

Leisure consumption: the "grease" to keep economic growth continuing?

Presentation during session 6 "Eco-philosophy and critical realism" at the 14th Annual Conference of the International Association of Critical Realism (IACR): "A world in profound change – Welfare and Nature in Crisis. Interdisciplinary Understanding of Reality in an Age of Global Capitalism"

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Outline of presentation

- **A controversial issue**
- **Some introductory theoretical reflections**
- **The projects**
- **The results**
- **Discussions and conclusions**

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To question the sustainability of Norwegians and their outdoor recreation activity is controversial!

forskning.no 05. september 2011

Hovedkategorier kultur samfunn helse jord og skog miljø te

Finn fram bakgrunn meninger forskeren forteller spør en forsker

Det enkle livet i luksus

Nordmenn mener friluftsliv handler om gode og miljøriktige verdier, og derfor er bra per definisjon. Sannheten er at friluftsfolket er slappe forbrukere som velger lite miljøvennlige løsninger både på hytta, i båten og i skogen.

Tom Erik Øikland
Journalist

Lørdag 03. september 2011
kl. 09:00

I samarbeid med Norges forskningsråd

An article on www.forskning.no about the project to be presented in today's presentation, published three days ago, has already resulted in 21 comments, some of them quit "angry"!

I de ca 4 årene jeg bodde på Costa Verde-kysten i Brasil møtte ikke en eneste nordmann, eller hørte et annet språk en brasiliansk..Ikke før jeg kom opp til Rio eller opp på høysletten og Sao Paulo, hørte jeg andre tungemål. Et annet alternativ var å flyge opp til Natal...Der ravelte fulle nordmenn rundt...

I Brasil er det bare helt unikt... og jeg har bare beskrevet en kystlinje på ca 600 km av til sammen over 6000 km hvite sandstrender i landet....Andre steder i Brasil har den samme luksusen, bare ikke i de samme mengdene....

Upassende?

Hva med telt?

Skrivet av Øyvind, 2011-09-03 08:01:08

Det mest miljøvennlige friluftslivet er naturligvis å bruke telt. Men nå ligger det ei hytte på hver eneste odde hvor det tidligere var flotte teltplasser, og vi tellere blir fortrent ut i svarteste granskauen. Når jeg padlet Dalslands kanal i Sverige la jeg merke til at hyttene lå godt tilskuddet fra sjøene, de var nesten ikke å få øye på fra vannkanten, og alle de flotte øddene og vikene var åpne for bruk for ALLE, og var IKKE okkupert av GRÅDIGE hytteiere!!!!

Sannheten er at Nordmenn har blitt en gjeng med grådige konsumenter! Se den fantastiske BBC-serien The Century of Self, som avslører det moderne konsumentmenneskets tragedie:

<http://permaliv.blogspot.com/2011/08/century-of-self.html>

Upassende?

Vilje

Skrivet av Aziz Shenk, 2011-09-03 07:50:38

Det er bare snakk om viljen til nordmenn. Hvis de villige til å gjøre endringer for å gjøre for å få friluftslivet mer bærekraftig er det bare å begynne, fordi det er ingen som står i veien. Jeg håper i fremtiden nordmenn er villig til ofre mer for natur og miljø, fordi her trengs det å gjøre noen endringer. Det forbruket vi har i dag er langt over vårt behov.

Upassende?

Feil

Skrivet av Ørjan, 2011-09-03 07:26:04

Source: <http://www.forskning.no/artikler/2011/august/296556>

- About Vestlandsforskning
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Leisure consumption - an outsider issue?

- **A “non-policy-issue”**
 - Policy-making as well as NGOs focus on the production side of society
- **A “non-research-issue”**
 - Research on sustainable development focus on production processes
 - Research on consumption and environment focus rarely on everyday consumption
- **Part of the problem**
 - Leisure consumption in rich industrialised countries are “exploding”
- **Part of the solution**
 - Making leisure consumption as an arena for learning more environmentally friendly consumption patterns to be adopted within everyday consumption

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Background

- **Two projects**
 - Project 1 (2005-07): A quantitative assessment of the direct and indirect energy-use of all categories of leisure consumption by Norwegians
 - Project 2 (2008-10): A qualitative study of the main drivers of changes in leisure consumption within cases of outdoor recreation activities
- **Research institutions**
 - Western Norway Research Institute (project leader)
 - The National Institute for Consumer Research (SIFO)
 - The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU)
- **Interdisciplinary research**
 - Many different research disciplines present in the research group
 - Includes a combination of qualitative and quantitative data
 - The main conclusion drawn in the project is not done within one of the represented research disciplines, but tried to do my means of an interdisciplinary approach

Project 1 (on leisure consumption on general)

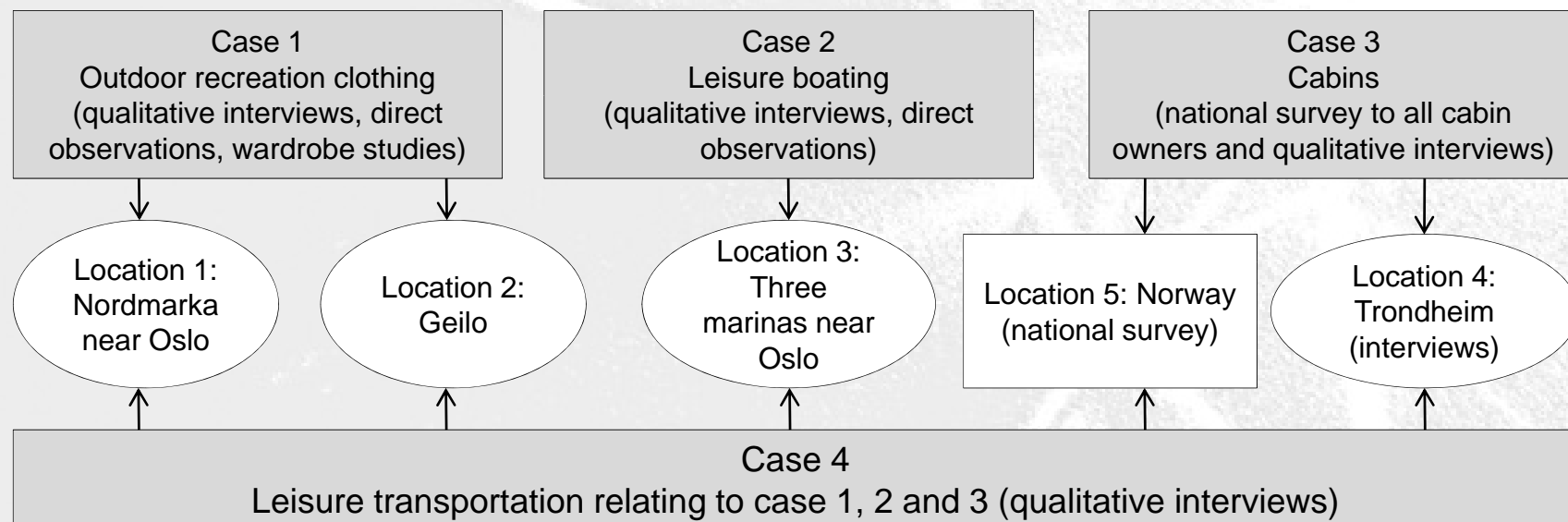
- **Research questions**

1. How can we categorize leisure consumption?
2. What is the total impact of leisure compared with everyday and public consumption?
3. What categories are the most and least important when it comes to relative and total environmental impact, and what are the main impacts?
4. How do impacts of leisure consumption relate to the goal of a sustainable development?

- **Data collection**

- Consumption by Norwegians in 2001, abroad and domestic, measured in terms of hours, monetary units and embedded energy use

Project 2 (on outdoor recreation activities)



Addressing the following research questions:

1. What are the main drivers of leisure consumption?
2. What possible policy strategies and policy means can make leisure consumption more sustainable?

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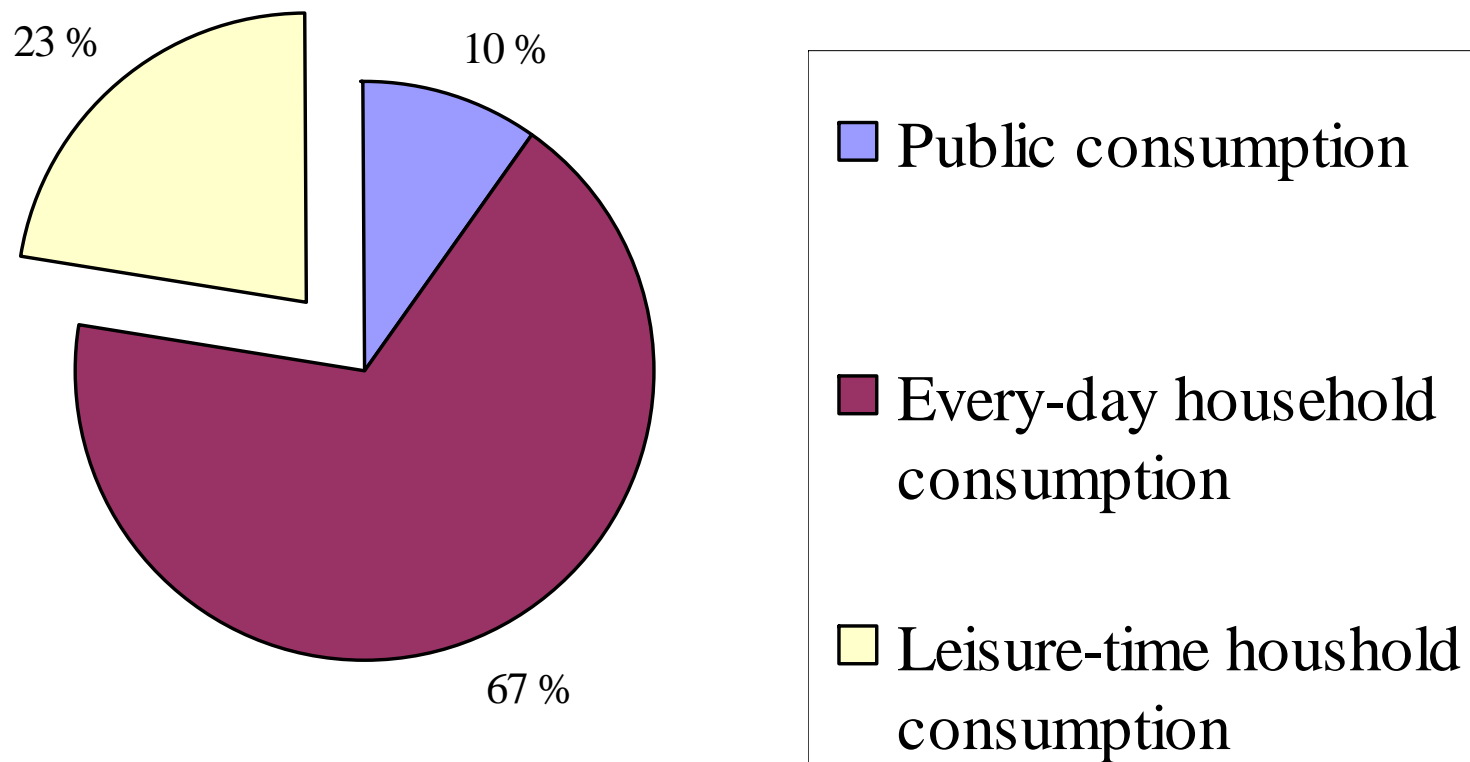
How can we categorize leisure consumption?

	Production	School	Reproduction	Recreation
'Bound' time	1) Work	2) Compulsory education and professional training	3) Domestic work and care	4) Organisational and voluntary work
'Free' time	5) Work-related welfare measures (e.g. conference tourism)	6) Non-compulsory education (e.g. hobby/evening courses)	7) Free everyday life (e.g. shopping)	8) Holidays and leisure time

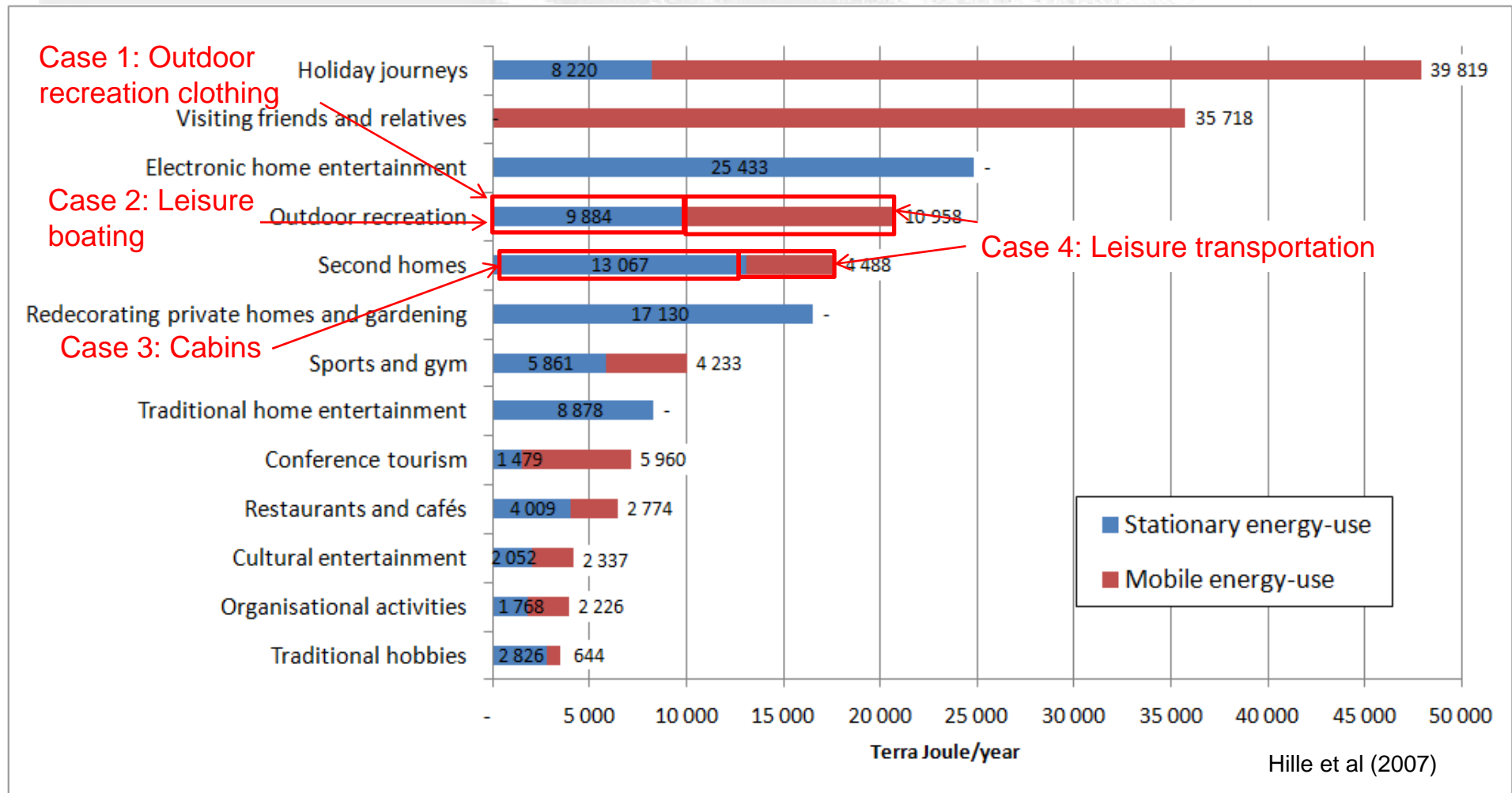


What is the total impact of leisure compared with everyday and public consumption?

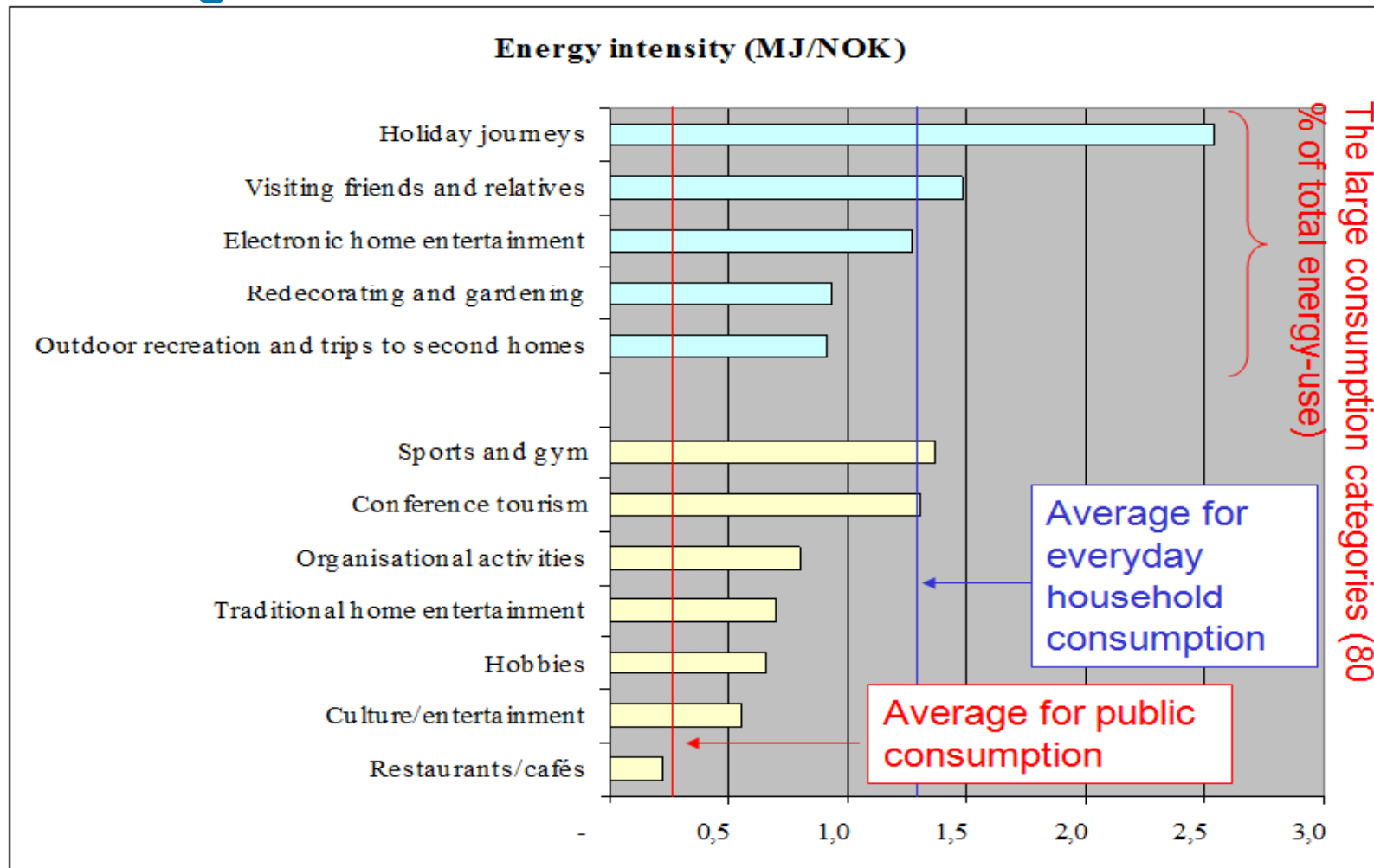
Norway 2001: Share of direct and indirect energy use embedded in consumption



The total energy use of leisure consumption by Norwegians in 2001



The energy intensity of leisure consumption by Norwegians in 2001



The relationship between leisure consumption and sustainable development

- **Leisure consumption have:**
 - increased more than private consumption
 - become more energy intensive
 - become more transport intensive
 - become more “materiel”
 - increased in level of technical standard
 - become more diversified
 - lead to an increase in the use of environmentally problematic materials and technologies
- **Thus; leisure activities in rich developed countries like Norway have a strong an increasing negative effect on the goal of achieving a sustainable development**

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Two competing hypothesis on the relationship between outdoor recreation and sustainability

- **More outdoor recreation will lead to less environmental pressure**
 - Directly
 - → less working time → less income → less consumption
 - Indirectly:
 - → more fond of nature → more support of an ambitious environmental policy
 - → learning sustainable consumption habits → in everyday consumption
- **More outdoor recreation will lead to more environmental pressure**
 - Directly:
 - During leisure time people take time “off” from their environmental attitudes → unsustainable consumption
 - Indirectly:
 - → learning less sustainable consumption habits → in everyday consumption

Examples of changes in outdoor recreation consumption

- **Outdoor clothing**
 - +135% in money spending during 1999-2009
- **Cabins**
 - +5.000/year during 1973-2008, reaching a stock of 90 cabins/1.000 capita
 - Floor space of cabins in relation to residential homes from 59% in 1983 to 78% in 2008
 - Share of cabins with electricity, water supply, water closet, bathroom and dishwasher from 13% in 1970-89 to 43% after 1990
- **Leisure boats**
 - +24.000/year during 1970-2010, reaching a stock of 190 leisure boats/1.000 capita
- **Leisure transportation**
 - +6% in total personkm from 1992 to 2009
 - Share of private car travels to cabins (measured in personkm) from 85 % in 2001 to 92 % in 2010

Main drivers of changes in energy use embedded in outdoor recreation consumption

<p><i>Direct drivers</i> (taking place <u>within</u> the leisure sphere of society)</p>	<p><i>Indirect drivers</i> (taking place <u>outside</u> – but influencing on - the leisure sphere)</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A limited focus on possible negative environmental effects of leisure consumption 2. An increase in new varieties of outdoor recreation activities 3. A shift in outdoor recreation ideology from achieving a 'simpler' to an 'easier' life 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An increase in the purchasing power of Norwegians 2. A reduction in prices on many imported products and services 3. An increase in person mobility

Driver 1: A limited focus on possible negative environmental effects of leisure consumption

- **Consumers**
 - Environment concerns are reduced to “waste treatment”
- **Producers**
 - Very few examples of eco-labelling on outdoor recreation products and services
- **Environment NGOs**
 - The Norwegian “green consumer guidance” has 12 hits for ‘leisure’ and 1153 hits for ‘everyday’
- **Policy making**
 - Changing leisure consumption habits a non-issue

Driver 2: An increase in new varieties of outdoor recreation activities (case of skiing)

- **From “skiing” to.....**
 - wet snow cross country skiing, dry snow cross country skiing, classical skiing, skating skiing, slalom skiing, Telemark skiing, Randonee skiing, off-pist skiing....
- **Leading to:**
 - Increased consumption of equipment (a wish for more differentiated equipment)
 - More transportation (more spots to visit)
 - More energy intensive transportation (more stuff to bring, increasing the share of transportation by private car at the expense of public transportation)

Driver 3: A shift in outdoor recreation ideology from achieving a 'simpler' to an 'easier' life

- **Experiencing pristine nature is still in focus, but the means to achieve this have changed**
- **The use of “leisure infrastructure” (the boat, the cabin, the transport to and from) are separated from the act of experiencing pristine nature**
 - Thus, staying in a large and high standard cabin or leisure boat, or using a Suburban Van to access your recreation spot, is not seen in any way as contradicting that of experiencing pristine nature
- **Installing time-saving equipment is looked upon as a means to be able to spend more time on experiencing pristine nature**
 - e.g. Installing electricity and water, reducing time to carry water on heating the cabin

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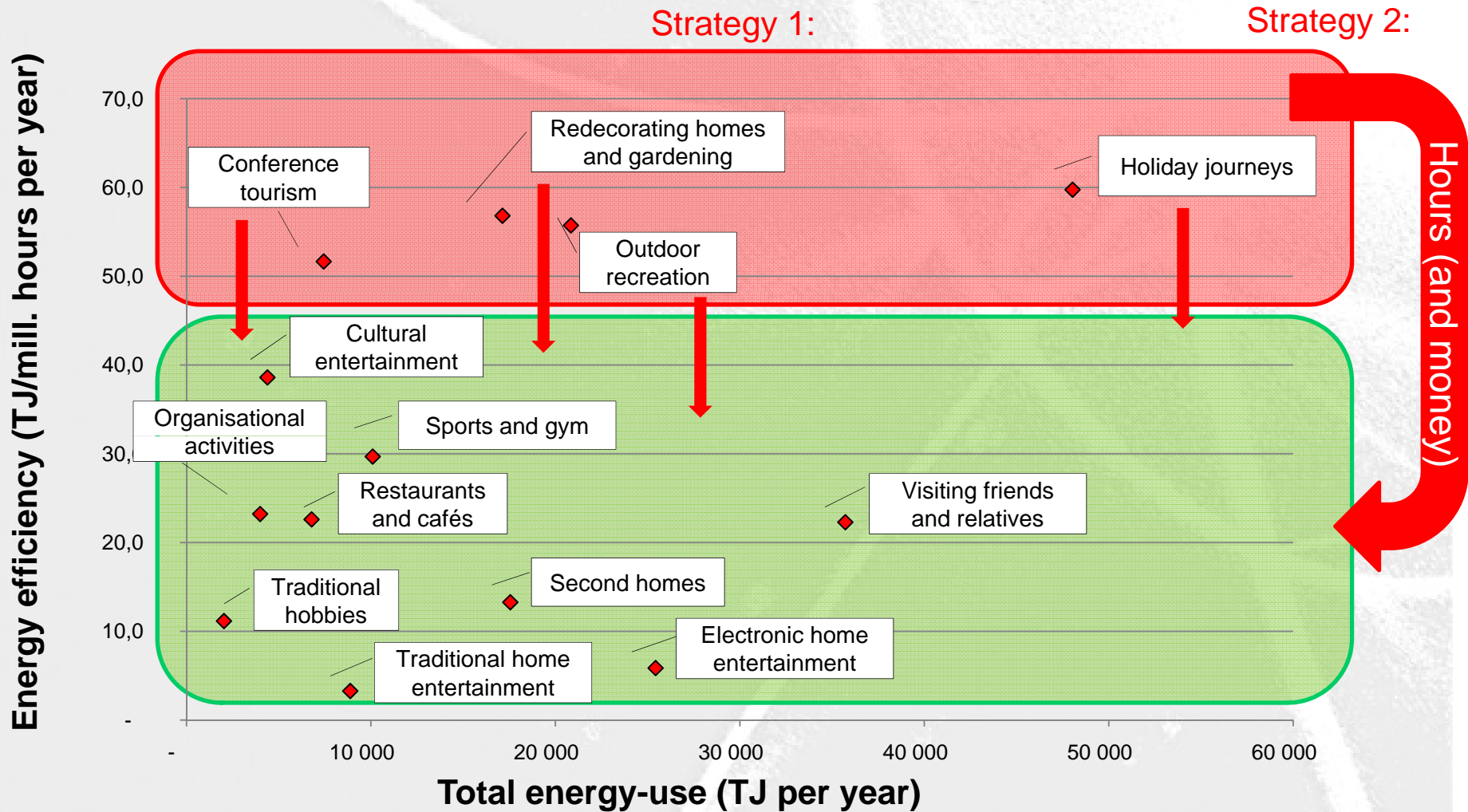
The leisure society

- **Ideal**
 - High level of leisure time at the expense of labor time, and the expected high qualitative aspects of such a society
- **Reality**
 - No increase in “time”
 - During the period 1980-2000 the total hours per day for Norwegians spent on leisure activities has only increased by 3 %
 - Large increase in both economic and physical terms
- **What is the limiting factor?**
 - “Time” (“money” in the case of Norway and many other rich western countries is still increasing)

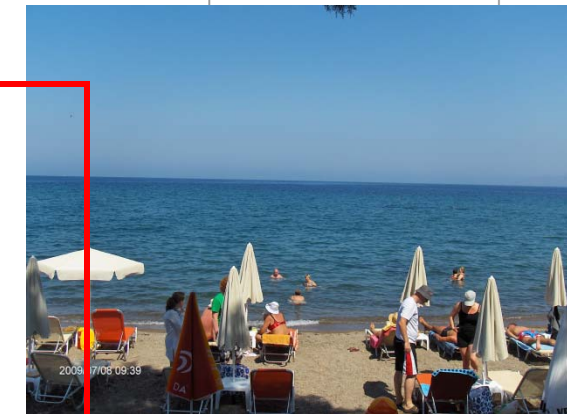
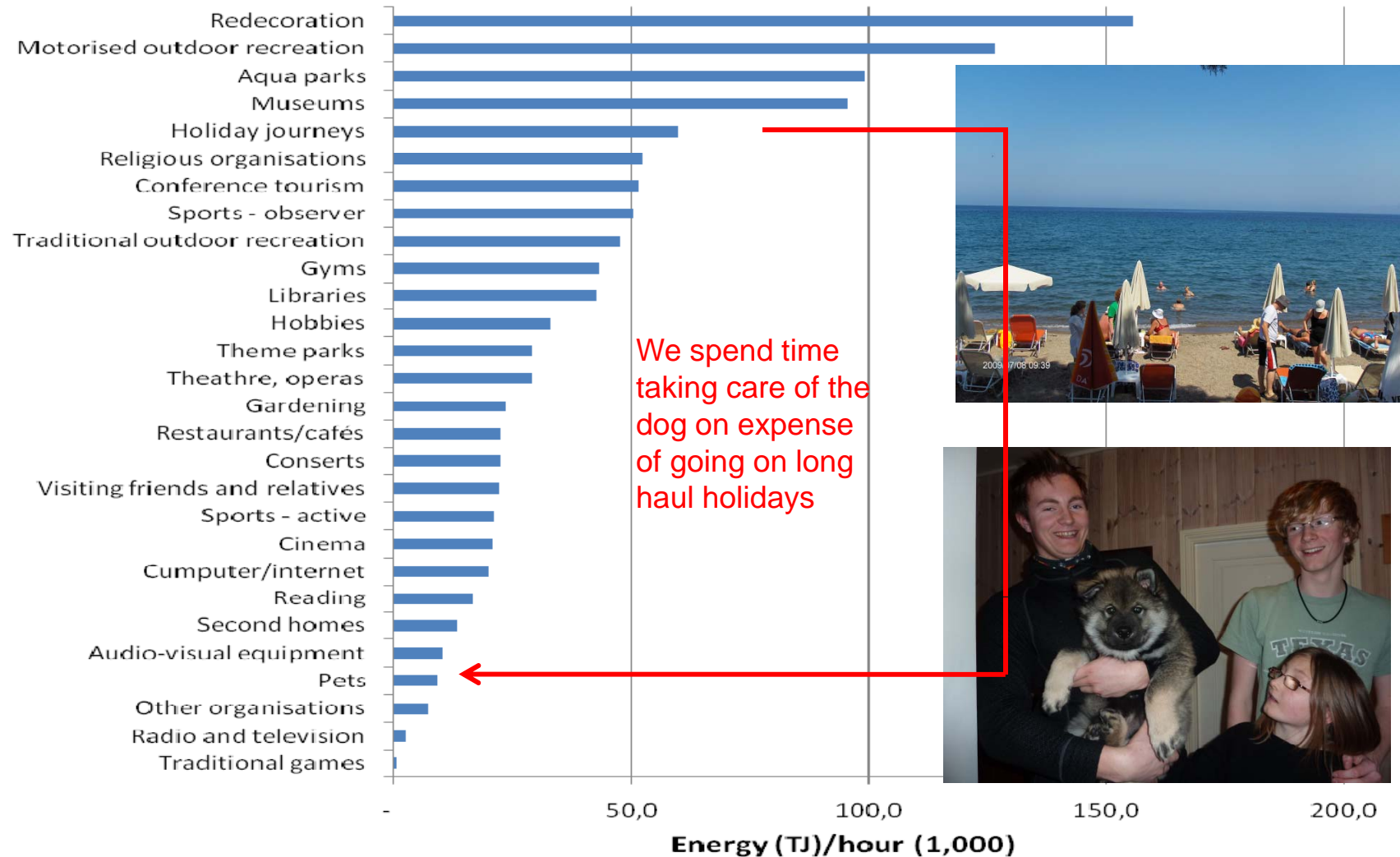
A energy-saving scenario model

Main strategy	Type of action	Reduction used in the scenario
Efficiency strategy	Using the same type of products and services, but choose the most energy-efficient (per unit of time) products and services	10 % reduction in stationary as well as mobile energy-use per unit of time
Substitution strategy	Changing to more energy-efficient modes of products and services	20 % reduction in stationary energy-use per unit of time (cabins, restaurants, outdoor recreation, redecoration) 50 % reduction in mobile energy-use per unit of time (changing from private car to bus/rail for long-distance transportation, and to walking and biking for short-distance transportation)
Reduction (or replacement) strategy	Changing from high energy-intensive to low energy-intensive (measured per unit of time) types of leisure activities but maintaining the same level of time-use	Reducing the time spent on the most transport intensive leisure activities (like holidays by plane) and increasing the time spent on transport extensive leisure activities

The scenario model



A personal case.....



How far did we come?

Main strategy	Reduction in total energy-use
1) Efficiency strategy	- 9 %
2) Substitution strategy	- 15 %
3) Reduction strategy	- 17 %
Combined strategy (1+2+3)	- 37 %

Aall et al (2011)

Is this a sufficient reduction?

Would we then be “sustainable” in our leisure practice?

“The road to hell is paved with good intentions”

- **Among policy makers:**
 - A wish to maintain leisure as a policy regulation free-zone and a (naïve) belief that more leisure will indirectly lead to more sustainability
- **Among consumers:**
 - A wish to increase the possibilities of experiencing pristine nature, and a belief that this can be enhanced by by means of investing in outdoor recreation infrastructure (like clothes, larger cabins, time-saving equipment in cabins and leisure boats etc)
- **In society as a whole:**
 - A wish to maintain economic growth, and assigning leisure consumption a crucial factor in supporting this goal

How to make leisure consumption more sustainable?

- **Supply current environmental policy with a consumption oriented policy (which is very controversial in Norway)**
 - Cf. the introduction to the Norwegian Green Paper on climate change mitigation from 2006: “A radical shift in the Norwegian way of life in a more climate-friendly direction could deliver major reductions in future GHG emissions. The Commission on Low Emissions has, nevertheless, chosen not to recommend such a strategy, because, among other things, we believe it would be politically impossible to put into effect.”
- **Apply an efficiency and substitution strategy in policies aimed at changing production and consumption of leisure products and services**
- **However, in order to contribute substantially on this matter we have to challenge the hegemony of economic growth as the number-one goal of society**

More information

Reports

Hille, J., Aall, C., Klepp, I.G. (2007). Environmental impacts of leisure consumption in Norway (VF-report 1/07). Sogndal: Western Norway Research Institute. (In Norwegian with English summary). Can be downloaded from www.vestforsk.no

Hille, J.; Storm, H.N.; Aall, C.; Sataøen, H.L. (2008). *Environmental Pressure from Norwegian Consumption and Production 1987–2007; A Report Commissioned by the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Children and Equality*; Sogndal: Vestlandsforsking. (In Norwegian with English summary). Can be downloaded from www.vestforsk.no

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Scientific publication

Aall, C, Husabø, I.A. (2010): Is Eco-Efficiency a Sufficient Strategy for Achieving a Sustainable Development? The Norwegian Case, *Sustainability* 2010, 2, 3623-3638

Aall, C. (2011): The Energy Use of Leisure consumption in Norway: Analysis and Reduction Strategy, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, Vol. 19, No. 6, 729–745

Aall, C., Klepp, I.G., Støa, E., Engeset, A.B., Skuland, S. (2011): Leisure and Sustainable Development in Norway: Part of the Solution and the Problem, *Leisure Studies* (in press)

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