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# Editorial: Tensions in sustainable consumption and everyday life

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## Editorial on the Research Topic

### Tensions in sustainable consumption and everyday life

## Introduction

The mitigation of the major crises of our time—such as climate change, biodiversity loss and resource depletion, as well as production of waste and pollution—requires profound societal changes. These changes are rooted and manifested in the everyday lives of ordinary consumers and citizens, and adjusting to them causes tensions which have gained limited attention in energy transition research. The tensions entail challenges that may be exclusionary in terms of competences, images and material and financial demands. They can also lead to rejection of climate change mitigation efforts and are connected to various socially formed perceptions of identity.

One of the pressing tasks is to imagine and realize versions of everyday life that fit within the envelope of sustainability (Shove and Spurling, 2013). Whether driven by technological development, social (“grassroot level”) reorganization, political steering or other intervention, changes in everyday are often complex and difficult to grasp (e.g., Schlosberg and Coles, 2016; Shove and Walker, 2010). The recent crises (such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the European energy crisis) leading to economic pressures, resource scarcity, and social insecurities, for example, add to this complexity, and test the flexibility and resilience of everyday lives of people across the world (e.g., Greene et al., 2022; Sovacool et al., 2019; Matschoss et al., 2025). Organizing sustainable everyday life in the middle of these changes calls for novel forms of collaboration and inclusiveness, innovativeness, and new citizen roles (e.g., Laakso et al., 2021; Lennon et al., 2020; Matschoss et al., 2021). The development of approaches that can grasp and address emerging complexities in everyday life is needed.

This Research Topic invited contributions that address sustainable everyday life and related tensions. Both past, present, and future looking, conceptual or empirical investigations were welcomed, as well as contributions from various domains of everyday life.

## Contributions in the Research Topic

One approach to reduce the effect of unsustainable consumption that is being increasingly advocated by sustainability research is sufficiency (e.g., Lorek and Spangenberg, 2019; Jungell-Michelsson and Heikkurinen, 2022). Gossen et al. in this Research Topic examine the consumption of mobile phones from the perspective of sufficiency through dynamic social norms. They ask how a sufficiency-promoting message that emphasizes a dynamic norm influences consumers' actual sufficiency-oriented mobile phone use intentions and behavioral choices and examine how consumers perceive sufficiency-promoting messages from a fictitious search engine compared to sufficiency-promoting messages from a fictitious online store. Their results indicate that the intention to purchase a new mobile phone is influenced by materialism and that participants perceive the motives of the fictional search engine as more altruistic and less exploitative compared to those of the fictional online store.

Ruippo et al. also highlight the material dimension of consumption. They discuss the ambiguous relationship of consumers with plastics in food consumption. They examine the interlinkages of the use of packaging and everyday sustainability starting from consumers' shopping routines and ending with their duties as recyclers or wastemakers. The key finding from the study is that consumers seem to experience an uneasy and cyclical relationship with packaging use. While it is essential and not much reflected upon while doing purchase decisions on food, consumers feel frustrated and anxious about packaging use and disposal as they are also expected to act as active agents in circular economy requiring constant negotiations and re-negotiations with sustainability and the materiality of food packaging. The article concludes that consumers have multiple moral considerations while interacting with packaging and constructing relationships with it, which requires work and constant negotiation from the consumer when acting in the position of a shopper, an eater, a wastemaker and a recycler.

Also Rinkinen and Shove examine circular economy from the point of view of material culture in this Research Topic. In their perspective article, they argue for an expanded analysis of "object relations" going beyond the examination of goods in isolation, and instead turning toward an approach that engages with fundamental questions about the constitution of needs and systems of provision. Basing their examination on social practices, they remind us about that resource flows related to consumption are bound up with the long run histories of social life, and with the material arrangements associated with them. Rinkinen and Shove (p. 3) argue that theories of material culture and practice provide a means of re-engaging with the ultimate questions about consumption, production and need that ought to be integral to the on-going debates about the circular economy, "but that are sidelined in what remains classically 'economistic' object-centric discussions of markets, substitution, manufacturing, and waste."

Heiskanen examines inclusivity in climate movement and points out that "climate transition" (a systematic shift toward

practices that mitigate climate change) has political implications for everyday life that are different for different individuals and groups. The article emphasizes that while climate action engages several kinds of actors, it often excludes men working in manual occupations, in particular. The article hence examines the conditions that enable these unlikely participants to engage in and identify with a climate movement and analyses the relationship between their biographies, practices of the climate movement, and the interaction between them that allows or affords the identification with climate movement. The analysis drawing from the concept of situated practice proposes cultural affordances that allow for more inclusive identification with climate movements. These include, for example, building on and respecting participants' experience and embodied competence and giving them room to appear as experts (Heiskanen, 9).

The contributions to this Research Topic provide a variety of examples and cases that illustrate what (strong) sustainability is in everyday life, how consumption is steered and shaped, what kinds of skills and competencies are needed, and what kinds of tensions and solutions arise.

## Author contributions

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