

Article

Nuancing Holistic Simplicity in Sweden: A Statistical Exploration of Consumption, Age and Gender

Marco Eimermann ^{1,*}, Urban Lindgren ² and Linda Lundmark ³ 

¹ Department of Geography and Arctic Research Centre, Umeå University, 901 87 Umeå, Sweden

² Department of Geography, Umeå University, 901 87 Umeå, Sweden; urban.lindgren@umu.se

³ Department of Geography and Centre for Regional Studies, Umeå University, 901 87 Umeå, Sweden; linda.lundmark@umu.se

* Correspondence: marco.eimermann@umu.se

Abstract: Studies of sustainable ways of life have hitherto made limited use of register data since, e.g., voluntary simplicity is usually identified through characteristics that cannot be found in data registers. Despite this, claims about these trends have been made in many countries, at times generalising the phenomena both in academia and media, based on anecdotal examples. This article draws on a quantifiable definition of holistic simplicity that includes certain fully measurable aspects, such as living in more affluent suburbs, moving to less affluent places and a significant reduction in individual work income. Other aspects are partially observable in register data, such as housing and car consumption. The advantage of this study is that it combines relevant theories around voluntary simplicity with register data that capture important characteristics of the entire national population (in this case, in Sweden) and thus, to some extent, also captures the magnitude of the phenomena. The article aims to statistically explore different demographic groups' probability of becoming holistic simplifiers in Sweden, regarding their consumption, gender and age. It discusses opportunities and limitations for advancing our knowledge on voluntary simplicity in Sweden, with current findings suggesting more of the same consumption patterns and only initial paths to degrowth. This is discussed in the context of individuals' agency in a state such as Sweden, which is changing from collectivist social democratic values to more neo-liberal conditions.

Keywords: consumption; degrowth; geography; register data; voluntary simplicity; Sweden



Citation: Eimermann, M.; Lindgren, U.; Lundmark, L. Nuancing Holistic Simplicity in Sweden: A Statistical Exploration of Consumption, Age and Gender. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 8340. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13158340>

Academic Editor: Tan Yigitcanlar

Received: 12 May 2021

Accepted: 19 July 2021

Published: 26 July 2021

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2021 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Global change and sustainable development struggles have been on the political agenda for over 35 years, fuelled by arguments pro and contra growth-led development accompanied by technological innovations to solve growth-related challenges. In the early 1990s, scholars claimed that economic growth would lead to increased environmental sustainability as technological innovations reduce the negative impacts of growth [1]. In contrast, climate change debaters argue that global warming has been continuing, irrespective of technological development [2]. Many policy documents at different geographical levels have acknowledged the failure of the market forces to adhere to the initial and subsequent sustainable development goals. Rules and regulations intended to steer economic activity and diminish negative environmental and societal impacts of global economic activity have so far been insufficient.

At the grassroots level, societal movements indicate tendencies for bottom-up trans-local transition initiatives [3] and 'green waves' of counter-urban migration [4–6]. This offers sustainable development opportunities inspired by degrowth to decrease excessive resource use [7]. Such tendencies can imply that geographical areas that have long fought population decline increasingly adopt right-sizing strategies of their population policies [8]. This article examines individual actions and manifest choices in the context of voluntary simplicity, which has seldom been linked with geographical studies in Sweden [9].

Early studies of current voluntary simplicity were conducted in Australia, North America and the UK [10–15]. Voluntary simplicity entails transitions such as voluntary career changes to gain more control over one's time [15,16] as part of a long-term strategy to increase one's quality of life, involving much less consumption and/or income than one's potential level [10]. This includes giving up "the compulsive purchase of material things that end up owning their owners" and stopping to sacrifice non-working activities for a job promotion [17] (p. 71). Voluntary simplicity reflects the growing interest in affluent societies to reduce overconsumption, to spend more time in activities that are in line with one's values and less time in the rat race [18].

Regarding the context of the state in international comparisons, living and working in Sweden has long been based on social-democratic values. Although the Swedish state is adopting more neoliberal policies, it differs from longer standing Anglo-Saxon neoliberal settings in which many previous studies were conducted. Individualisation has, e.g., progressed further in Anglo-Saxon "risk societies" [19] than in more collectivist societies such as Sweden. This has contributed to the emergence and growth of a precariat of unsafe individualised workers struggling with decreased well-being in Anglo-Saxon neoliberal economic acceleration [11,20–23]. Such acceleration is less palpable in Sweden, where workers' rights, including shorter workweeks, longer parental leaves, longer holidays and favourable retirement options have kept individual health- and wellbeing-related necessities for voluntary simplicity relatively low. In recent decades, however, Swedish state safety nets have been deregulated and pressure on individuals' responsibilities has increased while, at the same time, the moral plight for men and women to work full time has remained. The rationale has been that people should pay income taxes to contribute to the maintenance and equity of welfare state services and benefits [24].

Simultaneously, there has been an upswing in Swedish research and popular debate on voluntary simplicity and sustainable lifestyles as a possible counterforce to these pressures [6,25–29]. Different opinions exist of who the voluntary simplifiers are and whether or how they contribute to society. Some call voluntary simplicity a self-induced bottom-up form of 'luxurious communism' [30], in which affluent people work less to enjoy more time with each other and their hobbies of growing vegetables, driving water scooters and drinking wine. Others have pointed at gender and ethnic issues if the changed lifestyles at household level mean that mainly males continue their jobs and (white) females become home makers [13,14,31–33]. This in turn has implications at national levels, since sustainability transitions through working less imply paying lower income taxes, some argue that voluntary simplifiers do not contribute enough to sustaining the Swedish welfare state [29].

Nuancing some sensitivities in Swedish popular and academic debates, we focus on the consumption practices of holistic simplifiers, a sub-group of voluntary simplifiers defined as people who "adjust their whole life patterns according to the ethos of voluntary simplicity. They often move from affluent suburbs or gentrified parts of major cities to smaller towns, the countryside, farms and less affluent or urbanised parts of the country [...] with the explicit goal of leading a 'simpler' life" [10] (pp. 625–626).

Against this background, our study provides insights into holistic simplicity in Sweden. It aims to statistically explore different demographic groups' probability to become holistic simplifiers in Sweden, focussing on consumption, gender and age. We address two research questions regarding the consumption of housing and cars after a move away from affluent suburbs: (1) How (if at all) do the studied holistic simplifiers change their housing status? (2) How (if at all) do they change their car ownership in the household? We link these questions with financial costs and potential environmental effects.

Our data describe the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of holistic simplifiers in Sweden. A major contribution of this article is that it draws on quantitative register data, which is a novel method in this field. The data and related analyses can measure the relative magnitude of holistic simplifiers in a national population, i.e., how common the phenomenon is. We can also analyse the relationships between different individual factors in relation to holistic simplicity. This alleviates some challenges of

drawing on smaller samples, which may not be representative of the whole population, may be based on a selection bias or may cause uncertainties regarding the strength of the relationships between factors and the significance of these relationships. The data are longitudinal, enabling us to follow anonymised individuals over time, to identify individuals who meet the requirements of being a holistic simplifier (reducing work income and moving away from more affluent urban areas), and to study whether they perform more comprehensive lifestyle changes. We address the research questions for a cohort selected from the data in the year 2014, which we follow until 2016 using the variables in Table 1.

Table 1. Variable descriptions. Variables measured in 2014 and regarding changes 2014–2016.

Variable	Description
Age group 30–34	Dummy variable = 1 if the individual is aged between 30 and 34
Age group 35–39	Dummy variable = 1 if the individual is aged between 35 and 39
Age group 40–44	Dummy variable = 1 if the individual is aged between 40 and 44
Age group 45–49	Dummy variable = 1 if the individual is aged between 45 and 49
Age group 50–54	Dummy variable = 1 if the individual is aged between 50 and 54
Age group 55–59	Dummy variable = 1 if the individual is aged between 55 and 59
Born in Sweden	Dummy variable = 1 if the individual was born in Sweden
Male	Dummy variable = 1 if the individual is male
University degree	Dummy variable = 1 if the individual obtained a University degree (three years or longer)
Unemployment	Dummy variable = 1 if the individual received unemp. benefits
Single	Dummy variable = 1 if the individual is single
Child in household	Dummy variable = 1 if household includes child(ren) under 16
Tenure: Renting	Dummy variable = 1 if the individual resides in rented apt.
Tenure: Condo	Dummy variable = 1 if the individual resides in condominium
Tenure: Ownership	Dummy variable = 1 if the individual resides in owned house
Renting to ownership	Dummy variable = 1 if the individual changed form of tenure between 2014 and 2016 from renting to ownership
Changes in size of residence	Number of square metres of residence 2016 minus number of square metres of residence 2014
Changes in residence's assessed value per m ²	Residence assessed value per square metre 2016 minus residence assessed value per square metre in 2014. Assessed value is calculated by the Tax Authority and attributed to all properties. It is assessed to be 75% of the market value.
Changes in car ownership	Number of cars owned by household 2016 minus number of cars owned by household 2014
Changes in car registration year	Registration year of household's newest car 2016 minus registration year of household's newest car 2014
Changes in household disposable income	Household disposable income 2016 minus household disposable income 2014 (SEK 100)

We present a literature review before explaining our methods and materials. We then present the results before discussing their implications. Showing that this entails ‘more of the same’ rather than ‘new paths’, we analyse urban–rural migration and discuss our results while linking them with potential sustainability practices using accessible language (alternating jargon with less complex terms). We round off with conclusions and future research regarding local capacity building in destination areas and degrowth.

2. Literature Review

Although it has been estimated that the number of annual working hours per worker has been declining since the 1870s e.g., [34], we here focus on more recent attention for work time reduction. Schor [12] related work time reduction with sustainable consumption in Western societies. Work time reduction can comprise various scenarios, such as “reduced average hours per job, average annual hours per person, [or] lower total hours per working life” [12] (p. 47). Opposing consumer-driven productivity growth in the global North [35] (p. 15), she urged for working less and stabilizing consumption. To allow all people to consume natural resources equally, Schor [12] saw more potential in changed consumer behaviour than in technological improvements. In other words, we may have more fuel-efficient cars, but “the rebound effect is that we are also driving more and buying

more cars" [18] (p. 68). Human preferences adapt to levels of income, which makes averting income increases an efficient way to reduce Western consumerist lifestyles and save natural resources [12].

Some estimates suggest that as many as 200 million people are exploring a wide spectrum of 'simpler ways' of living in the West; that about 80% of voluntary simplifiers are based in urban centres, and that 22% sold or changed their car [18]. Of British adults aged 30 to 60, 25% had downshifted, equally representing different socio-demographic groups [14]. However, scholars are concerned with social inequality, as work time reduction can concentrate in specific income, age and gender groups [12,36]. Others note that, notwithstanding increased opportunities for part-time employment, voluntary simplicity has not become common in countries such as the UK or USA [37] despite alarms of overworked employees [38]. Although not conclusive, this indicates complex relationships between people's individual agency and wider structural contexts.

2.1. *Conscious Consumption*

Voluntary simplicity studies in Anglo-Saxon capitalist societies have considered the importance of material wellbeing, personal consumption and quality of life [10,18]. The latter is connected with post-materialist values, such as the desire for more freedom, a stronger sense of community and more influence in democratic processes [39]. In this context, Etzioni [10] (p. 620) describes voluntary simplicity as "the choice out of free will [. . .] to limit expenditures on consumer goods and services, and to cultivate non-materialistic sources of satisfaction and meaning". He noted that even highly dedicated voluntary simplifiers pursue combinations of a reasonable level of work and consumption to attend to basic needs, with satisfaction derived from knowledge rather than consumer objects [10] (p. 637). Etzioni [10] described different levels of intensity leading to three variations of voluntary simplicity seekers: downshifters as a moderate form, strong simplifiers who give up high levels of income and socio-economic status, and holistic simplifiers. We operationalize the latter variation below, which we selected because its definition includes migration (see this article's introduction).

One caveat is that consumption is a complex issue, as, e.g., postmaterialist values in the USA doubled between 1972 and 1991 while personal consumption continued to grow [10] (p. 620). From a psychological perspective, the visibility of consumer goods is one pivotal aspect in traditional capitalist terms: displaying one's income by buying expensive-status goods signals success [10,20]. In such contexts, there are few established means to signal that one has opted for simplicity willingly rather than by necessity. This may, however, be achieved by using select consumer goods that are clearly associated with a simpler life pattern and that are as visible as traditional status symbols, such as a dressing down, but still wear some expensive items [10]. This "conspicuous non-consumption" [40] can also involve cooking at home more often instead of eating out, giving up expensive holidays [41], or buying less complicated and more modest rural houses. These signals change over time and vary between subcultures [10].

Moreover, recent studies highlight that voluntary simplifiers may own significantly fewer but more expensive and environmentally friendly durable consumer goods [42]. Thus, they may not necessarily spend less money on these goods, since their quality and price can be higher [43]. However, due to a lack of comparable data, it is difficult to make assessments regarding the extent of this phenomenon in different countries and contexts.

Although voluntary simplicity is about reduced consumption, it does not necessarily mean sacrificing comfort or enduring hardship [37,41]. Ragusa's [37] economic study of domestic urban-rural migrants in Australia indicated that few desired to fundamentally change their standard or way of living. Almost none of the 53 (mostly middle aged) respondents rejected contemporary consumerism, and all continued to drive cars, often commuting even longer distances. Several of them moved to increase their purchasing power, e.g., on the housing market while still pursuing economically rewarding careers. None made significant changes to counter dominant Western lifestyle trends, which pointed

at conscious consumption combined with comfortable simplicity. Respondents wanted to live 'slow' while also living 'large' [37] (p. 128).

2.2. Gender and Age

Results on gender and voluntary simplicity are inconsistent. Although more females in the survey of Kennedy et al. [44] linked downshifting with a desire to stay at home with children, the authors found no significant interaction effects between voluntary simplicity and gender. It may be common that men and women face different issues due to internalised gender roles relating to work [13], and that women experience more stress in combining paid work with unpaid household tasks [32]. Tan [13] found that women experienced more difficulty with career transitions than men did. Explanations for this could be that more women in her study lived without a partner, that they were in early phases of their transition or that they underwent changes more rapidly. Further, a number of less egalitarian men disliked the consequences of having less money or having to rely more on their female partner's income [13]. In Hamilton's [14] study, it was more common for women to stop working at all and more common for men to work less. Other studies contradict each other, e.g., Grigsby [45] found that women were more likely to be voluntary simplifiers while Hamilton & Denniss [46] concluded the opposite. Hence, Kennedy et al. [44] signal a need for more nuanced future research regarding gender and voluntary simplicity, arguing that structural changes in broader domains such as work culture and support for families would be required to increase sustainable practices. This further indicates that the context of the nation as ordering and structuring everyday lives needs to be included in the assessment of who is engaging in voluntary simplicity and what the motivations might be.

In particular, a welfare state such as Sweden promotes gender equality, but full gender equality encompasses more than men and women working equally and earning equal incomes [47]. The Swedish model's narrow interpretation of women's emancipation has contributed to a situation in which a sharp line exists between market wages for the breadwinner in the male-dominated public spheres and unpaid (care) work often carried out by women in domestic spheres. As the Swedish welfare state applies social security rights based on work performance and labour market participation, many women struggle with socio-economic lag [48] and a double workload of both work and unpaid house work. This has led to unequal power relations where the social and economic positions of males are often stronger than those of females, and women are over-represented in statistics on mental illness and on sick leave [49]. Time spent on vital reproductive work, such as caring for partners, children and relatives is often made invisible.

Time use is also linked with age, life course stage and life events such as child rearing and mortality [13,44]. Age and life course stage were significant in a Canadian study [44], as older respondents and those living in central urban neighbourhoods were more likely to be satisfied with their time use than those with children living at home. Tan's [13] study focused on the midlife stage, which involves considerable responsibilities in terms of family and financial commitments, while also being at the peak of career earning potential. Tan [13] indicated a changed relationship with time, as many studied individuals started to reach an age that signalled mortality. This made them realise that less time was available for establishment in alternative careers and other directions. On a structural level, contemporary midlife Australians' life plans were dominated by insecurity about comfortable retirement, as the Federal government had made it clear that they could no longer rely on state pensions to meet their needs [41].

2.3. Urban–Rural Relationships

In a Canadian study, respondents who had shifted to lower income were more likely to engage in sustainable household practises, such as reduced consumption [44]. The regression models demonstrated significant effects on the subjective well-being of owning one's home, but also that the decision to earn less did not appear to change patterns of car

use [44]. They stated that environmental benefits of voluntary simplicity did not extend beyond the household level because pro-environmental behaviour, such as reduced car use, requires systemic changes in spatial planning. Although voluntary simplicity, as such, was not related to the place of residence (e.g., central urban, suburban), neighbourhood of residence was the strongest predictor of sustainable transportation practices [44]. Municipal spending in Canadian suburbs (where potential simplifiers live) had shifted away from public transportation in favour of multiple-car households. In this North American context, suburbs force reliance on cars and contribute to consumerist lifestyles [50]. This is a missed opportunity, since Alexander and Ussher [18] suggested that many simplifiers wish to escape the car culture but, for various reasons (e.g., harsh winters, health conditions or limited public transport), found this difficult or impossible.

In general, urban–rural relationships refer to functional linkages and interactions between urban and rural areas. They cover a spectrum of interactions through housing, employment, education, transport, tourism and resource use, including social transactions, administrative and service provision, and the movement of people, goods, and capital [51]. Within this spectrum, we here focus on socio-economic forces from economic geographic and voluntary simplicity perspectives. In economic geography, studies have addressed the ongoing urban concentration of companies, capital and individuals after the end of the Fordist production system, leading to uneven geographies of labour and growth [52,53]. These processes have resulted in increased levels of unemployment and out-migration from peripheral areas previously dominated by a single, large-scale workplaces [54]. However, Swedish studies have highlighted comparative advantages and successful companies in rural areas, as well as new ways of working and living there [55]. Where one lives and works is very important, as location is essential in the global competition for labour and capital [54]. Hence, Lindgren et al. [55] argue for a re-evaluation of the urban–rural divide.

Such a re-evaluation here includes holistic simplifiers' urban–rural moves that may be motivated by wishes to work and consume less. Voluntary simplifiers may contribute to local transformative capacity in Swedish rural areas by their social and human capital (e.g., work engagement, networks, skills [37]). For instance, Sandow and Lundholm [5] found a small but steady outflow of highly educated adults and their families from Swedish metropolitan areas to medium-sized and small towns (in 2003–2013). Most of them were public sector professionals or males working within arts and crafts [5]. In another example, retirees' spontaneous activism for the protection and reclamation of a riverbank in West Sussex (UK) was studied in the context of "nowtopias" [56]. These are territorial processes of regeneration that involve non-wage labour and are motivated by a desire to produce alternative local futures here and now, e.g., through the everyday experimentation of other worlds [57,58]. This provides a context for our urban–rural study below.

Our study thus employs a relational approach to holistic simplicity-induced urban–rural migration, which can link urban and rural areas with each other. Though starting from similar socio-economic globalisation processes, such as growth and degrowth, a relational approach recognises that globalisation affects people and settlements differently [59]. The unfolding population geographies in different places can be viewed as historically contingent developments, along with the evolving nature of translocal relations between urban and rural settlements [60,61]. Relational approaches shed light on irregular expansion and contraction of settlements and the acceleration or deceleration of local and regional linkages on a daily basis and over a life course [62,63]. Thus, urban–rural relationships shaping transformative capacity and nowtopias provide the context for our conclusions.

3. Materials and Methods

Most recent Swedish voluntary simplicity studies draw on deep knowledge gained from qualitative data of small samples in terms of socio-economic and geographic factors (e.g., [6,26,27]). Here, in contrast, we draw on rich georeferenced register data to expand the scope while exploring variables both on the individual and household levels. The empirical analysis is based on relevant longitudinal demographic and socioeconomic attributes of

individuals in the whole country. These data have been created by matching a number of administrative registers at Statistics Sweden (SCB). No ethical approval was needed, since the personal information was not sensitive and the key between persons and codes was destroyed. The entire data set covers the period 1985 to 2016 and includes annual information about all Swedish inhabitants (9.99 mln in 2016: 4.98 mln women and 5.01 mln men. [64]). The database contains over 100 unidentified individual attributes annually. These attributes refer to demography, household (e.g., partners with their attributes, children), education, employment, unemployment (e.g., unemployment benefits), income and transfer payments (e.g., income from work, disposable income, pensions), housing characteristics (where registered; rented flat, condominium, detached house, etc.), coordinates of places of residence, etc.

As the data are based on official registers, the quality of the information is generally very high. Another advantage is that this type of data covers the entire population. This means that all individuals can be analysed, and there is no need to consider how to deal with nonresponse as is commonly the case in studies based on surveys. The richness of information provides a possibility to learn more about the magnitude, characteristics and distribution of this phenomenon.

We recognize that such data cannot capture people's entire consumption behaviour, let alone wellbeing or experienced changes in overall quality of life. Still, this study provides a good opportunity to operationalize Etzioni's [10] theorization of holistic simplifiers, i.e., identify individuals who live in affluent city neighbourhoods, substantially decrease their work income and move elsewhere during this process.

This offers a possibility to study to what extent these movers make changes towards a simpler life regarding two commonly considered major household expenditures (housing and car ownership), which may cause decreased general wellbeing through higher stress levels regarding household economy. The longitudinal qualities of register data enable us to follow individuals over time and observe whether they actually led a simpler life after they moved away from the affluent neighbourhood and decreased work income. Table 1 presents the variables in the analysis.

Steps in the Analysis

To identify holistic simplifiers, data needed to be organized in a number of steps. Step 1. We identified individuals aged 30–59 in 2014 and who were still alive in 2015 or 2016. Individuals younger than 30 were excluded since many of their residential moves and changes in level of consumption may be related to education (a common feature in Sweden), which could distort the analysis. Further, a shift to a simpler life entails an initial income level and relevant working experience to shift down from. Both may be lacking to a larger degree among young adults under 30. Studying this age group's potential motivations for living simpler lives would be more suitable for qualitative investigations.

Step 2. We selected those aged 30–59 who lived in one of Sweden's major cities (Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö), or in a regional capital city (in order of population size from larger to smaller: Uppsala, Linköping, Västerås, Örebro, Helsingborg, Norrköping, Jönköping, Umeå, Lund, Sundsvall, Karlstad, Växjö, Luleå, Östersund) in 2014, in a parish whose average income from work exceeds the city average income. We used this as a proxy for Etzioni's [10] 'affluent suburbs'.

Step 3. We selected holistic simplifiers as those who had moved in 2015 or 2016 to other places in Sweden (outside the selected affluent suburbs), and who had reduced their income from work with at least 50% after the move. We acknowledge that a reduction of 50% may seem like much, and previous studies have settled for smaller reductions. However, our motivation for using the reduction of 50% is that we can be quite certain these individuals have good opportunities to lead a substantially simpler life than before reducing their incomes. We control for forced unemployment in this study through a variable indicating unemployment benefits. We can thus be confident that the results of the other variables do not depend on unemployment. Although unemployment in this study

does have a positive effect on the probability of consuming less, this effect is separate from the other results. We thus used this as a proxy for Etzioni's [10] 'leading a simpler life'.

Step 4. The reference group then consisted of individuals aged 30–59 living in the selected parishes in 2014, and who were alive in 2016, but had not moved to other parishes with lower average income. This may mean they had not moved at all, or that they had moved to another affluent parish with the same (or higher) average income from work.

These steps indicated about 1.4 million registered residential moves within Sweden, undertaken by 1.21 mln individuals (of whom some moved more than once). By using the criteria above, we identified 3188 individuals as holistic simplifiers. On an annual basis this corresponds to 0.11% of all movers. Some holistic simplifiers move longer distances, which justifies a comparison with a sub-selection of long-distance movers. The number of movers across municipality borders (290 municipalities in total) amounted to 488,000 the same year, which indicates that holistic simplifiers were 0.33% of all movers across municipality borders on an annual basis.

The modelling of Etzioni's [10] theorization of holistic simplifiers is carried out by estimating a binomial logit model capturing the differences between holistic simplifiers and the reference group. Since we are interested in comparing these two groups we constructed a dichotomous dependent variable, making, e.g., linear regression models (OLS) less useful. The applied software is Microsoft SQL Server (a database engine) and SPSS. The logit model applies a logistic function to model the binary dependent variable. On the right-hand side of the equation there is a vector (X) of observable attributes of the individual and a vector of parameters (beta) to be estimated. The variables and parameter estimates are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Estimates of holistic simplifiers.

Variables	B	Sig.	Exp(B)
Individual level (in 2014)			
Age group 30–34	ref.		
Age group 35–39	0.089	0.394	0.915
Age group 40–44	−0.277	0.034	0.758
Age group 45–49	−0.517	0.000	0.596
Age group 50–54	−0.198	0.137	0.820
Age group 55–59	−0.070	0.601	0.933
Born in Sweden	0.161	0.106	1.174
Male	0.056	0.457	1.058
University degree	−0.689	0.029	0.502
Unemployment	0.543	0.000	1.721
Household level (in 2014)			
Single	0.367	0.000	1.443
Child in household	−0.450	0.000	0.638
Tenure: Renting	−0.271	0.006	0.763
Tenure: Condo	ref.		
Tenure: Ownership	−0.404	0.000	0.668
Changes 2014–2016			
Renting to ownership	2.117	0.000	8.308
Changes in size of residence	0.019	0.000	1.019
Changes in residence ass. value/m ²	−0.002	0.188	0.998
Changes in car ownership	0.129	0.192	1.137
Changes in car registration year	−0.029	0.004	0.972
Changes in household disp. income	0.000	0.002	1.000
Constant	−5.373	0.000	0.005
N = 589,301. Log-L = −10,191			

The model estimates in the results section are based on a population aged 30 to 59, which more or less excludes retirees. We chose to do so since we are interested in what holistic simplicity looks like among people at working age. Retirees reduce work income by definition, and they can be seen as downshifters as a consequence of age rather than own

choice, but the philosophical question to what extent pre-retirees are voluntary simplifiers is beyond the scope of this article. To reduce the risk of biased results due to family changes during the study period (e.g., family dissolution or family formation) we only included holistic simplifiers who had not separated, changed partner or found a partner. As a consequence, changes in, for example, household disposable income, cannot be attributed to the income of a new spouse.

4. Results

4.1. Basic Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics of Holistic Simplifiers in Sweden

Table 2 presents model estimates of holistic simplifiers. First, we present and comment on individual demographic and socioeconomic variables, before shifting to household- and housing-related variables. To begin with, the probability of being a holistic simplifier varies by age. It is less likely that people in their forties make this type of change in their lives. This negative effect fades away as people grow older. People in their fifties are as likely as the reference category of people in their early thirties to engage in holistic simplicity. It can be added that we have estimated the same model including elderly people. These results showed the same patterns across age groups as presented in Table 2, but with the addition that the estimates turn significantly positive for all age groups over 60 except for the age group 75–79. These results suggest, when controlling for a wide array of demographic and socioeconomic factors, that people in their forties are the less likely age group to become holistic simplifiers.

The analysis shows that there are no significant differences between people born in Sweden and people born abroad, or between men and women.

Furthermore, people with a university degree are much less likely to be a holistic simplifier. The odds ratio indicates a drop by 50%. Being eligible for unemployment benefits seems to have a positive effect on the probability to be a holistic simplifier. The odds ratio increases by 72%. Taken together, these results show that Swedish holistic simplifiers are likely to have shorter formal education and more unemployment experience. These findings do not support the idea that opting for simplicity is a high-status phenomenon.

At the household level, the results indicate that family situation is important. In comparison to couples, people who are single are much more likely to be holistic simplifiers. The odds ratio increases by 44%. However, having underaged children in the household decreases the probability of making a change along these lines.

Further, the results show that, in comparison to living in condos, both living in rental flats and owned houses means a lower likelihood of becoming a holistic simplifier. On the other hand, it is equally correct to state that people living in condos are more likely than renters and house owners to become holistic simplifiers. Since people living in condos are usually regarded as owning their housing, this becomes a little complicated. Technically, condo owners do not own a property, they own a membership in a housing cooperative, which owns the property. True ownership of flats is a rare tenure in Sweden. We can only speculate about possible explanations, but households that have been able to purchase a house in affluent suburbs may have fewer reasons to move, not least because of the amenities such properties bring (e.g., own garden, tranquil surroundings, less traffic, etc.). People living in rented apartments may lack financial means to make a change in life in line with our interpretation of holistic simplification, partly because such moves usually involve buying a house. Access to rented housing is sometimes scarce in the destinations.

4.2. How (If at All) Do Holistic Simplifiers Change Their Housing Status?

Drawing on longitudinal data, we observe what happened to the holistic simplifiers after they moved out of the affluent suburbs and decreased their work income. This is operationalized by creating a number of variables showing differences between 2014 and 2016. The first variable in this category is changing tenure from renting to ownership. This estimate is positive and highly significant, implying that holistic simplifiers tend to shift from renting to owning their residences. As noticed above, this is a small group of

people, but those who perform these changes are very likely to end up having their own property. One explanation for these results could be the ownership of second homes in the countryside, which is more widespread in Sweden than, for example, in Anglo-Saxon countries [65]. People may have moved to their second homes, which they usually own. In contrast to the imaginaries in ‘luxurious communism’ [30], this does not have to be a luxurious house. Rather, as part of the process towards holistic simplicity, the surrounding place may become more important [27].

To study housing situations more thoroughly, we constructed another variable regarding changes in the size of housing space. This may be a relevant factor because housing costs are commonly a large part of household expenditures. The estimate of this variable is positive, which means that an increase in living space increases the likelihood of being a holistic simplifier. The odds of being a holistic simplifier rise by 1.9% for each square metre of increased housing space. Thus, holistic simplifiers do not seem to reduce living space to any large extent, which is somewhat surprising, since leading a simpler life is amongst the other factors associated with less housing consumption.

It can, however, be argued that houses are cheaper far away from affluent suburbs where people get the chance of owning a bigger house at a lower cost. In order to control for changes in living space, we created a variable that measures differences in assessed value per square metre. This estimate turned out to be insignificant, implying that holistic simplifiers do not reduce their housing consumption after the move—they tend to have houses that are as expensive as those of the non-holistic simplifiers who stayed put in affluent suburbs. This is a surprising result, considering the spirit of holistic simplicity.

4.3. How (If at All) Do Holistic Simplifiers Change Their Consumption of Cars in the Household?

Another indicator of conscious consumption is car ownership [10,18]. This also represents differences of distance to commercial and welfare services, since people living farther away from dense urban areas often need more cars for their (daily) transports. The variable “changes in car ownership” measures the difference in the number of owned cars. The variable shows an insignificant estimate, indicating that holistic simplifiers do not reduce their car fleet, which seems to be contrary to expectation. Cars require money to buy and maintain and might, therefore, be a good candidate for cost reduction when planning for a simpler life. On the other hand, living farther away from dense urban areas, sometimes even in the countryside, may be difficult without a car. Public transport is scarce and schools, leisure activities and service facilities may be far off, making it more or less impossible to manage without a car.

Car expenditures are not only related to the number of cars the household owns. These expenditures are also connected to the age of the car. Generally, newer cars are more expensive than older cars due to, for example, capital costs and value depreciation. We created a variable measuring differences in age of a household’s newest car before and after the move. This variable is negatively significant (Table 2), indicating that holistic simplifiers own older cars than the reference group. An increase of one year (i.e., a year’s newer car model) decreases the likelihood of being a holistic simplifier by 2.8%. These holistic simplifiers thus cut car costs, to some extent, which was expected [10,18], but they do not reduce the number of cars, which is contrary to the radical lifestyle changes suggested in other studies [66].

The results so far suggest a limited reduction in car consumption and no reduction in consumption related to housing, but we know, by definition, that individuals meeting the holistic simplifier criteria in this study have reduced their work income by at least 50%. This income reduction suggests diminished consumption somewhere in the household budget. Households may reduce spending on newer cars, and other products and services we cannot observe. Alternatively, the households do not reduce their consumption at all, because they have access to other sources of income. To investigate this, we created a variable showing differences in household disposable income between 2014 and 2016. This includes all sources of income (work income, capital income, transfer payments, social

benefits, etc.) for all individuals in the household (the holistic simplifier, his/her partner, income earned by youth living at home, etc.). The estimate of this variable reveals a positive significant effect on the probability of being a holistic simplifier, meaning that holistic simplifiers are more likely to have increased their household disposable income than their former affluent suburb neighbours. This is not what we expected from holistic simplifiers who supposedly shift to a simpler life. The reasons for this result are beyond the scope of this study but are well worth investigating in future research.

All in all, the results suggest that only a few of the 3,188 identified holistic simplifiers in Swedish register data reduced their consumption in accordance with what could be expected from previous studies. In fact, looking closer into data conditioning on reduced housing consumption and decreased household disposable income would reveal an even lower number of “true” holistic simplifiers [10].

5. Discussion

This article on Swedish conditions revealed two rather unique potentials for simplicity studies: (1) studying living and working conditions in egalitarian Nordic welfare states in comparison to previous studies in Anglo-Saxon contexts [11,12,20–23], and (2) drawing on rich (Swedish) longitudinal georeferenced register data. The former has implications for housing markets and labour markets, while the latter indicates potential for future studies.

Four reflections further explain this study’s results and limitations. First, our results may diverge from findings elsewhere, as Sweden might not be comparable to other countries and contexts [18,44]. Using Etzioni’s [10] criteria, we identified 3188 persons as holistic simplifiers in Sweden during the period 2014–2016. Such a low number indicates that this phenomenon is marginal at best, using this definition. It is less likely than in other studies [41,44] that people in their forties make this type of lifestyle change. We found no significant differences between people born in Sweden and elsewhere, or between men and women (which differs from [13,14,45]). Other characteristics are more important for increasing the likelihood to become a holistic simplifier, such as shorter formal education and more unemployment experience. Singles are much more likely than couples to be holistic simplifiers. As expected, having underaged children in the household decreases the probability of making such lifestyle changes.

The following question arises: Do similar patterns emerge in other countries when drawing on register data and following the same operationalisation as in this study? It is plausible that our operationalisation of Etzioni’s [10] definition of holistic simplifiers differs from the original intentions, and that it does not fully capture the phenomenon as intended. We conducted our study 20 years later and in a different country with different structural contexts. Differences in a society’s social and political structure, as well as general living conditions, probably impact the likelihood of becoming a holistic simplifier, but this is an under-researched field.

Second, this relates with ideas that the welfare state allows for certain degrees of voluntary simplicity without a need to resign from employment, find less expensive housing or relocate [28]. This is also linked with life course stages as, e.g., parents are entitled to parental leave with only little loss of income from work (paid for by all citizens’ work income taxes [67]). This means that there is no essential income reduction when at home taking care of children, which may leave room for temporary voluntary simplicity in terms of reduced workload both for women and men [48]. This regards the age groups in which other studies suggest high incidence of voluntary simplicity [13,41,44]. We thus find that the welfare state’s social benefit schemes need more attention when studying how simplifiers’ individual choices and practices are influenced by benefits such as longer parental leave or sick leave (e.g., [49]). Welfare states such as Sweden—while in a process of neoliberal changes—may keep individual health- and wellbeing-related necessities for voluntary simplicity relatively low.

A third reflection regards the extent to which individuals actually engage in holistic simplicity, voluntary simplicity or downshifting. Although these are similar concepts,

the individuals studied here may engage in some convenient changes without fully embracing overall lifestyle shifts [37]. Differences between qualitative and quantitative samples are underexplored: are interviewees in other studies a (more hardcore) subgroup of this article's data set, or can this study's 50% income reduction criterion indicate a minor subgroup of potential holistic simplifiers? More thorough studies facilitate further conceptual reflections on sustainable living through reduced worktime and consumption.

Fourth, difficulties in terms of operationalisation of Etzioni's [10] description of holistic simplifiers and related theories of conscious consumption [40,41] imply that we cannot measure all complex facets of consumption. Many consumption indicators are hidden in the register data, as, e.g., costs of leisure activities and social practices may be significantly lower in less affluent areas. The studied individuals can be living simpler lives through consuming less clothes and gadgets or eating out less often [40]. If this is the case, and since their disposable household income is not reduced, they may save much money. Further research could study potential alternative consumption issues; is the disposable household income invested in any way, spent on business ventures, bestowed on charity, or do other strategies exist?

A limitation of this study is that we do not know the studied households' reasons for not purchasing newer (possibly more environmentally friendly) consumer goods such as cars (e.g., [18,42]), which can also be investigated in future research. More in-depth overviews indicate how human values may guide voluntary simplicity lifestyles [43,68].

Future Studies Drawing on Georeferenced Longitudinal Register Data

Linking individual agency with geographic and political structures, future studies in Nordic contexts can reveal concrete policies and practices (e.g., regarding unemployment benefits and parental leaves) that differ from the hitherto studied Anglo-Saxon contexts. Such benefits and other features can be studied while considering interplays between individual lifestyle choices, trends and norms in society and states' structural components related with political ideologies. This links voluntary simplicity more profoundly with individualisation processes [19] and economic acceleration impacts on Nordic citizens' everyday lives [11,20–22].

Although this study's register data are rich in regard to the studied number of individuals and characteristics, the short time span (2014–2016) merely provides a snapshot of patterns and statistical relationships during the mid-2010s, with limited possibilities to measure evolving intentions and motivations. Future studies could utilize the longitudinal qualities of register data to better explore the dynamics of voluntary simplicity within a country's whole population. We suggest two different approaches.

One approach follows the evidence in the literature that lifestyles such as voluntary simplicity have been on people's minds for quite some time. Macro-economic studies indicate ongoing work-hour decreases in most industrialized countries [12,34]. To study whether this trend is as visible on the micro level of individuals and their specific life situations, this article's research design can be combined with longitudinal register data going back to the early 1990s. Individual- and household-level variable estimates could be compared over longer periods of time by stepwise repeating our analysis for moving three-year time frames for the periods 1990–1992, 1991–1993, etc. until 2018–2020, when available. This may reveal voluntary simplicity trends and provide information about changing numbers of individuals engaging in holistic simplicity.

Another approach considers that voluntary simplicity is not likely to occur overnight. In this study, we observe individuals over a three-year period, which may be too narrow a time frame. Longitudinal data can observe individual actions and events over a much longer period of time. Future studies could analyse the extent to which people make gradual shifts that, consciously or not, steer towards lifestyle changes. For example, a second home purchased one or two decades ago—which from the start was entirely considered to be used for recreational purposes during summer—could gradually be perceived to have qualities that make people think about voluntary simplicity [65]. Evidence suggests that

second home owners of all ages use their second homes as a way to experience quality of life without urban demands and burdens, to relax and for practices such as gardening, outdoor recreation and house work, which they do not have time for during a regular work week [69]. In this process, the second home may become a primary residence, which could reduce household expenditures and enable a livelihood that is less dependent on work income. Drawing on register data with a biographic point of view can reveal the life paths of voluntary simplifiers over longer periods.

These insights indicate the need to link studies of regular residences and second homes with voluntary simplicity, as future research can investigate extents to which voluntary simplifiers have access to second homes (compared to others), locations of these homes and arising gender issues [13,32]. Analysis focusing on sequences of events in the life course can identify different ways towards a simpler life, including the length of such a process or distinctions between more and less common ways to simplicity (including car ownership and use). This is a relevant policy area for Swedish and similar municipalities with relatively many second home residents. Their contributions to transformative capacity building [56] through social and human capital (e.g., skills, work engagement, networks [37]) is relevant for right-sizing strategies in rural municipalities' planning of housing and infrastructure for (electric) cars and other means of transport [8].

6. Conclusions

This article aimed to statistically explore different demographic groups' probability of becoming holistic simplifiers in Sweden, focussing on consumption, gender and age. It showed complex and paradoxical relationships between property ownership and likelihood of becoming a holistic simplifier. The exact reasons are unknown, but holistic simplifiers tend to shift to owning their residences. Larger living spaces increase the likelihood of being a holistic simplifier, and the assessed value per square meter does not imply a reduction in holistic simplifiers' housing size after the move either. They do not reduce the number of owned cars, but they tend to own somewhat older cars than the reference group. Finally, holistic simplifiers are more likely to have increased their household disposable income than their former neighbours who stayed in affluent suburbs.

These unexpected findings differ from previous studies elsewhere (e.g., [66]). Contrary to previous studies [11–15] and popular discourse of voluntary simplicity, our data show that holistic simplicity as identified here is, or at least until recently has been, a marginal phenomenon in Sweden. The group of individuals identified as holistic simplifiers in the data is a small part of the total population, and those performing lifestyle changes in accordance with our informed expectations are even fewer.

At first sight, our study thus suggests 'more of the same', as the studied holistic simplifiers undertook urban–rural moves without drastically reducing their consumption of housing and cars (in line with [5]). Their move from affluent suburbs to near and remote countryside nevertheless signals novel contexts that plea for re-evaluating the urban–rural divide [55]. Such studies could consider geographic and social inequalities and translocal relations between urban and rural settlements [59–61]. As indicated by relational approaches, there is no blueprint for degrowth through voluntary simplicity, but this is rather a grassroots transition process involving lower consumption that emerges differently in different places [3,7,16,45,70]. Examining lived experiences of degrowth from the bottom-up can evaluate whether voluntary simplicity implies a “deep re-evaluation of consumer affluence and embrace of lifestyles of radical material sufficiency” [66] (p. 365). This connects with popular and academic debate in Sweden, signalling a bottom-up resistance against the growth paradigm in multiple crises [29,33,71,72].

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, U.L., M.E. and L.L.; Methodology, U.L., M.E. and L.L.; Software, U.L.; Validation, U.L., L.L. and M.E.; Formal Analysis, U.L.; Investigation, M.E., L.L. and U.L.; Resources, M.E., L.L. and U.L.; Data Curation, U.L.; Writing—Original Draft Preparation, M.E.; Writing—Review & Editing, M.E.; Visualization, M.E. and U.L.; Project Administration, M.E. and L.L.; Funding Acquisition, M.E. and L.L. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research is supported by the Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development FORMAS (including funds to cover publication costs, APC) through grant numbers #2016-344 and #2018-547.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Restrictions apply to the availability of these data. Data was obtained from Statistics Sweden through the ASTRID database and are available from the authors with the permission of Statistics Sweden.

Acknowledgments: We are grateful to Charlotta H. for valuable comments and suggestions in many stages of manuscript writing.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest for this article.

References

1. Radetzki, M. *The Green Myth: Economic Growth and the Quality of the Environment*; Multi-Science Publishing Company: Essex, UK, 2001.
2. Thunberg, G. The Disarming Case to Act Right Now on Climate Change. Available online: https://www.ted.com/speakers/greta_thunberg (accessed on 27 April 2021).
3. Nicolosi, E.; Feola, G. Transition in Place: Dynamics, Possibilities, and Constraints. *Geoforum* **2016**, *76*, 153–163. [CrossRef]
4. Lindgren, U. Who is the counter-urban mover? Evidence from the Swedish urban system. *Int. J. Popul. Geogr.* **2003**, *9*, 399–418. [CrossRef]
5. Sandow, E.; Lundholm, E. Which Families move out from Metropolitan Areas? Counterurban Migration and Professions in Sweden. *Eur. Urban Reg. Stud.* **2019**, *27*, 276–289. [CrossRef]
6. Vlasov, M. Ecological Embedding. Stories of Back-to-the-Land Ecopreneurs and Energy Descent. Ph.D. Thesis, Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden, 2020.
7. DeMaria, F.; Kallis, G.; Bakker, K. Geographies of degrowth: Nowtopias, resurgences and the decolonization of imaginaries and places. *Environ. Plan. E Nat. Space* **2019**, *2*, 431–450. [CrossRef]
8. Syssner, J. *Pathways to Demographic Adaptation—Perspectives on Policy and Planning in Depopulating Areas in Northern Europe*; Springer: Cham, Switzerland, 2020.
9. Rebouças, R.; Soares, A.M. Voluntary Simplicity: A Literature Review and Research Agenda. *Int. J. Consum. Stud.* **2021**, *45*, 303–319. [CrossRef]
10. Etzioni, A. Voluntary simplicity: Characterization, select psychological implications, and societal consequences. *J. Econ. Psych.* **1998**, *19*, 619–643.
11. Schor, J. Time, Labour and Consumption: Guest Editor's Introduction. *Time Soc.* **1998**, *7*, 119–127. [CrossRef]
12. Schor, J.B. Sustainable Consumption and Worktime Reduction. *J. Sustain. Ecol.* **2005**, *9*, 37–50. [CrossRef]
13. Tan, P. Leaving the Rat Race to Get a Life: A Study of Midlife Career Downshifting. Ph.D. Thesis, Swinburne University, Melbourne, Australia, 2000.
14. Hamilton, C. *Downshifting in Britain: A Sea-Change in the Pursuit of Happiness*; Discussion Paper 58; The Australia Institute: Canberra, Australia, 2003.
15. Hampton, R.S. Downshifting, Leisure Meanings and Transformation in Leisure. Ph.D. Thesis, Old Main, Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA, USA, 2008.
16. Alexander, S. *Voluntary Simplicity: The Poetic Alternative to Consumer Culture*; Stead and Daughters: Whanganui, New Zealand, 2009.
17. Juniu, S. Downshifting: Regaining the Essence of Leisure. *J. Leis. Res.* **2000**, *32*, 69–73. [CrossRef]
18. Alexander, S.; Ussher, S. The Voluntary Simplicity Movement: A multi-national survey analysis in theoretical context. *J. Consum. Cult.* **2002**, *12*, 66–86. [CrossRef]
19. Beck, U. *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*; SAGE: London, UK, 1992.
20. Schor, J.B. *The Overspent American: Upscaling, Downshifting and the New Consumer*; Basic Books: New York, NY, USA, 1998.
21. Lupton, D. Introduction: Risk and Sociocultural Theory. In *Risk and Sociocultural Theory: New Directions and Perspectives*; Lupton, D., Ed.; Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 1999.
22. Gregory, A.; Milner, S. Editorial: Work-life balance, a Matter of Choice? *Gender Work Organ.* **2009**, *16*, 1–13. [CrossRef]
23. Standing, G. *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*, 3rd ed.; Bloomsbury Academic: London, UK; New York, NY, USA, 2016.

24. Hicks, A.; Esping-Andersen, G. The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism. *Contemp. Sociol. A J. Rev.* **1991**, *20*, 399–401. [CrossRef]
25. Hedberg, C.; Eimermann, M. Två Forskare om Att Sluta Jobba: Fler Fördelar än Nackdelar Med att Växla Ner. *Aftonbladet*, 18 February 2019; 4–5.
26. Eimermann, M.; Hedberg, C.; Lindgren, U. Downshifting Dutch Rural Tourism Entrepreneurs in Sweden: Challenges, Opportunities and Implications for the Swedish Welfare State. In *Tourism Employment in Nordic Countries: Trends, Practices, and Opportunities*; Walmsley, A., Åberg, K., Blinnikka, P., Jóhannesson, G.T., Eds.; Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, UK, 2020.
27. Eimermann, M.; Hedberg, C.; Nuga, M. Is Downshifting Easier in the Countryside? Focus Group Visions on Individual Sustainability Transitions. In *Dipping in to the North: Living, Working and Traveling in Sparsely Populated Areas*; Lundmark, L., Carson, D.B., Eimermann, M., Eds.; Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, UK, 2020.
28. Eimermann, M.; Lindgren, U.; Lundmark, L.; Zhang, J. Mobility Transitions and Rural Restructuring in Sweden: A Database Study of Holistic Simplifiers. In *Degrowth and Tourism: New Perspectives on Tourism Entrepreneurship, Destinations and Policy*; Hall, C.M., Lundmark, L., Zhang, J., Eds.; Routledge: Abingdon, UK, 2021.
29. Tjärnström, L.A. Ekorrhjulsavhopparna Snyltar på De Som Jobbar och Betalar Skatt. *Göteborgs Posten*. 20 January 2021. Available online: <https://www.gp.se/debatt/ekorrhjulsavhopparna-snyltar-p%C3%A5-de-som-jobbar-och-betalar-skatt-1.40121181> (accessed on 6 May 2021).
30. Bastani, A. *Helautomatisk lyxkommunism [Fully Automated Luxury Communism: A Manifesto]*; Verbal Förlag: Stockholm, Sweden, 2019.
31. Hochschild, A. *The Second Shift*; Penguin: New York, NY, USA, 1989.
32. Zimmerman, T.S. Marital Equality and Satisfaction in Stay-At-Home Mother and Stay-At-Home Father Families. *Contemp. Fam. Ther.* **2000**, *22*, 337–354. [CrossRef]
33. Linderborg, Å. Bara Vita Kvinnor får Vara Hemmafruar. *Aftonbladet*. 10 February 2019. Available online: <https://www.aftonbladet.se/kultur/a/4dpgde/bara-vita-kvinnor-far-vara-hemmafruar> (accessed on 6 May 2021).
34. Boppart, T.; Krusell, P. Labor Supply in the Past, Present, and Future: A Balanced-Growth Perspective. *J. Politics Econ.* **2020**, *128*, 118–157. [CrossRef]
35. United Nations Development Program (2007–2008) Human Development Report. Available online: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-report-20078> (accessed on 15 February 2021).
36. Hall, K. Hours Polarisation at the End of the 1990s. *Perspect. Labour Income* **1999**, *2*, 8–37.
37. Ragusa, A.T. Downshifting or Conspicuous Consumption? A Sociological Examination of Treechange as a Manifestation of Slow Culture. In *Culture of the Slow—Social Deceleration in an Accelerated World*; Osbaldeston, N., Ed.; Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, UK, 2013.
38. Schor, J.B. *The Overworked American*; Basic Books: New York, NY, USA, 1999.
39. Morse, E.L.; Inglehart, R. The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics. *Foreign Aff.* **1978**, *56*, 442–443. [CrossRef]
40. Brooks, D.; Viladas, P. Inconspicuous Consumption. *New York Times Magazine*. 13 April 1997, p. 25. Available online: <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/04/13/magazine/inconspicuous-consumption.html> (accessed on 11 February 2021).
41. Breakspear, C.; Hamilton, C. *Getting a Life—Understanding the Downshifting Phenomenon in Australia*; Discussion Paper 62; The Australia Institute: Canberra, Australia, 2004.
42. Peyer, M.; Balderjahn, I.; Seegerbarth, B.; Klemm, A. The Role of Sustainability in Profiling Voluntary Simplifiers. *J. Bus. Res.* **2017**, *70*, 37–43. [CrossRef]
43. Balsa-Budai, N.; Kiss, M.; Kovács, B.; Szakály, Z. Attitudes of Voluntary Simplifier University Students in Hungary. *Sustainability* **2019**, *11*, 1802. [CrossRef]
44. Kennedy, E.H.; Krahn, H.; Krogman, N.T. Downshifting: An Exploration of Motivations, Quality of Life, and Environmental Practices. *Sociol. Forum* **2013**, *28*, 764–783. [CrossRef]
45. Grigsby, M. *Buying Time and Getting By: The Voluntary Simplicity Movement*; State University of New York Press: New York, NY, USA, 2005.
46. Hamilton, C.; Denniss, R. *Affluenza: When too Much Is Never Enough*; Allen & Unwin: Sydney, Australia, 2005.
47. Carbin, M.; Overud, J.; Kvist, E. *Feminism som Lönearbete*; Leopard Förlag: Stockholm, Sweden, 2017.
48. Gunnarsson, A. *Tracing the Women-Friendly Welfare State*; Makadam: Gothenburg, Sweden, 2013.
49. Swedish Social Insurance Agency. Hur Många är Sjukskrivna? Available online: <https://www.forsakringskassan.se/statistik/sjuk/sjukpenning-rehabiliteringspenning/hur-manga-ar-sjukskrivna> (accessed on 27 April 2021).
50. De Graaf, J.; Wann, D.; Naylor, T.H. *Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic*; Berrett-Koehler: San Francisco, CA, USA, 2001.
51. Stead, D. Urban-Rural Relationships in the West of England. *Built Environ.* **2002**, *28*, 299–310.
52. Massey, D. *Spatial Divisions of Labour: Social Structures and the Geography of Production*; Methuen: New York, NY, USA, 1984.
53. Harvey, D. Roepke Lecture in Economic Geography—Crises, Geographic Disruptions and the Uneven Development of Political Responses. *Econ. Geogr.* **2011**, *87*, 1–22. [CrossRef]
54. Dicken, P. *Global Shift—Mapping the changing Contours of the World Economy*; SAGE: London, UK, 2015.
55. Lindgren, U.; Borggren, J.; Karlsson, S.; Eriksson, R.H.; Timmermans, R.H. Is There an End to the Concentration of Businesses and People? In *Globalisation and Change in Forest Ownership and Forest Use—Natural Resource Management in Transition*; Keskitalo, E.C.H., Ed.; Palgrave MacMillan: Basingstoke, UK, 2017.

56. Gearey, M.; Ravenscroft, N. The Nowtopia of the Riverbank: Elder Environmental Activism. *Environ. Plan. E Nat. Space* **2019**, *2*, 451–464. [[CrossRef](#)]
57. Hopkins, R. *The Transition Handbook: From Oil Dependency to Local Resilience*; Green Books: Totnes, UK, 2008.
58. Carlsson, C.; Manning, F. Nowtopia: Strategic Exodus? *Antipode* **2010**, *42*, 924–953. [[CrossRef](#)]
59. Massey, D. *For Space*; SAGE: London, UK, 2005.
60. Woods, M. Engaging the global countryside: Globalization, hybridity and the reconstitution of rural place. *Prog. Hum. Geogr.* **2007**, *31*, 485–507. [[CrossRef](#)]
61. Hedberg, C.; Do Carmo, R.M. *Translocal Ruralism—Mobility and Connectivity in European Rural Spaces*; Springer: Dordrecht, The Netherlands, 2012.
62. Stockdale, A.; Catney, G. A Life Course Perspective on Urban–Rural Migration: The Importance of the Local Context. *Popul. Space Place* **2014**, *20*, 83–98. [[CrossRef](#)]
63. Carson, D.B.; Lundmark, L.; Carson, D.A. The Continuing Advance and Retreat of Rural Settlement in the Northern Inland of Sweden. *J. North Stud.* **2019**, *13*, 7–33.
64. Statistics Sweden. Population Statistics. Available online: <https://www.scb.se/en/finding-statistics/statistics-by-subject-area/population/population-composition/population-statistics/> (accessed on 7 June 2021).
65. Hall, C.M.; Müller, D.K. *Tourism, Mobility and Second-Homes: Between Elite Landscape and Common Ground*; Channel View: Buffalo, NY, USA, 2004.
66. Alexander, S.; Gleeson, B. Urban Social Movements and the Degrowth Transition: Towards a Grassroots Theory of Change. *J. Aust. Political Econ.* **2020**, *86*, 355–378.
67. Schierup, C.-U.; Hansen, P.; Castles, S. *Migration, Citizenship, and the European Welfare State*; University Press: Oxford, UK, 2006.
68. Osikominu, J.; Bocken, N. A Voluntary Simplicity Lifestyle: Values, Adoption, Practices and Effects. *Sustainability* **2020**, *12*, 1903. [[CrossRef](#)]
69. Löfgren, O. *On Holiday: A History of Vacationing*; University of California Press: Berkeley, CA, USA, 1999.
70. Elgin, D. *Voluntary Simplicity*; William Morrow: New York, NY, USA, 1993.
71. Elander, I. Window of Opportunity or “Here We Go Again”? In *Dipping in to the North: Living, Working and Traveling in Sparsely Populated Areas*; Lundmark, L., Carson, D.B., Eimermann, M., Eds.; Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, UK, 2020.
72. Kallis, G. Societal metabolism, working hours and degrowth: A comment on Sorman and Giampietro. *J. Clean. Prod.* **2013**, *38*, 94–98. [[CrossRef](#)]