the best seen and communicative media, through which thoughts, ideas, feelings, as well as the power and social milieu are presented (Czeczuyński 2010: 67). Entrepreneurship in Pierīga has left clearly seen guidelines of politics in the urban landscape and has created living-place models – clusters of private houses in an expensive land property. Probably, uncertainty about individuals' possible action in conditions of free market and desire to consume did not allow post-socialist countries to foresee and manage this process.

Debt – the companion of consumer culture. Why did they buy houses and want to live in “meadow villages” – was it the desire to belong to the middle class which presents itself with a beautiful house in the suburb? Existing properties were sold or pledged, credits were taken. We live in “debt culture” – at public, private, as well as microeconomics and macroeconomics level. Asceticism, rationality and self-control do not fit in the ideas on a good life in consumer culture. Private house implementation practice of the respondents of the study is related with big mortgage, which, in conditions of economic growth, had not seem to be too burdensome, but with the beginning of economic crisis in 2008 a lot of families experienced heavy financial losses and psychological crises. In the interviews, several respondents recognize that they have taken credits, relying on the state created illusion about future free of problems.

The state created an illusion that everything was going better and better, then people themselves start to believe that things will never be worth. (Liene)

Majority of the respondents in the study gave an affirmative answer to the question whether their decision to take mortgage was affected by general public opinion. Qualitative data suggests inability of the majority of respondents to evaluate by themselves challenges and threats of long-term

mortgage, as the life in socialism did not let them acquire such experience. If in case of decrease in income the borrower cannot pay back the mortgage in time, they have to lose the real estate. People having debts very often are forced to live in the 'grey zone' of economics. At the end of 2011 in Latvia 30.8% of households which had received bank credits, had fallen behind with their repays (LR Central Statistics Bureau). In 2012 around 10% of new private houses in Pierīga were unfinished or due to their owners' inability to repay mortgage have become properties of banks, many of them are not resided in.

House implementation – satisfaction/disappointment in consumption practice. Social and consumption practices often enjoy public attention, and in case of success, individuals perceive it as outer recognition, but practice implementation creates also wellbeing and self-recognition, as recognized by Warde. Evaluation of practice performance often includes respect to the achieved, and that stimulates aspiration to continue practice performance, even if the process seems to have complications. Narrations of the respondents in the study include conclusions on how others have evaluated house implementation. And undoubted is consumers' desire to be admired for their performance and be excelled among other individuals having performed similar practice.

Of course, I wanted to be appreciated by others. I don't have any artistic education, but others said that it came from my inside. They didn't consider us as common people, they thought we were businessmen, a big house (Maira)

Analyzing practices, it is important to study how people understand what practice demands from them (Warde 2005). Consumer culture constructs and directs individuals' emotions to increase consumption potential. Each consumer, of course, can take responsibility for own abilities to manage consumption. Egils' experience shows really hedonic consumption.

I constructed shops, sport halls. Turnover was 3 million a year. About five years everything went smoothly. I could afford more. I bought a jeep, we participated in 5x5 competition. Bought some clothes more, a TV. That 2-room flat became too small. Then, absolutely accidentally, my business partner whom

I have to meet to arrange documents tells that he is building private houses. I say: “Oh, what’s the price? 100 000 euros. Oh! 150m² terraced houses in Rumbula. There, behind the all car parks. When we moved in we found out that near is a factory, which lets out dust, 100 m further on is a dumping ground. Nobody had told about it. (Egīls)

Even unsuccessful consumption practice creates new hopes and consumption desires, as stated also by one of the respondents: “*now we would be ready to start everything anew*”.

People create their home, but not constructing the building, though sometimes they think so. Place of residence is where people live, but feeling of home characterises by how people live.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Empiric studies of daily life practices in Latvia is a new, not yet worked out direction. The main research issue in this study is: what is the motivation of the individuals involved in private house post-socialism consumption practice and how consumption practice occur in Pierīga newly built private houses in the first decade of the new millennium, and what factors affect this practice. Other point that was studied - how the new social practices and lifestyle develop in combination with experience, gained in socialism, and consumption in suburbs, affected by neo-liberal post-socialism. Research interest has been aimed at actions, emotions, “things” and skills of Pierīga residents, involved in social and consumption practices, implementing their dream of a new private house. Great attention in the study was paid to respondents’ conclusions on satisfaction or disappointment gained in private house consumption practice.

Consumer culture creates an active life style, stressing *transformation*, which includes transformation of living space, relations, identity and body. Transformation requires financial investments, creating ‘debt culture’. The basic problem of the research interest – post-socialism consumption – has created serious challenges to owners of the private houses and to suburb environment, as implementation of the consumption often bases rather upon emotions than upon knowledge and experience, and is related with specific neoliberal features, characteristic to post-socialism, in economics, social sphere and development of suburban environment. Therefore, already at the beginning of the study, a conclusion formed that consumption models are more profoundly substantiated by individuals’ motivation to spend, though effect of neoliberal politics is also of importance.

After the break-down of soviet system ended also ‘kolkhoz era’ and the land was regained by their previous legal owners. A lot of them did not want to work in agriculture, and active selling and purchasing of the land started.

Proximity to Rīga and status of suburb determined high price of the land in the suburb Pierīga. Around the year of 2000 in Latvia active work was started by European banks, offering easily accessible mortgages for acquisition of houses and the land. For many people the dream about a new private house became achievable. However financial crisis of 2008-2010 stopped the economic growth, creating big unemployment (even up to 18%) and decrease in salaries averagely by 50%. The new temptation for great consumptions, promoted by neoliberal state policy and optimism stressed by politicians, as well as desire of better situated families to go up the social stratification ladder, did not allow many families to evaluate responsibly the true value of the real estate and personal economic risks. Part of the respondents state: they took mortgage relying on state created illusion about future *without problems* and public sentiments supporting consumption.

The study revealed surprising data on people's attitude to acquisition of their "dream house". The desire to buy a house appears rapidly, and the decision is often made without getting acquainted with the environment surrounding the house, being satisfied with offers from advertisements only. Actually, the dream of the house is consumed. Seeking the *real* house starts, the house which could help to maintain self-respect and correspond to the *green thinking* as well as would satisfy desire to materialize image of the house idealized in memories. Private house consumption often bases upon family experience, memories or develops as status consumption, affecting significantly consumption nature. Studies of consumption practices enable us to understand family desires and strategies for improvement of their living conditions. Data obtained in the study suggest that the mortgage obligations related to the private house are the reason for formation of extended family households, but in narrations about such living together disappointment appears. Great consumption practices usually envisage financial investments, mainly ensured

by mortgage, which includes risk of repaying, and can affect both daily life of the family and economics of all country.

In the Doctoral Thesis, private house implementation has been analyzed as a symbolic practice model, which combines different practices and separate, often unique, actions and usual expenses (Reckwitz 2002). To determine the life area characteristic to certain practice, as well as connection with institutions and political power, in the research process private house consumption practice has been generalised as daily life practice (Southerton et al. 2012). Daily consumption is a phenomenon affected by emotions, whose nature becomes particularly complicated and unpredictable in post-socialism society. In the theoretical part it is emphasized that practice develops as the link between organised actions. And one of the components of this link is teleoaffective structure which is explained by adapts of practice theory approach as purposeful hierarchy of action, to achieve the expected practice result (Schatzki 2012:16). Teleoaffective (emotional and logical purposefulness) of private house consumption, analysed in the study, is comprised by (1) **change of political system** – post-socialistic understanding of *normal* life, memories and opportunities of the private life, restricted by socialism; (2) **daily life practices** – development of home environment, life style in a suburb; (3) **social relations** – private house family models and new relations with neighbours, as well as unusual (4) **financial situation** – regular mortgage payments, regardless stability of the family budget.

1. Research in private house consumption practice in suburb is included into three dimensions. The first dimension *Motivation and process of consumption of suburban private house* allows finding out *how? & why?* people involve in the practice. The second dimension *Interaction of suburban private house consumption and lifestyle* directs the study of differences in practice distribution and realization process in relation with the lifestyle. The third dimension *Challenges of suburban private house*

consumption practices finds out satisfaction or disappointment of practice participants, implementing private house consumption in suburban environment.

2. In the analysis – *Nexus of 'normality' comprehension and memory as the motivation for house implementation* – appeared to be the central category, revealing how, in the borderline between the past and present, boundaries of reasoning, values and behaviour change.
3. In the result of the second level coding of the texts several significant categories appeared: *Home feeling, evolved in house building practices*; *House – the possibility for family consolidation* and *Creation of the environment for home*. *Promotion of welfare* marks out as a social process.
4. In the theoretical coding, the link between above mentioned categories and the categories which analyse changed lifestyle, connection with the milieu outside the house and challenges created by consumption appeared.
5. In the category *Home feeling, evolved in house building practices*, 'house' appeared to be both building and togetherness of the family. The new suburban houses with building materials and construction methods demonstrate belonging to more well-off social level, and this is common involvement in house construction practice which powerfully keeps the family together.
6. In the course of analysis developed the relation between categories *House – possibility of family consolidation* and *Creation of the environment for home*. Physical existence of the house, its site, size, and architecture affect and develop different models of family relations and cooperation. Experiencing house implementation practice, experience "to be at home" appears. In this understanding *a house* is more existence, in which its residents focus on the development of house environment and in which the respondents feel themselves and their near relations. This

practice includes routine activities (tidying), seasonal events (garden works), and cyclic events (different festivities).

7. Analyzing connection between a house and a family, it turns out that family patterns of Pierīga private houses not always correspond to the viewpoint accepted in the Western context, namely, that young people at certain time in their life leave the family house. The study reveals expanded households, but in the narrations about such living together appears disappointment.
8. Speaking about activities, performed in a certain family relations context and which either support or disprove certain ideas on gender socialization, interview analysis shows that, generally, all issues of house arrangement and tidying it up are solved together. In women's narrations, their role in house arrangement is more emphasized, and the strategy *we ourselves develop our living environment* is put forward.
9. The attitude towards the site, expressed in the interviews, turns out in the category *Belonging to the milieu outside the house*. Pierīga private house owners' belonging to the site strictly associates with their own house. Surprisingly little interest is shown about the events in the near surroundings. Also strategy *living place based cooperation* is weakly expressed, since the respondents show avoiding stronger relations with their neighbours, as well as lack of interest in the local events and the local power. Low level attachment to the living place is revealed by the survey among Pierīga residents as well.
10. Post-socialism suburb has its specific feature – in many places clusters of new private houses have not been constructed in historically developed villages, but in territories changed by land transformation (in the former agricultural and forest lands), creating unrelated environment and space experience, which has been tried to characterize with the notion *heterotopia*. In this way is expressed also post-socialistic desire for

normality in the small world – a modern private house – even in unarranged or destroyed environment.

11. With breakdown of socialism the local municipalities increased their power in planning of city and suburban zones, however they dealt with detailed planning of small pieces of the land rather than with versatile strategy for the use of the land and organized construction. In cases of bankruptcy of construction investors, complicated problems appear – who will take care of the infrastructure and roads of a new, often partly built, village. These clusters of houses are a problem for municipalities, as should be provided with the local transport and other services.
12. The study shows how the individuals “become professionals” in the practice and develop understanding required by high level consumption. The respondents recognized that together with insufficient knowledge in consumption practice of real estate there was also shortness of discussions and considerations on the decisions in families. In the study the respondents reveal that disappointment by itself can promote slightly more realistic evaluation, even healthy scepticism about consumption experience, thus lessening the gap between fantasy and reality, nevertheless disposing to renewed house implementation practice if the previous house was lost. Survey of the residents suggests that Pierīga is a desirable living place.

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