Political Consumerism: Its motivations, power, and conditions in the Nordic countries and elsewhere.

Proceedings from the 2nd International Seminar on
Political Consumerism, Oslo August 26-29, 2004

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Michele Micheletti and Mads P. Sørensen.*

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TemaNord 2005:517

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ISBN 92-893-1129-0

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Consumer Co-operation in the Nordic Countries

The aim of the co-operation in the Nordic Committee of Senior Officials on Consumer Affairs is to promote consumer safety, protect their financial and legal interests, inform consumers and promote their education, and promote consumer influence in society. Exchange of information, reports, and research will contribute to the Nordic consumer policy and provides a platform for joint Nordic presentation in international contexts.

Nordic co-operation

Nordic co-operation, one of the oldest and most wide-ranging regional partnerships in the world, involves Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland. Co-operation reinforces the sense of Nordic community while respecting national differences and similarities, makes it possible to uphold Nordic interests in the world at large and promotes positive relations between neighbouring peoples.

Co-operation was formalised in 1952 when *the Nordic Council* was set up as a forum for parliamentarians and governments. The Helsinki Treaty of 1962 has formed the framework for Nordic partnership ever since. The *Nordic Council of Ministers* was set up in 1971 as the formal forum for co-operation between the governments of the Nordic countries and the political leadership of the autonomous areas, i.e. the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland.

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1. Studying Political Consumerism

Magnus Boström, Andreas Føllesdal, Mikael Klintman, Michele Micheletti and Mads P. Sørensen

Late modern consumers do more than just think about their own well-being when doing their daily shopping. Increasingly, consumers express non-economic values through the market arena, especially with regard to such issues as human rights, animal rights, global solidarity and environmental responsibility. What we see in the Nordic countries and elsewhere is that people are active in boycotting and “buycotting” (i.e. positively choosing) products and producers for ethical and political reasons. Old and new civil society actors also shoulder responsibility for problems earlier considered exclusively a state concern. They initiate and participate in the development of new consumer-oriented policy instruments such as eco- or fair trade labels. New social movements are mobilized with new “cultural jamming” tactics; i.e. directly targeting and making ridiculous the names and logos of transnational corporations. The concept of political consumerism draws on the observation that consumer choice and the rising politics of products is an increasingly important form of political participation that exists parallel to conventional party-centered and national state level politics (Micheletti 2003; Micheletti et al. 2003; Sørensen 2004). Political consumerism has formally been defined as

consumer choice of producers and products with the goal of changing objectionable institutional or market practices. It is based on attitudes and values regarding issues of justice, fairness, or non-economic issues that concern personal and family well-being and ethical or political assessment of favorable and unfavorable business and government practice. Regardless of whether political consumers act individually or collectively, their market choices reflect an understanding of material products as embedded in a complex social and normative context which may be called the politics behind products (Micheletti et al. 2003:xiv-xv).

Using the market as an arena for politics and consumer choice as political choice receives the attention of the United Nations, European Union, Nordic Council, Amnesty International, World Wide Fund for Nature as well as other regional and national state and civil society institutions. Because political consumerism is controversial and understudied academically, researchers disagree about its importance in the world today. Some scholars argue that consumers play a significant role in improving

human rights and sustainable development globally when they make ethically and politically motivated consumer choices. Others maintain that political consumerism will never become an influential regulatory tool because individual consumers cannot be convinced, organized, and trusted sufficiently to express ethical and political values in the marketplace. A final group of scholars asserts that political consumerism is not a move towards sustainable development because it encourages continued over-consumption. Yet given the few academic studies that presently exists it is difficult to draw strong conclusions about the strengths and weaknesses of political consumerism. The 2nd International Seminar on Political Consumerism was called to begin to fill in the gaps in our knowledge about political consumerism.

Political consumption is not an entirely new phenomenon, yet social science has been unable to conceptualize it until recently. Given that Nordic countries have been seen as forerunners internationally (e.g. Boström 2003a, 2003b; Micheletti 2003; Klintman & Boström 2004b), it is perhaps no accident that Nordic social scientists have been central in the introduction and development of the concept. The idea of political consumerism was first formulated in the environment around the private Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies in Denmark in the mid 1990th (Sørensen, 2004:10). However, the concept soon spread to academic circles in Denmark and elsewhere.

The 1st *International seminar on political consumerism* was held in Stockholm 2001. It was the first time scholars from different disciplines were gathered to discuss political consumerism. Scholars from a wide variety of disciplines presented papers that used the concepts of trust, social capital, governance, postmodernization, political participation, audit and risk society, business ethics, globalization, lifestyle politics, reflexive modernization, ecological modernization, and individualization to address the phenomenon of political consumerism. Scholars analyzed and evaluated the institutional design of political consumerism schemes and penetrated political consumerism historically. Two other important areas were gender and the relationship between the consumer's movement and political consumerism. This first International Seminar on Political Consumerism was funded by *Axel and Margaret Ax:son Johnsons stiftelse* and was part of the research program "Ethics, Virtue, and Social Capital in Sweden" at City University, Stockholm, Sweden. A concrete outcome of this conference was the book *Politics, Products, and Markets. Exploring Political Consumerism Past and Present* (Micheletti, Follesdal, Stolle, 2003). The same year Michele Micheletti published *Political Virtue and Shopping. Individuals, Consumerism, and Collective Action*.

But even before the seminar and the ensuing publications, scholars in the Nordic countries had begun to publish on the subject of political consumerism. The Danish Study of Power and Democracy (Magtudredningen. En analyse af demokrati og magt i Danmark) published a book in

2001 by Jørgen Goul Andersen and Mette Tobiasen entitled *Politisk forbrug og politisk forbrugere. Globalisering og politik i hverdagslivet* (Political Consumerism and Political Consumers. Globalization and Politics in Everyday Life). The survey reported in this book was the most comprehensive to date on the characteristics and motivations of political consumers. Results from the 1st International Seminar on Political Consumerism were also stressed in the final report from the Power and Democracy research program that was published in 2003 (Togeby et al., 2003).

In Denmark, Mads P. Sørensen completed a dissertation in which he analyzes and discusses the initial research on political consumerism especially in Denmark (2002; see also 2004). He has also related the phenomenon of political consumerism to the history of ideas as well as, together with Boris Holzer (at the centre for Reflexive Modernization in Munich, Germany) analyzed its relation to Beck's idea of subpolitics (Holzer & Sørensen 2003). A year later another ISPC participant from Denmark, Mette Tobiasen, completed her dissertation (2003) that used political consumers as way of testing trends toward global citizenship. In Sweden Magnus Boström and Mikael Klintman started two projects on green political consumerism funded by the Swedish Research Council and the Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning (the latter project involving Lena Ekelund and Anna-Lisa Lindén). They especially pay attention to the production of tools – eco-labeling – for green political consumerism and the relating political controversies, organizational conditions, and framing strategies (e.g. Boström 2003a, 2003b; Klintman & Boström 2004a, 2004b).

With these publications the concept of political consumption now has a solid scholarly platform, and an international academic network around it is beginning to emerge (cf. e.g. Cashore et al. 2004; ECPR 2004; Micheletti & Stolle, 2002; Polconfood, 2004). A growing number of scholars from a variety of disciplines are now studying political consumerism. However, more theoretical and empirical research is needed before we can draw conclusions about the significance of the phenomenon of political consumerism in the world today. This need for more research stimulated the planning and preparation of the 2nd International Seminar on Political Consumerism. Among important queries included in the call for papers were: the general issue of the ability of consumer power to send messages on political and ethical values to corporate, state, and civil society actors and institutions; the conditions and prerequisites (political culture, market characteristics, etc.) for the success, effectiveness, or failure of political consumerism as a regulatory tool; the framing and organizational processes behind political consumerism and the actors involved in them, and the motives and characteristics of political consumers as well as their ability to handle risks and conflicting information about consumer choices and alternatives. Funding for a new conference on political consumerism came from the Nordic Council of Ministers and

the Swedish Research Council. The 2nd *International Seminar on Political Consumerism* was held in the hotel Voksenåsen in Oslo, Norway, August 26-29, 2004. The programme, and this publication, includes 21 papers of which a third are written by scholars from non-Nordic countries (US, UK, the Netherlands, Germany, France). A list of all authors represented in this volume is available at the end of this publication.

Earlier versions of the papers that are included in this publication were presented and discussed at this seminar. The papers address political consumerism from different theoretical angles and disciplines (political science, sociology, geography, history of ideas, philosophy, marketing, business studies, human geography, environmental studies and nutrition), and they analyze the characteristics of political consumers and their motivations to express their political concerns through market channels. The papers discuss how individual choice can be linked to public influence. The papers also investigate the conditions in the Nordic countries and elsewhere to facilitate or hinder political consumption. They show how state, business, and civil society actors compete or are forming new coalitions to develop (or oppose) tools for political consumerism. Some papers pick up the theme of political consumption from the business and entrepreneurial point of view. The papers included in this report are briefly summarized the following sections. The final section reports on a discussion on the final day of the 2nd International Seminar on Political Consumerism about the research questions that should be addressed in further research on the phenomenon.

Theorizing political consumerism

The first seminar session addressed the phenomena of political consumerism from four theoretical perspectives by focusing on the questions: What political consumerism is, why it occurs, and how we are to assess it. Regarded as a response to globalization, political consumerism challenges fundamental premises of conventional democratic thought. The papers show, however, that political consumerism may be interpreted and framed in conflicting ways.

In their paper "Globalisation and the Role of Citizen-Consumers in Environmental Politics" Gert Spaargaren and Susan Martens consider the changing role of citizens in globalized environmental politics. Citizen consumers may be taking responsibility in ways best understood in light of debates regarding ecological citizenship, sustainable consumption, and global civil society. Spaargaren and Martens explore when consumers may have an impact through their lifestyles, consumption, routines and political commitment in an increasingly globalized environmental field.

Mads P. Sørensen questions the legitimacy of such consumer influence in "Liberal Democratic Society and Political Consumerism – A

Problematic Combination.” Drawing on the classical insights of John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Adam Smith, he argues that liberal democratic values conflict with political consumerism in several ways, especially because political consumerism deliberately mixes the public and the private spheres and the political and the economic spheres – separations which liberal democrats have long fought for. When the state initiates political consumerism it abdicates political control, returning consumers and producers to a state of nature, leaving decisions not to citizens with equal votes but to consumers with unequal purchasing power. The fickle and arbitrary rule of consumer choice challenges not only the rule of law but, as Adam Smith would put it, also economic prosperity. Is Smith mistaken, or is the economic loss offset by the other values secured by political consumerism? If so, which are those values?

Mikael Klintman explores this issue and argues in “Ambiguous Framings of Political Consumerism: Means or End, Product- or Process Orientation?” that political consumerism is ambiguous regarding its means and objectives. The apparent simplicity and definitiveness of labeling and activism, frames and hides scientific complexity, knowledge uncertainty, political choices, and interest conflicts. For instance, the objectives may be to secure product quality or appropriate production processes. However, the criteria and labels must simplify important distinctions and assessments that are often of crucial importance for the environment and human health. Different activist frames also hinder the assessment of political consumerism because we have varying assessments about the relative importance of values such as trust, consumer learning, and broader political participation by the consumer.

Clive Barnett, Nick Clarke, Paul Cloke and Alice Malpass develop in “Articulating Ethics and Consumption” a theoretical understanding of the importance of ethical consumption as a new terrain of political action. They also discuss the grounds upon which ethical consumption can be opened up for normative critique. Through a critique of debates and existing research on consumption – which overemphasizes the problematic nature of caring at distance or on rational calculations of ethical obligations – they argue for taking more into account the complexity of the practices, motivations and mechanisms through which the working up of moral selves is undertaken in relation to consumption practices.

The meanings, causes, effects and legitimacy of political consumerism as well as other aspects continue to be contested issues. The empirical studies presented in the rest of this publication shed light on some of these issues. In the next section the focus is shifted from the philosophical, political and rhetorical contexts of political consumerism, and towards the consumers themselves and their commitment to political consumerist strategies for betterment of the environment and human rights. With the help of survey data on political consumer characteristics and motivations,

the papers offer knowledge to help us review the critical claim that consumer power cannot be channeled to a more sustainable world.

Who are the Political Consumers?

How many political consumers are there? Are they many, or are they just a radical elite fringe of the Scandinavian population? Who are the political consumers? Are they, for example, richer or poorer than the average consumer, are they better or worse educated, and do they trust more or less in traditional forms of political participation? These are the questions that have been at the center of survey research on political consumerism.

As political consumerism was first given research attention in Denmark and included as an important research topic in the Danish Study of Power and Democracy, Danish survey researchers have been privileged with an impressive data set that allowed them to address these questions. Now more survey data from other countries is also available. The European Social Survey includes data on political consumerism from twenty two European countries. The encompassing Citizen Involvement in Democracy project that includes fifteen countries, including Denmark, Norway, and Sweden is also reporting survey results on political consumerism. Finally, two special studies on Scandinavian political consumers were conducted in Denmark and Sweden. This section presents the latest survey data on political consumers in Denmark, Sweden and Norway. In "Political Consumerism in Denmark" Mette Tobiasen offers results from 2004 on Denmark from a survey designed to focus specifically on political consumers. She concludes that political consumerism has found a steady – and relatively high – level in Denmark. In their paper "Swedish Political Consumers: Who They Are and Why They Use the Market as an Arena for Politics" Michele Micheletti and Dietlind Stolle present data from a national representative postal survey conducted in Sweden in the fall of 2003. Their findings show that Swedish political consumers are more often women, highly educated, and coming from more wealthy households. Kristin Strømsnes writes about Norwegian political consumers in "Political Consumption in Norway: Who, Why – and Does It Have Any Effect?" Her paper is also built on Norwegian data from the Citizen Involvement in Democracy data set. She finds that this form of political participation appeals to an urban, radical, well-educated and politically interested group of people. There are many similarities between the findings in the three countries but also some differences. However, together the three papers show that political consumerism is a significant phenomenon in the Nordic countries. It is practiced by a considerable number of people and, therefore, claims about its use by an elite, radical fringe can now be dispelled.

Mobilization and political consumer power

Survey research confirms that political consumerism is practiced by a significant portion of the Nordic population. However, a large number of political consumers do not necessarily mean that political consumers can exercise influence to change the direction of politics in the marketplace. Do political consumers have real consumer power? And if they do, through what means can they exercise that power?

In his paper “Private Choice and Public Influence: Political Consumers Behind the Mirror of the Market” *Boris Holzer* develops a theoretical understanding of how individual choices can have public influence. He argues that political consumerism refers to and combines the rationalities of two subsystems, politics and the economy. This blending of roles and rationalities entails both difficulties and opportunities. In their everyday, highly individualized shopping decisions, consumers do not appear to command a great deal of power. However, individual economic decisions can make an impact on corporate policies if the societal context of political consumerism is taken into account. In particular, Holzer focuses on the role of social movements. His paper discusses how they play important pedagogical roles in their communication to everyday consumers and how they send messages to corporations about potential consumer demand.

Anna-Lisa Lindén shows in “Private Food Strategies and Political Consumerism” how concerned consumers, vegetarians, and vegans reflect about and make use of policy instruments such as eco-labels and other informational tools in their everyday practice and shopping behavior. Consumer power can be activated for several reasons; e.g. some political consumers rely on a green, animal-friendly ideology whereas others are more theoretically oriented and still others more everyday-oriented and concerned about the well-being of family members. Learning and socialization into private but also political food strategies can have many different sources. An important source not really highlighted in previous research on political consumerism is personal experiences and influence from relatives and friends.

Political consumerism may be more or less difficult to put into effect and its effects are dependent on a variety of contextual factors. In their paper “Between the State and the Market: The Political Struggle between the Animal Rights Movement and the Swedish Fur Industry” *Mattias Wahlström* and *Abby Petersen* analyze the capacity of the Swedish animal rights movement to pressure the domestic fur farming business. The business is export-oriented and, therefore, not economically sensitive to changes in the domestic market. This makes it difficult for the movement to develop political consumerist strategies (e.g., boycotting) within Swe-

den. However, the movement has been successful in dealing with a relatively open cultural opportunity structure, winning a war as to how the issue should be framed morally. In spite of the fur industry's attempts to counter-mobilize, the animal rights movement has been heard in the formal political channels. Quite surprisingly, the seminar discussion of this paper revealed an interesting difference between Sweden and Norway. An aggressive animal rights movement in Sweden has pressured government for change. In Norway, although occasionally news-breaking, civil society and extra-parliamentary action have played a less prominent role. Instead, animal rights' activists are integrated into the state bureaucracy. They have, for instance, used their legal education to "capture" state policy in this area and participate in legislative reforms. Thus, Norway has not experienced the same degree of militancy by animal rightists as Sweden.

In the paper "A Case of Discursive Political Consumerism: The Nike Email Exchange" *Michele Micheletti and Dietlind Stolle* introduce a third form of political consumerism aside from boycotting and boycotting. It is discursive political consumerism or the use of communication (discursive strategies) to target the market actors. The paper includes an analysis of a "cultural-jamming" case of the anti-sweatshop movement, known as the Nike Email Exchange (NEE). The paper uses the 3,655 emails received by the NEE originator as its main empirical material. The authors argue that social movement scholars should take into account corporate-oriented activism taking place in the virtual public sphere and in the market as an arena for politics that goes beyond the nation-state. They find that many of the critical claims about Internet activism need to undergo modification.

Creating Institutional Arrangements – Enabling and Constraining Factors

Political consumerist labeling and certification schemes are an increasingly important phenomenon in the world today. Many schemes have developed in the 1990s. This section focuses on the factors that enable and constrain the creation of political consumerist institutional arrangements for sustainability and human rights' promotion. All four papers included in this section study fishery and forestry, two areas involving private eco-labeling schemes launched in response to government's and industry's inadequate management practices. *Olav Schram Stokke, Lars H. Gulbrandsen, Alf Håkon Hoel, and Jonette Braathen's* paper "Ecolabelling and Sustainable Management of Forestry and Fisheries: Does It Work?" discusses whether and how certification and labeling schemes affect actual management practices. An effective ness model of causal drivers, institutional features, and contextual factors is developed. An

important result is that effectiveness may involve balancing competing concerns, as illustrated by the trade off between the need for incentives to trigger acceptance of forestry and fishery schemes and the scheme's general integrity or legitimacy.

Lars Gulbrandsen explores in his paper "The Emergence of Non-State Authority in Forestry: Explaining Different Approaches in Similar Societies" divergent approaches to forest certification. In Sweden, the NGO-supported Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) has been the major labeling institution. In Norway, the industry-dominated Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification's Living Forest scheme (PEFC) has certified virtually all commercially productive forests. Three factors – public policy and government support, advocacy-group and market pressures, and industrial structure – are used to explain the differences. The first factor cannot explain the different approaches because both governments facilitated and legitimated the certification processes. The second and third factors are, however, important. Because they were exposed to market pressure, a group of large industrial Swedish forest companies responded to market and advocacy group pressures by choosing FSC. Small non-industrial forest owners who are most dominant in Norway rejected it due to their narrower market and public exposure and their belief that environmental, social and forest company interests dominate the FSC decision-making process.

Peter Oosterveer's "Global Regulation of Food and Consumer Involvement: Labeling of Sustainable Fisheries using the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)" focuses on the interplay of the "space of place" and the "space of flow" in the creation of certification and labeling schemes. Referring to one of the questions raised in the call for papers mentioned above, Oosterveer argues that consumers can be instrumental in regulating the sustainability consequences of global food production and consumption. However, he cautions that consumers still pay more attention to local effects in the "space of places." By using Marine Stewardship Certification as his example, he shows how labeling and certification schemes can mediate between the flows of space and time and, thereby, play an important role in sustainability and human rights' protection.

The final paper by *Magnus Boström*, "Eco-labeling of Seafood in Sweden: Toward a Credible Tool for Consumer-Based Environmental Improvement?" asks why it has been difficult to create a trustworthy Swedish scheme, given Sweden's good reputation with eco-labeling initiatives. This paper applies the credibility-enhancing standard-setting ideals of inclusiveness, independency, auditability, and scientific validity to the case of fishery and discusses the importance of past regulatory failures and low level of consumer trust. Boström shows how the contextual factors of policy culture, existing regulatory framework, and organizational landscape affect the possibilities of fulfilling the standard-setting ideals. An important result is the importance of, but also difficulties in,

developing organizational forms and procedures that meet with the approval of all stakeholders (state actors, social movement organizations, fishermen's organizations, fish processing industry, retailers, consumers, etc.).

Political Consumerism, Information, Marketing, and Creating Markets

Based on a literature review, the paper "The Meaning of Information on Traceability of Fish for Establishment of Consumer Trust" by *Gun Roos*, *Arne Dulsrud* and *Hans Martin Norberg* asks if and how information and traceability may help to establish consumer trust in fish and seafood. The authors discuss the question if traceability is presented as a real consumer demand and a potential tool for consumers to express political views and increase market influence or if it is mainly portrayed as a business strategy and marketing technique for food industry and retail. Although food safety was an initial driving force for implementing traceability systems, food businesses and especially large producers and retailers increasingly see it as an important commercial tool. Yet, traceability has a potential to "defetishize" food commodities, i.e., to increase consumer consciousness and assist consumers in taking moral responsibility in a global market.

In his paper "The Social Construction of Green Market Niches" *Árni Sverrisson* investigates the preconditions that the market logics provides for political consumerism. What are the options for producers of "green" commodities vis-à-vis other producers? He holds that an analysis of producer action provides an incomplete picture of the opportunities for political consumerism. Sverrisson highlights the market challenges of legitimizing and advertising products as green by the use of scientific and technical information, which in turn may be interpreted in contested ways.

Hans Rask Jensen discusses in "What Does Political Consumerism Mean for Marketers?" different marketing management implications of the rise of political consumerism. The market increasingly becomes another channel for political participation, and this is important for marketers to take into consideration. But they need studies that are able to show to what extent consumer behavior in fact can be regarded as political consumerism and under what conditions potential political actors may be mobilized.

Context Factors Enabling or Constraining Political Consumerism

The last section includes papers that address the context factors which may facilitate or constrain political consumerism. These factors include political orientation in a country, political solidarity, access to alternative products, and traditions of citizen mobilization in consumer issues. The close interdependence between alternative production and political consumption is also highlighted.

Maurie Cohen uses a cross-national data set in “Sustainable Consumption and Global Citizenship: An Empirical Analysis” to investigate the significance of two dimensions of “sustainable” consumption: a country’s degree of income equality and its political solidarity with developing countries. Cohen contends that the countries that score high on the two dimensions also score high on sustainable consumption. Consequently, he holds that the two dimensions may be conceived as facilitating (if high) and constraining (if low) factors. On the basis of these variables, the Nordic countries appear to have an ability – or, in the case of Finland, “some capacity” – to forge a path toward more sustainable consumption.

Laura Terragni and *Unni Kjørnes* also examine the importance of political context and culture in “Ethical Consumption in Norway: Why is it so low?” By focusing on food-related practices, they highlight the opportunities and constraints that the institutionalization or shaping of the role(s) of the consumers may entail. Terragni and Kjørnes indicate that Norwegian consumers show a very high degree of trust in the food they consume as well as a high trust in experts involved in the Norwegian food system. The authors hold that this trust, in combination with the limited access to alternative, “ecological” food products, are crucial factors in explaining the low levels of political consumerism in Norway. While the results from earlier papers (see Strømsnes and Cohen) indicate similarities between Norway and other Nordic countries, it is interesting to note differences when focusing on trust- and access-dimensions.

In “From Political Consumption to Political Production, or the Resistable Implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility in a French Mining Company” *Franck Cochoy* and *Mylène Vabre* further develop the question of access to alternative products by examining the preconditions for a company to provide consumers with alternative products, produced through socially responsible production processes. In their study of a global mining company that tries to implement a Corporate Social Responsibility policy at the local level, they elucidate the constraints caused by limited acceptance among consumers. Cochoy and Vabre draw a picture of consumers who are less political than needed for a successful “politicized capitalism.”

Political Consumerism: Furthering the Research Agenda

The closing session of the 2nd International Seminar on Political Consumerism was dedicated to a discussion of furthering the research agenda on political consumerism. The participants addressed several themes that need to be discussed more fully in political consumerism research. The discussion covered some of the most urgent questions for further research on political consumerism.

One discussion concerned conceptual development in relation to such questions as the complexity of consumption. Participants agreed that political consumerism should problematize the concept of consumption as a multifaceted and multilayered phenomenon that is embedded in economic, social, and political norms as well as in everyday interactions and discursive practices. The complexity of consumption implies challenges for the development of an adequate terminology. Further research should consider how ethical, political, and green consumerism as well as citizen-consumerism are related and whether they should be distinguished from each other. Another important avenue for conceptual as well as empirical research is the relation between political consumerism and corporate social responsibility. Are these similar, different, or overlapping phenomena?

With the seminar and this publication much has been learned about the motivations and characteristics of political consumers. However (and almost needless to say) more research on political consumers is needed. How can we make distinctions among political consumers? Some of the suggestions discussed in the closing session included preliminary distinctions between shallow and deep political consumerism, consideration of the coherence in political consumerist thinking and behavior, complexity of motivations triggering political consumerism (including lifestyle issues, efforts of political change, the role of self-interest and other-regardness, and the opportunity structure of political consumerism in different countries and areas of the world). A couple of factors have proven to be significantly important in explaining differences in political consumerist behavior: gender and education. However, we have only begun to provide explanations and need more research about why this is so. Moreover, do we have difficulty in measuring possible but hidden male variants of political consumerism? Perhaps men indeed do take green and ethical issues into account when buying “male” products such as cars and computers. If this is so, why do they to a lesser extent see themselves as dealing with politics in the market arena? More research should also focus on the connection between political consumerism and political identity. Is political consumerism a left-leaning project for citizens seeking global social justice? Or can it be the case that we are having difficulty in measuring its use in extreme right-leaning groups?

Participants agreed that scholars should continue paying attention to the institutional designing of political consumerism. Research should, for instance, focus on the theme of how choice of products match problem targeting. It should consider how products and services are chosen for labeling and the kinds of problems that labeling is able to solve. Attempts at gender labeling are a good starting point to understand the problems involved with matching products with problems.

The papers indicate that the political culture, regulatory background, and role of market and ownership structure are important in the implementation of political consumerist institutions. Political consumerist research especially needs more of comparative studies which systematically compare countries and/or sectors. More attention should also be paid to the importance of broad stakeholder involvement for making institutions more effective, credible, and trustworthy. The participants noted a lack of focus on the role of consumers in the development and maintenance of political consumerist institutions as well as on how the media is involved in framing political consumerist issues and in disseminating information and knowledge to political consumers. More attention should also be focused on the role of the state in political consumerism. State actors can, for example, help legitimize political consumerist institutions. They can also have a role as a consumer through their procurement policy, and they may be involved in developing new market-based regulatory tools. It is necessary to investigate why and in which circumstances state actors choose to play certain roles. A final point is the need for studying the procurement policies of market actors as well as discussing the rise of political consumerism in relation to the changing role of corporations globally.

The 2nd International Seminar on Political Consumerism had the Nordic region as one of its main focuses. The papers on the Nordic countries show interesting similarities and differences. The session on “Who are the political consumers?” and Cohen’s broad comparative paper show general similarities in Nordic countries (Denmark, Norway, Sweden; Finland is the exception in Cohen’s paper). Surveys on European countries find that the Nordic countries stand out as those with populations with the highest levels of political consumerism (Ferrer-Fons 2004). Why is this so? Sweden and Denmark stand out as particularly political consumerist in nature. Further research is necessary to establish why a Nordic divide is present. From the paper discussions, it appears that Norwegians turn more to the state and government regulation to solve problems involving global market actors than Swedes or Danes. They seem to trust state and even market actors more than their Nordic counterparts, which may also explain why civil society actors are less prevalent in Norwegian political consumerist setting. The state itself can take on the role of acting as a political consumer. A good example is the Norwegian Petroleum Fund, which invests the state’s profit from state-owned oil production.

The investments are regulated by a code of ethics, applied by a Council on Ethics. The code of ethics prohibits investments in production of certain weapons, and in companies with an unacceptable risk of violating fundamental humanitarian principles, gross violations of human rights, corruption or severe environmental degradation. Does such responsiveness to ethical issues imply that citizens do not feel a need for more individualized political consumption?

In contrast, Danes and Swedes tend to believe somewhat less that the state can adequately deal with the problems that political consumerism attempts to solve. In particular, this applies to environmental problems and those concerning food quality. Lack of trust in state responsibility-taking encourages civil society actors to accept more responsibility, as evidenced by the environmental movement's establishment of eco-labeling and forest stewardship certification schemes. More research on the role of trust in political consumerism is needed generally, and the presence of a Nordic divide makes research on trust a high priority for Nordic scholars. We especially need more research of Finland and Iceland to get a fuller picture of political consumerism and its conditions in the Nordic.

Difficulties in establishing political consumerist arrangement are not only due to differences in national market, civil society, and political settings. There are also differences in sectors. The papers about fish-labeling and the fur industry indicate that the introduction of political consumerist strategies – even in a country such as Sweden – can be very problematic. As we discussed above, lack of trust in government regulation may trigger political consumerism. On the other hand, lack of mutual trust among civil-, market, and state actors can also be an obstacle for the establishment of political consumerist arrangements as the cases of fish-labeling in Sweden and organic labeling in the U.S. show. The process of establishing credible positive political consumerist arrangements require inclusion of many actors, but deep controversies in the sector may make it very difficult to organize such processes. We encourage scholars to investigate more how the market and organizational structures in different sectors affect the conditions for positive and negative political consumerism.

Important for the research agenda are comparisons among existing labeling schemes as well as comparisons between labeling and other tools for environmentally and socially responsible conduct (information, management systems, codes of conduct, etc.). What is the role of different stakeholders in different arrangements? How are disagreements and controversies over criteria resolved? How are standardization processes organized? What types of actors have the power to influence such processes? These and other questions are most fruitfully explored from the perspective of knowledge uncertainties as well as the divergent values and interests that come together in decision-making processes to solve social

and environmental problems. Researchers must consider that political consumerist decision-making processes are also highly “political” themselves. Even the advanced and state-of-the art science behind labeling criteria are produced in a political and social context that scholars should examine in order to enrich our understanding of the preconditions of a more democratically robust political consumerism.

Furthermore, of interest for scholars of political consumerism and political consumerist institutions (e.g. non-state regimes) is the development of normative criteria for assessing the democratic quality of political consumerism. Equally importance is the development of criteria for assessing the effectiveness of political consumerism. Effectiveness could be conceptualized broadly in terms of the role of the consumers, the democratic legitimacy of labeling schemes, boycotts, auditing and certification, and other forms of political consumerism. It should also be conceptualized as containing many different evaluative elements – from problematization of products and settings, to agenda-setting, policy and practice change, and ending in satisfactory outcomes that significantly help solve the problem that was targeted for problemsolving (for a discussion see Micheletti, 2003, Appendix). Effectiveness involves political consumerism with a role to play in improving the environment, common pool resources (forestry and marine life), gender relations, multiculturalism, food trust, animal welfare, fair trade, global solidarity as well as economic, social, and political equality.

With constructive discussions from the four day meeting, scholars are now ready to meet the challenge of the new research agenda for research on political consumerism. We took away with us from the last session a few ideas for the 3rd International Seminar on Political Consumerism. The important general themes that need to be addressed more systematically theoretically and empirically in future meetings are the effectiveness, trust, and accountability in political consumerism.

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2. Globalisation and the Role of Citizen-Consumers in Environmental Politics

Gert Spaargaren and Susan Martens

Abstract

In this chapter the changing roles of citizen-consumers in globalizing environmental politics are put at the center of attention. The (potential) involvement of citizen-consumers is discussed in relation to the increased influence of globalization on national environmental policies that address the lifestyles, consumption, routines and political commitment of citizen-consumers. After arguing for a stronger consumer orientation in environmental politics from an empirical perspective, the role of citizen consumers in the national and transnational environmental field is discussed in a theoretical way. To make sense of current and emerging citizen-consumer roles this article draws respectively upon the debates regarding ecological citizenship, sustainable consumption and global civil society. To place the resulting theoretical questions in the context of applied environmental politics four Dutch case studies that bring together environmental and consumer policies are put forward. From these case studies important ingredients for feasible consumer oriented policies in an increasingly globalized environmental field can be derived.

Introduction and Outline of the Argument

The connections between ‘environmental’ and ‘global’ change are well established and documented in the social science literature. Environmental problems are among the most frequently used examples to illustrate the new quality or dimension which social problems display when they manifest themselves primarily at the global level. Global warming for example was discussed by Anthony Giddens as a High Consequence Risk (HCR) to illustrate the new, risky dynamics of global modernity (Giddens, 1990). Trans-boundary pollution by nuclear radiation in the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster was used by Ulrich Beck as an early and convincing example of the emergence of the risk society, where it is im-

possible for citizens to escape from environmental risks that threaten large parts of the population (Beck, 1986).

The globalisation of environmental policies and politics has been reinforced by the emergence of global problems to a considerable extent. However, the development of these policies cannot be explained exclusively by the fact that the most pressing environmental problems (global warming, ozone-layer depletion) have obtained a global dimension. The management and control of environmental problems have developed into a trans-national and global affair for other reasons as well, the main reason being the emergence of a global network society (Castells, 1996). In the global network society, politics in general take on a different characteristic when compared to earlier phases of modernity. In order to be effective, environmental policies have to be developed at different levels, the nation-state just being one – though still very important – level.

As a result, we witness over the past decade a qualitative and quantitative growth in arrangements for the management of the global commons, for world-wide control of CO₂-emissions at levels set in the Kyoto-protocol, and for managing problems like desertification, biodiversity and water-scarcity beyond the regional levels. The globalisation of environmental politics is not restricted to official, governmental policies however. The agenda's of global civil society actors and especially the international (Environmental) NGO's are fuelled by environmental issues to a considerable extent, and the influence of NGO's like WWF, Greenpeace or Friends of the Earth International is judged to be substantial by most policy actors involved.

Although the globalisation of environmental problems and politics triggered a vital and still growing discourse in the environmental sciences, there is at least one theme that is not given proper attention in the literature: the changing role of citizen-consumers in globalising environmental politics. Do citizens participate in or at least feel some commitment with Rio, Kyoto-, or Cancun-processes? When confronted with new regulations, eco-labels or eco-taxes, do citizen-consumers know where they come from in terms of national, trans-national or global state-actors and institutions which can be legitimately held responsible for them? What are the consequences of globalisation for national environmental policies that aim to address the lifestyles, consumption routines and political commitments of citizen-consumers? Do they play the consumption-card or the citizen-card or a combination of both? These questions, referring to the impacts of globalisation on both the political roles of people as citizens as well as on the market roles of individuals as consumers, deserve more careful treatment and detailed discussion, so we would argue.

In this chapter we set ourselves the task of discussing the changing roles of citizen-consumers in globalising environmental politics, and look in more detail at the potential impacts of globalisation upon national environmental politics that aim to address the consumption patterns and li-

festyles of ‘their’ citizen-consumers. We start by posing the question why citizen-consumers do matter in environmental politics in the first place. In section one we present five arguments why there is a need for a stronger orientation on the role of citizen-consumers in environmental policy making both at the national and trans-national level. In section two we try to specify the role of citizen-consumers in a theoretical way, by presenting a selective review of the social science literature on respectively ecological citizenship and sustainable consumption behaviours. From the recent literature on ‘global civil society’ we try to learn more about the hybridisation of consumer-roles and citizenship-roles as they are seen to result from the globalisation of society. Having discussed citizen-consumer roles in a theoretical perspective, we then go on in section three to explore citizen-consumer issues in the context of applied (environmental) politics. We do so by presenting four Dutch case-studies, deriving from them some key-questions and principles for citizen-consumer oriented policies. In the fourth and final section we discuss a few key questions which could help to further develop the policy and research agenda on the global or trans-national level with respect to citizen-consumer involvement in environmental policies.

The Need for a Citizen-Consumer Orientation in Environmental Politics (4+1 arguments)

In the environmental field, policy experts are frequently joined by scientific experts who bring along a specialised expertise about the physical aspects of environmental flows. There is indeed a lot of technical scientific knowledge involved in understanding the dynamics of environmental flows like energy, waste, clouds or species. As a result, in many segments of the environmental policy field, technical or system rationalities tend to prevail. This dominance of technical scientific rationalities generates a number of ‘translation’ problems when policymakers are confronted with the task to organise a dialogue with citizen-consumers about the goals and general principles of environmental policies. The technical goals of emission-reduction or the percentages of material-recycling as set in official policy documents, have to be translated and adapted to the rationalities of ordinary daily life (Spaargaren, 2001). When we add to this translation-problem the fact that citizen-consumers are a very heterogeneous, loosely organised and modestly informed target-group of environmental policies, it is understandable why policy-experts in the environmental field mostly prefer to do business with the more powerful, well informed and well-organised target-groups like trans-national companies, farmers-organisations, professional NGO’s and utility-companies. For reasons of effectiveness and efficiency – so it is argued – it is better to avoid investing too much effort and money in policy arrangements that require

the active involvement of citizen-consumers in bringing about environmental change.

In The Netherlands the role of citizen-consumers in national environmental politics fits the pattern as described above to a considerable extent. In the national environmental policy plans (NEPP's) – appreciated and praised by friends and enemies alike for their thorough, consistent and well elaborated views on environmental change – the role of citizen-consumers is discussed as a complex and complicated issue (VROM, 1993). Consumers are regarded as a target-group that is difficult to reach and to get hold of. The only feasible action for national environmental policymakers seems to inform citizens – with the help of so-called social or soft policy-instruments – about the reasons behind measures and policy devices as they result from the negotiations between national governments and their counterparts in industries and in professionalized NGO's. Direct engagement and commitment of citizen-consumers with environmental policies however, tended to be avoided until recent times. At the international level, the situation does not seem to be much better. According to Cohen (forthcoming), Dutch environmental policies are among the front-runners when it comes to developing strategies to promote sustainable consumption patterns. In conclusion, when judged against the background of the overall 'environmental capacity' (Jänicke, 1991) as it was developed by nation states in advanced societies from the 1970's onward, the potential control of citizen-consumers and their direct contribution to environmental pollution, is least understood and under-theorized when compared to the politics developed for institutional actors.

With the apparent neglect of the important role of citizen-consumers in environmental policymaking, policy experts are swimming against the tide of social science studies emphasising the need to take a citizen-consumer oriented perspective on social change in contemporary modernity, also when environmental change or transition-processes are at stake. The need to take into account the perspective of citizen-consumers when designing and implementing environmental policies, can be argued for on a number of grounds, the most important of which can be summarised into 4 + 1 main points. The first four arguments are 'internal' to the field since they are rooted in the need to make environmental politics more legitimate and effective. The +1 argument refers to the changing character of politics in global modernity, affecting environmental politics but not being restricted to the environmental field.

Four Arguments

First, the need to develop a consumer-orientation in environmental policy is obvious when looking at the environmental impacts of modern consumption-patterns. The relative and absolute contribution of citizen-

consumers to total national environmental impacts is significant and still increasing in many advanced societies. According to a recent study by the national environmental research institute (RIVM) in the Netherlands, environmental policy goals cannot be realised without a further dematerialisation of consumption (Vringer et al., 2001).

Second, the neglect of citizen-consumers due to an emphasis on more 'profitable' target-groups in the earlier stages of environmental policy-making has become more difficult to defend in the present day situation, where we are confronted with rather mature, full developed environmental policies. With the advancement of environmental policy over the years, the fruits at the lower ends of the trees have been harvested. What remains are the more complex, persistent problems that need special treatment and new, integrated policy strategies. When looking at the problems that are labelled by the Dutch government as 'persistent' problems – e.g. problems that are in need of specific forms of transition-management – it can be concluded that they all have a strong 'consumer-behaviour-dimension' to them. For example the energy consumption related to dwelling a house and driving a car is significant in terms of environmental (CO₂) impacts, but difficult to change 'behind the back' of citizen-consumers. Although it is acknowledged by many policymakers that consumer-behaviours are crucial in this respect, it is indicated at the same time that the existing policy instruments are not suitable for this job and that we are in need of new, more sophisticated tools and equipment (VROM, 1993).

Third, when compared to the early days of environmental policymaking, the 'material foundations' for citizen-consumer oriented politics have become much broader and more developed. For a long time, consumer-empowerment in the environmental field was restricted to lifestyle-groups that were able to combine high environmental awareness with high incomes. This could be explained by the fact that in the early days of environmental policy-making, the provisioning of citizen-consumers with more sustainable goods and services found itself at rather low levels and also tended to be poorly organised. As a result, sustainable options in consumption-domains like food, housing, travel and recreation were overall inaccessible to the majority of the population. Now that the process of ecological modernisation of production and consumption is resulting in more green products and services that are offered in a more accessible and explicit ways to a greater diversity of lifestyle-groups, this argument no longer holds true (Mol & Sonnenfeld, 2000; Spaargaren, 2000). Environmental (product) choices or (lifestyle) policies are no longer restricted to top-consumers in niche markets or to well-informed citizens that are active in environmental organisations.

Fourth, not only the material foundations for consumer-oriented environmental policies have improved, also the 'social foundations' have become more solid and better established. Over the past thirty years, the

process of internalisation of environmental policy goals and strategies has not been restricted to companies and governments alone, but does at present extend to include also our daily lives and the consumption routines implied in it. Put in other words, environmental learning has not been restricted to the well-organised actors and institutions in governments and markets, and civil society actors have become better informed about and engaged with the 'environmental dimension' of their daily behavioural routines than before. Citizen-consumers 'know about' waste-management principles, green electricity schemes, green product labels or the environmental risks associated with daily routines as sunbathing or driving a car. They do not only 'know about' these products and processes, they also increasingly know how to handle them in the context of recursively organised social practices. At the demand side, citizen-consumer empowerment was fuelled over the last decades by world-wide processes like 'local Agenda 21', the sustainable cities dialogues, the emergence of sustainable housing associations and a variety of consumer-organisations. Consumer-organisations very often take the form of more loosely organised groups, associations, consumer-tribes or virtual communities, ranging from cyclists and users of public transport to vegetarians, internet eco-shoppers or eco-travellers. So next to the articulation of green provisioning by governments and producers, there has emerged an articulation at the demand side of the process as well.

Plus One

The arguments discussed so far are internal to the environmental policy field and refer to environmental politics *sensu stricto*. When looked upon from the broader perspective of politics in general, a fifth and crucial argument could be added in favour of a stronger orientation on the roles and behaviours of citizen-consumers. The role of classical or 'emancipatory' politics (Giddens, 1991) in modern societies seems to be under great pressures. There is a lack of interest and support from the general public for the core-business of traditional political parties, with memberships of official political parties in decline. The numbers of people making use of their right to participate in democratic elections at different levels of policy-making (local, national and EU) seem to diminish, as is the willingness to participate one way or another in formal processes of political decision-making at local and national levels.

Political scientists refer to these developments in terms of the 'erosion of politics' (Held et al, 1999) and they are involved in lively debates on the 'withering away of the nation-state', on the legitimacy-crisis of state-based powers, and on the negative image of political organisations when compared to their counterparts in the market. Many commentators do agree that these developments point to the need to rethink and reformulate politics 'from the viewpoint of the citizen-consumer'. They argue that

in order to regain trust of citizens in politics and to bridge the gap between politics and everyday life, the existing policies have to become better adjusted to the life-world of citizen consumers¹. Environmental policies are part of this broader crisis of modern politics and the lack of support from the side of the general citizenry cannot be dealt with by simply moving away from local politics or by neglecting the everyday opinions and worries of citizen-consumers. Environmental politics need to come to term with citizen-consumers.

Citizens and Consumers in Environmental Politics - some Theoretical Considerations

Although the general arguments on the changing roles of citizen-consumers in globalising environmental policies are underdeveloped, there are some narratives in the making in this respect. We will shortly look into three debates. First, there is an emerging debate on *ecological citizenship*, exploring mainly the political roles of citizens in globalising (environmental) politics (Held et al., 1999; Holemans, 1999; Steenbergen van, 1994; Urry, 2000). Second, especially since the Rio-Conference in the early 1990's and the Rio+10 gathering in Johannesburg, we see a world-wide debate emerging on the need for *sustainable consumption* patterns, especially in the over-developed parts of the world. Third, there have been a series of round-table discussions on the Global Civil Society organised by the London School of Economics (LSE) focusing on the positions of civil society actors and organisations with respect to globalisation and the global network society.

Ecological citizenship

When in advanced societies the electricity grid breaks down or the drinking water system is temporarily out of order, people tend to get angry not just because it's unpleasant to see your daily life being disrupted but perhaps even more so because people feel they are entitled to an uninterrupted supply of these necessary underpinnings of their daily routines. This basic attitude of having the 'environmental right' of access to clean water, proper waste-management services and a guaranteed supply of electricity results from a history of more than hundred years of utility-provisioning in Europe. A history in which the role of the nation-state has been of overriding importance. The state guaranteed access for all citizens to these goods and services under a set of fixed, state-determined

¹ The lack of trust in politics and the failure of official politics to take popular views into account more often and more serious were discussed in the Netherlands as important factors contributing to the upsurge of the populist political movement headed by the late Pim Fortuin. After Fortuin was murdered, a few weeks previous to the national elections, his party LPF (temporarily) gained a strong position in Dutch parliament.

circumstances (Vliet van, 2002). Only when monopolistic public provisioning begins to give way to liberalisation and privatisation, the established and taken-for-granted character of these ecological citizenship-rights come to be discussed and in some respects are (re)discovered by a generation that grew up with these rights as basic and customary. When European citizens in the future will have the right of choice in utility provisioning, when they will be free to buy for example their green electricity from a 'foreign' utility companies or even an international environmental NGO, how will these ecological citizenship rights be guaranteed and what will be the role of the nation-state in this? If the citizen develops into a consumer and when regulations on the provisioning of water and electricity are set at the European (EU) level for more than eighty percent, who will be held responsible when the grid breaks down or when providers do not live up to the contractual obligations? Do we phone the municipality, the police, the private utility companies' local or international office, or just the newspaper to air our complaints?

This example illustrates some of the changes in citizenship and politics as discussed by David Held in his 'Democracy and the Global Order' from a sociological point of view (Held, 1995). The interesting aspects of ecological citizenship are not about 'voting green' or becoming a member of a green party or NGO. Neither is the most important or interesting aspect of the ecological citizenship debate to be found in 'ecological rights' as the fourth and most recent set of comprehensive civil rights following earlier generations of (civil- political- and socio-economic) rights in a way as outlined by Marshall (1973). Ecological citizenship is about the *societal frameworks* for individual² rights and responsibilities with respect to sustainable development. As Held argues, citizenship rights in Europe historically emerged in the context of the debate on (the sovereignty of) the emerging nation-states which 'granted' rights to individuals who were assigned a series of rights and responsibilities they could legitimately claim or articulate in relationship with the state. So the framework to make the rights 'work' was defined along the axis individual – nation-state.

Against this background we should ask ourselves with the help of what kind of frameworks can and should citizenship-rights best be organised now that globalisation threatens the classical, 'modern' framework as provided by the nation and the nation-state. Nation-states have become enmeshed in many regional and global networks of environmental governance and are confronted with environmental threats to the 'ecological safety' of their citizens that are beyond the control of the individual nation-state. The discussion that Ulrich Beck set in motion about the 'ecological risks of reflexive modernity' – using Tsjernobyl, BSE and GMO's

² Although these rights and responsibilities are 'attributed to' individual human agents, it goes without saying that the formation and reproduction of these civil rights and responsibilities are not an individual affair and must be studied at the level of social practices.

as examples next to the well-known cases of the ozone-layer and global warming – was not only meant to illustrate the changing role and authority of modern science and technology but also and especially to show that these risks are beyond the control of individual nation-states. In addition to the nation-state being no longer an exclusively ‘national’ phenomenon, we must also reconsider the concept of an ‘individual citizen’ when we include in the analyses the kind of citizenship rights people are articulating when voting for or against the EU (elections), Brentspar-politics (consumer-boycott) or the WTO (demonstrations).

As we will argue in more detail in section four, the challenge for the environmental social (political) sciences is to develop new frameworks for ecological citizenship rights and responsibilities. While the classical framework of national, emancipatory politics will have an important role to fulfil also in future environmental policy, it needs to be complemented by the frameworks of life-politics on the one hand and arrangements for trans-national and global environmental governance on the other. Since the notion of life-politics is meant to emphasise the more direct relationships in global modernity between ‘the personal and the planetary’, this concept has an important role to fulfil as successor or at least complement of the citizen – nation-state framework of the classical, emancipatory politics.

Sustainable consumption-behaviours

In some respects the debate on sustainable consumption behaviours overlaps with issues of ecological citizenship rights. In the aftermath of the Rio-conference attempts have been made to determine the ‘amount of environmental space’ or the ‘ecological footprint’ that not only regions and nations but also (future) individual consumers should be permitted or entitled to. The question ‘how much is enough’ (During, 1992), or reasonable, or necessary in terms of overall levels of consumption cannot be decided upon with the help of ecological-technical knowledge alone. Notwithstanding the sociologically spoken ‘naïve’ solutions – one (wo)man one resource-vote – offered by most environmentalist studies on footprints, these questions of course have to be addressed at the political level as well (Wackernagel and Rees, 1996).

Although consumer roles and citizenship roles are interconnected, sustainable consumption issues are most of the time discussed in the context of markets and chains or cycles of production and consumption. So for example when talking about sustainable food-consumption, the roles of different actors in production-consumption-chains – from farmers to retailers, and from consumers to (organic) waste-managers – are at the centre of analyses. As consumption in this respect is the correlate to production, *sustainable* consumption must be conceived of as the necessary complement to the ecological modernisation of production. If consump-

tion processes at the downstream end of production-consumption-chains are ignored, the de-materialisation of production and consumption practices – with a factor-4 or factor-10 – will only be understood halfway. Or even less than halfway, since according to some commentators the dynamics at the consumer-side of the production-consumption chains are becoming by far the most decisive elements in modern consumer societies. Consumer-behaviour is becoming important not just because Life Cycle Assessments tell us that major environmental leakages occur in the consumption (and waste) phase of the cycle. Consumption dynamics in the ‘age of access’ (Rifkin, 2000) are worth studying because they are decisive for the future organisation of production-consumption chains. So the ecological modernisation of production in present day modernity presupposes knowledge about and strategies for the ecological modernisation of consumption.

Against this background of an increasing need to understand modern consumption dynamics, it took rather long before the environmental social sciences started to develop in depth analyses of (sustainable) consumption. For a long time many environmentalists were happy adhering to the fundamental critique of consumerism and consumer-society as developed by Frankfurter Schule- sociologists some decades ago (Marcuse, 1964). These contributions are formulated in rather general terms, addressing the fundamental values and overall structure of capitalist consumer-society, offering as a solution the downsizing of consumption and the development of radical alternatives to western consumerism. Questions as how to design concrete politics for sustainable consumption are dismissed, since they are considered as managerial strategies missing the fundamental points and misleading in their tendency to ‘blame the consumer’ (Princen et al., 2002).

In the 1990’s consumption studies in the social sciences were boosted by the serious attention of a number of scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds joining a Lancaster based international network to study ‘Consumption, Everyday Life and Sustainability’ (Shove, 2003). The big challenge was to develop a perspective on consumption behaviour beyond the existing economic and psychological explanations which only look at individual parameters to explain the social phenomenon of consumption. In the *infra-structural perspective* to (sustainable) consumption as put forward by this Lancaster network, the key elements are

- the need to understand consumption behaviour as an ordinary, everyday-life affair that is
- made possible by socio-technical *systems of provision* (Fine and Leopold, 1993) which deliver the goods and services under specific conditions of access to citizen-consumers who
- use these goods and services to organise their daily lives as knowledgeable and capable agents in a meaningful way, thereby

- reproducing culturally mediated levels of Comfort, Cleanliness and Convenience that they have become accustomed to over the course of their lives.

When we set ourselves the task in section three to develop some basic principles of consumer-oriented environmental policies, we will take this infrastructural perspective on consumption behaviour as our starting point. Before doing so, we have one question on citizen-consumers left which still has to be addressed: how do the two dimensions of this concept relate, or go together. Where does the citizen evolve into a consumer and vice versa? How does the hybridisation of social roles relate to the process of globalisation?

Citizen-consumers in Global-Civil Society

An often heard complaint made by companies that are offering sustainable products and services at slightly higher prizes when compared to the conventional products, is the fact that consumers – notwithstanding their frequent and loudly voiced ‘green preferences’ – in the end go for the cheap alternative. From this recognisable example a more general discrepancy can be derived between citizenship-roles and behaviours on the one hand and consumer-behaviours on the other (Spaargaren, 2003a). As citizens, people express great concern about the environment, about food-safety, about fair incomes for small coffee farmers etc. As consumers however, they refuse to put these firm sayings into action and always choose the cheapest product. How realistic are these complaints and how immune are consumers to socio-political considerations when shopping for their daily needs?

There are different aspects or dimensions to be distinguished when analysing the discrepancy between ‘citizen-norms’ and ‘consumer-behaviour’. In many cases, the gap between ‘saying’ (citizens) and ‘doing’ (not-buying) tends to be discussed as representing a specific case of a broader phenomenon, referred to by social psychologists as the gap between attitudes and behaviour. In the so called attitude-behaviour paradigm within the (environmental) social sciences, this individual attitude or behavioural intention is used to ‘predict’ future behaviour³. As we tried to argue before (Spaargaren 1997) however, this attitude-behaviour approach to consumer-behaviour can be said to be a cul-de-sac for several reasons, the main reasons being the isolation of behaviours from their social contexts and the fact that most behavioural routines are conducted at the level of ‘practical consciousness’ instead of being consciously or discursively organised at all times and all places.

³ In a similar vain, one could argue, do economist try to determine the ‘value’ of (public) environmental goods by asking individuals how much he or she would be willing to pay for the objects or services under study.

When working within this specific attitude-behaviour set of theoretical and methodological premises, the gap between opinions and behaviours is put at the centre of analyses and reproduced as a theoretical dilemma which first and foremost refers to individual norms and (lack of) responsibilities. The individual citizen says he or she cares for the environment, but the same person as consumer fails to live up to these norms. However, when instead of the attitude-behaviour scheme the infrastructural perspective to consumer-behaviour is taken as a starting point, the gap is analysed not just in terms of a lack of concern from the side of citizen-consumers, but also and primarily so in terms of the quality of provisioning of consumer-behaviours by social structures. The complaints of companies about 'unwilling customers' are investigated against the background of (the lack of) consumer-empowerment in the organisation of the process of 'green provisioning'.

A second and more interesting aspect of the citizen-consumer discrepancy is the fact that companies which are complaining about the lack of green buying power are in fact arguing that green political preferences *should* be expressed more frequently and consistently via consumption behaviours. And with this plea for more fluid barriers or boundaries between citizenship roles and consumer-roles, they find many social scientists at their side. In contemporary societies, the borders between citizen-roles and consumer-roles are 'under reconstruction', and less rigid and recognisable than before, due to the impact of globalisation (Urry, 2000). The confusion about people acting as citizens and/or as consumers is seen as the result of a concrete set of historical developments affecting the relationship between states, markets and 'civil society'. In the discussions and consultations on 'global civil society' as they were organised by the London School of Economics, the roles of change-agents at the grass-root level, beyond or in between states and markets, is put at the centre of analyses (Anheier et al., 2001; Glasius et al., 2002). The fluid borders between the roles of citizens (in the context of state policies) and of consumers (in the context of market-based policies) in global modernity is discussed against the background of the emergence of a Global Civil Society.

The increased importance of the 'third sphere' of Global Civil Society is analysed in the LSE-yearbooks as a civil society based response to globalisation. Four types of responses are discussed in some detail. At the extreme ends we find 'uncritical support' (Trans-National Corporations and other main carriers of globalisation) and 'outright rejection' (both left-wing and right-wing radicals) of globalisation. In between these extremes there are the positions of the 'reformists' (trying to 'civilise' globalisation) and the 'alternatives' (protesting against globalisation by organising their own, local, alternative, 'organic food' type solutions) (Anheier et al., 2001, 10). As will be clear from this categorisation, civil society based responses to globalisation are discussed in the LSE- round-table confe-

rences very much in terms of the new *political* roles, protests and division lines in global modernity. While emphasising the political responses to globalisation, the yearbooks offer little reflection and conceptual space for reactions to globalisation based on the role-prescriptions and expectations of (global) *consumers*. Especially when reformists⁴ strategies are at stake, we would argue that the 'eco-civilisation of globalisation' also demands the development of countervailing power in the context of the greening of chains of production and consumption that are increasingly organised over global levels of time-space dissociation. As we discuss shortly in section four, the new media and the new dynamics of time-space in global modernity also make possible new articulations of consumer-roles and consumer power at the level of global production-consumption cycles or chains.

To make sense also of the new emerging *consumer*-roles in the governance of global environmental flows, the political outlook of the Global Civil Society discussions needs to be complemented by an economic or market based strategy as well. To this purpose, a new vocabulary will have to be developed, breaking away from the classical schemes of multi-level multi actor governance and instead taking (global or local or regional) environmental flows and the networks and socio-physical 'scapes' that go along with them, as the main unit of analyses. The recent work of John Urry, elaborating upon Castells' concepts of flows, scapes and networks, seems to offer a promising starting point for doing this job (Mol & Spaargaren, 2003).

The theoretical overview offered in this section provides the background to our discussion of the specific roles citizen-consumers might perform in concrete environmental politics.

Citizen-Consumer Oriented Environmental Policies, Four National Case-Studies

In the Netherlands, some policy experiments and pilot studies have been conducted in recent years to explore the possibilities for a more citizen-consumer oriented environmental policy. The pilot projects brought together policymakers and scientific researchers in an attempt to reflect more systematically on citizen-consumer oriented environmental policies. We will shortly introduce and discuss in this section some of the relevant projects as they were issued by the environmental ministry (VROM/-DGM) at the national level, in order to derive from them the most important ingredients for a consumer oriented policy. Four projects will be

⁴ Those who are familiar with the debate on ecological modernisation in environmental social sciences will recognise the similarities between the distinctions made in the LSE-books between reformists and alternatives on the one hand the eco-modernist versus de-modernisation strategies as discussed in environmental sociology on the other (Spaargaren, 2000; Mol & Sonnenfeld, 2000).

discussed in some detail. The 'Domain Explorations' (Domeinverkenningen), the 'Future Perspective Project' (Project Perspectief) and the project on the 'Ecological Modernisation of Consumption Practices' are emphasising the consumption role of citizen-consumers, while in the 'Citizen and the Environment Project' (Project Burger en Milieu) the political roles of citizen-consumers in the environmental policy field are the most important⁵.

The Domain-Explorations: 'Organising alternatives for high-impact consumption'

With the initiation of a series of so called 'Domain-explorations' from the mid 1990's onward the Ministry of the Environment started to acknowledge the increasing environmental pressures derived from consumption practices. The aim of the Domain-explorations was to identify the environmental profile (including the most detrimental elements) of a number of consumption practices with special relevance for environmental policymaking. Five domains were selected: food, clothing, dwelling, recreation and personal care (Schuttelaar & Partners, 2000; CREM, 2000; TNO, 1999). Within each of these domains the environmental deterioration caused by various consumption items and behaviours was assessed, mainly with the help of technical methods such as life-cycle analysis. Next to identifying major leaks – referred to as identifying the 'big fishes' – there was the search for technical and/or behavioural options to actually lower the environmental impacts. The Domain-explorations consisted in other words of a series of systematic scans of the production-consumption chains in a specific consumption domain, in order to find both major leaks as well as ways to repair them. In a number of cases, chain actors were brought together by national policymakers in order to discuss the (development of) more sustainable consumption-alternatives in their specific domain.

Through the development of the Domain-explorations an important step was taken in the foundation of consumer-oriented policy in the Netherlands. Well-defined 'ordinary' consumption-domains were taken as departure-point for policymaking, instead of starting from already determined policy-goals and instruments and then arguing for the need to incorporate them into consumption practices. By mapping out the environmental hot spots (the most rewarding interventions from an environmental policy point of view), it becomes possible to compare the effectiveness and efficiency of past and future interventions, both within and between the consumption-domains. This kind of knowledge is essential when consumer-oriented environmental policies are to be legitimised in a

⁵ This section is based on a more comprehensive report on the pilot project by Beckers, Spaargaren et al., 2000. See also Martens & Spaargaren, 2002; Spaargaren, Beckers et al., 2002; Spaargaren, 2003b.

sustained dialogue with citizen-consumers. In case of the Domain-explorations the legitimacy of consumer-oriented environmental policy is established primarily on technical grounds, in terms of technical environmental efficiency only.

This exclusive emphasis on the technical dimensions of environmental policies can at the same time be regarded as the major weakness of the Domain-explorations, since the extent to which citizen-consumers know and have internalised technical objectives as for example x% CO₂-reductions, a specific BOD/COD⁶ for the water-quality or a certain nitrate and phosphate concentration in the soil will always be limited. To our opinion technical objectives in the context of citizen-consumer oriented policies have to be connected to the social behaviours, the expectations and experiences of citizen-consumers in their everyday life. In other words, a link has to be established with the consumption-routines behind the environmental impacts in the different domains. CO₂-targets for example have to be translated to buying A-labelled fridges, washers and dryers and to insulating the home. CO₂-consumption should be connected to using fuel efficient cars and/or considering (also) eco-efficiency factors when choosing for certain combinations of transport modalities (plane, train, car, bike) for holidays or work. Another weakness of the Domain-exploration approach was the fact that the platforms, organised with chain actors to discuss feasible routes for the innovation and diffusion of green alternatives, were dominated again by providers and their predominantly technical outlook and rationality, with citizen-consumers hardly being represented in the workshops.

The Domain-explorations are about consumption, but they are not 'citizen-consumer oriented'. They help to establish consumption politics by determining in technical terms the environmental impacts of a number of consumption-domains that most people will be involved in when enacting daily life. The policy strategy behind the Domain-explorations was to develop the knowledge needed to pressure providers within the different consumption domains to 'make available' more sustainable alternatives in the future. These experiments were in other words targeted at the further development of the material basis of consumption politics by improving 'green provisioning' by producers, retailers and other institutional actors at the provider-side of the production-consumption chains.

But will citizen-consumers make use of these new developed, more sustainable products and services? Under what kind of circumstances can householders be 'seduced' (Bauman, 1983) to green their daily lives and lifestyles? To investigate these questions in more detail, the Future Perspective Project was initiated.

⁶ Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) and Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD) are technical indicators for the quality of surface water, based upon the oxygen consumed when some substances degrade.

The Future Perspective Project: Learning to 'read' social structures for green alternatives

The Future Perspective Project (CEA, 1999) was launched as the follow-up project to a number of studies trying to quantitatively assess the environmental dimension of the lifestyles of Dutch citizen consumers (Vringer & Blok, 1993; Blok & Vringer, 1995). Environmental impacts of domestic consumption routines were made operational in terms of the direct (heating, lightning) and indirect energy use, with indirect energy referring to the energy needed to produce a certain product (a car, a fridge, a piano). By focusing on the long term development of the domestic direct and indirect energy consumption of different lifestyle-groups, the project served to provide the Ministry of the Environment with insights in the (potential) role and position of citizen-consumer in CO₂-policies. In the aftermath of the Kyoto-conference, CO₂-policies were given high priority by the Dutch national government⁷.

During a two-year period, a small number of participating households was challenged to change their consumption-pattern in order to achieve a 30 to 40% reduction of their total domestic-consumption of indirect energy. Since a continued rise in household incomes was expected, the participating households received a supplement to their regular budget of 20%. Additionally, households were assigned a computer-program with information on the indirect energy content of most products available in the Netherlands, as well as a personal coach to assist them in permanently monitoring their energy-use and to provide advice and information on energy-saving alternatives (CEA, 1999). When returning from the local shop or the supermarket, householders had to register the environmental dimension of their shopping, thereby learning about the best ways to spend money in an environmental efficient way and about the possibilities to substitute polluting products (or product-sets) with less energy intensive alternatives. Substitution with alternative products and services should lead to substantial reductions of environmental impacts, while avoiding negative consequences for the levels of Comfort, Cleanliness and Convenience (Shove, 2003) the householders were accustomed to.

⁷ The indirect energy-use of households roughly amounts to about 60% of the total household energy-use.

Figure 1: 'Webs of Life' (Styles); diverging household-strategies for reducing the environmental impacts of lifestyles (based on: CEA, 1999).

At the end of the two-year period, most participating households had indeed developed a personal, energy-extensive consumption pattern (with an average of 31% reduction). Equally interesting however was the conclusion that householders differed with respect to the ways in which energy-extensive consumption patterns were realised. Households showed their own specific 'Webs of life' before and after the project period, where the webs are used to represent the ways in which environmental impacts are distributed over the different consumption domains that together make up a lifestyle (fig. 1).

A year and a half after the ending of the project, the consumption-patterns and energy-uses of the participating households were monitored and evaluated again. In most households the changes in patterns of indirect energy-use turned out to be rather stable, especially in the fields of food and leisure. Long distance travel related to summer holidays however proved more difficult to alter on a lasting basis. Constraining factors in maintaining the energy-extensive consumption-patterns were the loss of the supplementary budgets and personal feedback, in combination with overall high prices and limited availability of sustainable products and services. Factors enabling the routinisation of the new energy-extensive behaviours had to do with householders perceiving their new 'lifestyles' as healthier, more relaxed and money saving. Participation in the project was valued by most households as positive, while some felt to be judged by their social environments as being 'different' or 'special'.

The Future Perspective project did not focus on the environmental attitudes or opinions but on the actual behaviours of people in the context of their daily lives. We consider this focus on ordinary daily lives to be a fruitful starting-point for exploring the possibilities for a politics of sustainable consumption. The project managed to provide insights in the relative feasibility of energy-savings in different consumption-domains. The potential for environmental change turned out to be considerable and

related both to household-internal factors (income, composition, phase of the life-cycle, housing etc.) as well as to external factors like the availability and accessibility of more sustainable alternatives in the different consumption domains.

With respect to the households-external factors, the Future Perspective Project above all turned out to be an instructive exercise in the 'reading' of social structures. Actors were trained to constantly scan their social environments with respect to the possibilities and constraints they offered for realising more sustainable lifestyles. The fact that a special computer programme and a personal coach – next to the extra budgets - were needed to fully detect and evaluate the sustainable alternatives, can be regarded as indication of the fact that the ecological modernisation of consumption is yet less developed when compared to the greening of production processes.

When discussing in a number of workshops with scientific researchers, practitioners and policymakers the results of the Future Perspective project (ResCon, 2000), it was recognized that factors at the providers side, determining both the level and accessibility of sustainable alternatives, were not given proper attention in the project. As a consequence, the job of greening everyday consumption patterns was to be performed almost exclusively by citizen-consumers themselves, 'independent' from actors at the supply-side of the green economy. With respect to future pilot projects, it was suggested that especially the mediation between supply and demand, the facilitating of exchange between providers and consumers, should be enhanced at different levels, ranging from the national (for example with internet sites on green alternatives) to the local level (for example with 'environmental brokers' operating at district or neighbourhood levels). In case market actors and mechanisms alone cannot perform this job of mediation satisfactorily, it could in principle become an important task for environmental policymakers to facilitate and stimulate – if not organise themselves on a public-private partnership basis - this exchange.

The mediation between supply and demand, in sociological terms the interrelation between consumption behaviours and their corresponding systems of provision, was the main focus of the third project to be discussed.

The ecological modernisation of Consumption Practices: Investigating levels of 'provisioning' and 'access' in two case-studies

In the Social Practices approach to consumption, some of the strategic elements from the 'provider-oriented' Domain Explorations were combined with the 'end-user' orientation of the Future Perspective project, while at the same time trying to repair some of the apparent weaknesses of both perspectives. We will shortly summarise the basic assumptions of

the social practices approach as a foundation for citizen-consumer oriented policies, and then look into the result of two case-studies conducted to empirically explore the feasibility of these assumptions.

In the social practices approach⁸, the daily behaviours of citizen-consumers are taken as the starting point. Unlike the Future Perspective however, behaviour is not put forward in terms of an individual (domestic) affair, or a series of isolated behavioural strings (like buying product X or not performing behaviour Y). Instead, behaviour is analysed at the level of groups of citizen-consumers sharing among each other some specific consumption routines that are reproduced over time and space. By taking social practices as the central unit of analysis and policymaking, the target group of citizen-consumers is specified and differentiated, or segmented not according to citizens' opinions on the environment, nor with respect to their overall lifestyles characteristics, such as income, education or political preferences. Instead, the analysis is focused on the patterns of concrete behavioural routines like shopping, gardening, dwelling, commuting, playing football, and the like. Issues of lifestyles, personal motives, interests and norms are discussed not just as a characteristic of an individual, but also and primarily so as characteristic for the social practices under study.

The social practices approach follows the Domain-explorations by looking at a specified number of consumption-domains and the environmental impacts they represent. Unlike the Domain-explorations however, these consumption-practices or routines are analysed not only as the end-user aspects or elements of specific production-consumption chains. Instead, consumption practices are conceived of primarily in terms of the performance of skilful and knowledgeable human agents who, with the help of social structures, reproduce these consumption-routines in a knowledgeable and skilful way.

In order to make environmental change 'work' at the level of social practices, policy-definitions of sustainable consumption must address the way they fit or do not fit into the behavioural routines of groups of citizen-consumers. If the new, more sustainable routines would affect the existing levels of Comfort, Convenience and Cleanliness (Shove, 2003) in a negative way, major obstacles in the transition process will probably arise. Also when people do not 'recognise' environmental policy goals as a legitimate affair – for example because these goals are framed in an overly technical jargon – the transition process will probably not come about.

To deal with this problem, in the social practices approach the need to develop environmental heuristics for each consumption domain is emphasised and taken into account. These environmental heuristics are

⁸ For a more detailed introduction and theoretical foundation of the Social Practices Approach, also in relation to environmental policy making, see Spaargaren (1997), Beckers et al. (1999) and Spaargaren, Beckers et al. (2002).

thought to result from a dialogue or consultation between environmental policy experts and citizen-consumers. They not only specify the environmental policy goals in terms of life-world rationalities, but they also at the same time indicate how these goals can be approached in terms of behavioural changes⁹.

In the Social Practices Approach, the responsibilities and commitments of citizen-consumers for transitions towards more sustainable consumption-practices are analysed and formulated with reference to the existing capacities for change in the domains under study. Capacities for change can in this respect be said to result from the concerted actions of (governmental and market based) providers and innovative groups of citizen-consumers so far. If the level of 'green provisioning' is high in both quantitative and qualitative respects and when these environmental innovations are judged to be accessible for considerable numbers of life-style groups, then the responsibilities and 'to be expected commitments' of citizen-consumers are higher when compared to situations of under- or undeveloped capacities for environmental change¹⁰.

If we are dealing with a consumption practice that has good environmental performance records, the individual citizen-consumer can be asked to re-organise his or her daily life in this respect, e.g. for this specific segment or sector of the lifestyle. So in line with the Future Perspective Project, the central objective and rationale of citizen-consumer oriented environmental policies is the reduction (with a factor four or more) of the net environmental impacts of actual consumption. This can and must be done however with the help of high quality green provisioning that enables a greening of lifestyles without affecting the levels of Comfort, Cleanliness and Convenience in modern society.

As shown by the Future Perspective Project, the 'roads to reduction' are manifold and need not to be specified by governments or NGO's in too much detail. Sustainable lifestyles are the 'private affairs' of citizen-consumers with respect to the ways in which they seek to realise the reduction of environmental impacts over the different segments or sectors of their lifestyles. There are many 'Webs of Life (styles)' connected to the strategies householders might choose to reduce overall environmental impacts.

With the help of the assumptions formulated above, two case-studies were conducted in close collaboration with policymakers in the Dutch

⁹ An example of an environmental heuristic in the field of waste-management by citizen-consumers is the principle of 'prevention and separation of wastes': if possible the practices of shopping (bags/ packages etc.) or gardening (composting) should be performed in such a way that waste-production is minimised and the different waste-streams are kept separate in order to make possible a more efficient recycling and re-use of domestic wastes. For more examples, see Martens & Spaargaren, 2002.

¹⁰ So whatever the concrete instruments to be used (from regulatory eco-taxes, to formal legislation, to communication), the argument as presented here implies that legitimate citizen-consumer oriented environmental policies can be more strict and compulsory when the quality of green provisioning increases.

ministry for the environment (VROM/DGM). For two 'environmental relevant' consumption domains – dwelling a house and going abroad for holidays – the levels of 'green provisioning' were assessed. This was done by 'scanning' the production-consumption chains involved with respect to the socio-technical innovations that were made available to citizen-consumers by providers higher up in production-consumption chains or cycle. By looking into the number of innovations, the way they were put into the market by providers and the ways in which they were facilitated (or not) by governmental actors, the quality of the provisioning in these two consumption domains was established. A series of semi-structured interviews with actors at the provider-side of the production-consumption chains were the main sources of information in this respect, next to the information available in policy documents, on web sites etc.

With this information at hand, groups of citizen-consumers who showed to be engaged with the consumption-routines under study¹¹ were invited to join a series of focus-groups in order to develop a citizen-consumer perspective to the greening of these specific consumption practices. With the help of visual techniques – the construction of a series of posters representing different green alternatives offered to citizen-consumers under different conditions of access – citizen-consumer definitions of the problem (and the corresponding environmental heuristics) were determined, as well as the (life-style related) preferences for gaining access to the socio-technical innovations presently available. Finally the 'responsibility' of citizens, consumers, market and state-providers was discussed against the background of the existing state-of-affair in the specific consumption domains (Martens & Spaargaren, 2002; Spaargaren, Beckers et al., 2002).

With the help of these research methodologies, it was concluded that the two consumption domains under study found themselves in different phases of the policy process, with both qualitative and quantitative differences in green provisioning. Figure 2 situates the position of the two consumption domains – dwelling a house and tourism – in relation to each other, including estimated levels of green provisioning and access in some other domains in The Netherlands as well.

¹¹ Participants for the focus groups were selected with the help of 'on-site' short questionnaires. Two main criteria used in the selection process were i) the fact of being an active consumer and ii) not having an aversion for (talking about) environmental aspects of these consumption practices. Active consumers for the Do-It-Yourself (DIY)-focus group that was organised in the context of the consumption practice 'dwelling a house' were selected while shopping for materials in a big DIY-warehouse, while people for the focus group on tourism were addressed in travel shops etc.

Figure 2: Status of ecological modernisation process as derived from the estimated levels of the quality of green provisioning and access for a selected number of social (consumption) practices.

If more mature policies for sustainable consumption are to be established in the future, the kind of information provided by the social practices approach to consumption is of key importance. Only when the existing levels of green provisioning and access are established in a scientifically valid and socially legitimate way, the role of governmental and non-governmental actors – including the roles of citizen-consumers – can be specified in the transition process.

But do citizens feel the need to become involved in processes of environmental change? Do they recognise environmental policies for sustainable consumption as something the (national) government should facilitate and promote? It is these questions on the ‘legitimacy of national environmental (consumption) policies’ that our fourth and final project is about.

Citizens and the Environment: When and why bothering people with (distant) environmental problems

The Citizen and Environment Project (B&A Groep, 2000) was instigated by the Ministry of the Environment to actively seek meaningful relations with citizen-consumers and to develop a dialogue on the (lack of) responsiveness from the side of environmental policymakers for the concerns of ‘ordinary citizens’. The project was aimed to move away from the classical emphasis on the technical system rationality dominating the environmental policy field. The project looked for possible ways to connect policy goals as formulated by central governments to the drives of citizens,

their motivations and concerns in daily-life. The focus was primarily on the 'political roles' of individuals as citizens. In what way do people want or not want to address environmental problems and policies when they are busy organising their everyday life? What kind of definitions of environmental change do specific (lifestyle) groups of citizen-consumers use in this respect? What kind of choices do they think government or society should make in environmental matters and what courses of environmental actions do they consider to be relevant for themselves?

To find answers to these kinds of questions, a series of small projects was conducted to explore the implications of a citizen-consumer-orientation for agenda setting, policymaking and the division of roles and responsibilities in the implementation of environmental policies. Several methods and techniques such as workshops, expert sessions, panel meetings, interviews with consumers, and focus groups were employed to study the environmental motives and concerns of citizen-consumers within the context of different daily-life settings. Citizen-consumers were interviewed for example when visiting an entertainment area, a day care centre or a shopping mall. With the help of different research methodologies, the project tried to reconstruct the ways in which people encountered and experienced environmental issues in these settings, as well as citizen-consumers' opinions on the type of environmental policy interventions that would best fit their lifestyles and preferences (B&A Groep, 2000).

From the project several conclusions regarding citizen-consumer oriented environmental policies have been drawn. With respect to the ways in which citizens perceive of the environmental agenda, it could be concluded that environmental policies are in need of societal embedding: problem definitions can and must not be restricted to technical ecological issues only. With regard to the division of labour between citizens and the (national and regional) governments in the context of environmental policy making, it became clear that a distinction has to be made between environmental problems for which consumers can reasonably be held (co)responsible on the one hand and problems that are the first responsibility of the (central) governments on the other.

During the project, this problem was labelled as the '*bordjes-probleem*', a Dutch saying referring to 'the need to serve meals to the proper plates'. Having in mind the social science literature on the prisoners-dilemma, the debate on the environment as collective or common-good etc, it was concluded that the pre-conditions for bothering citizen-consumers with environmental problems and solutions – e.g. regulations – can and must be specified in more detail than it is usually done at the moment. Some problems simply should not be put on the plate of citizen-consumers in that specific manner during that specific phase of the policy cycle, since the next series of actions to be performed in that policy-phase are to be undertaken by government and/or business actors and not by

citizen-consumers. Also, when environmental problems are not 'visible' for citizen-consumers in daily life and when citizens are not able to establish a meaningful link between the environmental problem and their daily behaviours, environmental policies are likely to fail. In these situations new symbolic representations of environmental problems have to be developed which match the daily life-world of citizen-consumers. These new representations ought to be generated in a direct dialogue between policymakers and citizens.

One of the weaknesses of the Citizens and the Environment project is the strict focus on politics. The project discusses the responsibilities of citizen-consumers for sustainable development exclusively in terms of the relationship between citizens and their (national) environmental state authorities. When the issue of having (the prime) responsibility for environmental problems is at stake, market- and civil-society actors should be included in the analyses as well. The prisoners' dilemma, so we would argue, is not restricted to citizens and states, but pertains to companies and consumers as well.

As we will discuss in more detail in the next section, questions about the best way and the most relevant moment to call upon citizen-consumers in order to confront them with political rights and responsibilities for environmental problems, are directly affected by the globalisation of environmental policies. The issue of 'putting the right problems at the right plates' acquires a new dimension when national environmental policymakers are joined by transnational and global policy- *and* market actors who are often operating outside the reach of national governmental politics.

Citizen-Consumers and Globalising Environmental Politics

Throughout this chapter we have explored the possible roles of citizen-consumers in environmental politics and the way these roles will be affected by the process of globalisation of both environmental problems and policies. Are not environmental politics 'moving away' from citizen-consumers and their everyday lives while being formulated at ever higher levels of governance, up to the global level? Can environmental policies be said to be extra vulnerable to the 'erosion' of traditional nation-state based policies, due to the strong 'technical' nature of environmental problems and due to the fact that their negative social impacts are very often perceived as 'far away' in both time and space?

Our general response to these critical questions has been that indeed the erosion of traditional nation-state policies does not halt at the door of the environmental policy field. Perhaps even more than their colleagues in other policy domains, are environmental experts at the national level fa-

ced with a fast growing body of transnational legislation and with restructuring of the policymaking process at the national level, due to globalisation of social relations in the network society. Against this background, it is easy to understand why environmental problems are used so often by sociologists to illustrate the new dynamics and principles of policymaking in global modernity.

To face the challenges of environmental policies moving away from every-day life, a strong orientation on the roles of citizen-consumers in environmental policymaking was put forward as an essential element of the strategies to be followed. Urging for a stronger emphasis on citizen-consumers in (national) environmental policies, we used arguments both from within the field itself as from broader discussions on the changing role of the nation-state towards citizen-consumers in global modernity. When exploring both the theoretical and practical implications of a stronger orientation on the roles of citizen-consumers, we concluded that the agenda for citizen-consumer oriented environmental politics is still very much in the making and that there are a lot of research and policy questions yet to be answered. Among the questions that most urgently need to be addressed is the question pertaining to the impacts of globalisation. In the remainder of this chapter, we will not be able to resolve this issue entirely. We will however, make a first start by looking into some of the key elements, firstly with respect to the impact of globalisation on changing roles of *citizen-consumers* and then with respect its impact on the roles of *citizen-consumers*.

Ecological Citizenship beyond the nation-state

Ecological citizenship is a concept that has gained real substance over the past thirty years. It refers to the rights and responsibilities that are connected to the overall process of ecological modernisation in modern societies. The concept of 'rights' refers to both positive things – the right of access to clean water or waste-services – as well as to negative elements, such as avoiding exposure to environmental risks in the modern risk-society.

Although right from the beginning, already in the early seventies, the Club of Rome reports (Meadows, 1972) and the Stockholm conference (United Nations, 1972) gave environmental politics its 'global' character, the overwhelming majority of environmental policy-activities were organised at the (sub)nation-state level in the first decades of environmental policymaking. The dominant framework for thinking about ecological citizenship rights and responsibilities was for that reason organised along the axis 'citizens vis à vis nation-states', also in the environmental field.

In Europe, the development of environmental policies has been influenced to a considerable extent by the strong position of the European Union (EU). The EU has gained a lot of (regulatory) power in this field

from the nineteen eighties onwards. As a result, EU-environmental policies are – next to economic and agricultural politics – the most influential transnational set of policies ever in modern history. In the latest Dutch national environmental policy plan (NEPP-4) it is stated that about 80% of all policy measures in the Dutch national environmental field are affected by – if not originated from – European environmental politics.

With EU-influences growing stronger and stronger, the commitment of citizens to formal or official environmental policymaking at the EU-level seems to move in the opposite direction. The lack of power from the side of the Euro-parliament and the information deficit at both national and European levels are part of the explanation, together with the apparent lack of interest in daily European environmental affairs from the side of national mass-media in most member states. To us however, the lack of a ‘mediating role’ of the nation-states in between EU-environmental politics and their national citizenry is among the most decisive factors to understand why ecological citizenship is hardly discussed from a transnational or global perspective. Such a mediating role for the nation-state is put forward in the debate on so called ‘third way’ politics, although not unambiguously¹². So far, only the vague contours of a framework organising ecological rights and responsibilities for citizen-consumers beyond the nation-state level has been developed.

The potential role of the EU in providing an alternative framework to organise citizenship rights beyond the nation-state will be restricted to the official, primarily emancipatory politics, with European citizens voting for European politics, politicians and the parliament. When looking for frameworks that address globalisation in a more direct and encompassing way, we have to enter the debate on global civil society again.

Citizen-consumers and political consumerism in Global Civil Society

Outside official policymaking circuits at the nation-state and EU-level, new ways of organising citizen-involvement in environmental policies seem to be developing. Environmental NGO’s have opened ‘direct negotiations’ with market actors at different levels, using public pressure as their most important and sometimes very effective sources of power. The Brent-Spar case is discussed in the literature as one of the prototype examples of ‘sub-politics’ at the transnational level (Beck et al., 1994). Sub-politics are shaped in direct relation or confrontation between multinational companies and equally multinational civil society actors, both outside the influence of official (state) politics. With the nation-state losing terrain in environmental affairs, sub-political arrangements seem to gain influence not in the least because they are much more flexible with

¹² In the ‘Third-Way’- debate, the renewal of social democracy in Europe (especially the UK and Germany) and in the USA was at stake, looking in particular to the new roles of the nation-state in an era of globalised markets. Both Tony Blair (UK) and Gerhard Schröder (Germany) made active contributions to this debate (Giddens, 1998; 2000).

respect to the (combination of) layers or levels of environmental policy making.

The concepts of life-politics or lifestyle-politics – as introduced in the social sciences by Giddens – represent the new relationships between the local and the global, between the personal and the planetary. Life-politics might refer to nature – ‘the eyes of the panda’ or the ‘tail of the whale’ – as well as to the environment. A nice example of ‘environmental’ life politics is provided by citizens who fulfil their ‘Kyoto-targets’ in a direct and personal way by fixing to their roofs a number of photovoltaic (solar) cells that roughly corresponds with the CO₂-reduction level the Kyoto protocol would require for individual households in their specific country or region.

As the examples in the field of sub-politics already illustrate, it is difficult to decide where exactly in global civil society the citizen-role develops into the consumer-role and vice versa. ‘Buying green’ will in the future likely develop into an umbrella category of environmental actions, covering both consciously organised forms of environmental behaviour shaped as political activism, as well as routinised everyday consumption behaviours that go without saying. However instead of complaining about the lack of consistency between citizenship-roles and consumer-roles (see section 2), we would emphasise the broadening of possible roles and welcome the new hybrids for involving and engaging citizen-consumers in environmental policies in different ways.

It will be obvious that for all the different forms of engagement, the development of new communication and information technologies in the network society – the world of www, dot com and mobile phones – very much enhances the possibilities of actors and institutions in the Global Civil Society to get involved in processes of political consumerism. As illustrated by Van den Burg (2003) among others, the internet offers opportunities for groups of citizen-consumers to exert more direct and effective control over producers – companies and governments alike – both in their negative roles as polluters or providers of environmental risks, as well as in their positive roles as providers of eco-labels, green electricity schemes and other green products and services.

When the monitoring of environmental performance in production-consumption cycles is organised no longer exclusively along the established lines of providers-interests, but also with the aim to service the empowerment of citizen-consumers, people are offered the chance to become engaged in more direct and diverse ways in processes of environmental change. The environmental score-card – informing citizens in the public domain about sources of environmental risks in their direct living environment – would perhaps be on the political side of the spectrum, while interactive internet-sides on available green electricity schemes find themselves on the consumption-side of the spectrum.

Sustainable Consumption (politics) in the Global Arena

Sustainable consumption is most of the time organised outside the direct influence of nation-states and governmental bodies. In the strict sense, sustainable consumption is not an 'environmental policy'-affair. It is primarily a market or 'chain-affair', with all the relevant players struggling to make visible and to buy and sell the 'environmental qualities' that result from the improved environmental performance at the side of producers and consumers alike. Although states themselves do mostly not 'organise' sustainable production and consumption, we know from thirty years of environmental policymaking that the role of states has been crucial in some phases and with respect to some specific dimensions of the process. In section three, we discussed some pilot projects illustrating the involvement of the Dutch national government in emerging consumption politics. What can now be said about the role of transnational and globally operating state-organisations in triggering sustainable consumption also in the global arena?

In the year 2000 the OECD started a programme on Sustainable Consumption, trying to find answers to questions that are very similar to the ones discussed in section three. For a number of countries, the environmental impacts of household consumption are to be assessed. The program focuses not only on the direct and indirect energy per household, but also tries to specify environmental trends in key sectors of everyday life consumption, like food, tourism, travel and housing (OECD, 2000). This type of studies builds upon the experiences and results of a number of EU-funded international programmes like Domus (Chappels et al., 2000), Homes (Noorman et al., 1998) and SusHouse (Knot, 2000), investigating more sustainable domestic consumption from a comparative perspective. Next to the OECD, also the UN-Commission on Sustainable Development, the EU, UNEP and some pro-active companies joining the WBCSD¹³ are involved in making the first steps towards sustainable consumption policies in the global arena (Cohen, forthcoming).

The tasks at hand seem to be rather difficult however. When investigating the possibilities for sustainable consumption policies at the international level, we run into an extra set of complicating questions. If a selected number of every-day life based, environmentally relevant consumption routines is to be chosen as starting point for consumption policies in the global arena, how does one confront the considerable differences between countries and social classes with respect to their overall consumption levels, the levels of Comfort, Cleanliness and Convenience adhered to, the cultural meanings attached to sustainable consumption, and the different levels of 'green provisioning and access' in the countries or regions under study, just to mention a few of these complicating is-

¹³ The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) is a coalition of 170 international companies united by a shared commitment to sustainable development via the three pillars of economic growth, ecological balance and social progress.

sues. So while not being an ‘environmental policy affair’ in the strict sense, the *political dimension of sustainable consumption programmes* – the social distributional aspects of the greening of consumption at the global level – can hardly be underestimated and manifests itself at the global level in a specific way.

An example might be helpful to illustrate this rather abstract argument. Because European and US-consumers are enjoying high levels of consumer protection in the area of food, producers in developing countries run into a number of ‘green barriers’ resulting from the import restrictions imposed on them for reasons of environment and nature protection (Oosterveer, 2003). The greening of consumption when discussed at the global level cannot be envisaged without the concomitant greening of the international production, trade and investment regimes as regulated at GATT/WTO global levels. While NGO’s are pushing hard in this direction and many countries – also in less developed parts of the world – are theoretically in favour of such a greening of ‘product-flows’, in the political reality of WTO-negotiations there seems to be a “fundamental clash of priorities between developed and developing countries” in this respect (Neumayer, 2001, 15). The greening of consumption, that at the level of life(style) politics appears as the evident heuristic of buying tuna-cans with the smiling dolphin on it is discussed in global trade institutions in terms of Western protectionism, sold under the umbrella of nature conservation. The dolphin-free technologies in tuna production or the turtle protective technologies in shrimp production illustrate the more confusing aspects of the relationship between the personal and the plenary in sustainable consumption.

Of course the easiest way to deal with these nasty questions and complications is to do away with eco-labelling altogether and to discard the efforts to develop sustainable consumption programmes (also) in the global arena. The more tricky but at the same time more challenging approach would be to try and tackle these issues in the context of internationally and globally discussed and co-ordinated research programmes and policy pilots on the ‘life-politics of global sustainable consumption’.

Concluding comments

Against the tendency among environmental policymakers to regard the (consumption) behaviour of citizen-consumers as too difficult to influence or assess from an environmental policy point of view, we have been arguing that a stronger orientation on citizen-consumers can be argued for on a number of (four + one) grounds. Both the material and social basis for citizen-consumer oriented environmental policies and politics have advanced over the past decennia, at least in the most developed parts of the world. The social context is more favourable when compared to the early days of environmental policy making, and also the theoretical foundations of citizen-consumer oriented politics have developed and become more mature. With the help of four national (Dutch) case studies we tried to show that if social practices in distinguished consumption domains (food, travel, dwelling etc) are taken as unit of policy-analyses and if they are approached with the help of the infrastructural perspective to consumption behaviours, there might result a politics of sustainable consumption that combines democratic quality with environmental efficiency and does not fall victim to the danger of blaming the wrong actors for environmental deterioration.

While emphasising the need to rethink the role of citizen-consumers in environmental politics, we are the first to agree that globalisation makes this project the more challenging and complicated at the same time. The experiences from the – national – case studies take on a different dimension when situated at the level beyond the nation-state. Throughout the chapter we have tried to map out the different ways in which globalisation might affect citizen-consumer oriented environmental politics. We suggested that these impacts can be discussed and further investigated under at least three headings.

First, we discussed the ways in which globalisation disturbs the national formats that are used to organise ecological citizenship rights and responsibilities. Globalisation does not just result in more actors working on environmental policy arrangements at more levels. It brings along a new quality or category of policymaking, and these ‘environmental politics of the space of flows’ (Castells, 1996) will have to be addressed differently. We suggested that nation-states so far did not live up to their task of serving as a mediator between global and local level environmental politics in a way as suggested in the discussion on ‘third way politics’. We also suggested the classical frames of emancipatory politics to be complemented by the framework of life-politics, making more direct connections between the planetary and the personal.

Second, we discussed the emerging agenda for sustainable consumption-politics and the complexities one confronts when this agenda is si-

tuated in the global arena. Our general argument – that the commitments and responsibilities of citizen-consumers for domain-specific efforts to reduce the environmental impacts of consumption must be decided upon against the background of the quality of green provisioning – seems to be valid also in the global arena. However, since the social inequalities in the global network society are greater and more complicated when compared to the national environmental policy domains, we argued that the political dimension of sustainable consumption programmes need to be taken serious especially when working in the global arena. We argued that in this respect the concepts offered by Urry and Castells on the ‘space of flows’ versus the ‘space of place’ deserve attention in future research, since they might be helpful to analyse and assess the social distributional aspects of sustainable consumption politics at the transnational level.

Thirdly, we discussed the concept of ‘global civil society’ as put to the fore in a series of round-table meetings organised by the London School of Economics. Global civil society refers to the realm of ‘sub-politics’ beyond state and market, nourished to a great extent by the activities of (also environmental) NGO’s and supported by the (communication) technologies of our time. Notwithstanding the fact that its geographical scope is still restricted to Western Europe mainly, this global civil society and its main actors and institutions might in the future develop into an important factor for setting the global agenda on issues of ecological citizenship and sustainable consumption. Like their predecessors in the nineteen-seventies, they fuel the global environmental debate with the pros and cons of ‘reformists’ versus ‘alternatives’ strategies to cope with globalisation from an environmental policy point of view. We tried to contribute to this debate by arguing for the need to include in the predominantly ‘political’ debate on the global civil society an analysis of the economic and consumption-dimension of global environmental change as well.

If an eco-civilised global modernity is to be realised, nation-states and citizen-consumers have to reinvent their roles in environmental politics now that the traditional roles are partly immobilised by the extreme mobility of globalisation.

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3. Liberal Democratic Society and Political Consumerism – a Problematic Combination¹⁴

Mads P. Sørensen

Abstract

This article explores the question of how the idea of political consumerism looks from a liberal democratic viewpoint. The question is analysed by looking at the main thoughts behind the liberal, democratic model of society. John Locke's political philosophy, Adam Smith's political-economic thinking, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's understanding of democracy is contrasted with the idea of political consumerism in order to see how this idea looks in respect to the original arguments for the liberal, democratic model of society. It is shown that the idea of political consumerism is a highly controversial idea seen from a liberal, democratic viewpoint. The main problem is the deliberate mixing of the public and the private spheres and the political and the economic spheres. This deliberate mixing leads to at least three problems: a democratic problem, a problem of legal security and a prosperity problem. These problems raise the question of legitimacy of the idea of political consumerism within liberal, democratic societies. The article suggests that we divide political consumerism up into two forms; one that arises *from below*, where it is the consumers themselves who wish to supplement their political opinions with political consumerism, or NGOs that go out and encourage political consumerism; and political consumerism that is staged *from above*, from the state or the formal political system. It is concluded that the former is a legitimate form of political consumerism within liberal democracies whereas the latter is not.

Introduction

Although few would probably go as far as Francis Fukuyama (1989) and claim that liberal democratic society is the goal of history, it is nonethe-

¹⁴ I am grateful to Stacey M. Cozart, Faculty of Humanities, University of Aarhus, for translating this article into English.

less a fact that today this type of society is totally predominant in the Western part of the world as well as in large areas of the rest of the world.¹⁵ This is true both descriptively and normatively. Not only can the European and North American as well as a large number of other societies today be termed *actually existing* liberal democratic societies, but nor does there seem to be much discussion of, let alone proposals for, alternative societal models.¹⁶ Across party lines and diverging ideas concerning the good society in general there appears to be a broad acceptance of this model as a suitable framework for social life.¹⁷

It is therefore also this kind of society that primarily frames the idea and the phenomenon that is the main topic of this conference – political consumerism – and so it must be appropriate to ask the following question: How does the idea of political consumerism actually look from a liberal democratic societal viewpoint? This question is the main focus of this paper. I shall thus concentrate on what one could call the core problem in political consumerism from the point of view of liberal democratic society: the deliberate mixing of the public and the private spheres and the political and the economic spheres; I shall also take a look at three additional problems that can be traced back to this: one related to democracy, one to legal security, and one to prosperity. I shall attempt to analyse and discuss these problems based on the original thoughts underlying the liberal and the democratic elements, respectively, in the liberal democratic model of society. This means that I shall contrast political consumerism with John Locke's political philosophy, Adam Smith's political-economic thinking, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's understanding of democracy in order to see how political consumerism looks in respect to the original arguments for this model of society.¹⁸ It goes without

¹⁵ Fukuyama does not actually speak of liberal democratic society, but uses the term "liberal democracy". However, since what I am talking about here is a political form of society and not just a form of government, I find that liberal democratic society is the most apt term – also for the phenomenon that Fukuyama (1989) discusses.

¹⁶ Most people seem to think along the lines of Rorty, who writes, "J. S. Mill's suggestion that governments devote themselves to optimizing the balance between leaving people's private lives alone and preventing suffering seems to me pretty much the last word" (Rorty, 1991, 63). Incidentally, Rorty exemplifies the fact that it is easy to consider liberal, democratic society as the best form of society *without* needing to legitimate this viewpoint with references to metaphysics or philosophy of history, as Fukuyama does.

¹⁷ There are of course still people – (some) monarchists, (some) republicans, communists, fascists, and certainly others – who would like a model of society different from the liberal democratic one, but the point is that their numbers have probably never been as low as they are today.

¹⁸ The liberal, democratic model of society is understood here as the model of society that – formed by the new state constitutions – crystallises from the end of the eighteenth century onward in Europe and in North America. There are of course many others besides the above-mentioned three authors who have made intellectual contributions to this model of society. But besides Montesquieu these three authors are without a doubt the most important ones. It should also be added that even though Rousseau is considered one of the contributors to the liberal, democratic model of society, it is above all in respect to the democratic element in this model that he has contributed. Rousseau was not liberal, but republican, and therefore he would not be keen on the overall result. He would never subscribe to the idea of the fundamental equality of the private and public spheres, as is the case in the liberal, democratic model of society; in his view the public sphere must always take priority over the private sphere.

saying that a paper like this does not provide the possibility of exposing all the philosophical and historical details of these arguments. My ambition in this context is therefore first of all to show that political consumerism is an extremely *problematic* entity seen from the perspective of liberal democratic society – so problematic that it ought to give rise to reflections on whether political consumerism is on the whole compatible with a liberal democratic society. I shall address this question in the conclusion of this paper, but first I shall discuss the problems in political consumerism as seen through the lenses of liberal democratic society – to begin with, the core problem: the *deliberate mixing* of the economical and political levels in political consumerism and thereby also the mixing of the private and the public spheres.

The core problem – the deliberate mixing of spheres

The liberal democratic model of society stands in opposition to all totalitarian models of society. The advocates of this model of society view the political formation of society as basically something that takes place for the sake of the individual citizens. In liberal democratic society the starting point is therefore the individual, and by dividing society into different, *clearly separated* spheres the aim is to establish a sphere of inviolability surrounding the individual. The most important distinction between spheres in this kind of society is therefore the one between the private and public spheres – between what only concerns the individual and what concerns the community. This does not mean that the boundaries are given once and for all. What is agreed on by those who subscribe to the liberal democratic model of society is that there *should* be a boundary between the private and public spheres (marked by the private right to property, religious freedom, freedom of expression, and so forth), but not where this boundary should go. Politics in liberal democratic society is therefore not least about finding out where the boundary between the public and the private spheres should be drawn. Subordinate to the boundary between the public and the private spheres, the liberal model of society employs another fundamental boundary, one between the economy and politics: the economy is a *private* matter in the liberal model of society, while politics is a *public* matter.

The first thing that leaps to the eye when holding political consumerism up to this model of society is therefore the *radically different* view of the relationship between the private and the public spheres, including that between the economic and political spheres underlying the two entities. Whereas in liberal democratic society, for several reasons that I shall return to below, it is considered important to keep the private and the public spheres as separate as possible, it is considered important in political consumerism to *deliberately* mix the public and the private spheres; to

attempt to resolve political – i.e., *public* – problems by means of *private* consumerism.¹⁹ Seen from the viewpoint of liberal democratic society, political consumerism therefore appears to be a radical *criticism* of the way in which we have previously thought about the relationship between the public and the private sphere. Political consumerism definitely calls into question the division of labour in the liberal democratic model of society; an economic sphere that creates *wealth* and a political sphere that deals with *welfare*. The political consumer can precisely also be understood as a reaction to the *negative* side effects caused by the liberated wealth-production in the economic sphere.²⁰ In contrast to the utility-maximizing consumers who via their actions in the market maintain certain prosperity-oriented patterns of production and structures, political consumers attempt to change the patterns and the structures in a more *welfare*-oriented direction by politicizing the market. They attempt, for instance, to force the companies to act decently towards their workers, or to get the companies to behave differently in respect to the environment. It is, however, as I shall attempt to show in the following, far from an unproblematic course of action in liberal democratic society.

The democratic problem – from democracy to plutocracy

What is in fact the democratic element in a liberal democratic society? There are many possible interpretations of this, but two interpretations dominate the discussion. One can think of democracy liberally in the tradition from Locke, or one can think of democracy in the republican tradition stemming from Rousseau. In the first tradition, the main idea is *freedom from arbitrary public or private interference* in the lives of the individuals in society, while the core of the other view of democracy is *freedom to participate*. Democracy regarded liberally comprises representative democracy, constitutional rights, power-sharing, and so on, while active participation plays the main role in the republican understanding of democracy.²¹ Rousseau was scornful of Locke and the English way of viewing democracy. They were, as he writes in *Du Contrat Social*, only free when they chose representatives – the rest of the time they were slaves because they didn't participate in the law-making

¹⁹ Political consumerism and the political consumer may be defined in many ways – and has been (see, for instance, IFF and Elsam, 1996, 6; Goul Andersen and Tobiasen, 2001, 12; Sørensen, 2004, 7-8) – but of course it is agreed that the combination of the economic and political aspects is part of the definition.

²⁰ See Sørensen (2004, 100-108) for an account of this understanding of political consumerism.

²¹ In the European and North American constitutions one finds liberal and republican features – for instance, in several countries universal military service remains compulsory, which is an obvious republican characteristic. On the other hand, the emphasis that the constitutions place on individual rights is a clearly liberal element, while the participatory rights can be viewed in respect to both traditions – but they are the core of the republican way of regarding democracy.

themselves, but let themselves be represented in parliament.²² But a people cannot allow itself to be represented, for then it is precisely no longer a people but slaves. For Rousseau, direct *participation* is of vital importance.

Seen in the light of republican thinking, the immediate assessment of political consumerism will therefore be positive. It is apparently a question of expanding democracy.²³ Now the citizens no longer only participate in the democratic work by way of traditional political participatory channels such as voting at parliamentary elections, being members of a political party and the like. Now they also participate – often, and in large numbers (cf. Goul Andersen and Tobiasen, 2001, 29-30) – in the political work by means of their consumerism.

But although political consumerism measured in respect to participation may be considered a step forward, there are other serious problems with political consumerism seen from a democratic perspective. For there are just as different views of what a democracy is as there is considerable agreement about what influence the individual citizen ought to have in connection with voting. In every democracy – also those viewed as republican – the principle applies of *one man, one vote*. In this perspective, political consumerism appears profoundly *undemocratic*: in the market, where the political consumer acts, the votes are of course not distributed according to the principle of one vote each. On the contrary, each person has as many (or as few) votes as his or her private economy allows. This means that we – to the extent that the political work is moved from traditional political fora to the arena of the political consumers, the market – go from a democratic principle of ‘one man, one vote’ to a *plutocratic* principle according to which the size of one’s wallet determines one’s influence.

So even though an empirical Danish study (Goul Andersen and Tobiasen, 2001, 47) has been able to show that the consumers’ income level has not played a decisive role so far (in Denmark) in respect to whether they have acted as political consumers or not – and even though other studies should arrive at the same result – this does not however change the fact that political consumerism, normatively considered, contains a considerable *undemocratic* element.

²² "Sovereignty, for the same reason as makes it inalienable, cannot be represented; it lies essentially in the general will and will does not admit of representation; it is either the same, or other; there is no intermediate possibility. The deputies of the people, therefore, are not and cannot be its representatives: they are merely its stewards, and can carry through no definitive acts. Every law the people has not ratified in person is null and void – is, in fact, not a law. The people of England regards itself as free; but it is grossly mistaken; it is free only during the election of members of parliament. As soon as they are elected, slavery overtakes it, and it is nothing. The use it makes of the short moments of liberty it enjoys shows indeed that it deserves to lose them" (Rousseau, 1762, book III, chap. 15).

²³ This viewpoint has been predominant in the politological approach to the phenomenon (see, for instance, Micheletti, 2003; Stolle and Hooghe, 2003; Goul Andersen and Tobiasen, 2003 and 2001).

The problem of legal security – back to the state of nature

While there may be doubt about the extent to which the democratic element in the liberal democratic society should be understood as liberal or republican, the same problems are of course not linked to the liberal element in this model of society. This element thus closely resembles the liberal philosophical tradition from John Locke and onward, and in respect to what I call the problem of legal security, I will specifically take my starting point in one of the seminal texts on liberal democratic society: John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* from the 1680s.²⁴

In *Two Treatises of Government*, Locke writes a critical response to Sir Robert Filmer, who in the 1630s had formulated a small, but at the time much read and influential publication – *Patriarcha* (Filmer, 1949) – in which he, as a contribution to the then current dispute between Charles I and the parliament, had attempted to argue for the king's right to reign supreme by referring to birthright and to the fact that his government was ultimately inherited from Adam and hence from God. Locke was of quite a different opinion. For in contrast to Filmer he did not believe that society had always existed, nor that the power to govern was inherited from God. Society was rather a historical, man-made product, and it was therefore necessary to find out the principles on which society could and ought to be established as well as reveal the original motives for creating them.

Some years before, Thomas Hobbes had argued that the state of nature is a state of war – "... a warre, as is of every man, against every man." (Hobbes, 1985, 185) – and that the primary task of society is therefore to stop this war and bring about *security* for the individual citizen. For Locke, the key concept was not security but *freedom*. Thus, he thought

²⁴ In *Two Treatises of Government* it is argued for the first time in favour of dividing society into a private and a public sphere – and it is argued that the economic sphere is a part of the private sphere. This division later became the foundation of liberal democratic society. Locke's natural rights thinking – especially his understanding of economy as something private – wandered on to the different human rights declarations that were elaborated in the eighteenth century. These attempted precisely to determine the content of the individuals' private spheres of inviolability by defining what belongs to these spheres. These human rights declarations later came to constitute an important part of the modern liberal democratic state constitutions that were elaborated from the end of the eighteenth century and onward. It is thus possible to draw a line from Locke and natural rights thinking via the human rights declarations to the modern European and North American state constitutions – and hence to modern liberal democratic society. It is however important to note that this is a *retrospective* ascertainment. There is disagreement over how little or how much the French and American revolutions and subsequent constitutions were actually influenced by Locke's thoughts. Locke's influence on the American Revolution in particular has been much discussed. Until the 1960s the view was that the American struggle for independence was primarily inspired by Locke. One commentator went so far as to describe the "party line" under the American Revolution as *John Locke* (Dworitz, 1990, 194). In the 1960s a wave of counter-interpretation set in, in respect to Locke's influence on the American Revolution. It was historians such as Bernard Bailyn and especially J. G. A. Pocock who headed up a new, republican interpretation (Dworitz, 1990, 17ff and 22ff). John Dunn also took part in shooting down the Locke interpretation; in his article "The politics of Locke in England and America in the eighteenth century", from 1969, he showed that Locke's influence was highly exaggerated. Concerning the French Revolution, Locke's social philosophy had no direct influence. At most it was a matter of indirect influence through, for instance, the no fewer than eight versions of *Two Treatises of Government* that were published in France before 1789, and through Rousseau's and others' reception of Locke's thinking (Klenner, 1979, 27-28).

that freedom was crucial to every society.²⁵ In *Two Treatises of Government* Locke claims that the natural state of mankind is “a state of perfect freedom”, and that every societal project must start from that (§4: Locke, 1997, 116).²⁶

The original reason for moving from the state of nature to political society – a movement that for Locke was historico-factual and was realized by means of a social contract – must therefore, according to him, be viewed as the individuals’ attempt to ensure their natural freedom (cp. §123). Although Locke imagined that man in a state of nature lived in “a state of perfect freedom”, this freedom was always threatened. The state of nature was constantly in danger of turning to a state of war because the relationship between people was not regulated in any other way than by the individual interpretations of the law of nature. Locke therefore believed that at some point in time it must have been realized that the individuals’ rights could best be guaranteed through a general, social legislation supported by sanctions against those who offended against the laws of society. Locke also rebuked Filmer on this point for (according to Locke) thinking that freedom for the individual was “... to do what he lists, to live as he pleases, and not to be tied by any laws” (§22; Locke 1997, 126). In contrast, Locke thought that “... freedom of men under government is, to have a standing rule to live by, common to everyone of that society, and made by the legislative power erected in it; a liberty to follow my own will in all things, where the rule prescribes not; and not to be subject to the inconstant, uncertain, unknown, arbitrary will of another man (§22: Locke, 1997, 126).

Of course, it was not political consumerism or political consumers that Locke had in mind when he wrote this. One nevertheless finds in political consumerism a form of subjection to others’ “inconstant, uncertain, unknown, arbitrary will” corresponding to that which, according to Locke, manifested itself in the state of nature; the one from which people attempted to flee when they originally united in society. The core strategy in all political consumerism is, it will be recalled, that people attempt to resolve *public* problems here by way of *private* consumption. It challenges the legal rights of the individual because the public problems cannot be directly resolved, but only through the regulation of other private actors. In political consumerism the goal is thus to solve public problems by letting private individuals regulate other private individuals. But private actors (in this case: the political consumer) attempting to solve public problems by displaying force in respect to other private actors (in this

²⁵ After writing the two dissertations familiar as *Two Tracts of Government* in 1660-61, Locke’s political thinking undergoes a radical transformation that is evident in *Two Treatises of Government*. Thus, in *Two Tracts of Government* Locke pleads the cause of “the arbitrary monarch and the authoritarian society” – a viewpoint that is poles apart from the ones we encounter in *Two Treatises of Government* (cf. Koch 1992, 24-25). In referring to Locke’s political thinking in the following, I refer exclusively to the Locke who wrote *Two Treatises of Government*.

²⁶ All paragraph references in the following are to the second treatise of *Two Treatises of Government*.

case: companies), is dangerously reminiscent of the state that it was attempted to avoid by creating liberal democratic societies, and of the individual's lack of legal protection in the state of nature due to individual interpretations of the natural rights and arbitrary punishment. So with political consumerism we return in a way to the state of nature. But, as mentioned above, it was precisely in order to prevent individuals or individual groups from regulating each other that the general legislation and public regulations of the state of society were chosen.

Although Locke as well as liberal theoreticians ever since certainly have not been supporters of a great deal of societal regulation, liberal society is in fact founded on the fundamental insight that a certain amount of regulation is necessary to ensure the freedom of individuals; it is therefore crucial that this regulation is *public*. For Locke it was important to ensure uniformity in the regulations in order to guarantee the *legal rights* of the individual. Another argument for public rather than private regulations is that individuals themselves (in democratic societies) influence the character and quantity of these regulations. The individual therefore comes to live under rules and regulations that s/he has helped decide.²⁷ Although in most "actually existing" liberal democratic societies the ideal of a well-functioning, bourgeois public sphere (cp. Habermas, 1962) is far from existing, the third argument for public as opposed to private regulations is still that in a democracy these cannot simply be carried out under cover of night, but must always be legitimated in respect to the public.

Even though today very few endorse the natural-rights or social contract theory underlying Locke's argumentation, many still think that the ideas that Locke was the first to introduce and that constitute the core of liberal democratic societies are good ideas worth preserving – especially the idea of dividing up society into a public and a private sphere, the latter being a place where one is left alone from other individuals' "inconstant, uncertain, unknown and arbitrary will".²⁸ Likewise, most no doubt also think that it is fairest to employ equal standards – "common to everyone of that society" – for how one should and should not conduct oneself in a given society. Finally, on the whole, everyone also prefers to have an influence on the conditions under which they live. The problem with political consumerism in this context is therefore that here equal standards precisely do *not* exist. It is the individual political consumer or group of consumers who absolutely decide what applies and what does not. Everyone else has no direct influence on the standards introduced. They are precisely introduced without public interference, without prior public discussion, and they should not be legitimized afterwards in re-

²⁷ This is also decisive for Rousseau. He defines true freedom as obeying the laws we ourselves have participated to creating: "... the mere impulse of appetite is slavery, while obedience to a law which we prescribe to ourselves is liberty." (Rousseau, 176a, Book I, chap. 8).

²⁸ Along with Rorty one can say that today we are in a position of being able to throw away the philosophical ladders used to construct liberal democratic society (Rorty, 1991, 194).

spect to the public. For others – especially the companies towards which political consumerism is directed – the individual political consumer's course of action therefore often seems arbitrary. At any rate, an arbitrariness in standards and regulations is manifest. One company is punished for having used child labour, another is not. One company is rewarded for paying extraordinary regard to the environment, another is not. One company holds itself within the limits of the law but is punished – another breaks the law but is rewarded.

It can of course be difficult to summon up compassion for private companies that conduct themselves highly irresponsibly in respect to the environment, ethics and/or social matters, and that for this reason are struck by boycott campaigns. Likewise, it is difficult to get very upset about consumers rewarding companies that, for instance, attempt to improve the circumstances of child workers, that establish health clinics and free schooling for their employees, or that make an extraordinary effort in the environmental area. Yet from a liberal democratic perspective there is reason to at least discuss how appropriate it is that private individuals regulate other private individuals, as is the case in political consumerism.²⁹

The prosperity problem – welfare for us to the detriment of wealth for them?

In addition to the politico-philosophical argument discussed above there is also a *politico-economic* argument for the liberal model of society which also conflicts with political consumerism. This argument goes back to Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* from 1776. In this work Smith argues that the economic actors should be liberated from political responsibility. In fact, he attempts to show that it can be directly harmful to mix politics and economy as the political consumer does when attempting to carry out politics via the market.

Smith's errand in *The Wealth of Nations* is both moral and political. The immediate topic may well be economics, but economics for Smith is

²⁹ There are also many others besides the villains who are struck by boycott campaigns, and nor is it always the "good guys" who are rewarded. When political consumers boycott, for example, Israeli goods in hopes that it can press Israel out of the occupied territories, this boycott affects not only right-wing Likud voters or extreme right-wing nationalist groups. A campaign like this will unwittingly also affect the middle-of-the-road orange farmer who wants an independent Palestinian state to be established as soon as possible. It will also affect Palestinians living in Israel – workers as well as employers. On the other hand, it is not just the virtuous who are rewarded by the political consumers. For it is not virtue at all, but rather the *experience of* virtue, that determines whether the political consumer chooses or does without goods. For the companies it is therefore not of primary importance to *be* virtuous – to live up to the ethical, environmental and social demands made by the consumers regarding production methods and so on – but to be perceived *as though* they are. One might say that 'schein' has become more important than 'sein'. In this also lies part of the explanation for the increasing importance of public relations departments in modern companies. "Corporate communication" and "reputation" have taken centre stage, and public relations departments are to modern companies what quality departments were to traditional companies.

only a tool at the service of politics and morals. Throughout the work the economic aspect – economic systems and economic policies – is therefore measured in respect to an overall moral and political project, which aims to create so much *wealth* that there is enough for everyone.

It is in this light that one should view Smith's intense criticism of mercantilism in the work and of erroneous policies in the economic area on the whole (Smith, 1976, book IV). Mercantile politics is *immoral* because by means of monopolies it favours individual social groups – above all merchants and master artisans – to the detriment of everyone else, especially the consumers. For instance, the merchants and master artisans were protected against foreign competition by means of high tariff rates, while corporation laws protected them against domestic competition (Smith, 1976, 144). It was altogether harmful to the consumer, who had to pay an unnaturally high price for the goods. In Smith's view, a policy that supports monopolies, corporation laws and so forth – as mercantilism does – is not just immoral because it favours individual groups in society to the detriment of others, it is also *unnatural*, one of the consequences of this policy being that the prices become unnaturally high to the detriment of the consumers. A natural price can only occur in an economic system with freedom of competition. Freedom of competition will furthermore guarantee that salaries and profit rates will find their natural level.

According to Smith, the basis of a correct economic policy is how humans are created by nature. He points out that people's efforts to improve their living conditions is the primary natural behaviour that politics ought to use to its advantage.³⁰ If the individual is allowed to live out his or her nature in the market, it will, according to Smith, be beneficial to society as a whole. The prosperity that the political economy is supposed to bring about is best created if politics leaves the initiative to the citizens' private interests. Paradoxically enough, it so happens that every human, even though s/he solely pursues his or her own interests in the market, still is led by "an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention." (Smith, 1976, 456). Hence, according to Smith, an open market in which the consumer and the other actors solely pursue their own interests will not lead to chaos and anarchy. On the contrary, behind the backs of the players an order will impose itself to the benefit of the whole.

The concept of division of labour is the key to Smith's thinking in *The Wealth of Nations*. His line of thought goes as follows: the source of prosperity is work. Therefore one can increase prosperity by increasing the productivity of the work. The way in which one improves the productivi-

³⁰ "The natural effort of every individual to better his own condition, when suffered to exert itself with freedom and security, is so powerful a principle, that it is alone, and without any assistance, not only capable of carrying on the society to wealth and prosperity, but of surmounting a hundred impertinent obstructions with which the folly of human laws too often incumbers its operations; though the effect of these obstructions is always more or less either to encroach upon its freedom, or to diminish its security" (Smith, 1976, 540).

ty is through the division of labour. First, the work is split up into individual trades and other vocations and then a specialization takes place within the individual trade and vocation, resulting in a drastic increase in productivity. The incentive for increased specialization comes from the growing markets. The bigger the markets and the more open the access is to them, the greater the degree of division of labour, which in turn brings about increased productivity and thus increased prosperity.

For Smith, the historical development of the division of labour is not the result of a conscious process. The division of labour is rather an unintended side effect of the human inclination to “truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another” (Smith, 1976, 59). Smith describes how the first uncivilized people must have realized that it was expedient to entirely or partially concentrate on what they were good at. Then they could exchange the surplus from their own production with others so in this way the individual could acquire the other goods that he needed. The original cause of the division of labour is thus the certainty that arises with the establishment of the first markets of being able to exchange one’s surplus for other goods.

Yet far from all problems can be solved by the market. Smith distinguishes clearly between what the market’s responsibilities are and what the sovereign (politics) should attend to.³¹ For this reason it is also imprecise to attach the predicate “laissez-faire” to Smith’s thinking, as is often done. The market should not order *everything*, according to Smith; the market should precisely only order what it can and that is to bring about economic, material *prosperity* for the benefit of the individual as well as the whole. The rest must be taken care of by politics, the law and morals.

The Wealth of Nations is one long argument for separating the economic sphere from the political sphere, and Smith argues for the separation based on a *moral* and *political* agenda. For according to him the creation of the wealth that is the precondition for the individual and the whole to live a good life is only possible by means of a model of society in which the political and the economic are separated. If the project is to succeed, it is however important that the players in the two spheres also live up to their

³¹ According to Smith, politics has the following three main responsibilities: first, protecting society by building up a military defense (Smith, 1976, 689ff); second, establishing a judicial system that can protect the citizens against injustices and oppression by other members of society (Smith, 1976, 708ff), and finally: “... erecting and maintaining those public institutions and those public works, which, though they may be in the highest degree advantageous to a great society, are, however, of such a nature, that the profit could never repay the expence to any individual or small number of individuals, and which it, therefore, cannot be expected that any individual or small number of individuals should erect and maintain. The performance of this duty requires too very different degrees of expence in the different periods of society” (Smith, 1976, 723). The final responsibility of politics is in three parts: A) Developing and maintaining the infrastructure of the country by building and maintaining roads, ports, bridges, canals, and so forth, in addition to establishing postal and monetary systems, all of which is necessary for commerce to thrive. B) Establishing and running an education system. C) Providing guidance to the citizens in all age groups, which for Smith is a task for the church (Smith, 1976, 788ff).

responsibility. On the one hand, the politicians should make a point of creating the best possible conditions for the economic sphere, while, on the other, the consumers and the rest of the market players should stay far away from political considerations. In the market the players should solely have their own interests at heart because according to Smith the circumstances are such that "... by pursuing his own interest he [the market actor] frequently promotes that of society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it" (Smith, 1976, 456). Smith sharply differentiates between how one ought to act in the political and economic spheres, respectively. While in the political sphere one must keep the whole in view, in the economic sphere one must have – out of regard for the whole – only oneself in view. It can, according to Smith, be directly *harmful* to take into account the whole when acting in the market. The contrast to the political consumer can therefore not become greater. The concept of consumer we encounter in Smith is simply diametrically *opposed* to the idea of political consumerism. While the political consumer wishes to unite the economic sphere with the political one, in Smith and in the liberal democratic model of society it is generally a point that politics and economy ought to be separated. One could say that whereas the political consumer wishes to carry out politics *via* the market, Smith wishes instead to carry out politics *with* the market. For the amazing thing about the market is that, according to him, it – if kept clear of political obligations – was actually able to solve the greatest political problem of his time: the lack of *wealth*. Yet in order to work it was important, as mentioned above, that the consumers and the other market actors *solely* concentrated on pursuing their own interests in the market.³²

Adam Smith's main argument for the liberal model of society is thus that it is better able to bring about social prosperity than models of society that mix the political and economic spheres. Retrospectively, it appears that this argument holds water. There is consequently no doubt that *liberating* the market actors – of which Adam Smith was the first to understand the full implications – has helped to improve the productivity of the economic sphere and hence our prosperity. If we now can afford on the whole to make political demands on companies, it is paradoxically enough not least for the very reason that throughout the past couple hundred years we have relatively consistently kept politics and economics separate – that we have kept the economic actors clear of political responsibility. It is therefore also naïve to believe that it is cost free to act political in the market. For integrating otherwise separate spheres will, other things being equal, decrease the productivity of companies. Organic farming, as an example, does not yield as high a profit as conventional farming – and probably never will. When we act politically in the market

³² Yet, as Smith dryly ascertained, it should not be difficult to persuade them from this. To act with the common good in view is, namely, "... an affectation, indeed, not very common among merchants, and very few words need be employed in dissuading them from it." (Smith, 1976, 456)

fewer goods are produced overall than otherwise. This also means that the overall development in prosperity does *not* become as big as it could have been. In the Western part of the world one can of course refer to a slowing down in the increase in prosperity, but there are other parts of the world where this is not at all the case. As we know, the world is divided into almost equally large parts: a part where “*the lack of prosperity*” is still the paramount problem, and another part where the *side effects* of the successful creation of wealth have become the main problem – grotesquely expressed in the fact that today there are about *one billion* overweight people in the world, 300 million of whom are obese, while at the same time, around 840 million people primarily in the poor countries are starving.³³ The question that therefore arises in continuation of the above circumstances is whether political consumerism is largely merely just another example of how the spoiled, rich Western part of the world in its self-centredness gets in the way of the poorest part of the world.³⁴

Conclusion

So there are plenty of problems in political consumerism seen from the viewpoint of liberal democratic society. But what consequences should we draw from this insight? Should we, to paraphrase Milton Friedman, say, “There is one and only one political responsibility of consumers – to use their resources and engage in activities designed to maximize their utility?”³⁵ Shouldn’t we, in other words – to the extent that we actually mean something by our support to the liberal democratic model of society – simply encourage people to stop acting politically in the market?

As demonstrated above, there are many good reasons for having this opinion, but in my view, one must distinguish between two kinds of political consumerism: political consumerism that arises *from below*, where it

³³ Cp. WHO’s report: “Obesity and Overweight” at http://www.who.int/hpr/NPH/docs/gs_obesity.pdf and FAO’s report: “The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2002” at <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/005/y7352e/y7250e.pdf>

³⁴ The preoccupation of Western consumers with *welfare* in the environmental field, which leads us to choose organic rather than gene-modified foodstuffs, does not actually benefit, for instance, the increase in wealth in the poorest countries. As many have pointed out, the European opposition – including the consumers’ opposition – to gene-modified foodstuffs has contributed to blocking the further development of gene-modified crops in the world’s poorest countries, crops that otherwise could have a positive effect on the problems of starvation and undernourishment facing these places. The problem is that many developing countries are dependent on the export income from their agricultural production. If they make use of GM crops – also even though it is only for the domestic market – they easily risk being entirely excluded from the European market because here it is feared that GM produce can be intermixed with non-GM produce in storage (cf. “The Nuffield Council on Bioethics”, 2003, xvii). The European consumers’ choice to do without gene-modified foodstuffs – a choice that in many cases is motivated by a sincere desire to protect nature and humans and therefore can be described as *political* – may therefore contribute to blocking, or in any case postponing, long-term solutions to hunger and under nourishment problems in the worlds’ poorest countries.

³⁵ According to Friedman, corporate social responsibility in societies with market economies can be boiled down to the following: “... there is one and only one social responsibility of business – to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits ...” (Friedman, 1962, 133).

is the consumers themselves who wish to supplement their political opinions with political consumerism, or NGOs that go out and encourage political consumerism; and political consumerism that is staged *from above*, from the state or the formal political system. Although political consumerism initiated from below can, as demonstrated, have *negative* side effects (the standards may become unequal, one may not only strike a blow at the villains but also at innocent people, one may put obstacles in the way of increasing prosperity), this line of action is still *legitimate* seen from the viewpoint of liberal democratic society. For even though the individual political consumer acts directly counter to the underlying rationale of the liberal democratic model of society by mixing the political and economic spheres, in this kind of society one must still accept this line of action because here there are even more fundamental, liberal principles at play: the individual's right to (within the limits of the law) spend his or her money on just what s/he wants.³⁶ In other words: the only way to prevent political consumerism is by making such profound interventions in the civic rights of the individual that in reality it would mean saying goodbye to the liberal democratic model of society.³⁷

So although in a liberal, democratic perspective there certainly isn't any enthusiasm about political consumerism, it must still be accepted so long as it originates from *private* initiative. The situation is the reverse if it is the public sphere, the state or the formal political system that is the initiator of the political consumerism; if the formal political system out-sources political decisions to the market that the system itself *could* have made, or if the market is used as an indicator of the public opinion.³⁸ This happens, for instance, when a state leaves it up to the consumers to determine through their purchases the environmental standards that should apply in a certain country or area, often motivated by the idea that "the consumers can have what they want as long as they will pay for it", instead of deciding itself which standards should apply.

The idea seems to be that by moving the decision-making process out into the market it is easier to involve the citizens in the democratic work,

³⁶ The relationship of liberalism to political consumerism must be described as ambivalent. On the one hand, there is an element of political consumerism that is of primary importance to liberalism: the individual's right to (within the limits of the law) to spend his or her money on just what s/he wants. On the other hand, the political consumer is at the same time a market actor who actively opposes another fundamental idea in liberalism – that the economic and the political spheres should be kept apart. This must therefore mean that the liberal tradition must recognize *the individual's right* to be a political consumer, while at the same time distancing itself from the *idea* of political consumerism, inasmuch as this idea – consistently carried out – will destroy the invisible hand's possibilities for arranging everything for the common good; i.e., it will *destroy* the possibilities for continued wealth creation, while at the same time thus also *threatening* the legal security of the individual.

³⁷ Political consumerism can only be stopped by abandoning the market-economic system in favour of a plan-economic one: only by doing away with private consumption is it possible to provide against consumers allowing political opinions to influence their private consumption.

³⁸ I specifically use the word *could* to indicate that there are also problems – an increasing number – that the formal political system in its present, primarily nation-state form, cannot solve. For if the states do not just intervene and regulate the conditions, it is of course because many of the problems we are facing today are problems that transgress national boundaries, and that must therefore be solved on a *transnational* or, ideally, *global* level.

while at the same time avoiding far too much control of details and legislation. Only if the consumers really want it – and a want here is viewed as a purchase – is agriculture, for example, converted into an organic operation, otherwise it is not. Instead of determining how the agriculture of the future should look, the formal political system provides a publicly controlled labelling system so that the consumers can differentiate organic goods from other goods.³⁹

This marketization of politics is however entirely unacceptable seen from a liberal democratic perspective, in which this kind of outsourcing of the political decision-making process can only be described as a *fleeing from responsibility* or as a *faulty attempt* at including the citizen in the decision-making process, for it is not the *citizen* one meets in the market, but the *consumer*. The difference is that even though it appears that a large number of consumers in fact think of others and something besides themselves when they act in the market, liberal democratic society is essentially founded on the idea that (according to the Smithian interpretation) the consumer only *ought* to think of him or herself in the market. In the political sphere the individual is on the other hand expected to think of others and something besides him or herself. With a conceptual pair borrowed from Rousseau, it may therefore be said that in the market one can expect to meet the citizen not as ‘citoyen’ but as ‘bourgeois’. The difference is that while ‘le bourgeois’ always gives his particular interests top priority, ‘le citoyen’, on the other hand, gives first priority to the interests of society as a whole. It may therefore be said that in the liberal democratic society ‘le citoyen’ is the ideal for how one ought to act in the political sphere while ‘le bourgeois’ is the ideal for the correct line of action in the economic sphere.

In the real world, there is in the political spheres – luckily – quite a way to go before reaching the ideal of the ‘citoyen’ as described by Rousseau at the beginning of *Émile*,⁴⁰ just as actual political consumerism shows us that not all market actors are pure bourgeois.⁴¹ This does not change the fact that the liberal democratic society is built up around a difference between the public and the private, including a difference bet-

³⁹ This of course also applies to areas other than organic farming. Thus, in most countries there are general environmental labelling systems such as the Nordic Swan label or the EU flower. In Scandinavia there has also been much talk of introducing an ethical label (cp., for instance, TemaNord, 2003).

⁴⁰ “A Spartan mother had five sons in the army and awaited news of the battle. A Helot arrived; trembling she asked his news. “Your five sons have been killed.” “Vile slave, was that what I asked you?” “We have won the victory.” She ran to the temple to give thanks to the gods. That was a citizen.” (Rousseau, 1762b, first book, 26)

⁴¹ Political consumerism is therefore also a challenge to mainstream theories of market economies, which since the 1870s – since the breakthrough of the theory of marginal utility with William Stanley Jevons’s *The Theory of Political Economy* (1871), Carl Menger’s *Grundsätze der Volkswirtschaftslehre* (1871), and Léon Walras’s *Éléments d’Économie politique pure* (1874) – have assumed that the consumer’s activities in the market could be viewed as utility maximizing (see Sørensen, 2004, 75–82). The understanding of market actors as pure homo oeconomicus’es is however criticised by not only the practical actions of the political consumer but also by certain economists (see, for instance, Sen, 1977; 1991).

ween the political and the economic sphere with different ideals of how one ought to act in each sphere. Therefore it directly *undermines* the liberal model of society as well as very basic democratic rules, moving the decision-making process from the political sphere – where the citizen in the shape of ‘le citoyen’ is thought to reside and where the votes are distributed according to the principle of one man, one vote – to the economic sphere, where the citizen is precisely not expected to appear as a citizen but as a consumer, and where the votes are unequally distributed corresponding to the individual’s economic situation.

In conclusion, I think that there are serious problems in political consumerism seen from the perspective of liberal democratic society, but that in evaluating which consequences this insight ought to have, we ought to distinguish between consumers on the one hand, who want to use their private resources to, for instance, influence agriculture in a certain direction, and politicians on the other, who do not want to or dare make the necessary decisions about how agriculture should look in the future, and who instead leave it “up to the consumers and the market” to decide the direction in which agriculture should move. The former is, as already mentioned, a fully legitimate, though potentially unfortunate, way to act in liberal democratic society, while the other is an entirely *illegitimate* course of action, the marketization of politics having nothing at all to do with participatory democracy. On the contrary, it is a matter of an unfortunate mixing of spheres that not only muddles the picture to an unfortunate extent, but, as I have attempted to show in this paper, thus also contains strong anti-democratic tendencies and departs from fundamental legal principles in liberal democratic society.

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4. Ambiguous Framings of Political Consumerism: Means or end, product - or process orientation?

Mikael Klintman

Abstract

For dealing with various societal problems, ‘political’/‘ethical’/‘responsible’ consumerism is often discussed as an effective democratic and participatory tool. However, political consumerism – along with its tools, such as product labeling – is often conceived and discussed in oversimplified ways. Instead, the tension between scientific complexity, knowledge uncertainty, and a codified, standardized label involves extensive political strategy, interest conflicts, and simplified framings of the consumers’ roles as political decision makers. The purpose of this paper is to analyze how criteria for organic food labeling have been simplified, or framed, within various versions of political consumerism in policy debates. The more general purpose is to examine variations of what consumerism may entail theoretically and practically. Examples are chosen of organic food labeling in the U.S. The analysis is based on framing theory. The first distinction is made between framings of *extrinsic* and *intrinsic* consumerism, (that is, consumer empowerment toward an external goal: or as an overriding principle of democracy). The second distinction is between product- and process-oriented consumerism (that is, consumer empowerment with regards to the purchased goods or concerning the ‘invisible’ production and disposal processes). Finally, the paper argues that a judgment of processes of political consumerism as ‘successful’ or ‘unsuccessful’ examples of democratic political consumerism may, for instance, be dependent on the relative importance that one places on trust, insight, and influence of political consumers.

Introduction

An increasingly debated consumer issue – both in academia and among various stakeholders – is whether, or how, the market can function in new

ways as a political arena, and to what extent consumers can use the market to become (sub) politically active (see Micheletti, 2003; Micheletti et al., 2004; Crane, 2000; Sørensen, 2002:7)⁴². The basic questions are not entirely new: Should we perceive consumerism as an ideal form of political participation and empowerment where ‘every penny gives a right to vote’ (von Mises, 1944:17; cf., Cohen, 1990:xii) thus constituting ‘the authority of the consumer’ (Slater 1997:51)? Or should a political, ‘modified consumerism’ be perceived as ‘unjustified, detrimental to the aim of sustainable improvement in welfare’ (Lintott, 1998:240)? Despite the criticism embedded in the latter question, it is interesting to note that the general political consumerist-ideal in recent years has been increasingly appreciated among a broad range of societal actors and institutions, across ideological positions (Nimon & Beghin, 1999:802; Sørensen, 2002).

On the face of it, political consumerism may appear quite straightforward, since its practical policy tools may appear so. The principle is mainly that societal problems should be solved by the use of voluntary measures – such as certificates, standards, product labeling or other information. By having access of this product information, the argument goes, individual consumers and professional purchasers become empowered, and will acquire the knowledge needed to make informed, ‘political’ decisions through their consumer choices (e.g., Rhodes & Brown, 1997).

As to our empirical focus – product labeling – this ‘soft’ tool is claimed to be particularly useful as a backup of hard regulation in cases where the risk arguments are not strong enough (e.g., Hadden, 1986; Jordan et al, 2004). Furthermore, labeling and other information tools are said to be flexible, so that they can be modified as new knowledge replaces old assumptions (Sabel et al., 2000). In addition, many economic arguments are presented in favor of product labeling rather than hard regulation such as bans (Golan, 2000).

The basis of this paper is that political consumerist arrangements such as product labeling – although it may be a promising communicator – are often treated in over-simplified ways. Food labeling is typically treated as if optimal limits and thresholds were possible to find through objective discovery. As regards organic food labeling, even scholarly debates rarely go beyond the aim of finding ways for concerned and reflexive consumers to learn ‘what foods are truly organic’ (e.g., Amaditz, 1997:538), as if organic foods were something absolute. A closely related view is that once national standards of products and processes have been developed, political (e.g., green) consumerism can start to work with little friction:

One of the primary barriers to green consumerism is the absence of ‘nationally accepted standards or coding systems for determining what products are [for

⁴² See Sørensen, 2002 for an in-depth analysis of the historical roots of political consumerism, which go back to classical theorists such as John Locke and Adam Smith.

instance] environmentally sound (Quote from Elkington et al., 1990:7, in Allen and Kovach, 2000)

On the contrary, this paper contends that product labeling and other ‘political-consumer-tools’ are far from straightforward. Deciding on criteria for product standards or labels requires immense simplifications of complex and uncertain knowledge about consequences for the environment, human health, the economic structure of farming, and so forth (Klintman & Boström, 2004; Boström & Klintman, 2003). Such simplifications in turn require political strategies, selections of certain aspect and omissions of other factors. In addition, there are diverse ideas and interests within various interest groups (environmental, health-related, ‘ethically concerned’, and so forth) about what factors should be given priority, aside from more obvious diverging interests across business sectors, NGO:s, and governments (Boström & Klintman, 2004; Boström, 2001).

In light of these over-simplified complexities, ‘political consumerism’, is a concept that needs to be clarified and developed. In addition to welcome developments of political theory, which takes political consumerism into account (e.g., Follesdal, 2004, cf., Micheletti, 2003), clarifications need to be pursued based on analyses of practical consumer-related policy processes and tools. The objective of the latter strategy is not so much to determine what political consumerism should be, but rather how it is framed, treated and used in policy processes and debates. The purpose of this paper is to help such clarification by analyzing how different frames of political consumerism (a term rarely used in practice, yet often implied) are used by various actors involved in labeling. The specific focus is, at times, the very heated disputes over the criteria for food products and processes to be labeled ‘organic’.

The analysis of consumerist framings in this context is a way of shedding light on the growing public discourse surrounding the use of voluntary instruments for democratic and societal improvements. What are the purposes of certain organic labeling criteria, as implied by the consumerist framings used by various groups? And how can these framings of purposes be placed in a broader context of political consumerism? As a point of departure, the very broad definition of political consumerism in this first part of the paper may be stated as the idea that active consumer choice is a promising means towards ‘changing objectionable institutional or market practices’ (the quoted part comes from Micheletti et al, 2004:xiv). In *green* political consumerism, environmental implications of production processes become an important focus.

American examples of organic food labeling are examined here. The US is particularly interesting due to its dynamic and adversarial policy discourse climate. Compared to many countries with more consensual policy discourse climates (e.g., the Nordic countries), the US reveals an

extraordinary dynamics in how various consumer issues have been framed (Boström & Klintman, 2004).⁴³

When examining how complex policy issues are simplified and ‘packaged’, and how certain aspects are selected or omitted, frame analysis is a useful research perspective (e.g., Laws & Rein, 2003; Fischer, 2003:144ff). This perspective is particularly useful for analyzing how various actors, organizations, and alliances have to simplify scientifically complex and ideologically diverse issues. This paper focuses on the part of the labeling processes where governmental and non-governmental groups frame organic labeling in contested ways – partly to acquire cultural resonance with the broader public (see Gamson, 1995).

This theoretical basis, together with the empirical analysis, has resulted in the main frame distinctions in the paper: between *intrinsic* versus *extrinsic* consumerism, and between *product-oriented* versus *process-oriented* consumerism (see below). To examine framings of political consumerism may be a helpful basis for policy discussions—about consumerist tools as opposed to (other) democratic tools. It is highly relevant for debates about whether/how consumers can become more empowered, and towards what ends.

The paper is aimed at shedding light on patterns of argumentative and practical flexibility, and sometimes obscurity, among actors and groups involved in processes of product labeling. Despite this critical approach, it should by no means be conceived as a rejection of political consumerism or its tools. (Grand rejections of the whole phenomenon of political consumerism run the risk of leading to a dead end). Instead, this paper will hopefully contribute to a broader call for nuancing and concretizations of decision makers’, planners’, and social movement organizations’ often vague and sweeping reasoning about the political importance of consumer choice. Hopefully it may also help to stimulate the theoretical debate by raising issues of the different levels of transparency concerning the tools on which ‘consumers as political participants’ (Stolle & Hooghe, 2004:265) are dependent.

The paper is structured as follows. In the following section the theoretical basis is developed. It has three parts, and distinguishes between intrinsic vs. extrinsic consumerism, and product- vs. process-oriented consumerism. The proceeding sections provide empirical examples of various actors’ flexible usage of these distinctions in the American organic food labeling case. The final section concludes and discusses the findings, as well as suggests political and democratic implications.

⁴³ The data used in this case study has been collected through in-depth interviews, websites of actors and organizations involved, as well as written documents. The main interest has been the open communication and rhetoric of the parties rather than “the real” values within the organizations and within people’s minds in the organic food labelling issue. Therefore, the open documents used to convince people within and outside of the organizations have offered this paper the data within its scope.

Theoretical Context: Framings of Political consumerism

Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Consumerism

When analyzing the data in the organic food labeling case, a fundamental distinction turns out to concern the intrinsic versus extrinsic values it may have as a tool of consumerism.⁴⁴ At least since G.E. Moore (1903: §8), moral and political philosophy has often used the distinction between ‘intrinsic’ and ‘extrinsic’ value. When the value of something is claimed to be ‘intrinsic’ it is good in, and for, itself. Extrinsic value, on the other hand, refers to when something is held to be good as a means to other things (Moore, 1903: § 8). Among philosophers, there is a far from broad agreement as to which type of value that democracy, liberty, and public participation (however defined) possess (see e.g., Lemos, 1994). Since this paper focuses on framed values of consumerism in a policy process, rather than on the nature of various types of values, it is beyond its scope to do an in-depth normative, ethical analysis of intrinsic and extrinsic value. Instead, the analysis involves a more basic distinction between *framings* of intrinsic and extrinsic consumerism among actors, other than consumers, involved in consumer policy issues: the first category concerns framings that stress a fundamental, democratic value of having consumers make ‘political’ choices on the market. These framings are contrasted with those that present political consumer choice as useful because it (to them) appears to be an instrument for reducing harm to the environment, human health, animals or other ‘external’ dimensions of society.⁴⁵

Product- vs. Process-Oriented Framings of Consumerism

The framings analyzed in this paper are further elaborated through the distinction that actors draw between concerns of the *products as such* and *processes* within the product’s lifecycle. This is connected to the often-

⁴⁴ Cf., Follesdal (2004) who identifies five conceptions of the role of political consumerism. Three of these – ‘clean hands’, ‘expressing self’, and ‘expression of mutual respect’ – could possibly be conceived as examples of intrinsic consumerism, as they reflect an interest in the principle of consumer empowerment rather than in its consequences. The latter two roles in Follesdal’s categorization, ‘re-socializing wrong-doers’, and ‘changing business practices’ would fall within our latter category of extrinsic consumerism, as they reflect an interest in the outcomes of political consumerism. However, since our purpose is to identify the pluralism and flexibility of political consumerist framings, it is here more to leave open what various actors include in intrinsic and extrinsic consumerism, rather than to use pre-defined categories. And it is clear that many other categories are possible in addition to Follesdal’s, (for instance, intrinsic consumerism as a way of avoiding command-and-control by the state).

⁴⁵ Examples of theorists of participatory democracy who claim an intrinsic value with democracy in general include John Stuart Mill and Hannah Arendt. Mill, for instance, stresses the educative virtue of participation on citizens. Jon Elster, on the other hand, claims that politics – and thus also democracy – is “public in nature and instrumental [i.e., of extrinsic value] in purpose.” The educative advantages he perceives as positive by-products rather than something of intrinsic value (Bohman & Rehg, 1997:xiii).

stated, late modern reflexivity, which also involves the impacts of the entire production and disposal process. It allows for a wider notion of rationality than the conventional view of individual welfare maximization, and involves value pluralism (Paavola 2001:83; cf., Elster, 1983).

An immediate challenge with regards to, for instance, food consumption is 'how to make visible the invisible' (cf., Klintman, 2000; Lindén & Klintman, 2003 for making environmental risks in general visible).⁴⁶ The visibility of goods has also been conceptualized by Darby and Karni (1973). They have made a three-part distinction between

- a 'search good', which can be fully evaluated by looking at the product,
- an 'experience good', for which the using of the product, such as eating, will reveal its qualities, and
- a 'credence good', which is impossible to evaluate even when using.

However, although Darby & Karni's distinction may be helpful, it implies, erroneously, that most products are easily placed in one of the three categories. Instead, this paper claims that it is often the way actors frame a product, rather than 'the nature' of a product, that determines its category. Some would, for instance, argue that organically labeled foods have higher quality than other foods (where 'quality' could have many, sometimes contradictory, meanings), whereas others would argue against such framings. Framings are typically contested by various groups, and may also be changed over time. In the framing processes, food products may thus be partly moved from being separable by visual inspection or taste, and to raising concerns completely invisible to the consumer (to c: for instance concerns of the production process). And, conversely, the idea to put a standardized organic label on certain products is aimed at making invisible production processes of credence goods (category c) visible, to create full organic visibility (as in category a). This analysis focuses predominantly on the dynamics between framings of search goods and credence goods. Also, instead of focusing on a certain product, this paper mainly covers the broader framings, such as whether the political consumerist choice of organic food should concern product- or process issues, or both.

⁴⁶ The challenges of making visible the "invisible" aspects of production processes may also be connected to Marx' notion of commodity fetishism. This concept refers to the collective forgetfulness, a social repression, that the routines of consumerism contain in order to maintain the pleasures of consumerism. This repression constitutes a lack of awareness of the production processes (social, environmental, animal-related, etc) through which consumer goods have been created. This repression is created through the market discourse and is tied to the everyday routines (Billig, 1999). Proponents of (green) political consumerism hold that a more reflexive consumerism can help to reduce this social repression and increase the awareness of the production processes (e.g., Stolle & Hooghe, 2004).

A Model of Framings of Political Consumerism

As was mentioned above, organic food labeling is not permanently a product- or process issue by nature, but is instead determined by how it is framed. The same is true for intrinsic or extrinsic consumerism. The framing perspective (cf., Goffman, 1974) denotes this dynamic (see also figure 2.3). *Frames* and *framing* are here conceived as simplifications of the complex and uncertain reality in order to make parts of reality more understandable and/or to push an agenda (Klintman & Boström, 2004).⁴⁷ This paper makes use of the framings of consumerism presented in the following figure (using the letters A-D in figure 2.3). The paper indicates how the organic food labeling policy issues are moved between the types of framings (in figure 2.3) by various actors.

Figure 2.3: Framings of Political Consumerism

Framings of P.C.	Product-oriented	Process-oriented
Intrinsic	(A) Consumers should decide what products to accept on the market, regardless of the consequences for environment, health, etc. (e.g., economic value, competition, product ingredients).	(B) Consumers should be able to distinguish between production process on the market, regardless of whether the end product is 'substantially different' or not (e.g., 'naturalness' of certain food processes).
Extrinsic	(C) General Consumers should decide what products to accept on the market, to the extent that their decisions help to improve for externalities (e.g., human health). Yes, unless position Products should be inseparable for consumers, unless risks with one of the products have been supported by 'sufficient scientific evidence'. No, unless position: Products should be separable for consumers for precautionary reasons, even if risks with one of the products have not been supported by 'sufficient scientific evidence'.	(D) General Consumers should decide production processes to accept on the market, to the extent that their decisions lead to improvements for externalities (e.g., the environment, animal welfare, fair trade). Yes, unless position Processes should be inseparable for consumers, unless risks with one of the processes have been supported by 'sufficient scientific evidence'. No, unless position: Processes should be separable for consumers for precautionary reasons, even if risks with one of the processes have not been supported by 'sufficient scientific evidence'.

This paper examines how changes in framings may be more than a complete transition from one type of frame and to the other. The distinction between that is here called "single versus "double framing" illustrates this. Single framing refers to framings that take place within one frame. In (strong instances of) double framing, however, a coalition may hold: "even if our original framing were not valid (e.g., for "scientific" reasons), our position is still valid from an entirely different framing (e.g.,

⁴⁷ In the rich field of framing theory, several concepts have been developed that could be compared with the concept of single and double framing. Of particular interest to this study are (a) frame bridging (Gerards & Rucht, 1992), (b) frame extension (Babb, 1996:1046), and (c) metaframing (Klintman & Boström, 2004).

for “democratic” reasons). Thus, to frame an organic food labeling issue as both one of extrinsic and intrinsic consumerism, or as either of the two, is an example of double framing. Similarly, broadening the framing from *product relevance* to include *process relevance* is also another example of double framing.

Framings of Consumerism in an Organic Food Labeling Debate. Brief Background of Organic Food Labeling Debates in the US.

The Awakening of Organic Consciousness

US organic agriculture began – alongside modern conventional agriculture – on a very small scale. It was first in 1960s and 1970s that one could witness a dramatically growing interest in alternative agriculture. A broad range of reasons for preferring ‘chemical-free products’ could be found among organic consumers: they commonly assumed that organic food choices would be beneficial to health, the environment, and small-scale farming (Hartman & New Hope, 1997). This was also the time when laws and regulations started to mention organic food, although the organic farmers still constituted a small and dedicated group of semi-idealists (Lathrop, 1991).

The broad picture of American organic food labeling in the 1990s and 2000s is that of a federal ambition to move from a more complex and diverse system to a nationally standardized one. Organic food labeling policies has, during these last decades, moved from diversity and regionalism, and to federally regulated standardization (Klintman & Boström, 2004). This ambition was manifested by the incorporation of the Organic Food Protection Act (OFPA) into the 1990 Farm bill. Here the US federal government took control of standardizing organic criteria federally.⁴⁸ One of the goals of US Congress for developing national standards of organic food labeling included: ‘to assure consumers that organically produced products meet a consistent standard [of organic processes]’.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Despite the marginal proportion of organic food (2% of the U.S. food market) its exponential growth was reason enough to clarify organic labelling. It has commonly been argued that food retailers and distributors hesitated to choose organic foods due to the varied state laws. Also it was claimed that it was virtually impossible for “even the most sophisticated consumer to understand the term “organic” (S. Rep. No. 357, reprinted in 1990 U.S.C.C.A.N. at 4944). Consequently, there were consumers and other agents in the food chain that did not even trust “legitimate organic producers” (Clark, *supra* note 8, at 325).

⁴⁹ <http://envirotext.ch.doe.gov/data/uscode/7/6501.shtml> [Downloaded 2003-01-07]. See 7 U.S.C. § 6501.

The Polarization of Alliances

According to Amaditz (1997) there was a consensus across a broad range of actors that the US needed a national standard for organic food. This range of actors includes ‘state agriculture departments, national farmers’ organizations, organic industry trade associations and consumer interests’ (Amaditz, 1997:540).⁵⁰

Nevertheless, it is interesting to note the rather conflict-oriented policy discourse climate in organic food labeling issues in the US. In Klintman & Boström (2004) we examined the inter-frame controversies surrounding ‘scientific’ versus ‘ideological’ framings of organic food labeling. The present paper instead illustrates conflicts over consumerist framings. After the national standardization of organic food labeling, the actors have in the disputes that this paper analyzes been split in what we in this context conceive as two ‘alliances’: one alliance (represented by the US Department of Agriculture) proposing a more inclusive organic label, and another alliance (represented by consumer organizations, organic industry, organic farmers organizations, organic trade associations, and so forth) opposing a more inclusive organic label.⁵¹ A crucial part of the polarization of the two is that the latter alliance takes the view that the USDA is allied with the ‘conventional’ food industry and the GM food industry. This is linked to conflicts which touch the very essence of what ‘organic’ ought to mean.

The most extensive conflict over organic food has concerned The Big Three. In 1997, the USDA suggested that three ‘new’ processes be included under the standardized organic label: GM processes, the use of sewage sludge, and food radiation. The great number of consumer protests (275.603 comments) was unique in this case, and has helped a frame resolution to be reached (through a final rejection of the proposal). However, several other organic issues continue to be strongly debated in consumer terms up to this day.

Point of Departure: Political Consumerism as part of Market Economy

As in other market economies, there has in the US long been a strong position in favor of consumers’ intrinsic right to shape the products on the market through consumer demand. The most obvious framings of consumerism have thus been intrinsic and product-oriented. They are framed as issues concerning ‘economic value’, ‘quality’, ‘taste’, and so forth (A in figure 2.3, mainly as ‘search’ or ‘experience’ goods). The Food and Drug Agency (FDA) accordingly deals with the characteristics

⁵⁰ Moreover, the organic industry in the US (as well as perhaps the USDA) has felt the need to adapt to the “stricter” thresholds of the EU and other regions for reasons of international trade.

⁵¹ See Boström & Klintman, 2004 about the organization of organic food labeling.

of the final product, and finds process-orientation (B & D in figure 2.3) irrelevant to consumers, for instance production processes using genetic engineering (FDA, 1992; Klintman, 2002a). In Darby's and Karni's (1973) terms, these are not credence aspects relevant to consumers.

'the [Food and Drug] agency does not believe that the method of development of a new plant variety (including the use of new techniques including recombinant DNA techniques) is normally material information within the meaning of 21 U.S.C. paragraph 321 (n) and would not usually be required to be disclosed in labeling for the food' (Runge & Jackson, 2000:726).

However, in the national standard of organic food labeling (controlled by the US Department of Agriculture, USDA) the process-oriented framings of consumerism have been more successful. Nevertheless, much dispute has been raised regarding organic food labeling criteria. Process- versus product orientation is still a contested issue; moreover, intrinsic and extrinsic frames of consumerism are constructed both by the anti-Big Three alliance, who wants the organic labeling criteria to be kept stricter, and by actors who want to broaden them to include additional processes.

The Organic Basis: Consensus surrounding the intrinsic value of the process-oriented consumer choice

A framing agreed upon concerning organic food labeling is its role as a consumerist tool of separating goods based on 'invisible' differences in production methods and contexts. Moreover, it has been widely agreed – across the two alliances – that organic food labeling is a legitimate tool based on the intrinsic rights of consumers to choose production processes.

The label [...] is not [...] better for you in any way. It is purely a marketing label. (Alex Avery, director of research at The Hudson Institute Center for Global Food Issues. The statements by the USDA have been nearly identical, see Butler, 2000, *supra* note 61)'.

Even if organic food labeling would not reflect differences in the final product), or differences in its consequences (extrinsically, towards the environment, health, etc), it may still be widely accepted as a legitimate product label. But, again, there have still been conflicts.

The Big Three Proposal: A Reflection within the Frame of Process-Oriented, Intrinsic Consumerism?

The USDA and its allied presented the Big Three proposal as a critical frame reflection within the intrinsic, process-oriented frame (B in figure

2.3). In this light, actors supporting USDA's initial proposal wondered why one should not call GM organic since this production technology uses the organic production processes, aside from the genetic modifications.

The policy of the United States government is that genetically engineered organisms and their products should be regulated on risk, not on how they are produced. We are requesting public input on whether the use of genetically engineered organisms or their products in organic farming and handling should be permitted, prohibited, or allowed on a case-by-case basis (Dodds, 1997, at the USDA).

However, the Big Three could also be interpreted in another way, namely as USDA's attempts to create a double frame of organic food labeling, in which also health implications (i.e., extrinsic product-frame, C in figure 3.3) are considered relevant, but in a different way than the Big Three opponents would hold. The health aspects associated with organic food belong to the most polarized ones in the labeling disputes in the USA. The governmental bodies that deal with food labeling in the US constructed a very clear 'yes,-unless-position' as regards the safety of GM, radiation, and in some cases the use of human biosolids. The yes,-unless-position means, in this case, that unless a process has been proven dangerous to human health – through 'sufficient' scientific evidence – a restriction of the use of the organic label would be highly misleading and should thus be avoided:

Several commenters complained that consumers are misled by the organic labeling and the NOP [National Organic Program]. They claimed that when science-based technologies (genetic engineering, irradiation, chlorination, etc.) are not used on products, the food is [assumed to be] less safe than conventionally produced foods (Agricultural Marketing Service, under USDA: Labeling: Preamble).⁵²

In this case, it is interesting to note the strong tension that is taking place between framings of intrinsic and extrinsic consumerism in the US. Although most relevant actors – governmental and non-governmental – have accepted the inherent rights of consumers to choose organic production processes (i.e., intrinsic, process-oriented framings of consumerism: B in figure 2.3), there is also the business pressure to reframe the issue into one about consequences for health or for the environment (i.e., into a version of extrinsic consumerism). If successfully combined with the framings in which production processes are allowed until proven dangerous to health or environment (i.e., yes, unless-framings) new methods would be permitted under the attractive organic label.

[...] organic and modern biotechnology production methods can successfully co-exist [under the organic label], providing farmers and consumers alike with alterna-

⁵² Still, AMS (the Agricultural Marketing Service, under USDA) disagrees. They claim, "The USDA seal indicates only that the product has been certified to a certain production and/or handling "process" or "system." The seal does not convey a message of food safety or more nutritional value."

tive food production methods (The American Crop Protection Association [ACPA], 2000:2)

From that perspective, the legitimacy of intrinsic consumerist framings of 'naturalness' and 'consumer democracy' (B in figure 2.3) is questioned.

We also question whether consumer expectation or consumer opposition are valid or appropriate reasons for determining whether a production method is compatible with organic production' (The American Crop Protection Association [ACPA], 2000:4).

However, as we shall see, it is a big challenge to reframe the strong cultural resonance of intrinsic consumerism among the American public.

The Big Three Opponents: Extrinsic Consumerism Framings

The yes, unless versions of the extrinsic consumerist framings of the Big Three proponents have run parallel with the organic alliance's struggle for cultural resonance within the two precautionary (no, unless-) frames (C and D in figure 2.3). At several points of the conflict, the organic alliance apparently found it important to partly leave the emphasis on the intrinsic value of consumer empowerment. For instance, as has been shown in another paper, the organic alliance has also tried to gain cultural resonance as the 'owners' of the most scientifically sound perspective (Klintman & Boström, 2004). To merely be regarded as the proponent of a frame containing 'arbitrary', ideological value-positions such as 'naturalness' might have appeared insufficient.

Consequently, there are many instances in which the organic alliance has reasoned within the frames stating consumers' right to an exclusive organic label as a way of being precautions concerning unknown effects for the environment. For instance, the ecological arguments are core to many organic actors, referring to the production processes:

Ecological soundness is the key claim, indeed the *raison d'être*, or organic agriculture. ('For you and your customers: 10 reasons to buy organic. In 'Natural Foods Merchandiser, 1998; Allen & Kovach, 2000:225)

In addition to process-oriented concerns, the organic alliance has often made claims concerning health. The health frames are very clear surrounding the promotion of organic food in the USA. It is tempting for the organic industry to imply a status of organic food as more healthy, as 'credence goods' which need an organic label to become 'search goods' (Darby & Karni, 1973)

Organic food is certainly safer and better than the chemical-doused, genetically contaminated, or irradiated food typically found on grocery store shelves [...] When you eat food that is organically grown, you are taking a pledge to your health, while helping our environment, one bite at a time. (Organic Trade Association, Oct. 1, 2002).

Such claims are often made through bringing up a precautionary framing of what potential risks consumers may avoid by choosing organic. Also, the deeper metacultural framings of naturalness (which we perceive as intrinsic framing, since naturalness does not have to imply certain consequences for health, environment, economy etc. See B in figure 2.3; see Schön & Rein, 1994; Comstock, 2000) have a profound public resonance, which makes people associate organic with positive health effects. According to the ABC NEWS Organic Food Poll of 2000, 57% of all consumers in the U.S believed that organic foods are better for the environment; 45% believed that organic foods have better nutritional value. Only 5 and 3% respectively believed that organic foods are worse in terms of the environment and nutrition than conventional food.

Actors within the organic alliance try to place organic food criteria within a double frame, in which there is an emphasis on possible, negative consequences both for health and environment. They base their arguments on precautionary reasoning; 'there are uncertainties with 'conventional' and Big Three-*products* (for health) and *processes* (for the environment and human health); thus, these products and processes should not be hidden from consumers under the organic label'.

The Big Three Proponents: Counterframing against Extrinsic Consumerism

However, in the vein of the Big Three suggestion, the Big Three proponents have strongly refused to accept the extrinsic framings of their opponents. The spokeswoman for National Food Processors Association, Regina Hildwine, was eager to stress that 'Organic does not mean safer. Organic does not mean healthier'. (in Lilliston & Cummins, 1998:195). The USDA sees as its role to strongly echo this negative claim in order to stay free from the accusation that the exclusion of the Big Three from organic labeling misleads the consumers and works against free market competition. And already in 1990, at the time of the Organic Food Protection Act, the US Congress stressed that organic as production that refers to processes rather than to consequences to the environment, health or 'quality'.⁵³

Thus, the US government has tried to move the framings of organics back to the basis of intrinsic, process-oriented consumerism. They hold

⁵³ S.Rep. No. 357, reprinted in 1990 U.S.C.C.A.N, at 4946-47.

that the basis of organic food labeling is an intrinsic consumerism issue, which is ‘only’ process-oriented. It does not concern extrinsic aspects of the product (health), although health (and other product-oriented framings) ought normally to be the only truly relevant aspects to the consumer. Accordingly, they hold that consumers should normally only care about the direct health consequences of products, not about processes and their social and environmental consequences (Klintman, 2002b).

Organic food labeling is, according to the US government, one of the few examples where only arbitrary, intrinsic consumerism aspects should be taken into account in a federal label.

The Big Three Opponents: Double framing of Extrinsic and Intrinsic Consumerism

As the USDA so strongly stressed that there is no sufficient evidence of any health risks with the three suggested processes, it turned out to be more effective for the organic alliance to create a double frame which emphasized the original framing: intrinsic, processed-oriented consumerism (B in figure 2.3). This double frame contended that Big Three ought not to be permitted within the organic label – even if, in principle, Big Three processes were to have extrinsic advantages compared to the strict, organic processes. It is instead the free choice of the consumer that ought to be the overriding principle.

The USDA's interpretation of the power yielded to the Secretary can easily undo any changes to the proposed rule that the public demands. I sincerely hope the USDA will keep the future of the national organic label where it belongs, in the hands of the people (DeFazio, 1998).

To be sure, the organic labeling issue was thus back to the original framing that all parties had originally agreed on. Still, the organic alliance's version of this frame has, through the controversy, gained new strength and is supported by a stronger cultural resonance among the public, in two respects. Firstly, the intrinsic principle of ‘naturalness’ has gained more resonance, rather than ‘scientific’ claims within the extrinsic framings as a basis for untraditional processes to be included in organic labeling. Secondly, the originally modest intrinsic framing of organic food labeling as a ‘marketing standard’ (i.e., the free market rhetoric) created by the USDA⁵⁴ has been modified into a stronger, political rhetoric of consumer empowerment, consumer democracy, and even the right to ‘free speech’ of organic producers to consumers (see below). The right for organic consumers to avoid goods produced with Big Three methods has gained cultural resonance in which it is placed on a par with democracy itself. And who dares to appear to be against ‘democracy?’ It

⁵⁴ Through AMS 65 Fed. Reg. at 13514. This “marketing standard” rhetoric may in fact also be interpreted as an extrinsic framing of consumerism – as a tool toward economic benefits from international trade. In this paper, however, we are mainly interested in the framings of the importance of the consumers as judges of the criteria, rather than of the motives for allowing consumers to have a voice.

has thus led to a resolution where both alliances frame the issues as an intrinsic, process-oriented consumerism.

A single, national organic standard, backed by consistent and accurate labeling, will greatly reduce consumer confusion' [...] We listened to consumers and organic farmers and closely followed recommendations of the National Organic Standards Board to develop a national organic standard that is better than our original proposal Agriculture (Secretary Dan Glickman, in McAvoy, 2000. USDA Release No. 0074.00)

Here, the anti-Big Three alliance has gained not only cultural resonance, but currently also legal resonance, in their stronger definition of that frame. Moreover, parts of the organic alliance still try to double this frame with an extrinsic frame of precaution, regarding uncertain consequences with conventional and GM processes—to health, and the environment. It is interesting to note the new claim of the USDA, namely that the new, Big-Three-excluded organic standard is 'the strictest organic rule in the world' (Glickman, 2000, Release No. 0073.00). To be consistent with his previous refusal to accept any extrinsic significance of organic processes or products, Glickman (the former head of the USDA) ought to mean 'strictest' in terms of intrinsic consumerism, that is, with the strongest basis in consumer democracy.

Continuing Frame Dynamics and Further Disputes

Dan Glickman, who is strongly in favor of GM food, admitted that 'The response [275.603 comments on the Big Three proposal] was 20 times greater than anything ever before proposed by the USDA' (St. Louis Post Dispatch, March 26). From a democratic point of view, it was particularly interesting to note that the public protests appear to have had an impact, as the USDA decided to give up the Big Three issue, at least temporarily. Still, this was by no means the end to conflicts concerning organic food labeling criteria. Steven Milloy at the Cato Institute claims that the USDA's final rule against the Big Three 'serves to validate and encourage' the public belief that organic foods are safer to the environment and health than products produced by other methods (Milloy, 2001). Moreover, he reflects critically on the frame created by the organic alliance that the Big Three proposal would be business-driven whereas the criticism of the Big Three would be driven by sound ideology and science. Milloy brings up a list of protesters against Big Three, whom he claims have strong business interests in excluding new production methods from the organic label. These protesters include actors from Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, Crop Choice coalition, as well as individual anti-GM activists (Milloy, 2001:1). Cato and a number of organizations and companies continue to try to convince the USDA to formulate new pro-

posals which include further production methods under the organic label (see e.g., www.croplifeamerica.org).

Aside from this resolution, there are closely related issues that continue to be debated. The national organic standards have been interpreted as ‘federal restrictions’ at the state level. A state is not allowed to require higher organic standards than the USDA does federally, unless there are specific environmental conditions, which necessitate stricter state standards. Such exception could be if unique state restrictions are needed to protect a certain watershed. These federal restrictions on organic improvements at the state level have led to strong reactions from the organic alliance, such as organic producers and the Organic Consumers Association. There are for instance organic players who have referred to the right of free speech in their claimed right to communicate with consumers at the state level about their products, and their claimed right to display their competitive advantages compared to those who barely meet the Federal organic criteria (Frommer, 2001, at 3C). Here we are back to extrinsic framings of organic criteria with implied advantages to the environment and health, which stand against the intrinsic consumerism frames of the USDA, in which ‘stricter organic thresholds’ than those already decided are perceived as irrelevant and misleading.

Conclusions and Discussion: Towards Evaluations

As researchers of political consumerism contend, the democratic benefits of labeling schemes may, in principle, be that they

- create public opinion,
- give consumers information in order to make conscious choices related to global risks,
- monitor the performance of the industry at a global level, and
- provide consumers with ways of expressing political concerns (Follesdal, Micheletti & Stolle, 2004:293-294; Vogel in Follesdal et al, 2004)

The purpose of this paper has been to analyze the practical decision-making processes behind such political consumerist tools. The idea has been that an understanding of the precondition of political consumerism requires a broader insight into the policy processes which concern its tools: for example, product information, standards, and labeling. By analyzing such processes, new complexities are found. Firstly – and contrary to much rhetoric – the challenges of political consumerism and its tools are not to discover fixed or ‘real’ labeling criteria for ingredients and processes. Even if everyone agreed, for instance, that the purpose of organic labeling ought to be to have consumers reduce environmental harm,

the views differ across alliances and even within the environmental movement as to where to draw the lines (Boström, 2001). The views also change over time, as new knowledge replaces old knowledge. The criteria thus have to be constantly modified and clarified (cf., Klintman, 2000).

The definition of organic is not a fixed entity; nor are prevailing organic practices; nor are the agroecosystems in which they are implemented [...] inevitably they will change. (Allen & Kovach, 2000:223)

Moreover, as has been the main focus here, the goals themselves may differ in a much broader sense, at least in the way the goals are framed. The goals do not only fluctuate across alliances but also within one and the same alliance. As Goodman & Goodman (2001:111-112) state, the organic food struggles are “about a competition for the ‘hearts and minds’ (and purchases) of consumers through the discursive tactics of language and symbols, as much as they are about agroecological production methods.” The analysis of the framing dynamics in this labeling case has not been aimed at mapping out an exact chronological development. The point has instead been to illustrate patterns of framing dynamics, argumentative and practical flexibility, and knowledge modifications, as regards the discursive struggles that concern tools by which consumers are supposed to become empowered. Hopefully, the elucidation of these patterns may facilitate scrutiny of criteria, processes, and communication of political consumerist policies, both external and internal to the groups and organizations in which one operates.

Scrutiny runs the risk of being meaningless, unless the goals and values on which the assessments rest are clearly stated. Several goals and values are possible, and we have chosen to focus on goals closely related to consumers, rather than, for instance, to ecological and social consequences. I thus present three normative dimensions that are partly found in the empirical material, dimensions that may be used to judge processes of political consumerism. On this basis, an evaluation would depend on the relative weight one puts on three ideal-types: trust, insight, and double influence of the political consumer.⁵⁵

In terms of *consumer trust*, organic food is doing well, at least to judge from the statistics. Firstly, the sector is growing more rapidly than any other sector in the US.⁵⁶ Secondly, the national attitude surveys in the US (and elsewhere) indicate a high level of consumer trust in the organic label (see e.g., ABC News Organic Food Poll of 2000.). Thirdly, as I show elsewhere (Klintman, 2002b) there is a common rhetoric among the organic movement that the “stricter” the labeling criteria are, the more

⁵⁵ The three ideal types should not be confused with positions or points of view. Few actors would fully subscribe to one of these three. Rather, different actors would put different relative weight on them.

⁵⁶ Organic cropland doubled between 1992 and 1997 in the U.S. Each year the number of organic farmers increases by 12 %, although it still has not reached more than a few percent of the consumer expenditures for food at home (USDA, News Release 042500, 20 December 2000. 1).

trustworthy the label is, even though it may be technically difficult to control that the stricter criteria are followed. If this claim gets public resonance, the stricter standards under the organic label in recent years may raise the consumer trust further. However, as the ambiguity and flexibility of framings become more apparent to the public, this trust might be turned into its opposite: a sense of arbitrariness where the substantive benefits of the labels are obscured.

Among those who stress the importance of *consumer insight*, there ought to be a good hope that the intensive debates about organic food labeling has helped some political consumers to learn more. This increased consumer insight would for instance concern the framing flexibility of both alliances, the strategies between polarized reasoning, and the vested interests involved. However, there is a risk that many consumers that follow the basic organic debates are merely aware of its most conspicuous parts, concerning an inclusion of “unnatural,” genetically modified foods without much access to information about extrinsic pros and cons. Moreover, for instance the issue of sewage sludge has fallen outside of the broader debate, yet by no means of lesser scientific concern to health or the environment than GM.⁵⁷

In terms of broader *political participation of consumers* (also beyond the grocery shelves) the massive public reactions (in absolute numbers) to the proposals of widening the organic label inclusion should be regarded as a success. Moreover, the fact that these reactions actually seem to have influenced the USDA’s withdrawal of the proposal could also be perceived as successful political consumer influence. Yet, despite of the impressive numbers, the limited *range* of consumer groups who made their voices heard this way, and the limited *part* of the entire population, ought to be seen as a limit to this dimension of political consumerism. Moreover, the narrow and in some respects unnuanced scope of the more public debates may also be a limiting factor to the ideal of political influence of consumers aside from their choices of products to purchase. Still, the somewhat deliberative character of the public comments through the internet, in which people commented on one another’s remarks, speaks in favor of increased insights through this process (see Zavestoski et al. 2003).

This discussion has shown one way of judging policy processes and debates in terms of political consumerism. Other ways are obviously also possible. Yet, it is clear that any fruitful way of making such an evaluation ought to include more than one parameter in order to give nuance to the concept of political consumerism. The multi-frame character of many

⁵⁷ In my interview with Keith Jones, Program Manager in the National Organic Program, on April 4, 2002, he claimed: [...] at least I’m not aware of any health concerns regarding GMO:s. Radiation is in the same situation. I’m not aware of any, or at least there are not any definitive studies I guess I should say, on ionizing radiation. But sewage sludge there are beginning to be some studies out there, and I think EPA:s own work is beginning to show that there may be some questions there that need to be answered.”

debates within specific consumer policy issues needs to be followed up with evaluations which give room for several ideals of political consumerism.

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5. Articulating Ethics and Consumption

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Abstract

Debates about how to maintain a sense of morally responsible action often emphasize the problematic nature of caring at a distance, and take for granted particular kinds of moral self-hood in which responsibility is bound into notions of human agency that emphasise knowledge and recognition. Taking commodity consumption as a field in which the ethics, morality, and politics of responsibility has been problematized, we argue that existing research on consumption fails to register the full complexity of the practices, motivations and mechanisms through which the working up of moral selves is undertaken in relation to consumption practices. Rather than assuming that ethical decision-making works through the rational calculation of ethical obligations, we conceptualise the emergence of ethical consumption as ways in which everyday practical moral dispositions are re-articulated by the policies, campaigns and practices that enlist ordinary people into broader projects of social change. Ethical consumption, then, involves both a governing of consumption and a governing of the consuming self. We therefore argue for the importance of the growth of ethical consumption as a new terrain of political action, while also emphasising the grounds upon which ethical consumption can be opened up to normative critique.

Introduction: Knowing Obligations

In debates about ethics, the model for responsible action is often presented in terms of a problematic relationship between place and space. Place is understood as the location of clear-cut ethical commitments, while space serves as a shorthand for abstract, alienated relations in which distance intervenes to complicate and extend the range of moral duties. The exemplary topic for geography's recent 'moral turn' has therefore become the recurrent theme of *caring at a distance*, revolving around the question of what obligations are owed to *distant others*. The predominant

rhetorical frame of these discussions is the idea that caring at a distance is a *problem*, in need of either explanation or justification. This implies that caring up close, as it were, is much less of a problem. This way of problematizing the geographies of responsibility is supported by influential accounts from contemporary social theory. Above all, perhaps, Zygmunt Bauman's diagnosis of modernity underwrites a widespread understanding of distance as the source of moral harm, by rendering consequences of routine activities unintelligible to actors. In Bauman's work, there is a tendency to elide together spatial distance and social distance, so that a critique of pathological cultural othering is conflated with a critique of the distancing effects characteristic of modern bureaucracy, markets, and organisations. To take another example, the communitarian critique of liberal egalitarianism revolves around a set of imaginary geographies in which the intimacies of a knowable community are considered essential to the very possibility of being moved to ethical action at all. This set of understandings connect with a much longer line of political philosophical questioning in which, by presuming that outsiders require special consideration in terms of duties and obligations, the forms of care that tie together families, friends, neighbours, or compatriots are presumed to be relatively unproblematic. In such debates, geographical distance often serves as a figure for cultural difference, which destabilises notions of ethical commitment. In this paper, we want to outline an approach that complicates this easy equation of spatial and social distance, and in turn presents distance as a barrier to ethical conduct. There is, we suggest, no good reason to suppose that spatial distance necessarily diminishes either a felt responsibility or practical capacity to care for others; nor, indeed, to suppose that caring 'up close', in local contexts, somehow involves a transcendence of social distance.

There is, then, a widespread and taken for granted assumption that spatial distance can be thought of in terms of a barrier, beyond which the reach of responsibility becomes problematic in a way that is assumed not to function in relations of proximity. This distinction between alienated distance and intimate proximity underwrites the discourse of morality in a range of debates in the social sciences. Take for example, David Harvey's (1990) influential reinterpretation of commodity fetishism, revolving around the didactic device of asking where one's breakfast comes from. This is, in effect, a spatialization of Marx's moral theory of alienation under capitalism, in which social relations between people are sublimated into relations between people and objects. In this narrative, commodification renders the give-and-take of recognition, upon which full moral selfhood is presumed to depend, difficult if not impossible to maintain, by hiding from view the identities, toils, and troubles of those whose labour is inscribed in the commodities that sustain our everyday routines. 'Space hides consequences' thereby becomes the basic premise of a model of critical analysis in which reconnecting the separated moments of produc-

tion, distribution and consumption is understood to be equivalent to restoring to view a previously hidden chain of commitments and responsibilities. A key conceptual device in this new moral-empirical pedagogy is the notion of the commodity chain. This concept serves as the basis for elaborating an implicit moral theory of action, in which commodification is understood to work in terms of generalised mis-recognition, and geography itself becomes a means of learning re-cognition as morality as such. What we want to emphasise here is the presumption that knowledge, as cognition, is the privileged medium for motivating ethical responsibility. It is this assumption we want to question, both because it narrows the range of possible forms of motivation for ethical action, as well as failing to register the extent to which acting according to consciously ethical principles does not necessarily diminish the risk of effecting negative consequences.

There is, then, a broad understanding in the social sciences of geographical distance as a problem: a problem for empirical knowledge; a problem for establishing causality; and by extension, a problem for maintaining a sense of morally responsible action. In turn, robust empirical knowledge and rigorous explanatory theory are presented as the essential media of recognition that promise to restore the lost intimacies of care sundered apart by commodification and bureaucratisation. Our starting point for reconstructing an alternative account of the geographies of responsibility is the observation that this whole set of understandings take for granted the identity of a particular sort of moral self-hood. People are thought to be implicated in their actions by reference to a linear chain of relations between free will, knowledge, action, causality, responsibility and blame. Responsibility, in short, is tightly bound to a particular notion of human *agency* (Barry, 2000). It is for this reason that various strands of contemporary thought that call into question models of the human subject as a self-founding moral agent are so routinely castigated as undermining the grounds of responsible ethical or political action. What is missed in this defensive gesture of dismissal is the ethical seriousness of lines of thought that endeavour to track the practical ways in which responsibility and obligation are often called forward in ways that cannot be reduced to models of strict causal responsibility (Young, 2003). What these strands of thought share – we are thinking here of work as various of that of Bernard Williams, Emmanuel Levinas, Stanley Cavell, Francisco Varela – is a strong sense of responsibility as being a *response*, that is, as presupposing a capacity to respond, one which exceeds either a simple recognition of identical interests or culture, or the taking ownership as one's own the effects of one's wilful actions.

Perhaps the purest version of this endeavour to de-centre the intentional subject of traditional moral theory is Derrida's development of Levinas' phenomenological account of the conditions of possibility of being ethical, in which ethics in its purity emerges as a realm of action that is

motivated by that which exceeds strict causal responsibility (Barnett, Forthcoming). Pure ethicality, from this perspective, cannot be based on taking responsibility for one's own actions. This understanding seems to indicate that ethical action is actually impossible, in so far as the pure ethical relation is defined as one that necessarily resists incorporation into any form of self-regarding knowledge at all, including the ordinary knowledge required for taking responsibility for the consequences of those actions that do, after all else is said and done, remain one's own. One might prefer, then, to turn to Foucault's later work, which sketches the outlines of an understanding of ethics that does address the question of how to motivate other-regarding ethical action by working on self-regarding considerations, that is, by thinking through the ways in which the cultivation of the care for the self serves as a means of extending care for others. This theme connects to a broader range of work that is concerned with practices of 'moral selving' (Allahyari, 2000; Cloke, 2002), that is, with the mediated work of creating oneself as a more virtuous person through practices that acknowledge excessive responsibilities to others. Moral selving might take the form of explicit performances, or displays, of virtuous conduct; but it also refers to a range of more humble, perhaps even anonymous modes of conduct. In the rest of this paper, we want to use consumption as a site for exploring this alternative understanding of the practices of ethical self-hood and responsible action.

What are the Ethics of Ethical Consumption?

In the social sciences, consumption has been understood as the exemplary ethical practice in two distinct senses: by virtue of occupying a pivotal position in the extended network of contemporary commodification processes, consumption comes to serve as the paradigm for caring for distant others; but also, in a line of work that is concerned to assert the active and creative dimensions of consumption, consumption is also constructed as a realm for the cultivation of identity, in which ordinary capacities for autonomous action, discrimination, and choice are routinely exercised. We want to suggest that existing research on consumption fails to register the full complexity of the practices, motivations, and mechanisms through which the working up of moral selves is undertaken in relation to consumption practices. Academics, policy-makers, and campaigning organisations understand ethical decision-making in particular, often highly rationalistic ways. This is the case even when understandings are broadened out from narrow economic rationalities to consider the relationships between consumption and identity, where one still finds strong presumptions of the relationship between consumption, knowledge, and an actively reflexive self.

In order to raise some critical questions concerning the empirical and normative adequacy of the two dominant ways of working out understandings of the geographies of ethics (and politics) by reference to consumption practices, we want to focus here on the growth of a range of activities that are defined explicitly in terms of *ethical consumption*. We want to ask what sorts of ethical conduct and moral selving are actually encouraged by regulated, self-consciously 'ethical' consumption behaviour. It is our contention here that by assessing the ways in which ethical consumption actually works, it is possible to discern a more complex sense of multiple rationalities of ethical action that campaigns and practices of ethical consumption actualise in different combinations (Radley and Kennedy, 1995). The focus on ethical consumption also allows us to explore the relationships between ethical action, often thought of in terms of personal conduct and mores, and the institutional mediation of responsibilities and obligations. There are, we suggest, two dimensions to ethical consumption practices that recommend a critical re-interpretation that re-orders our understandings of the motivations and practices of ethical subjectivity. First, there is an organisational dimension, referring to the strategies used by campaigning organisations, policy makers, and businesses to facilitate the adoption of ethical consumption practices by consumers. Second, there is an inter-subjective dimension, referring to forms of subjectivity that ethical consumption practices enable people to cultivate in their everyday lives.

The role of ethical considerations in shaping consumer behaviour has become increasingly significant over the last two decades. The economic importance of the rise of ethical purchasing for corporate strategy, retailing, and policy makers is well established and likely to grow. But just what counts as ethical consumption is itself open to some debate. On the one hand, ethical consumption might be defined in relation to particular *objects* of ethical concern. In this sense, consumption research defines a variety of issues as 'ethical', including environmental sustainability, health and safety risks, animal welfare, fair trade, labour conditions, and human rights. On the other hand, this focus on consumption as a means of acting in an ethical way toward particular objects of concern extends across various forms of *practice*, including shopping, investment decisions, and personal banking and pensions. The diversity of objects and practices that might constitute ethical consumption is underscored by considering the diversity of organisational forms that might be defined in this category. These include ethical trading organisations (e.g. Oxfam, Traidcraft, Body Shop); lobby groups (e.g. the Soil Association); fair trade campaign organisations (e.g. Oxfam, Christian Aid); co-operative movements (e.g. the Co-Op in the UK); consumer boycott campaigns (e.g. anti-Nestle, Stop Esso); and 'no-logo' anti-globalisation campaigns (e.g. against Nike, Gap, McDonalds). Even this short list indicates the high degree of overlap between organisations, the diversity of strategies

and issues adopted, and the variability of scales at which ethical consumption activities operate.

There are three broad fields that have addressed the formal and informal dimensions of consumption as a scene of ethical practice. Firstly, research in sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, and human geography has demonstrated that everyday commodity consumption is a realm for the actualisation of capacities for autonomous action, reflexive monitoring of conduct, and the self-fashioning of relationships between selves and others (Jackson, 1999; Miller, 1998). The strong emphasis of critical consumption research is upon asserting and re-asserting the skilled, active role of consumers in consumption processes. However, by relying on a simple rhetorical distinction between activity and passivity to frame the normative significance of its analysis, much work in this field leaves open a set of questions concerning the precise meaning of autonomy, choice, and agency in mediated, market-related practices. Secondly, and related to this field, work on commodification has emphasised the variable historical-geographical 'careers' of commodities as they pass through production, distribution, and consumption. As we have already suggested, critical accounts of the politics of commodification rest on an analytics of mis-recognition, according to which responsible political action requires the development of geographical imaginations, or cognitive maps, that connect spatially and temporally distanced actions and consequences through the provision of explanatory knowledge. This is likewise a strong undercurrent in work on the ethical dimensions of global commodity-chains, in which ethical trade initiatives are understood to rest on changing the patterns of knowledge-relations within distanced networks of interaction (Hughes, 2001). Thirdly, there is a burgeoning literature on business ethics and corporate social responsibility in economics and management studies. This work understands ethical consumption primarily in terms of the role of information as the medium through which the ethical preferences of consumers and the ethical records of businesses are signalled in the market place (Bateman *et al*, 2002). From this perspective, the development of appropriate informational strategies (marketing, advertising, labelling, and branding) will assist in overcoming market failure. This dual set of assumptions - that providing information to consumers regarding the conditions of production and distribution of commodities is central to changing consumer behaviour, and that knowledge is also the key to putting pressure on corporations and governments - also underwrites the political rationalities of consumer-oriented political activism, such as fair trade campaigns and ethical trade audits, in which publicity is understood as a primary means of acting on the conduct of both individualised consumers and corporate actors alike. For example, as Hobson (2002; 2003) observes, the assumption that the exposure of the public to scientific knowledge will trigger

changes in consumer behaviour underwrites policies for sustainable consumption that have emerged in the last decade.

We would suggest therefore that both critical-cultural research, and business studies and management theory, tend to share key assumptions about consumer sovereignty, individual autonomy, information, and utility maximisation in their approach to the normative analysis of consumption practices. The strong assumption connecting these fields of research is that individuals are implicated in their actions through dimensions of knowledge and ignorance, recognition and mis-recognition. It is our contention that academic, policy, and activist discourses on the politics and ethics of commodity consumption all assume that ethical decision-making works through the rational calculation of ethical obligations, for which the provision of knowledge, advice, and information is an essential prerequisite. Contemporary discourses of ethical consumption can therefore be characterised as implicitly consequentialist in their understanding of ethical action. By this, we mean that they assume that the burden of responsible individual or collective action depends both on having the epistemological capacity to know the likely consequences of actions, and on having the practical competency to adjust actions accordingly. Existing research on consumption therefore depends on relatively narrow conceptualisations of ethical decision-making by consumers, companies, and public organisations. As a result, ethical consumption is understood in both theory and practice as depending on dimensions of knowledge and information, and on explicit practices of acknowledged commitment. One implication of this, we will argue below, is that ethical consumption works through practices and registers which, while outwardly universalistic in their moral claims, are inherently related to practices of differentiation, discrimination, and distinction that might render ethical consumption a highly particularistic set of socio-cultural practices.

Conceptualising the Pragmatics of Ethical Consumption

We want to outline an alternative, thicker conceptualisation of the relationships between consumption, commodification, and the dynamics of ethical action that can account for the variety of ways of being ethical which, we have suggested above, are not allowed for by the predominant rationalism of existing approaches. We approach consumption neither as the individualised expression of consumer preference aggregated into a demand function, nor as a series of contingent acts of symbolic identification. Rather than assuming that ethical consumption is a self-reflexively conscious practice set off against non-ethical consumption, we start by assuming that everyday consumption practices are always already shaped by and help shape certain sorts of ethical dispositions. Thus, we propose that everyday consumption is *ordinarily ethical*, in two senses. Firstly, if

'ethical' is taken in a Foucauldian sense to refer to the activity of constructing a life by negotiating practical choices about personal conduct, then the very basics of routine consumption – a concern for value for money, quality, and so on – can be understood to presuppose a set of specific learned ethical competencies. Secondly, and following from this, consumption is ordinarily ethical in so far as it is a set of institutionally and technologically mediated activities that practically implicate selves and others in ethical relations prior to any conscious reflection (O'Neill, 2000).

Given this starting point, our concern is with understanding the ways in which the ordinary, practical ethical dispositions of everyday consumption are re-articulated by policy-makers, campaigning organisations, and businesses – that is, with how the ethical dispositions already implicit in routine consumption become the object of explicit policies, campaigns, and practices of 'ethical consumption'. Understanding ethical consumption in this sense implies that it refers to any practice of consumption in which *explicitly* registering commitment or obligation towards distant or absent others is an important dimension of the meaning of activity to the actors involved (cf. Howard and Willmott, 2001, 119–120). On this understanding, ethical consumption campaigns, policies, and marketing strategies can be conceptualised as transforming the patterns of self-cultivation practised through engagement with commodities. To develop this conceptualisation, we draw upon ideas and insights from governmentality studies (Bennett, 1998) and from actor-network theory (Barry, 2000). The convergence between these two fields provides a set of theoretical ideas that suggest an understanding of ethical consumption as a complex of practices of 'acting-at-a-distance' by acting on one's own self.

The ethics of consumption can be conceptualised in terms of action-at-a-distance in two related senses. Firstly, modern consumption is a set of practices premised on the exercise of choice by free subjects. It is, in a specific sense, therefore a liberal practice, where this refers to the idea that individual dispositions to choose are not the expressions of natural dispositions, but are worked up, governed, and regulated by an array of actors who make possible certain forms of individualised conduct. Secondly, consumption as a version of action-at-a-distance can be thought of in explicitly spatial terms. The sites of commodity consumption are multiple and dispersed (Jackson, 2000). They are not therefore subject to tight, detailed disciplinary forms of social regulation. The spatialities of consumption therefore imply that the power relations constitutive of consumption are fundamentally indeterminate, in so far as they are unforced (Barnett, 1999). As a result, attempting to influence the consumption habits of myriad consumers depends on a series of mediated practices for governing complex assemblages of individual conduct, collective action, technologies, spaces, and discourses. On this understanding, the power

relations constitutive of consumption involve distinctively *cultural* forms of conduct, such as the cultivation of moral consciousness, self-control, and self-display (Barnett, 2001). Consumption can therefore be understood as one of the key sites of ethical self-formation in the contemporary period of 'advanced liberalism' (Miller and Rose, 1997), in so far as it serves as a key scene for the generalisation of the notion that freedom and responsibility consists in exercising the capacity to choose, understood as a realisation of an innate, private right of individual autonomy. We want to emphasise the irreducible dimension of mediation involved in working up of ethical consumerism as a field of action. If one holds that any assertion of an obligation also requires a practical capacity to act on that obligation, that is to say, that *ought implies can*, then what is perhaps most interesting about ethical consumption is that it involves a set of procedures which simultaneously interpellate individuals as subjects of obligations in the very moment of also providing the practical means of realising this obligation – the structure of address implied by the distinctive 'buy this' of ethical consumption practices therefore both depends upon and elides the mediated working up of a range of moral responsibilities and registers of action. In this sense, then, we are concerned with how certain practices of ethical consumption can be understood not so much as the means of *translating* ethical values into practical conduct, but rather in the ways in which ethical consumption practices *articulate* specific ethical competencies.

This understanding of ordinary consumption in terms of various forms of action-at-a-distance – that is, as governed as a liberal realm of freedom of choice – suggests that ethical consumption practices can be understood to involve the governing of selves and others along two related dimensions of action. Firstly, it involves *governing consumption*, where this refers to an array of strategies that aim to regulate the informational and spatial contexts of consumer 'choice'. For example, these include market research and marketing (Maxwell, 1996), advertising (Leslie, 1999), regulating access to credit (Leyshon and Thrift 1999), architectural design and spatial planning (Marston and Modarres, 2002), and the growth of social and ethical auditing (Hughes, 2001). These sorts of practices can be thought of as so many devices for turning *oughts into cans*. At the same time, the emergence of certain practices, devices and technologies for acting ethically at a distance itself generates new responsibilities by enabling new forms of action. Secondly, ethical consumption involves *governing the consuming self*. This refers not to attempts by collective actors to govern the conduct of others, but to the various practices of the governing oneself in and through consumption, as a means of caring for others through the cultivation of the care of the self. In this sense, ethical consumption practices can be understood as a means of cultivating particular forms of social distinction by overtly displaying one's ethical credentials (Gregson and Crewe, 1997; May, 1996).

Herein lies the fundamental ambivalence of ethical consumption, which can be understood to be a means of establishing networks of solidarity at the global scale (Renard, 1999), while at the same time it potentially reinforces patterns of socio-cultural differentiation at more localised scales. Ethical consumption often works by presenting consumers with various forms of what are essentially positional goods. This implies that there may be a basic contradiction between the means and ends of ethical consumption, in so far as the practical devices through which a universalistic responsibility is made possible is also a means of socially and cultural differentiating certain classes of persons from others. There are two dimensions to this tension between different moral imperatives that inheres within the practices of ethical consumption, which map onto the above distinction between *governing consumption* and *governing the consuming self*. Firstly, governing the contexts of ethical consumption involves the manipulation of various *practical devices* that effectively facilitate the adoption of self-consciously ethical consumer behaviour (e.g. direct debits, brand awareness, mail ordering). Access to these sorts of mechanisms is, one can reasonably suppose, socio-economically uneven. Likewise, in so far as ethical consumption involves an explicit marking of commitments, then governing the consuming self depends on various sorts of *performative practice* associated with being an ethical consumer (e.g. shopping, giving, wearing, eating, drinking, displaying, protesting). The socio-cultural and economic resources necessary to engage in these sorts of practices are, one can also reasonably suppose, unevenly distributed across lines of class, gender, race and ethnicity. Thus, both the material and socio-cultural resources required for engaging in ethical consumption are differentially available. In so far as ethical consumption involves both governing consumption through various practical devices, and the performative cultivation of social distinction through the display of ethical credentials, then the acknowledgement of the uneven capacities for this sort of practice therefore opens a space for a critical analysis of the forms of ethical disposition that ethical consumption practices reproduce. In light of this analysis, in the next section we want to expand on this relationship between the roles of collective actors in shaping the repertoires of ethical conduct available to consumers, and the performance of ethical consumption as a practice for the reproduction of differential cultures of taste, distinction, and discernment, by way of a case study.

Rearticulating Politics and Ethics through Consumption

In conclusion, we want to reiterate our argument that consumption can be understood as an entry point for rethinking the geographies of ethical responsibility. In particular, we want to suggest that the meanings of 'ethical' associated with ethical consumption are themselves open to cri-

tical analysis. This is not to dismiss ethical consumption, but to open up an analysis of the complexities of normative evaluation that any simple contrast between ethics and politics would erase. We also want to connect the question of ethics to the question of politics of consumption, but to do so in a non-reductive way. We do not mean to invoke the political as a means of trumping the ethical concerns we have discussed in this paper. Rather, we would suggest that ethical consumption can be understood as opening up new forms of action that combine ethical and political considerations in new combinations. The growth of ethical consumption campaigning is suggestive of new forms of practice through which unequal power relations are constituted, reproduced, and contested. There are two sets of issues that our analysis of the relationship between ethics and consumption raise for the understanding of the relationship between ethics and politics. Firstly, by asking the question of what sort of ethics is presumed by ethical consumption campaigns and policies, we have been concerned to explicitly raise the problem of what sorts of power are operative in this field. Ethical consumption works through a set of subtle interpellations that turn upon ambivalent forms of address such as seduction and shame. These are not the forms of address normally privileged in discussions of moral responsibility or political obligation, both of which tend to depend on understandings of autonomy and recognition. These modes of addressing consumers as subjects of ethical obligations, in turn, connected to the effective de-territorialization of citizenship obligations, inscribing people's sense of responsibility into networks of relations that are not contained within the bounds of national territories. And this de-territorialization is related to another feature of ethical consumption understood as a form of political action, which is its flexibility with respect to acting in relation both to state institutions and to corporations.

Secondly, ethical consumption is important for political reasons in the sense that it deploys a set of strategies and repertoires that not only draw from political action, but also innovate new strategies and repertoires that find their ways into more explicitly political forms of organisation, campaigning and mobilisation. Branding, boycotting, auditing, lobbying, and protesting are all modes of organisation that increasingly scramble any clear division between forms of practice defined as ethical – those that seem to refer to a personalised sense of the good – and those defined as political – those that seem to refer to a collective determination of the right or the just. Ethical consumption involves a set of practices that are at once highly individualised, yet which by virtue of their dependence on organisational mediation and mobilisation, also represent distinctive forms of collective action.

The informational model of ethical consumption has the effect of flattening power relations by presenting responsibility as individualized and falling equally on all actors. In contrast, consumer-based activism presents an alternative model of responsibility, one that connects indivi-

dual/household consumption to broader campaigns. In this way, the narrow sense of ethical responsibility is transformed into a practice of political responsibility in two senses: firstly, in practical terms, through connecting up routine everyday activities (like shopping) to more formal practices of campaigning; and secondly, in discursive terms, by presenting individualised actions as part of a collective project that demands responses and imposes obligations on corporations, governments, and regulatory agencies (see Young, 2003).

Thirdly, it should not be forgotten that there is a politics internal to the growth of ethical consumption itself – as Howard and Willmott (2001, 119) suggest, “[t]he very concept of ethical consumption assumes an extremely advanced consumer society comprising confident, knowledgeable and *affluent* consumers [...]. Despite growing affluence, for a significant proportion of the population [ethical] concerns are secondary to price and affordability. For them the ethical issue may be feeding their family on a limited budget. In this context, ethical consumption can be seen as yet another means by which the privileged can differentiate themselves from the mass”. This observation is certainly valid, although it should not lead to a premature dismissal of this whole topic as just a form of First World, middle-class distinction. Rather, we would suggest that it calls for sustained analysis of the differential practices and performances of ethical consumption. On the basis of the analysis developed here, we would argue that if, as we have suggested, the organised facilitation of new modes of consumption through various devices and repertoires can be understood as providing opportunities for self-consciously ethical *consumption*, then it might also be argued that these same practices also open up different opportunities for the differential consumption of *ethics* itself. The growth of ethical consumption, in short, is important not just for understanding changing patterns of consumption, but more broadly for throwing into relief the contemporary transformation of the meaning and possibilities of ethics as such.

Our final suggestion is, then, that what is perhaps most notable about ethical consumption for thinking about politics is, then, the close attention that organised actors in this field are obliged to pay to *what works*. That is, this is a field which requires careful experimentation to glean and respect the motivations, incentives, and desires that can be successfully mobilised in developing large-scale forms of collective action that are able to induce meaningful change in the patterns of conduct of powerful economic and bureaucratic systems.

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6. Political Consumerism in Denmark

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Abstract

This article examines political consumerism in Denmark on the basis of new survey data from 2004. The article concludes that political consumerism appears to have found a steady level, which, it is suggested, fluctuates (upwards) in relation to concrete boycotts and depending on media-attention. About 40 percent of those who engage in political consumption do so on a regular basis. In comparison with collective modes of political consumerism, political consumption via the market is much more widespread. Political concerns do not contradict other concerns but are interwoven with them, e.g. health concerns. Indeed, data demonstrates that political consumption is political and it is a supplement to other modes of political participation – not a substitute. Moreover, the article argues that political consumers may be interpreted as representing a particular kind of “sub-politician” and that political consumption is characterised by a global orientation.

Research questions and hypotheses

While the study of political consumption as a mode of political participation and identity – which is the perspective applied in this article – is new compared to the examination of other modes of political participation, e.g. voting, party-membership, contacting etc., a number of studies have been conducted in recent years (Halkier, 1994, 2003; Jensen, 2000; Goul Andersen and Tobiasen 2001; Goul Andersen, 2004, ch. 8; Micheletti, 2003; Micheletti, Føllesdal and Stolle, eds., 2003; Micheletti and Stolle, 2003; Ferrer-Fons, 2004), and measurements of political consumption have become regular ingredients in international surveys⁵⁸. Moreover, efforts have been made to provide political consumerism with a theoretical basis in theories of social capital (Stolle and Hooghe, 2003), late mo-

⁵⁸ See for example the Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy project 2000, <http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/projekte/cid/>, the European Social Survey 2002 <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>, and International Social Survey Programme, Citizenship module 2004, www.issp.org

dernity, risk society, individualisation, reflexivity, sub-politics, life-politics (Halkier, 1994, 2003; Micheletti, 2003; Sørensen, 2003), global political identities (Bennett, 2003; Føllesdal, 2003; Tobiasen, 2002, 2004), and everyday life and consumer society. In other words: a research agenda for political consumption as a mode of political participation and identity is emerging and taking root.

The objective in this article is not to develop a thorough theoretical basis for political consumerism. I briefly present a number of hypotheses prevalent in the literature, but emphasis will be on examining these hypotheses empirically. This is interesting because new data, a survey representative of the Danish population that was carried out in the summer of 2004, enables us to examine some of the hypotheses much more thoroughly than was the case with previous surveys.

More specifically, the article addresses the following research questions:

- How widespread is political consumerism and has it increased or decreased since 2000/2001, where almost half of the Danish population reported that they had engaged in political consumption during the past twelve months? In Denmark, political consumerism probably had its peak period in the mid 1990s in connection with the boycott against Shell in response to the dumping of Brent Spar in the North Sea. However, the study from 2000 also concluded that political consumerism probably had found a more or less stable level – mainly due to the emergence of *buycotting*, i.e. deliberately choosing products for political reasons. Furthermore, prediction was made that political consumerism would, if not increase in the future, then at least maintain the same level (Goul Andersen and Tobiasen, 2001, 63). The question is, of course, whether this prediction holds. This is examined in section 3.
- How often do people engage in modes of political consumption other than political consumption in the market? Micheletti (2003, Ch. 3) has pointed out that political consumerism also comes in the form of collective modes of action such as petitions, demonstrations, participation in organisations etc. The data includes new questions that address the extent to which Danes engage in these forms of political consumption and the degree to which they are familiar with different boycotts (section 3).
- What are the motives behind political consumerism? Several scholars have questioned whether political consumerism in fact represents genuine *political* action (e.g. Beckmann et al., 2001; Stenger, 2002). Others, who are more convinced that political consumerism actually is political, raise enquiry as to the areas concerned by the political aspect: is it the environment, human rights or what? How important are political motives compared to other concerns, e.g. health and

price? This article examines whether political consumerism is actually political, and what the political concern consists of. It also discusses whether concern about e.g. health and price stands in opposition to political concerns, or whether they make up different aspects of consumption (section 3).

- What is the context of political consumerism? Under this heading, a number of hypotheses are examined: first, do people engage in political consumption on a regular and routine basis, or is the intensity low; if the latter is the case, questions may be raised as to whether the activity can qualify as a mode of political participation; "... the actor must take decisions on a regular basis; a one time decision is not sufficient to be considered as a form of 'political consumerism'" (Stolle and Hooghe, 2003, 280). Second, where do people attain information about which products to buy or not to buy; for instance, do people primarily rely on experts and the media, which a late modernity (Giddens, 2003, 30-32) interpretation would suggest? Third, a critique put forward against individualised modes of political participation in general, and political consumerism in particular, is that it does not reproduce a genuine political community, which is an important side-effect of (more collective modes of) political participation (Andersen et al., 1993, Halkier, 2003, 233). On the other hand, scholars discuss whether political consumers feel that they shop into specific value-systems when acting as political consumers, i.e. whether they have a sense of belonging to an "imagined community" (Halkier, 1994, 2003). This hypothesis has only been substantiated with qualitative data thus far, and the conclusions show mixed patterns (Halkier, 2003, 234-236). It is therefore interesting to delve deeper as regards this hypothesis in the survey data (section 4).
- Is political consumerism at all political? This question has been answered in the affirmative in a number of studies (Goul Andersen and Tobiasen, 2001, 2003; Stolle, Hooghe and Micheletti, 2003); however, the data presented below includes answers to new questions that can further illuminate this question, including questions about whether people themselves conceive of political consumerism as a political action, and whether they give political concerns a higher or lower priority than other concerns (section 5).
- Who are the political consumers? This question has been examined in various publications in Denmark (Goul Andersen and Tobiasen, 2001, 2003; Tobiasen, 2002; Goul Andersen, 2004, Ch. 8) and internationally (Stolle, Hooghe and Micheletti, 2003; Stolle and Micheletti 2003; Forno and Ceccarini 2004; Ferrer-Fons 2004). The interesting question is, then, whether known patterns can be confirmed on the basis of the new data from 2004? Of particular interest is whether Danish women are beginning to distance themselves more from Danish men; in 2000, women engaged in political consumerism

only marginally more than men (Goul Andersen and Tobiasen 2001, 45), which goes against the tendencies in other countries (Stolle, Hooghe and Micheletti 2003; Stolle and Micheletti 2003; Micheletti 2003), where women have adopted the identity of political consumers to a higher degree than men. Do Danish women follow suit with their sisters in other countries? In addition to gender, it is interesting to examine the impact of resources. Hypotheses suggest that deliberately choosing products on the ground of values requires education and knowledge, as well as financial resources (Stolle and Hooghe, 2003, 277). Previous studies suggest that education and money are indeed important in Denmark. At the same time, the interesting observation is made that the effects of financial resources are explained in terms of educational capital; i.e. the reason why people who are well-off engage in political consumption more often than people who are less well-off is that they are better educated (Goul Andersen and Tobiasen, 2001, 47). Is this still the prevalent pattern among Danes? Finally, it is particularly interesting whether youngsters continue to follow suit with other age groups (relative to other modes of political participation), as was an emerging pattern in 2000. If this is the case, it emphasizes the uniqueness of political consumption as a mode of political participation capable of attracting young people, who are otherwise characterised by being much less engaged in politics than other age groups (section 6).

- Does political consumerism substitute other modes of participation or does it represent a supplement? Existing studies suggest the latter, i.e. political consumption is a supplement to other modes of political participation. Does this continue to hold true? (section 5)
- One of the much-debated hypotheses in the literature is whether political consumers are “sub-politicians” (Micheletti, 2003, 29-30; Sørensen, 2001, 2004, 104-108). The assumption is that political consumerism constitutes a reaction to the risks emerging as a consequence of the successes of modernity. More specifically, political consumption is a means of attempting to lend social and political legitimacy to (global) market mechanisms. According to this hypothesis, the parliamentary system and traditional political institutions and modes of participation do not have the capacity to cope with new (global) risks. Consequently, a new arena for politics emerges – sub-politics – that is outside and critical of the traditional political system. From an individual-level perspective, ordinary people can assume the role of sub-politicians in this sphere through grassroots activities and more individualised modes of participation, e.g. political consumption (Beck, 1994, 13-23, 1997, 94-110). In this manner, citizens assume a personal responsibility for coping with risks for present and future generations (Micheletti, 2003, 30). Little evidence has been found at the individual level in support of this

hypothesis; political consumers do not tend to be more distrustful of traditional political institutions than those who do not engage in political consumerism; however, to do this hypothesis justice, more thorough examination is called for. The data at hand allows us to substantiate the hypothesis in greater detail (section 7).

- Scholars of political participation do not typically distinguish between whether participation targets the local, national or global level (for an exception, see Norris, 2002). With the emergence of political “commons”, institutions, and communities at the global level, however, it seems urgent to demarcate a global dimension of political participation and identity (this point is developed in greater detail in Tobiasen, 2002). Political consumerism may also be interpreted as a mode of global political participation and identity (Føllesdal, 2003; Bennett, 2003). I have developed the theoretical basis for this hypothesis more thoroughly elsewhere (Tobiasen, 2004). In the task at hand, I merely want to point out that all modes of political participation may potentially contain aspects of global orientation, including political consumerism, and that this hypothesis may be rendered probable considering the increasing intensity and extensity of technological, economical, cultural and political globalisation (Held et al., 1999). Political consumption may be a useful tool for attempts at influencing (global) risks or global commons emerging from global market practices and political cooperation about global issues, which are not legitimised politically (Beck, 1998, 98; Micheletti, 2003, 5-7) nor normatively justified (Føllesdal, 2003), let alone democratically institutionalised. People may also engage in political consumerism in an attempt at influencing political regimes or social and humanitarian conditions in countries all over the world. The few individual-level analyses that have represented empirical attempts at assessing whether political consumerism constitutes a mode of global political participation and identity point in different directions: some studies suggest that political consumption is formed by the national context and discourse (Stolle, Micheletti and Hooghe, 2003, 10). Other studies conclude that political consumerism appears to include aspects of global orientation in the sense that political consumers are linked to a global solidarity, to knowledge about international organisations, and to participation in globally oriented organisations (Goul Andersen and Tobiasen, 2001, 57-62; Tobiasen, 2004, 17-21). The data at hand allows us to examine this hypothesis in more detail (section 8).

Before proceeding with the empirical analyses, a note should be made about the two hypotheses concerning political consumerism as “sub-politics” and as a mode of global political participation. Both hypotheses are derived from macro-level theories. When we draw conclusions from the empirical analyses below, it should be stressed, first, that individual-

level analyses do not make any hard test of the hypotheses; second, further along the same lines, even if some of the expected relationships cannot be confirmed, this does not “reject” the theories in a “traditional” hypothetical-deductive manner. The theoretical perspectives are frameworks of interpretation (Layder, 1998); the empirical results will be interpreted on the basis of macro-level theories.

Political Consumerism – definition

The criterion of a deliberate attempt to influence or change society will be used to delimit the political aspect of political consumerism, (Halkier, 1994, 24, 29-36; Goul Andersen and Tobiasen, 2001, 14). In line with this, the definition applied in this article is the following: political consumerism is “... actions by people who make choices among producers and products with the goal of changing objectionable institutional and market practices. Their choices are based on attitudes and values regarding issues of justice, fairness, or noneconomic issues that concern personal and family well-being and ethical or political assessment of favourable and unfavourable business and government practices. Political consumers are the people who engage in such situations. They may act individually or collectively. Their market choices reflect an understanding of material products as embedded in a complex of social and normative context” (Micheletti, 2003, 2-3). Moreover, for consumption to qualify as political consumption it must have a certain measure of regularity and people must act in an informed and deliberate manner (Stolle and Hooghe, 2003, 279ff; see also Stolle, Hooghe and Micheletti, 2003, 8,11).

In addition to this definition, two points are relevant for the conceptualisation of political consumerism in this article: first, even though consumption is only political in the event that it is aimed at influencing other actors and a collective outcome, it is important to emphasise that demarcation of the motive is not synonymous with demarcation of specific social, ethical or political values. The goal can also be a realisation of one’s own interest, where attempts at advancing one’s own interests necessarily entail one becoming engaged in public-oriented interests. Therefore, the motive criterion integrates both the “public virtue” and “private virtue” tradition of politics (Micheletti, 2003, 19-20).

Second, scholars often distinguish empirically between positive and negative political consumption, referring to a person who consciously buys (positive consumerism) and boycotts (negative consumerism) products, respectively; however, political consumerism does not merely take place in the act of purchasing/not purchasing specific products in the market-sphere. People may also act as political consumers by trying to influence unfavourable business practices and governments’ practices

regarding businesses through organisations, petitions, demonstrations etc. This latter aspect has not yet been operationalised in survey data. The data at hand allows us to describe the extent to which Danes engage in such forms of political consumption.

Political consumerism – an overview

How widespread is political consumerism? Has it increased or decreased over time? Respondents were asked the same questions in 2000, 2001 and 2004⁵⁹: whether they have boycotted goods and products for political reasons, and whether they have buycotted – deliberately chosen certain goods and products over others – for political reasons. For boycotting, we also have a comparable measurement from 1990, albeit with a reference period of three years rather than twelve months.

Looking first at *boycotting*, the level was the same in 1990, 2000 and 2001 (cf. Table 1): a little more than 20 percent had engaged in boycotting. This probably reflects an increase from 1990 to 2000 in light of the longer reference period in 1990. In comparison, the percentage of respondents that have boycotted goods or products has almost doubled in 2004: as many as 42 percent report that they have done so within the past twelve months. Such a large increase in only 3 years gives reason to enquire whether the sample is biased. For example, there may be an overrepresentation of politically active people. However, as will become apparent from the analysis below, the intensity of political consumerism has not undergone a similar increase. Moreover, comparing modes of political participation in general, the present sample does not deviate from similar studies. Could the social and political contexts during the period of data collection then explain the large increase in boycotting? This actually appears to be a likely explanation: in the spring of 2004, a large firm in Denmark (ARLA) was accused of unfair competition, which weakened the competitive position of smaller firms. The ARLA-case was covered widely and for an extended period of time in the media, coverage that also focused on how ordinary people could combat the firm by boycotting ARLA products and choosing products from smaller producers instead. Thus, a likely interpretation is that the increase in boycotts, on the one hand, reflects a steady level of boycotting in line with previous years. On the other hand, the high level probably also reflects that boycotting is highly dependent on contextual factors and media attention (Thulstrup in Sørensen, 2004, 31), and thereby fluctuates (upwards).

Proceeding to *buycotting*, we also find a small increase from 2000/2001, where about 45 percent had deliberately chosen certain products for political reasons, to 2004, where 51 percent report having engaged in buycot-

⁵⁹ All surveys are representative of the Danish population. 2000: Citizenship survey (N=1640). 2001: European Social Survey (N=1498). 2004: Political consumerism survey (N=1271).

ting within the last year. We cannot conclude that this reflects a permanent increase; in any case, it is not very big. But it does suggest that political consumerism in the form of boycotting seems to be a widespread and continuous phenomenon.

Table 1. Political Consumption. Percentages. 1990, 2000, 2001, 2004.

	1990	2000	2001	2004
Boycott	22	21	23	42
Buycot	.	45	44	51
Often		23		20
Sometimes		30		26
Rarely		22		25
Never		24		26
DN/NA		1		4
Total N 100 pct.	2021	1640	1498	1271

Source 1990: Citizenship survey.

Question wording:

- "There are different ways of attempting to bring about improvements or resist deterioration in society. During the last twelve months, have you done any of the following?"

- 2000: "How often do you choose products because of attitudes towards political, ethical or environmental matters?"

- 2004: "First, please tell me, how often do you boycott or buy certain products because of attitudes towards political, ethical or environmental matters?"

Next, we construct an index of political consumers consisting of three categories: 1) those who have not engaged in political consumerism, 2) those who have engaged in *either* boycotting *or* boycotting, and 3) those who have been active in *both* boycotting *and* boycotting (cf. Table 2). Measured in this way, 43 percent have not engaged in political consumption in 2004, which is about 10 percent-points less than in 2000/2001, where about 52 percent did not engage in political consumption. Also, more respondents report that they have *both* boycotted *and* boycotted products in 2004 (36 percent) than in 2000/2001 (19 percent). The opposite is the case for respondents who have *either* boycotted *or* boycotted products: 22 percent in 2004, compared with 28 percent in 2000. This indicates that political consumerism is becoming more intensive in two ways: more people engage in political consumerism and more are active in both boycotting and boycotting.

Table 2. Index Political Consumption. Percentages. 2000, 2001, 2004.

	2000	2001	2004
Not political consumer	53	52	43
Either buycott or boycott	28	29	22
Both buycott and boycott	19	19	36
N 100 pct.	1640	1498	1271

However, intensity has not increased if it is assessed by a measurement whereby respondents are asked how often they boycott or buycott certain products because of attitudes towards political, ethical or environmental matters (cf. Table 1). The percentages are almost identical in 2000 and 2004. In 2004, 20 percent report that they do this "often", 26 percent "sometimes", and 25 and 26 percent "rarely" and "never", respectively. In this manner, whereas the above analysis suggested that intensity has

increased in the sense that more are engaged in both boycotting and boycotting, this analysis suggests that intensity has not increased when measured in terms of frequency.

Table 3. Association between political consumerism within last twelve months and intensity in terms of frequency. Percentages. 2004.

	Frequency of political consumption										
	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		DN/NA		Total N (100 pct.)
Not PC	51	22	28	12	12	5	3	1	7	3	540
Either/or	14	3	37	8	37	8	11	2	1	0	276
Both	3	1	14	5	36	13	46	16	1	1	455

Figures in bold: percent of total (N=1271).

From a validity point of view, Table 3 is satisfactory: there is a strong correlation between the two measurements of political consumerism ($\gamma^{60} = .77$). This table also allows us to assess, admittedly rather crudely, that 16 percent are “hardcore” political consumers who engage in both boycotting and boycotting and do so “often”. This number merely increases by 2 percent points if we include those who have either boycotted or boycotted products “often”. 21 percent engage in political consumerism (either/or or both) “sometimes”. Thus, almost 40 percent can be said to be “*regular political consumers*”, of which 16 percent are “*hard-core*” political consumers. In contrast, 17 percent report having engaged in political consumerism (both boycotting and boycotting, or only one of these), and that they “never” or “rarely” boycott or boycott products for political reasons. This group, then, cannot be assumed to act on a regular basis and probably do not qualify in terms of the criterion of intensity, see above.

Table 4. Collective forms of political consumerism. N=1271. Percentages. 2004.

	Yes	N 100 pct
Petition	14	100
Active in association or organisation	6	100
Taken part in a demonstration	3	100
Worn badges, put up posters etc.	3	100

Question wording: “You can try to influence firms that you think violate political, ethical or environmental norms, in other ways than through shopping and consumption. Please tell me whether you have done any of the following within the last year to try to influence firms so that they meet certain political, ethical or environmental norms.” Answer categories: Yes/No.

As mentioned, political consumption does not only take place in the market, i.e. by choosing products in an attempt at influencing politics and society. Political consumption may also be organised through grassroots activities, e.g. petitions, demonstrations etc. People may also engage in associations working to promote consumer rights or in other ways attempting to promote certain market practices. Looking at Table 4, 14

⁶⁰ Gamma measures the strength of the relationship and ranges from .00 (no relationship) to +/- 1.00 (perfect relationship).

percent have taken part in a petition aiming at influencing firms to satisfy certain political, ethical or environmental norms, and 6 percent have been active in an association and 3 percent have taken part in a demonstration or worn badges/put up posters. From this analysis, it appears clear that the act of purchasing is the most common way of engaging in political consumerism; comparatively few engage in grassroots activities etc. However, comparing with the number engaging in grassroots activities in general, i.e. where the aim is not specified, the numbers are relatively high: 28 percent have signed a petition, 6 percent have taken part in a demonstration and 5 percent have worn badges etc. (data not shown).

Table 5. Intensity of political consumerism. N =1271. Percentages. 2004.

Number of political consumerism acts	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Percent	38	22	27	9	2	1,3	0,3

Correlating all modes of political consumerism – boycott, boycott, petition signing, participating in a demonstration, organisation activity, badge wearing or putting up posters – it seems clear that political consumerism is largely a cumulative phenomena; correlations are strong (data not shown). The construction of a scale that adds all modes of political consumerism, cf. Table 5, reveals that 38 percent have not been engaged in any kind of political consumerism, 22 percent in one activity, 27 percent in two, 9 percent in three, and 2 percent or less in four or more activities. Measured in this manner, then, intensity is rather low; only few engage in three or more modes of political consumerism.

Table 6. Motives for political consumerism. N =1271. Percentages. 2004.

Boycott	Often	Some-times	Rarely	Not at all	DN/NA	N 100 pct.
Price	63	24	7	4	3	100
Health	62	22	8	5	3	100
The environment	33	35	19	9	3	100
Support Danish workplaces	33	30	18	14	6	100
Animal protection	35	29	19	14	4	100
Support small producers	26	32	23	14	5	100
Support certain firms that do a good job at taking ethical, political or environmental concerns	12	27	27	25	9	100
Support products from developing countries	6	23	36	28	8	100
Boycott	Yes		No	DN/NA		
From political regimes that suppress their populations	29		61	10	100	
From firms because they do not take sufficient political, ethical, environmental concerns	36		55	9	100	
To work against the power and monopoly of large firms	38		56	5	100	

Question-wording:

- Boycott: "When shopping, you can buy certain products instead of others for many reasons. Within the last year, how often have you bought products for the reasons I now mention? Have you done so often, sometimes, rarely or not at all?"

[The sequence of the items in the questionnaire was the following: health, price, environment, animal protection, small producers, products from developing countries, Danish workplaces, supports certain firms].

- Boycott: "And within the last year, how often have you chosen not to buy certain products ...". Answer-categories:

Yes/No.

The data allows us to assess the intensity of political consumerism in yet another way: how often do people purchase products because of different concerns, e.g. the environment, child labour etc.? Which concerns are most important, and how does this compare to “traditional” concerns such as price? Beginning with *buycotting*, respondents were asked how often they have bought products for various reasons within the last year. Table 6 leaves no doubt that “price” and “health” are the most important concerns: about 60 percent respond that they “often” think about price and health when shopping, and a little more than 20 percent say they do so “sometimes”. Other concerns are also considered important but not at all as important as price and health. Before presenting these results, it should be noted that “health” and “price” were the first two categories in the question-battery. The respondents have thus responded to the other concerns with “price” and “health” as reference categories. This was done deliberately, since the price-concern is the “traditional” concern at the market, and because the theoretical debate is about how important other concerns are relative to price. Considering the results, then, about 30 percent report that they “often” consider “the environment” (33 percent), “support to Danish workplaces” (33 percent), “animal protection” (35 percent) and “support to small producers” (26 percent) when shopping. About the same share does this “sometimes” (a little less for “animal protecting”). A majority of respondents (about 65 percent), then, consider non-economic concerns in the form of environment, workplaces, animals and small producers more or less regularly when shopping. The opposite is the case for concerns about “support to certain firms that people think do a good job of taking ethical, political or environmental concerns” (only 12 percent of respondents do so “often”, 27 percent “sometimes”, whereas 52 percent do so “rarely” or “not at all”) and “support to products from developing countries” (6 percent do so “often”, 23 percent “sometimes” and 64 percent “rarely” or “never”).

Turning next to *boycotting*, Table 6 shows that 29 percent have engaged in boycotts against “specific political regimes that suppress their populations”, 36 percent in boycotts against “firms that do not take sufficient political, ethical or environmental concerns”, and 38 percent in boycotts to work against “the power and monopoly of large firms”.

Several interesting points emerge from this analysis. *First*, the fact that price is considered to be the most important concern cannot come as a surprise, since it is the traditional market concern. *Second*, health concerns are often interpreted as non-political (Beckmann et al., 2001); however, they may also be interpreted in line with the “private virtue” tradition of politics (cf. above), i.e. that people, on the grounds that they wish to be healthier, turn to trying to influence the market-mechanism by choosing products they consider to be healthier. *Third*, non-economic concerns indeed appear to be “on display” in the consciousness of a majority of respondents. This being said, we ought to be aware that there is

probably a good deal of “political correctness” portrayed in the answers. Therefore, a more conservative and cautious conclusion is that many people probably do consider non-economic issues when they choose products; however, some probably want to portray themselves as responsible citizens, even if they do not (always) act in accordance with this. This, however, also provides important information; evaluating products on the basis of non-economic values is, in any case, an important norm. *Fourth*, it is somewhat surprising that global concerns about how firms act on the international scene and supporting developing countries do not rate higher; these issues are often forwarded as examples of how political consumers can assume a global responsibility. In fact, even though a fairly high percentage of respondents possess global orientations in substantial terms, global concerns are the least important concern relative to the other concerns. *Finally*, we may ask whether the different concerns contradict each other or whether they are cumulative. Correlating the concerns reveals that they are typically positively correlated, or not correlated; and all concerns are positively correlated with the political consumer index (data not shown). The different concerns, therefore, do not appear to contradict one another. The only exception is the “price concern”, which is not correlated (with a tendency towards being negatively correlated) with the other concerns and with the political consumer index. This suggests that price is in contradiction with other concerns to some extent (this is also confirmed by a factor-analysis showing that price is “something else” than other concerns, data not shown). This, and especially the fact that health concerns are also positively correlated with some of the other political concerns and the political consumer index, indicates that consumption is multi-dimensional; people do not have *either* health-concerns *or* (other) political concerns; motives are interwoven (Sørensen, 2004, 47).

Another measurement indicative of political consumerism is knowledge about different boycott-actions. Table 7 shows the percentage of people who have heard about different boycott actions. Even though we do not have any comparable measurements, the fact that approximately 80 percent have heard about four of the boycotts (boycott against French products because of French nuclear bomb explosions, ARLA boycott, boycott against the US because of the war in Iraq, and boycott against Shell because of the dumping of Brent Spar), indicate that people are reasonably well-informed; even though the figures do not say anything about how much people know about the different boycotts. However, it is not all boycott-actions that a majority of Danes know about: “only” 39 and 33 percent, respectively, know about the boycotts of NIKE and Nestlé. Bearing in mind that the four boycotts with which people are most familiar probably have had much wider and consistent media coverage than the NIKE and Nestlé boycotts, suggest that knowledge is dependent on how much attention boycotts garner in the media.

Table 7. Knowledge about Boycott-actions. N=1271. Percentages. 2004.

	Yes	N 100 pct.
French products because of nuclear bomb explosions in the Pacific Ocean in 1996	85	100
ARLA	83	100
USA because of war in Iraq	78	100
Shell, because of dumping of the Brent Spar oil rig in 1995	77	100
NIKE	39	100
Nestle	33	100

Question wording: "Next, I have some questions about different campaigns to boycott certain firms or countries. Please tell me whether you have heard about the campaigns I now mention?" Answer-categories: Yes/No.

Context of political consumerism

Knowledge, attitudes etc. depend on a continuous flow of information according to theories of reflexive modernity. People are reflexive and orient themselves by way of information, provided by expert systems, as opposed to tradition or personal experience (Giddens, 2003 [1990], 30-32). Consequently, we would expect that people primarily refer to expert systems, including labelling schemes, when making decisions about what products to choose or not to choose.

An alternative hypothesis is that political consumption is embedded in social networks (associations and more informal social networks), which have a "socialisation function through which members learn civic skills and generalised values and attitudes such as trust and they do get recruited for participatory acts" (Stolle and Micheletti, 2003, 5). Accordingly, we may anticipate that people draw on social networks (informal and formal) as a source of information for what products to buy or not to buy.

Examining the survey results (cf. Table 8), indeed, the media and experts appear to represent the primary source of information when respondents are asked where they get information about what products to choose – 91 percent of political consumers report that they obtain information from the "media" (but not the Internet, only 17 percent state that they use this media for this purpose), 67 percent get it from "experts", and 52 percent from the "description of content on products". 53 percent obtain information from "friends and acquaintances" and 30 percent from "associations and organisations". This indicates that the alternative hypothesis – that social networks are socialising agents – makes sense for a number of respondents, even if it is not as influential as media, experts and labels. Finally, it is interesting to note that 39 percent report that they use "politicians" as a source of information. Politicians, then, continue to serve as a reference group for some; however, from a classical elite-perception of democracy, we would probably expect politicians to be the primary information source.

Table 8. Political consumers and information about products to boycott or buycott. N = 944. Percentages. 2004.

	Yes	N 100 pct.
Media	91	100
Experts (via media)	67	100
Friends and acquaintances	53	100
Description of content on product	52	100
Politicians (via media)	39	100
Associations and organisations	30	100
Internet	17	100
Other	8	100

Question wording: "From where did you get information about what products to boycott or choose?"

Answer-categories: Yes/no.

Turning next to people's trust in labelling schemes (Table 9), two points ought to be emphasised: first, that a majority have never heard about several of the labels: "The Flower" (60 percent) and "Max Havelaar" (51 percent). This share is somewhat lower for "The Swan" (23 percent) and especially "Ø-mærket" (6 percent)⁶¹. Since expert systems, following theories of reflexive modernisation, are assumed to be an important reference system, we would probably have expected greater familiarity with the labelling schemes. This being said, the relatively large share that does not know about some of the labelling schemes makes sense in light of the circumstance that knowledge-profiles in late modernity are personal. Moreover, without pre-empting the findings in later sections, political consumers hold more trust in the labelling schemes than people who do not engage in political consumerism. Second, a majority of the respondents who are familiar with the labels do trust them (between 53 and 67 percent), and only very few indicate little trust in the labels (between 11 and 15 percent).

Table 9. Trust in labelling schemes. Percentages. 2004.

	Very high/ rather high trust		Neither/nor;		Rather/very little trust		Not heard about the label	DN/NA		N 100 pct.	
"The Swan"	52	67	11	14	9	11	23	6	7	1271	978
"The Flower"	21	53	8	19	6	14	60	6	14	1271	506
"Max Have- laar"	30	60	8	15	7	15	51	5	10	1271	627
"Ø-mærket"	64	67	13	14	14	15	6	4	4	1271	1199

Question wording: "There are different labelling schemes guaranteeing that products live up to certain standards. Please tell me how much you trust the following labelling schemes. Do you have very high trust, rather high trust, rather little trust, or very little trust in them?"

Figures in bold: respondents who have not heard about the labels are not included in N.

Political consumers, in the form of buycotting or boycotting, do not meet physically; nevertheless, scholars suggest that political consumers may feel as though they are part of some imagined or concrete community in

⁶¹ *The Flower* is an eco-label that was introduced by the European Union in 1992; *Stichting Max Havelaar* was founded in Holland in 1988 and has since spread to 19 other countries (under the name Transfair or Fairtrade in some), the concept being to ensure fair treatment for small farmers and workers and that production takes place with consideration for the environment; *The Swan* is a Nordic eco-label established by the Nordic Council of Ministers in 1990; and the red 'Ø-mærket' is a Danish eco-label that was introduced in 1989.

which they experience a sense of allegiance to a certain set of values (Halkier, 1994, 2003). This seems to be the case – at least in a very general and abstract sense: respondents who have acted as political consumers were asked how much they agree with the following statement: “When I boycott or buy certain products because of political, ethical or environmental concerns, I feel part of a larger community that share some of the same values”. 58 percent agree, while 25 percent disagree (cf. Table 10). Admittedly, this is a very crude measurement and it is not clear what exactly the values consist of. This said, it probably does reflect that a majority do attach some kind of values to political consumption and feel that they share them with a broader group or community.

Table 10. Imagined community, responsibility taking, and priority price vis-à-vis the environment. Percentages. 2004.

	Agree	Neither/ nor	Dis- agree	DN/NA	N 100 pct.
Imagined community					
When I boycott or buy certain products because of political, ethical or environmental concerns, I feel part of a larger popular community that share some of the same values.	58	11	25	6	944
Responsibility taking					
The welfare of future generations depends on whether contemporary consumers consider political, ethical or environmental concerns when they are shopping.	82	0	13	6	1271
	A great degree	Some degree	Not very great degree	Not at all	DN/NA
To what degree do you think that we as ordinary people have a personal responsibility to buy products for political, ethical and environmental reasons?	36	41	13	5	5
Priority price vis-à-vis environment: When you do your shopping, what is most important – the price or whether the product is produced in an environment-friendly manner?					
Price most important	49				
Most important that product is produced by considering the environment	36				
DN/NA	15				
N 100 pct.	1271				

One implication of “individualised collective action”, which is the term Micheletti (2003, 24-34) employs to denote citizen activism in a reflexive modernity, is that “responsibilities for problem-solving cannot be delegated to other actors and spheres and the actors and institutions of representative democracy. It must be taken by each individual who leaves footprints after their action and choices” (2003, 34). Thus, we would expect that people, and political consumers in particular, assume such an individual responsibility. The analysis largely confirms this (cf. Table 10). A majority (82 percent) of people agree that “the welfare of “future generations” depends on whether contemporary consumers consider political, ethical or environmental concerns when they do their shopping”, while 36 percent think that ordinary people to “a great degree” bear a personal

responsibility to buy products for political, ethical and environmental reasons – 41 percent think they have this “to some degree”. Again, these questions are very easy to agree with. On the other hand, it agrees with the fact that in Denmark “...the social division of responsibility for food risks, the choices of ordinary consumers are constructed as central [in the public discourse]” (Halkier, 2003, 223). Moreover, without pre-empting the analysis in section 7, the validity of data is strengthened by the fact that political consumers take on this responsibility to a greater degree than do people who do not engage in political consumption (cf. Tables 18 and 19); which is what we would expect from the perspective of “individualised collective action”. This would at least appear to be a hypothesis worthwhile pursuing in the future.

However, we cannot ignore some degree of over-claiming in these questions about individual responsibility, especially when people are not reminded about alternative concerns and priorities. This is supported by a question where respondents were asked to prioritise whether price or concerns for the environment are more important when shopping: 49 percent report that price is the most important, while 36 percent think it is most important that the product is produced in an environmentally-friendly manner (cf. Table 10). Thus, a fairly high percentage find price to be more important. This, however, does not necessarily rule out that the environment (in the present case) has low priority – it just has lower priority than price for about half of the respondents.

Is political consumerism political – and is it a substitute or a supplement?

Several scholars have questioned whether political consumerism is actually political. Indeed, this is a justified question, as most political consumerism takes place at the market, which traditionally, and according to liberal theory, is characterised by a utilitarian logic (Sørensen, 2004, 57–82). Consequently, several studies have empirically examined whether political consumerism is in fact political. Many studies – at least quantitative ones – succeed in confirming this: compared with people who do not engage in political consumerism, political consumers tend to be more interested in politics, perceive political consumption as more efficient, and political consumption seems to constitute a meaningful dimension of political participation together with other individualised modes of grass-roots participation (Goul Andersen and Tobiasen, 2001; Stolle, Hooghe and Micheletti, 2003). This is also confirmed by the present data: even though voting and working in associations or a political party is considered more efficient than boycotting or buycotting, a majority of respondents think that political consumption is efficient, substantially speaking: 55 and 53 percent, respectively (cf. Table 11). Moreover political consu-

mers, in comparison with people who are not political consumers, think that political consumerism is more efficient (cf. Table 12). Political consumers, then, consider political consumption to be a mode of political influence and a rather efficient one, which presumably gives them a feeling of political self-confidence – which is also supported by the fact that political consumers in general tend to think that other modes of political participation are more efficient, compared with non-political consumers (cf. Table 12). Furthermore, a factor analysis of modes of political participation indicates that political consumerism, together with signing petitions and donating money, represents a complex of individualised grass-roots activities (data not shown).

Table 11. Perceived efficiency of political consumption by modes of political participation. Percentages. N = 1271. 2004.

	Very, somewhat efficient	Neither/nor	Not very, not at all efficient	DN/NA	N 100 pct.
Vote at elections	88	6	4	2	100
Work in associations or organisations	68	17	10	5	100
Work in political party	67	14	13	6	100
Boycott	55	14	27	4	100
Buycott	53	14	27	10	100
Sign a petition	42	21	32	5	100

Question wording: "There are different perceptions about how one as a citizen can influence decisions in society most efficiently. I will now read a list with some activities. Please tell me whether you think they are very efficient, somewhat efficient, not very efficient or not at all efficient."

Table 12. Efficiency political participation by political consumerism. Share "very + somewhat" efficient. Percentages, gamma-coefficients. N = 1271. 2004.

	Work in political party	Work in association or org.	Vote at elections	Boycotts	Buycotts	Sign petition	N 100 pct.
Not political consumer	61	62	85	34	29	38	100
Buycott or boycott	72	69	92	61	60	40	100
Buycott and boycott	72	73	91	77	77	50	100
Gamma	.10	.10	.	.48	.53	.19	

Note: Only statistically significant relationships (i.e., significant at least at .05 level) are reported.

However, even though political consumerism, together with other modes of individual political action, seems to represent an independent dimension, it does not replace other modes of political participation. Instead, it represents a supplement: there is a positive correlation between political consumerism and other modes of political action (except for participation in a public strike), and political consumers are more active in other modes of political action than those who do not engage in political consumption (cf. Table 13). This also suggests that the assumption that individualised forms of political participation, including political consumerism, make collectivistic and group-oriented modes of political participation decrease does not gain much support from the analysis.

Table 13. Political consumerism by modes of political participation. N =1271. Percentages. 2004.

	Not political consumer	Boycott or boycott	Both boycott and boycott	All
Contacted politician or government official	11	23	28	20
Contacted association or organisation	11	24	31	21
Worn or put up badges, posters, t-shirts etc.	1	5	11	5
Signing a petition	17	28	42	28
Public demonstration	2	8	10	6
Public strike	2	4	2	3
Donated money	34	50	60	46
Collected money	5	7	10	7
Contacted or appeared in the media	4	7	8	6
Illegal protest activity	0	0	2	1
Political meeting	6	16	24	15
Campaign or discussion group on the Internet	2	5	6	4
Election	90	90	95	92
Party, association etc.	23	31	40	31
N 100 pct.	540	276	455	

Another way of assessing whether political consumption is political is to ask respondents themselves whether they perceive of various actions as being political. Respondents were asked whether they perceive of boycotting a firm that exploits child labour as having something to do with politics (cf. Table 14). 45 percent think this is the case to “a very great degree”, 28 percent “to some degree”, while 22 percent say that it does not have anything, or only little, to do with politics. A similar question was asked about buying organic products, where only 20 percent think that this “to a great degree” has something to do with politics, whereas 26 percent think this “to some degree”. In this manner, a majority think of boycotting on the grounds of child labour as politics. On the contrary, only about half think of buying organic products as being a political act. It is, thus, not straight forward that respondents think of acts as political even if it may be argued from a theoretical point of view.

Table 14. Is political consumerism political – self-assessment. N =1271. Percentages. 2004.

	Great degree	Some degree	Not very great degree	Not at all	DN/NA	N 100 pct.
Boycott firms that exploit child labour	45	28	11	11	5	100
Buy organic products	20	26	23	26	5	100

Question wording:

"There are different perceptions about what politics is. To what degree do you think that boycotting a product from a company that exploits child labour has something to do with politics?"

"And to what extent do you think that buying organic food has something to do with politics?" Answer-categories: great degree, some degree, not very great degree, not at all.

All in all: on the one hand, "objective" measures largely confirm that political consumerism is indeed political. On the other hand, it is more ambiguous when asking people themselves what they think of as political acts – at least it cannot be taken for granted that just because an act may be defined as a political act by scholars, it is also considered to be this by people themselves.

Well-educated middle-aged women?

Who are the political consumers? This question has been examined in various publications, in Denmark (Goul Andersen and Tobiasen, 2001, 2003; Goul Andersen, 2004, Ch. 8) and internationally (Stolle, Hooghe and Micheletti, 2003, Stolle and Micheletti, 2003; Forno and Ceccarini, 2004; Ferrer-Fons, 2004). The interesting question then becomes whether known patterns can be confirmed in 2004, i.e., are the well-educated middle-aged women in front, or have new patterns emerged? In particular, it is also interesting whether youngsters still follow suit with other age groups (relative to other modes of political participation).

Table 15. Political consumption by social and political characteristics. Percentages. 2004.

	Not political consumerism	Boycott or boycott	Boycott and boycott	N 100 pct.
Men	49	21	31	633
Women	36	23	41	638
18-29 years	38	27	35	199
30-39 years	39	26	35	231
40-49 years	35	22	43	265
50-59 years	41	20	39	237
60+ years	54	17	29	339
No further education	55	20	25	320
Vocational training	49	21	31	420
Short further education (3 years)	37	21	43	155
Middle-range education (3-4 years)	26	23	51	222
Long further education (4+ years)	29	26	45	152
A city	37	26	38	317
Suburb to a city	44	19	38	170
Town	46	20	34	435
Village, countryside	43	22	35	348
0-149.999 dkr	48	21	31	316
150-199.999 dkr	42	24	34	144
200-299.999 dkr	41	21	39	352
300-399.999 dkr	32	23	45	215
400.000+ dkr	37	26	38	159
Left wing	12	21	68	112
Social democrats	43	19	38	251
Centre parties	17	29	54	122
Liberals & Conservatives	51	24	25	386
Right wing	48	22	30	83
Very interested in politics	25	22	54	220
Somewhat interested in politics	36	23	41	594
Not very interested in politics	55	22	23	369
Not at all interested in politics	73	14	13	78

Table 16. Political consumption by social and political characteristics. MCA-analysis. Eta and Beta. 2004.

	Eta	Beta. Controlling for sex, age, urbanisation, education, income	Beta. Do + political interest	Beta. Do + political leaning
Sex	.13	.13	.16	.17
Age	.14	.10	.12	.
Urbanisation	.	.	.	.
Education	.24	.20	.14	.11
Income	.12	.	.	.
Political interest	.29	.	.26	.24
Political leaning	.33	.	.	.27

Eta is a measurement of the strength of relationship and range between 0 (no relationship) to 1 (perfect relationship). *Beta* is the same measurement after controlling for other variables.

Only statistically significant relationships (i.e. significant at least at .05 level) are reported.

In general, the analysis confirms previous analyses (cf. Tables 15 and 16). Political consumers are statistically over-represented among women, highly educated, well-off, politically interested and people with political observations that are leaning towards the leftwing or the centre of Danish politics. Young people (18-29 years of age) act as political consumers as often as other age groups. Relative to other modes of political participation, where young people tend to lag behind, this renders political consumerism unique. Moreover, it does not matter much whether people live in

the city or in the countryside; and the small differences that are identifiable owe to the fact that city dwellers are better educated. The multivariate analysis (MCA-analysis, cf. Table 16) also confirms that educational capital is more important (and indeed the most important factor) than economic capital; the reason why people who are better off engage in political consumerism more often is that they are better educated. Moreover, the analysis confirms that the reason why highly educated act more often as political consumers is because they are more interested in politics.

The analysis, thus, largely confirms previous studies. There are, however, at least two interesting new findings: first, the contrasts between genders appear to be greater in 2004 than in 2000: 64 percent of women surveyed in 2004 are political consumers, which is 13 percent points more than men (51 percent). In 2000, this difference was only 6 percent points (Goul Andersen and Tobiasen, 2001, 46). This suggests that Danish women have begun to follow the tendency observed in other countries more clearly, where the contrasts between genders are more pronounced (Stolle and Micheletti, 2003). In fact, the differences between men and women are also quite evident after controlling for relevant variables ($\beta = .17$). Second, age differences are smaller in 2004 than in 2001: the new data suggests that people 60+ years of age do not lag as far behind other age groups as was the case in 2000.

Constructive sub-politicians

Turning next to the hypothesis that political consumers are “sub-politicians”, data enables us to examine the following relationships: in contrast to people who do not engage in political consumerism, the assumption is that political consumers harbour greater distrust in the established and institutionalised political system and market-actors, that they flee institutionalised modes of political participation, hold more faith in the capacity of extra-parliamentary actors and institutions, are more oriented towards and aware of risks and fears, and feel a personal responsibility to attempt to deal with these risks. Again, it should be stressed that we do not assume causal relationships between the variables, and the analysis is not a hard test of Beck’s macro-level theory. We cannot “reject” or “accept” the theory, but we can employ it as a framework for interpreting the empirical results.

Table 17. Political Consumerism by risk variables. N = 1271 (except for indexes: only valid cases are included). Percentages & averages. 2004.

	Not political consumerism	Either boycott or buycott	Both boycott and buycott
Reflexivity			
Strongly or partly agree with: "One of the problems with people today is that they go against authorities."	46	35	29
Strongly or partly agree with: "There is only little a person can do to change the course of life."	31	16	11
Index of two items: "to make up your political opinion independent of the opinion of others" and "evaluate one's own opinions critically, when discussing politics". Average on scale where 1=not at all important, 7=very important.	5.87	5.99	6.19
Strongly or partly agree with: "The welfare of future generations welfare depends on whether contemporary consumers consider political, ethical or environmental concerns, when they shop"	68	84	97
Fear			
Index of three items: fear of terrorism, climate, organised crime. Average on scale where 1=very worried, 4=not at all worried.	2.06	2.19	2.06
Institutional trust			
Somewhat or very great trust in:			
Government	43	49	36
Politicians	30	38	33
Experts	44	58	58
International firms	39	33	28
Global protest movements	17	24	33
Consumer organisations	57	71	78
Trust in expert systems			
Index of four items about trust in labelling schemes. Average on scale where 1=very great trust, 4=very low trust. (N = 246)	2.91	2.19	2.13
Very great or rather great trust in "Ø-mærket"	52	74	81
Law abidingness			
Voting at general elections. Average on scale where 1=not at all important, 7=very important.	6.38	6.58	6.61
To follow laws and regulations. Average on scale where 1=not at all important, 7=very important.	6.58	6.52	6.40
Personal responsibility taking			
To what degree do you think that we as ordinary people have a personal responsibility to buy products for political, ethical and environmental reasons? Share large responsibility.	43	45	54
Capacity			
To a high degree:			
The Danish Government	27	29	38
Business and industry	40	50	60
Environment movements	18	20	27
Ordinary people	25	25	36
External efficacy			
Strongly or partly agree, "In general, you can trust politicians to make the right decisions for the country."	55	51	46
N 100 pct.	100	100	100

Table 18. Political Consumerism by risk variables. MCA analysis. Eta and Beta. 2004.

	Eta	Beta 1 Controlling for sex, age, education	Beta 2 do. + political leaning
Reflexivity			
One of the problems with people today is that they go against authorities	.22	.18	.17
There is only little a person can do to change the course of life	.18	.14	.17
Index "to make up your political opinion independent of the opinion of others" and "evaluate one's own opinions critically, when discussing politics"	.12	.11	.10
The welfare of future generations welfare depends on whether contemporary consumers consider political, ethical or environmental concerns, when they shop	.35	.36	.34
Fear			
Index of three items: fear of terrorism, climate, organised crime.	.08	.07	.08
Institutional trust			
Government	.16	.16	.11
Politicians	.	.	.
Experts	.12	.	.
International firms	.15	.17	.12
Global protest movements	.24	.20	.14
Consumer organisations	.18	.15	.12
Trust in expert systems			
Index of four items about trust in labelling schemes.	.38	.36	.27
Label: "Ø-mærket"	.26	.22	.20
Law abidingness			
Voting at general elections	.10	.10	.10
To follow laws and regulations	.08	.08	.
Personal responsibility taking			
To what degree do you think that we as ordinary people have a personal responsibility to buy products for political, ethical and environmental reasons?	.11	.11	.09
Capacity			
The Danish Government	.09	.09	.09
Business and industry	.15	.14	.11
Environment movements	.15	.13	.13
Ordinary people	.10	.11	.10
External efficacy			
In general you can trust politicians to make the right decisions for the country	.13	.13	.10

Statistically, political consumerism is entered as the independent variable and all other variables are entered as dependent variables.

Only statistically significant relationships (i.e. significant at least at .05 level) are reported.

The hypothesis that political consumers are "sub-politicians" is illustrated in a number of ways (cf. Tables 17 and 18): In comparison with people who do not engage in political consumption, political consumers are more reflexive⁶², and, in particular, they are more reflexive when it comes to "leaving footprints in the future". Political consumers also hold greater trust in extra-parliamentary institutions, e.g. global protest movements

⁶² More specifically, political consumers agree more with the following statements: "one of the problems with people today is that they go against authorities", "There is only little a person can do to change the course of life"; "the welfare of future generations depends on whether contemporary consumers consider political, ethical or environmental concerns when they shop" and an index composed of two questions about how important it is "to make up your political opinion independently of the opinions of others" and to "evaluate one's own opinions critically, when discussing politics" (cf. Table 17).

and consumer organisations, and less trust in market-actors (international companies), than people who do not engage in political consumption. Moreover, people who engage in *both* boycotting *and* buycotting have slightly less faith in “government” (36 percent have very great trust) than people who only engage in either buycotting or boycotting (49 percent) and non-political consumers (43 percent). The most enthusiastic political consumers, then, tend to be more critical towards the government than others. Finally, political consumers trust food-labelling schemes (“The Swan”, “The Flower”, “Max Havelaar”, “Ø-mærket”) to a higher degree than non-political consumers, indicating that expert systems are crucial when political consumers orient themselves.

Correlations are weaker in some instances, but the tendencies continue to support the hypothesis that political consumers are sub-politicians: political consumers are slightly less inclined to accept authority⁶³ than are people who do not engage in political consumption, and they are a little more inclined to think that ordinary people bear a personal responsibility to buy products for political, ethical and environmental reasons. Furthermore, political consumers, and in particular those who engage in *both* buycotting *and* boycotting, hold more faith in the capacity of “environment movements” and “ordinary people” to affect the development of the global environment. Moreover, people who engage in *both* buycotting *and* boycotting tend to have a little less faith in the responsiveness of politicians.⁶⁴

However, the analysis also contradicts some of the assumptions made on the basis of the sub-politician hypothesis: political consumers do not fear global risks (e.g. terrorism, climate change, organised crime) more than people who are not political consumers. Moreover, there is no – or only a very weak – relationship between engaging in political consumption and trust in politicians. Additionally, political consumers do not tend to support civic virtues about voting at elections less than non-political consumers. Furthermore, political consumers actually have more faith in the “Danish government” and especially “business and industry” when it comes to their capacity to affect the development in the global environment. Finally, political consumers do not tend to flee institutionalised modes of political participation, rather to the contrary: political consumers tend to also take more part in institutionalised channels of political participation, than do people who do not engage in political consumption (see section 5).

How, then, may these results be interpreted? What distinguishes political consumers is not so much that they are more oriented towards risks and fears or that they are critical and sceptical towards the institutionalised political system and its capacities – except for the most enthusiastic

⁶³ They think it is a little less important “to follow laws and regulations” than do people who do not engage in political consumerism, cf. Table 17.

⁶⁴ Do not agree as much as non-political consumers with the statement, “In general you can trust politicians to make the right decisions for the country”.

political consumers who are slightly more sceptical towards the government. Instead, political consumers appear to be distinguished by their governance-understanding of politics, and that they perceive of themselves as sub-politicians, i.e. as playing an active role in (global) politics where they assume a responsibility to attempt to deal with risks.

Political consumerism: a mode of global political action?

Finally, we set out to examine the hypothesis that political consumerism may be interpreted as a mode of global political action. For political consumerism to be global, it must be targeted towards global issues, i.e. global political consumerism can be defined as consumption "... oriented towards influencing a specific form of policy or collective outcome, i.e. policy dealing with 'global commons', which is regulated in global issue networks (for example issue networks regarding global environment) with specific regime values and norms and with a number of actors, including (multinational) corporations. The global political consumer can also raise global controversial questions that are not institutionalised, but which they feel decisions ought to be made about" (Tobiasen, 2004, 5).

Whether or not political consumption is characterised by global aspects may be operationalised in a number of ways (see Tobiasen 2004 for a more thorough discussion). First, we may ask respondents about the objectives of their political consumption. As documented in section 3, respondents were asked how often they buy products for different reasons. Some of these motives are likely to include global aspects⁶⁵, namely if respondents buy products where they attempt to "support products from developing countries" (6 percent do so "often", 23 percent "sometimes") and to "support specific companies that make an effort to take ethical, political or environmental concerns" (12 and 27 percent, respectively), and when respondents boycott political regimes that suppress their populations (29 percent) or boycott companies that do not take sufficient political, ethical or environmental concerns (36 percent). Even though this, as shown in section 3, is not high in comparison with other concerns, the absolute percentages still indicate that global concerns are "on display" in the minds of some respondents. Likewise, even though "only" about 30-40 percent are aware of the boycotts against NIKE and Nestlé, respondents proved to be even more "enlightened" about the boycotts against the US, Shell and French products (see section 3).

Another path of enquiry regarding whether it is meaningful to talk about *global* political consumerism builds on the assumption that political consumption can be regarded as an expression of a global identity. To

⁶⁵ Following an aspect-definition of politics, all motives may potentially contain global aspects (Tobiasen 2002, 246-247); however, it appears more obvious that the abovementioned motives contain global aspects than other motives included in the survey.

the extent that political consumption correlates with dimensions of global identity, political consumption can be interpreted as involving global aspects. Global identity contains many dimensions: engagement (interest, cognitive orientation etc.), opinions/feelings towards and normative perceptions about global issues, institutions, actors etc. in a global issue network.

The assumption is that, in so far as political consumers prove to be more globally oriented and possess a greater degree of global political identity than persons that do not act as political consumers, then political consumption can be interpreted as comprising a conglomerate of action and attitudes that indicate that political consumerism contains global aspects. Again, it does not constitute any hard test of a macro-level hypothesis, but the discovery of such correlations will add to the plausibility of such an interpretation.

As mentioned, previous studies indicate that political consumerism does indeed contain global aspects; political consumerism is linked to global solidarity, to knowledge about international organisations and to participation in globally oriented organisations (Goul Andersen and Tobiasen, 2001, 57-62; Tobiasen, 2004, 17-21). The present analysis supports this in several respects (cf. Tables 19 and 20), even though many of the correlations are weak. Most convincingly, political consumers do seem to feel more solidarity with the global community. Political consumers also agree slightly more with statements concerning the need for global cooperation and that the global environment will be damaged if the power of multinational companies is not delimited. Moreover, political consumers are slightly more pro-globalisation than people who do not engage in political consumerism. Political consumers, then, are not anti-global.

However, in a number of respects the analyses do not support the hypothesis that political consumerism contains global aspects: on three questions political consumers do not deviate from people who do not engage in political consumerism: "I feel as much as a world citizen as I feel as a Dane", "Denmark should follow the decisions made by those international organisations that the country is a member of", and another question about positive/negative attitudes towards globalisation.

All in all, the analysis confirms the expectations in some respects, and at least no correlations go in the totally opposite direction of what we expected.

Table 19. Political Consumerism by global orientations. N = 1271 (except for indexes: only valid cases are included). Percentages and average. 2004.

	Not political consumerism	Boycott or boycott	Boycott and boycott
International cooperation			
Strongly or partly agree with "For certain global problems, like environment pollution, international bodies should have the right to enforce solutions, even if it goes against Denmark's interest"	56	66	72
Strongly or partly agree with "Unless the power of multinational companies is restricted considerably, the global environment will be seriously damaged"	62	69	79
Strongly or partly agree with "In general Denmark should follow the decisions made by those international organisations that the country is a member of"	72	75	70
Global identity			
Strongly or partly agree with "I feel as much as a citizen of the world, as I feel as a Dane"	37	44	40
Global solidarity			
Strongly or partly agree with "Denmark should be in the forefront in the protest against countries that violates human rights, even if it may damage Danish export interests"	74	89	90
Strongly or partly agree with "Denmark should work for a better distribution of the resources of the earth, even if it means that we in countries like Denmark have to accept a lower standard of living"	68	81	84
Index (average)	2.00	1.76	1.58
Apathy			
Strongly or partly agree with "In reality, politicians do not have much influence. In practise, it is international market forces that decide which policies are carried through"	63	67	68
Attitude towards globalisation			
Strongly or partly agree with "If you look around in the world, you can see that globalisation bring about more misery than progress"	48	39	39
Attitude towards globalisation. ^{A)} Average on scale where 1= Negative, 7=positive	4.57	4.71	4.65
N 100 pct.	100	100	100

^{A)} Question-wording: "It is often discussed whether so-called 'globalisation' primarily has a positive impact on Denmark or whether it primarily has a negative impact. On a scale from 1-7, where 1 is "negative" and 7 is "positive", what impact do you think globalisation first and foremost has on Denmark?"

Table 20. Political Consumerism by global orientations. MCA analyse. Eta and Beta. 2004.

	Eta	Beta 1 Controlling for sex, age, education	Beta 2 do + political leaning
International cooperation			
For certain global problems, like environment pollution, international bodies should have the right to enforce solutions, even if it goes against Denmark's interest	.12	.10	.09
Unless the power of multi-national organisations is restricted considerably, the global environment will be seriously damaged	.11	.14	.
Denmark should follow the decisions made by those international organisations that the country is a member of	.	.	.
Global identity			
I feel as much as a citizen of the world, as I feel as a Dane	.07	.	.
Global solidarity			
Denmark should be in the forefront in the protest against countries that violate human rights, even if it may damage Danish export interests	.17	.15	.12
Denmark should work for a better distribution of the resources of the earth, even if it means that we in countries like Denmark have to accept a lower standard of living	.17	.14	.
Index	.19	.16	.11
Apathy			
In reality, politicians do not have much influence. In practise, it is international market forces that decide which policies are carried through	.	.	.
Attitude towards globalisation			
If you look around in the world, you can see that globalisation brings about more misery than progress	.11	.08	.11
Positive/negative towards globalisation	.	.	.

Statistically, political consumerism is entered as the independent variable, and all other variables are entered as dependent variables.

Only statistically significant relationships (i.e. significant at least at .05 level) are reported.

Concluding remarks

On the basis of new data from 2004, the objective in this article has been to examine various dimensions of political consumerism in Denmark, and how it has developed since 2000. Several conclusions can be made from the above analysis:

- In Denmark, political consumerism seems to have found a steady level (about half of the population has engaged in political consumption at least once within the last year), which, however, seems to fluctuate (upwards) in connection with concrete boycotts and media attention.
- The intensity of political consumerism has increased in the sense that more engaged in *both* boycotting *and* boycotting in 2004 than in 2000. On the contrary, we find no increase in intensity when measured in terms of how frequently people act as political consumers, or in the variety of acts of political consumerism people engage in.

- In comparison with organised political consumerism, political consumerism via the market (i.e. boycotting and boycotting) is much more common.
- About 40 percent of political consumers are “regular political consumers”; 16 percent are “hardcore political consumers”.
- Indeed, Danes do consider political concerns fairly often when buying products; however, price (and health) concerns remain the most important. Concerns about global issues are surprisingly modest in comparison with concerns that probably have a more local/national context. The different concerns do not contradict each other, but are interwoven; only the price concern seems to constitute a different dimension.
- The primary source of information about what products to boycott or boycott is the media and experts. To some extent, people also obtain information from friends and social networks. Fewer get information from politicians; only a minority use the Internet as a source of information. This suggests that, indeed, a modernisation-interpretation that information derives from experts and media is sound, and more so than a socialisation-hypothesis, even if the latter cannot be ruled out.
- A majority are not familiar with several labelling schemes; however, a vast majority of those who do know about them have high trust in them.
- Political consumption represents political action, even if subjective measures indicate that not all acts that are defined as political are perceived as such by the respondents themselves.
- Political consumption constitutes a supplement to other modes of political participation, not a substitute.
- In terms of social and political profile, we find most political consumers among the well-educated, well-off women who are leaning towards the left or centre of Danish politics and who are interested in politics. More generally, education is the most important factor (which is explained by the fact that people with a higher education are more interested in politics and therefore engage in political consumerism), but gender is becoming more important. Economic capital is also important, but the reason why there are more political consumers among the more wealthy is that they have a higher education. Age-differences, on the other hand, are diminishing; the elderly gain on other age groups, and younger people (18-29 years of age) engage as often in political consumerism as do the middle-aged, rendering political consumption unique compared to other modes of political participation.
- The analysis confirms previous studies that political consumerism contains aspects of global orientation and identity, even though the analysis is not terribly convincing in all respects.

- Political consumers may be interpreted as sub-politicians in the way that they perceive of politics as a system of governance (as opposed to government), where they themselves play an active role and take on an active responsibility for coping with risk in a reflexive manner. However, political consumers are not more oriented towards risks and fears than others, and they are not more critical towards the institutionalised political system and its capacities to cope with risks; only the most enthusiastic political consumers tend to be more sceptical towards the government. Political consumers are responsible sub-politicians who engage in politics in their daily life and who assume a critical but constructive attitude towards politics. Political consumers do not regard political consumption as an alternative to other modes of participation, but as a supplement; they use the entire spectrum of possible connecting links to decision making.

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7. Swedish Political Consumers: Who they are and why they use the market as an arena for politics

Michele Micheletti and Dietlind Stolle

Abstract

This paper offers findings from a national representative postal survey (1,816 persons 15-85 years of age) conducted in Sweden that included several questions on political consumerism. Most of the questions were asked for the first time in the fall of 2003, thus making this survey one of the most comprehensive data sets on political consumerism in existence today. Political consumers are defined as people who state that they have boycotted products or deliberately chosen products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons in the past twelve months. The respondents were asked questions about their trust in and views on a variety of governmental institutions, civil society, and multinational corporations as well as the aspects that they consider as important when shopping for groceries and clothes/shoes. Significant findings are that Swedish political consumers are disproportionately women, highly educated, and come from wealthy households. An overwhelming number of sympathizers of the Green Party and Left Party are political consumers. The study shows that political consumers are more supportive of curbing the power of multinational corporations. They also give more consideration to other-regarding values (animal rights, the general working conditions in countries that manufacture our consumer goods, and child labor) when purchasing products. It is noteworthy that political consumers are more politically interested and active than non-political consumers. The study confirms that political consumers are concerned about risk society, and they are more critical about traditional governmental institutions.

Surveying Political Consumerism

Growing numbers of citizens use the market as an arena for politics (Norris, 2002, 196f). Analysis of European Social Survey data shows that, on

an average, 16 percent of adults in twenty European countries have boycotted certain products for political reasons and that 24 percent have deliberately purchased products for the same reasons. People living in Northern European countries are more often political consumers than people living in Southern European countries. According to this survey, Sweden ranks first among Europeans when it comes to boycotting and deliberately purchasing products: 33 percent stated that they have boycotted and 55 percent stated that they have bought certain products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons (Ferrer-Fons, 2003, Figure 1 and 2).⁶⁶

When people act in this fashion they use political or ethical concerns and values to guide their consumer choices. These citizens are political consumers. Political consumers may decide to boycott a product or company because they disagree with its policies and practices or decide to “buycott” or purchase products from a particular company to support its policies and practices (Micheletti, Follesdal & Stolle, 2003, xiv). They may even, as discussed in our paper “A Case of Discursive Political Consumerism: The Nike Email Exchange,” engage in communicative involvements to change the fair trade discourse and our conceptions of consumer society. Surveys have, however, not really begun to tap involvement in discursive political consumerism.

Political consumerism is not a new form of political involvement. Boycotts have a long historical past; but buycotts generally began to gain in importance in the late 1900s. The Swedish Study of Power and Democracy shows in the book *Medborgarnas makt* that 15 percent of adult Swedes boycotted for political reasons (Petersson, Westholm & Blomberg, 1989, 96). By 1997 boycotting ranked third as a form of political involvement and was the form of political participation that had increased most between 1987 and 1997 (a 14 percent leap from 15 to 29 percent) (Petersson et al., 1998, 55). The Danish Study of Power and Democracy deemed the phenomenon so important that it commissioned a study that included questions about citizen’s use of boycotts and even the use of labeling schemes. They found for the year 2000 that 21 percent of all adult Danes had boycotted products within the past 12 months, 45 percent had deliberately chosen certain products for political reasons, and that Danes tend to do both (Goul Andersen & Tobiasen, 2001, 29). Political consumerism has also interested the second Norwegian Study of Power and Democracy. 30 percent of adult Norwegians stated that they boycotted products for political reasons and 44 percent indicated that they had

⁶⁶ The countries included in the survey are Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. The survey question was: “There are different ways of trying to improve things in (country) or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following?” Several items measuring forms of political participation follow this introduction. See europeansocialsurvey.org.

deliberately chosen goods for political, moral or environmental reasons (Strømsnes, 2003, 122).

The various waves of the World Values Survey (WVS) are a prime data source for detecting trends in political participation behavior during the last two decades. Unfortunately there is only one relevant question in the World Values Surveys on participating in consumer boycotts that can be used longitudinally. We can extend the time series by comparing WVS data with the results from the 1974 Political Action Survey (Barnes & Kaase, 1979). Figure 1 compares trends in the participation in boycotts with trends in the signing of petitions, demonstrations and occupation of building.

Figure 1

Notes: Data points are percentages of respondents indicating that they have participated in these acts. Source: 1974 Political Action survey; 1981/1990 and 1999/00 World Values Surveys; only for those countries that were included in both surveys (Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Netherlands). The political action batteries in both surveys used a similar question wording on political activities. In 1974 the exact question was: "Are you willing to join boycotts", with a first answer category: "I have done this". All the other answering possibilities ventured into the possibility that the respondent might ever consider taking part in this kind of action. In the World Values Survey, the question was asked: "Now I'd like you to look at this card. I'm going to read out some different forms of political action that people can take, and I'd like you to tell me, for each one, whether you have actually done any of these things, whether you might do it or would never, under any

circumstances, do it." The answer options here included: "Have done," "Might do," "Would never do." For this analysis we have used only the "Have done" option, since it is most comparable to the option in 1974.

The ratios indicate the growth of the proportion of participants in from 1974 to 1999. For example, the signing of petitions is nearly 3 times as likely in 1999 compared to 1974. Survey information: Political Action in Barnes & Kaase (1979), pp. 537-591; WVS: see www.worldvaluessurvey.org.

Together with several other rising forms of political participation, boycotts have increased in the countries where we can compare participation trends over time. The signing of petitions is very widespread at the end of the 20th century, and a large proportion of citizens have also participated in demonstrations. The involvement in boycotts has steadily increased over time as well, and in fact, it is the one form of political participation that experienced the strongest growth, as indicated by the ratios in Figure 1. Participation in boycotts is more than four times as likely in 1999 as in 1974. The increase in all the other forms of participation has been at a lower rate.

Boycotting is also a question usually found in surveys on the societal involvement of young people, as exemplified by the Young Citizens Program covering twenty eight countries (for information see cefos.gu.se/ycp/). Political consumerism plays also a part in market surveys on organic food, fair trade labeling and sustainable fishing (Konsumentverket, 2001; Wessels, Donath & Johnston, 1999; Klint, 1997; Soil Association, 2001; Holmberg, 1999; LRF/Ekologiska lantbrukarna, 2001, Eurobarometer, 1997).

Purpose and Paper Outline

This paper summarizes a few findings from a national survey in Sweden that includes several questions on political consumerism. The survey questions on political consumerism were asked for the first time in the fall 2003 and are part of our research project "Political Consumption: Politics in a New Era and Arena" financed by the Swedish Council of Research (Vetenskapsrådet). The questions tap a variety of different aspects of citizens' use of political consumerism. To find political consumers in the data we defined them as people who either have boycotted or buycotted for political, ethical or environmental reasons in the past 12 months. To analyze why they are political consumers we asked questions about the effectiveness of forms for political engagement, their trust in and views on institutions (governments, multinational corporations, civil society associations, global protest groups), and what they consider as important when buying groceries and clothing/shoes. At present this is one of the most comprehensive data on political consumerism in existence.

The questions on political consumerism were included in the 2003 SOM survey, which annually conducts a postal national survey of Swedes bet-

ween the ages of 15 and 85 surveys (for more information see som.gu.se/english.htm2003). This survey contains the most developed measures of political consumerism to date with 1,816 respondents. It builds on the question on the use of boycotts for political reasons first asked in Sweden in the national citizen survey (medborgarundersökningen) 1987 and the question on the use of labeling schemes first used in the Danish Study of Power and Democracy. It goes further than these surveys by probing into the motivations and considerations behind political consumerist choices. The SOM data also helps us understand whether political consumers believe that they have a personal responsibility to choose consumer goods on the basis of their the ethical, political, or environmental quality⁶⁷, whether they trust political institutions and labeling schemes currently in use in Sweden, and what kinds of aspects they consider most important when making purchasing choices for themselves and their families.

The next section characterizes Swedish political consumers in terms of gender, demographic and socio-economic factors. It concerns who are Swedish political consumers and how they differ from non-political consumers. Then we analyze why people are political consumers and which issues they consider important when choosing among products, with the prominence of women among the group “political consumers” discussed in a separate section. The paper ends with a few reflections on further data analysis of this rich survey on political consumerism.

General Characteristics of Swedish Political Consumers

When political consumers are defined as people who state that they either have boycotted or buycotted products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons almost 50 percent of Swedes between the ages of 15 and 85 years can be said to be political consumers. These people have either (1) participated in a boycott, (2) used a labeling scheme, or (3) both boycotted and “buycotted” in the past year. 31 percent are “only boycotting” and 44 percent “only buycotting” political consumers. Nearly 30 percent have done both. Table 1 characterizes political consumers.

⁶⁷ A similar question was asked in a SIFO survey from 2001 (SIFO 2001).

Table 1. Who are Swedish Political Consumers (in percentage)

	Political consumers	Number of responses
Men	43	808
Women	52	876
Age		
15-19	32	115
20-29	52	211
30-39	56	266
40-49	52	286
50-59	49	337
60	41	469
Level of education		
Low	32	448
Middle	47	714
High	64	503
Household income (in SEK)		
100 000	35	87
101 000 – 200 000	40	256
201 000 – 300 000	48	314
301 000 – 400 000	48	293
401 000 – 500 000	52	272
501 000 – 600 000	48	173
601 000 – 700 000	58	125
700 000 or more	56	101
Place of residence		
Countryside	44	257
Village	43	411
City or larger village	49	738
Large city (Stockholm, Göteborg, Malmö)	56	267
Interest in Politics		
Very interested	78	101
Rather interested	63	656
Not very interested	43	701
Not at all interested	35	183
Political sympathy		
Left Party	68	148
Social Democratic Party	42	568
Center Party	50	129
Liberal Party	53	196
Conservative Party	42	267
Christian Democratic Party	52	113
Green Party	67	78
Total	47	1673

Source: SOM 2003.

The bivariate analysis presented in Table 1 can be summarized in seven points. First and most importantly, women stand out. 52 percent of women compared with 43 percent of men are political consumers. This result has also been found in other surveys in Sweden and internationally (Petersson, Westholm, & Blomberg, 1989; Petersson et al., 1998; Stolle & Hooghe, 2004; Ferrer-Fons, 2004), and we analyze it more closely in a later section.

Second, political consumers are not very young people. They are disproportionately middle-aged citizens, with the largest group in the age range of 30-39. The youngest citizens (15-19) and the oldest citizens (60+) are less involved in political consumerism.

Third, political consumers tend to be more highly educated than non-political consumers, a result also found in the Danish survey mentioned

earlier (Goul Andersen & Tobiassen, 2003, 46) and generally in studies on political participation (e.g., Petersson et al., 1998, 89; Brady, Verba & Schlozman, 1995). Citizens with university and college education are more than twice as likely to be political consumers as citizens with only elementary school education.

Fourth, although a report by EU Organic Food Marketing Initiatives and Rural Development shows that Swedish consumers pay less than consumers in the rest of the EU for organically grown food (Øresund Food Excellence, 2004), Swedish organic food labeled-goods (KRAV) and fair trade goods (Fair Trade/Rättvisemärkt) often cost more – or are perceived to cost more – more than non-labeled goods (Konsumentverket, 2004; Rättvisemärkt, 2004). The substantial difference in prices for several products leads us to wonder whether political consumers are more often citizens with higher income. Table 1 shows that household income is indeed important. The ratio of political consumerism between citizens in the highest income groups compared to the lowest income group is 1.5: 1, that is, it is one-and-one-half times more likely that the respondents in the highest income category are political consumerism than those in the lowest income category.

Fifth, political consumerism is more an urban than a rural phenomenon. Particularly people living in the largest cities (56 percent) are more often political consumers than those from less populated areas. This should not be interpreted to mean that political consumerism is not present in the countryside: 44 percent of people in the less populated areas are also political consumers.

Sixth and contrary to much of what is often said about political consumerism in the public debate, political consumers show disproportionately more general interest in politics than non-political consumers. 78 percent of those who stated that they are very interested in politics are political consumerism. Of those not interested in politics only 35 percent are political consumers. This finding is somewhat dissimilar from those of the Danish study mentioned earlier (Goul Andersen & Tobiasen, 2001, 49).

Finally, the results also dispel a common conception on the political views of political consumers. They are not left-wing extremists. The fact that nearly half of all adult Swedes are political consumers shows that the phenomenon is much more widespread. However, political consumers have more often a left political orientation (see discussion on Table 2) and more people who sympathize with the Left Party (68 percent) and the Green Party (67 percent) are political consumers. We find the largest number of non-political consumers among supporters of Social Democratic Party and Conservative Party, at roughly the 40 percent level.

Why political consumerism?

Political consumers are among the most resourceful citizens. They are highly educated and affluent. They are also highly interested in politics

and engaged in many forms of participation. Political consumers are also among the most active members of society (data not shown, see Micheletti & Stolle, 2004). But why, given this profile, are they involved in the market as an arena for politics? What motivates a well-educated, well-paid, and politically resourceful person to decide that involvement beyond voting in elections, working in organizations, and contacting the media is necessary today? To probe these issues, we asked questions about the aspects that citizens find to be important when making decisions about what groceries and clothes/shoes to buy and whether they consider it the personal responsibility of individual consumers to pay attention to the ethical, political, and environmental quality of consumer goods. Figure 2 shows similarities and differences in how political consumers and non-political consumers view several dimensions of consumer products.

Figure 2

Source: SOM 2003 (N=1,673)

We divided the sample into three groups: (1) non-political consumers, (2) people who are either boycotters or buycotters, and (3) people who have both boycotted and buycotted. Interestingly, the three types of consumers consider the price and quality of goods as well as their own and their family's health as the most important aspects when making shopping decisions. This means that political consumerism is not a selfless phenomenon because political consumers consider self-interest when they shop. However, political consumers are also other-oriented and give substantially more weight to the "politics of products" (Micheletti, 2003, 12-13)

than non-political consumers. They look at clothing labels, lists of ingredients on packages, and labeling schemes to see whether the product leaves an ethical, ecological, or political footprint. They want to know whether their consumer choices have hidden environmental consequences and whether they have an impact on animal rights as well as on general working conditions in the countries that manufacture our consumer goods, and on other ethical and political considerations. They also think about how their consumer choices affect child labor.

We also asked if it is every consumer's personal responsibility to choose between different products and labels on the basis of ethical, political, or environmental considerations. Both groups of political consumers answered yes to this question. Those who both boycott and buycott are the group most concerned about "the politics of products" (see also discussion on Table 2 below). Finally, we asked for opinions on a proposal debated in Sweden about curbing the power of multinational corporations. We chose to probe opinions on multinational corporations because they are the focus of many political consumerist campaigns, with the ones focusing on Nike and Nestlé as two of the best examples (Shaw, 1999, Baby Milk Action, 2004). Our analysis shows that political consumers were more sympathetic to the proposal, and the group that both boycotts and buycotts agreed most with it.

Other analyses reveal that political consumers are significantly more worried about environmental problems and climate change but much less worried than non-political consumers about typical issues for materialists, e.g., too many immigrants, unemployment, economic crisis, and terrorism (results not shown). This might suggest that political consumers exhibit a typical postmaterialist attitudinal profile.

In sum, Swedish political consumers think about more than economic and self-interested concerns when they make choices among products. They look beyond the material quality of products and pay attention to how and under what conditions products are made. They include other-regarding values into their purchasing considerations. They make purchasing decisions this way because they believe that each consumer must take a personal responsibility and purchase goods with ethical, political, and environmental considerations in mind. These considerations are tied to policy preferences as illustrated by the proposal to curb the power of multinational corporations.

But why do they choose the market as an arena of politics to express and work with issues of personal or "reflexive" responsibility? Are they dissatisfied with how established political institutions are dealing with important political problems? Do they, instead, focus on the corporate world and circumvent traditional channels for political participation?

Theories of risk society/subpolitics and postmaterialism help us analyze the survey data by highlighting how and why citizens increasingly develop a lack of trust in the capacity of the government (Holzer & Sør-

rensen, 2001, 2000; Inglehart, 1997). These theories posit that citizens fear that government either does not comprehend or cannot control new uncertainties and risks that characterize society today and that they search for new ideas, arenas, and methods to work on these important political problems. If this is correct, we should find that political consumers are more distrusting of conventional institutions than other citizens.

Table 2: Multivariate Model for Political Consumers

	Explaining political consumerism
Cte.	-.96** (.462)
Demographic variables	
Gender (male=ref.)	-.26 (.127)
Education	****
Low	ref.
Medium	-.88**** (.191)
High	-.35** (.149)
Income	.46* (.254)
Age	ns
15-19 years	ref.
20-29 years	-.25 (.298)
30-39 years	.14 (.223)
40-49 years	.16 (.212)
50-59 years	.12 (.199)
60 years and up	-.07 (.194)
Stockholm/Göteborg/Malmö (no=ref.)	.203 (.173)
Left Right Scale (Klart till Vänster=0)	-.82**** (.244)
Participation	
Conventional Political Participation (no=ref.)	-.40** (.155)
Political Attitudes	
Political Interest	1.44**** (.277)
Political Consumerism is Citizen's Responsibility	3.35**** (.288)
Political Trust	-1.40**** (.362)
Trust in Consumer Institutions	1.63**** (.377)
Nagelkerke's r ²	.31
Log Likelihood	1582.457
Chi square	****

Source: SOM 2003.

Entries are results from a binary logistic regression, B and (SE) ****:<.001, ***:<.01; **:<.05; *:<.10

Dependent Variable: Political consumption (coded 0 for not done; and 1 for done)

Table 2 presents the results of a logistic regression model including several variables discussed above as well as measurements of institutional trust. Table 2 shows that most of our findings in the bivariate relationships presented in Table 1 still hold. More women than men are political consumers. Education continues to be an important factor that explains political consumerist involvement. Perhaps because of the inclusion of education, the influence of income is slightly reduced although still significant. Higher household income is significantly related to political consumerism after controlling for all other variables. A new result is that age is no longer important. Urban living is insignificant in explaining political consumerism after controls for political interest and education. Orientation on the political left is still important as are the results about political consumers being more involved in traditional politics and concerned about the individual consumers' responsibility to consider ethical and political issues when buying products.

Two trust scales are included in the regression model. The first is a summated rating scale measuring trust in mainstream political institutions (parties, the parliament, the national and local government) and institutions of the European Union (the Commission and the European Parliament). The second scale taps trust in organizations that have a consumer profile, that is the Swedish Consumer Agency and independent consumer organizations.⁶⁸ Interestingly, all else being equal, the general groups of political consumers trust mainstream political institutions less (our first scale) and consumer-oriented organizations more (our second scale). This finding is very important and needs to be analyzed more deeply.

Figure 3

Source: SOM 2003.

The second analysis examines the respondent's evaluations of the influence of several types of international and national political, economic and social institutions on people's living conditions. Do political consumers evaluate certain types of institutions more positive or negative than non-political consumers? As could be expected political consumers view international and citizens organizations more positively than non-political

⁶⁸ Both scales showed a Cronbach's alpha around .80.

consumers. Political consumers evaluate the UN and the WTO as well as international consumer organizations significantly more favorably than non-political consumers. But the strongest difference between the two groups can be found in their evaluation of global protest movements. Whereas non-political consumers clearly see global protest movements as negative societal forces, political consumers are positively inclined towards them. Surely, the image of global protest movements is influenced strongly by the violent protest experiences in Seattle, Quebec and especially Göteborg, however, political consumers rate the positive influence of the overall movements higher than the European Union, the World Bank, multinational corporations, and the United States. The last two entities are viewed as extremely negative, especially when compared to the evaluations by non-political consumers. Interestingly, in question batteries which compare Swedish with other international institutions, the Swedish Government is viewed more positively than in comparisons with other domestic institutions. This is an interesting result that need further scrutiny, because political consumers and non-political consumers both evaluate the Swedish Cabinet similarly.⁶⁹

In sum, political consumers are critical in orientation (cf. Norris, 1999). They take a critical stance on mainstream, established domestic political institutions, the World Bank, and the United States. The analysis also shows that political consumers are more trusting of institutions that have the issues of transparency and accountability of consumer goods and the corporate world on their agenda, as exemplified by international and domestic consumer organizations and public consumer agencies. The result also reflects the ability of politically resourceful and concerned citizens to use the information provided by consumer-oriented institutions to develop their own forms of political activity in the marketplace. Political consumers are clearly more supportive of bottom-up global protest movements, but they do not value them higher than established international organizations like the United Nations and the World Trade Organization.

Women as Political Consumers

Today women stand out as political consumers. However, a historical look at surveys with questions on boycotts shows that boycotting was a predominantly male activity in the 1970s. This pattern changed gradually over the subsequent decades: in 10 out of 16 West European countries included in the World Value Survey more women participated in boycotts than men. Women also predominate as boycotters in 9 of the 21 European countries included in the 2002 ESS survey. In fact, boycotting emerged

⁶⁹ For all political institutions do we find significant statistical differences between political consumers and non-political consumers at the $p < .05$ level, except for the Swedish Cabinet.

as one of the few political acts in which we find a reversed gender gap at the end of the 20th century (Stolle & Hooghe, 2004; Stolle & Micheletti, 2004).

Figure 4

Source: European Social Survey 2002. For more information see <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>

As shown in the cross-national distribution of buycotting in Figure 4, buycotting has become a near-routine form of engagement for women (particularly in Scandinavia). More women than men in all countries aside from Spain and Israel are more present as buycotters. However, the use of political consumerism to express political values is not evenly distributed. In Southern and Eastern Europe, buycotting as well as boycotting are not frequently used as a form of political engagement by women. These differences are most likely linked to the presence of national

labeling schemes and other national factors that influence this form of transnational activism. They warrant further investigation (see Forno & Ceccarini, 2004; Ferrer-Fons, 2004; Stolle & Micheletti, forthcoming). Moreover the largest reversed gender gap exists in countries where political consumerism is most widespread, which indicates that women are essential in bringing this political tool into mainstream use.

Available market studies from Sweden, Denmark, and the U.S. confirm this gender gap. They show that women stand out as users of organic food labels, the Max Havelaar fair trade label, and eco-labels for seafood respectively (LUI, 1999, 3, Klint, 1997, 28, Wessells, Donath & Johnston, 1999). LUI, a Swedish survey institute specializing in consumer research for the farming community, finds that women shoppers also stand out on such aspects as whether food is guaranteed free of salmonella, GMOs, growth hormones, medicines, chemical additives, and chemical pesticides (LRF/Ekologiska Lantbrukarna 2001, 21). The authors of the U.S. study on eco-labeled seafood conclude that “the gender of the respondent has an impact on choice, with women more likely to choose certified products across all species” and that “variables representing age, income, education, and political affiliation are generally insignificant individually and jointly...” (Wessells, Donath & Johnston, 1999, 51f).

So why more women? Perhaps their presence is just a legacy of the past: women have traditionally been family shoppers and have, on certain historical occasions, used their consumer power to change society (Micheletti, 2003 for a discussion; Orleck, 1993; Young, 1994; Hirdman, 1983). Another possible explanation is that women are still the gender that shops more frequently and are, therefore, come into more contact with ethical and political shopping opportunities. A third possibility is that women, unlike men, are particularly motivated to shop ethically and politically. They may, as research on risk thresholds shows, be more sensitive to environmental risks as threats to the health and safety of their communities and families (Davidson & Freudenburg, 1996).

Figure 5

Source: SOM 2003.

Note: The data points represent percentages of political consumers per category of frequency of shopping. The number of respondents is 1748 and 1754 for shopping of groceries and shopping of clothes respectively.

The SOM survey data can be used to test some of these hypotheses – we present here results for the gender differences in the frequency of shopping, knowledge of labeling schemes as well as trust and attitudinal differences. Interestingly, Figure 5 reveals that women as well as men who shop for groceries more frequently are also more engaged in political consumerism. This difference is statistically significant. Gender differences do not, however, hold for the shopping of clothes/shoes, and there is no clear linear relationship between shopping frequency and political

consumerism. Rather, both those who shop for clothes/shoes less frequently and very frequently tend to be less aware of consumer labels or political consumer issues. Although people who shop for clothes/shoes less frequently are less familiar with labeled products, it is also true that too much consumption goes against the ethics of political consumerism. This last point reflects the critical attitude political consumers take toward pure consumer society. Overall though, the predominance of women as political consumers cannot be explained by the fact that they shop more than men.

Is it maybe the case that women know more labeling schemes than men? The SOM data reveal that there is no significant difference between men and women in their knowledge of labeling schemes such as Bra Miljöval, Krav, Rättvisemärkt and Svanen (results not shown). The only gender difference is for the label scheme TCO Development: more women than men indicated that they have never heard of it. Yet for all labeling schemes (excepting TCO Development) included in the survey, women have significantly more trust in them than men. In other words, women tend to believe more strongly in their legitimacy.

We are still left with a puzzle. How can we explain women's predominant interest in political consumerism and trust in labeling schemes? Because women do not trust consumer institutions more than men, there are only two plausible explanations for the gender differences in political consumerism that can be found in the SOM data. First, women's political consumerism is triggered by their higher degree of membership in consumer and animal rights' organizations than men (results not shown). These memberships have several effects, as they connect women better through weak ties which are been found to spread information more easily through loose informal contacts (Granovetter, 1973; Putnam, 2000). In consumer and animal rights' organizations, women receive information about consumer issues which can potentially mobilize political consumer behavior. The second explanation is related to gender differences in societal attitudes. Women significantly more than men care about other regarding issues when shopping for food and clothes/shoes (results not shown). They care particularly more about animal rights, working conditions in the production countries and environmental concerns when they buy groceries and clothes/shoes. This gender attitudinal difference has been confirmed in other surveys as well (see Stolle, Hooghe & Micheletti, 2004) and concern about these issues serves as an additional motivational source which influences women's shopping decisions.

Future Analysis of Political Consumers

More questions about political consumers need to be investigated to understand the phenomenon of political consumerism more completely. Social science research has now a rather good understanding of the socio-economic characteristics and gender of political consumers in Europe (Tobiasen, 2004; Strømnes, 2004; Ferrer-Fons, 2004). The pending research task is to study why people turn to the market as an arena for politics, that is, why they are political consumers. The research task is to gain knowledge on the motivational, contextual, and attitudinal factors that prompt people into political consumerism. Further analysis of the SOM data can enrich our understanding of the concerns of people who engage in political consumerism. This section offers a brief and preliminary outline of our plans for future analysis of the SOM data. It formulates four theses on political consumerism and indicates the variables from the SOM data that will be used to investigate them (see Micheletti, 2003, ch. 1 for the theoretical foundation for the theses).

First, the SOM data allows for an analysis of the *risk society thesis of political consumerism*. Are Swedish political consumers more concerned about risks than non-political consumers? As indicated in an earlier section, political consumers are more worried about environmental risks like climate change than non-political consumers. They are also less worried about concerns generally understood as material in nature (crime, immigration, and terrorism). Is this the case in other policy areas as well? Survey questions about perceptions of worrisome situations and Sweden's political and military situation can be used to explore the risk threshold of political consumers and non-political consumers and the gender-bias in political consumerism. The SOM survey also includes data on the respondents' standpoints on proposals from contemporary Swedish public debate that indicate the immediacy of different policy problems on citizens' individualized political agendas. This data can also be used to explore the risk society thesis.

Second, the SOM survey can be used to investigate the *government/governance trust thesis of political consumerism* more thoroughly. Political consumers seem to trust more international organizations like the UN and the WTO, but the differences between political and non-political consumers are strongest when it comes to global movements and consumer-oriented institutions. Which aspects of these latter institutions are important for political consumers? How can we explain women's higher trust in labeling schemes, that is, their trust in new voluntary regulatory tools created by cooperation among business, civil society associations, and consumers? Another part of the government/governance thesis is "governability" (the steering capacity and effectiveness of government institutions), which will be tapped through questions about perceptions of how well government politics is conducted in various poli-

cy areas, how well government and different groups are working, how democracy works in different areas.

Third, the *globalization thesis of political consumerism* will be explored. Are Swedish political consumers more globally-oriented than Swedish non-political consumers? Our preliminary analysis suggests that political consumers care more about others involved in the production of consumer goods. This is particularly true for women, who are consistently more other-regarding than men. Survey data on the power of multinational corporations, solidarity with people in other countries as well as additional multivariate analyses of questions about the importance of working conditions in manufacturing countries and whether or not the product is Swedish in origin for purchasing choices will be used to examine the globalization thesis more fully.

Fourth is the *postmaterial values thesis of political consumerism*. Are Swedish political consumers more postmaterialist in orientation than non-political consumers? Can a postmaterialist positioning help explain the predominance of women among political consumers? The cross-national pilot project on political consumerism among university students that preceded the SOM survey showed that postmaterialist attitudes emerge as the most important explanatory variables of political consumer behavior. A variety of data from the SOM will be used to test the postmaterialism thesis further. Among the data items are information on membership in "postmaterialist" associations like environmental, peace group, and animal rights groups, green-oriented political preference, and judgments on the importance of free time.

Further analysis of the SOM data is the first step in mapping the mentality of political consumers. The second step is to compile survey data from different countries. The European Social Survey, World Value Survey, data from the Citizen Involvement in Democracy Survey (CID), and national surveys can be used for cross-country comparisons of the characteristics and mentality of political consumers. The third step is to use this rich comparative survey data together with contextual variables to understand why the phenomenon of political consumerism is more prevalent in certain countries over others. An important question here is why political consumerism is so prevalent in Scandinavia. What role does, for instance, political culture, gross national product, quality of civil society, cleavages in society, media attention, favorable public policy, market actors and their characteristics, and the presence of political consumerist labeling schemes play in making the market an accessible arena for politics?

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8. Political Consumption in Norway: Who, why – and does it have any effect?

Kristin Strømsnes

Abstract

In Norway surprisingly little research has been done on political consumption, in spite of the fact that it has become one of the most popular forms of political participation in the country. In this paper political consumption is defined simply as boycotting or buycotting products in order to influence politics. The questions raised are: Who are the political consumers in Norway, why do they choose this channel to political influence, and do they feel that it have an effect? The analyses show that political consumption is a form of participation that appeals to an urban, radical, well educated and political interested elite, but do not support the impression of political consumption as an income dependent kind of political participation. Political consumption should furthermore not be seen as a reaction towards the representative system. The political consumers participate at least as often within this channel, they are not more distrustful towards the political system, and they are more interested in politics at all levels. Political consumers do consider boycotts to be an effective way to gain political influence, but that does not imply that they evaluate traditional forms to be less efficient.

Introduction

Political consumption is a new concept in the political science dictionary, even if it is not a new phenomenon. It was not until the 1990s that political scientists started to talk about political consumption, meaning the conscious use of private consumer decisions to influence politics.⁷⁰ Political consumption can take a variety of forms, and it differs depending on whether it is collectively organised or individual; local, national or global; directed towards a certain industry or towards a political system etc. I

⁷⁰ The concept is not even included in the Scandinavian Political Science Encyclopaedia (Østerud et al., 1997). “Boycott”, however, is.

shall here define political consumption simply as boycotting or buycotting products in order to influence politics. Boycott is the negative version of political consumption, where consumers choose not to buy a certain product as a protest against the politics of a company or a country. Classical examples are the boycott of French wine and cheese that lasted for several years after France restarted its testing of nuclear weapons in the South Pacific Ocean in 1995, and the boycott of Shell that started the same year after it became public that the company planned to dump the outdated oil platform Brent Spar in the Atlantic Ocean. Likewise, there have been boycott actions directed towards Norway because of the Norwegian politics on whaling and sealing. Buycotts, on the other hand, are a positive political consumer choice, where the consumers decide to buy certain products based on political, ethical or environmental reasons. Examples can be to choose eco-labeled food products or to buy coffee that is sold by a company that guarantee fair trade.⁷¹ This kind of ethical or environmental friendly shopping can find its motivation from either the input or the output side of the production process – like the conditions for the workers, whether the company use child labour, animal testing, use of toxins etc. on the input side and pollution, whether the product can be recycled or not, whether it comes without a lot of unnecessary packaging etc. at the output side.

Political consumption is then a question of either buying or not buying for political reasons, or in other words – to let political attitudes decide the choices one makes as a consumer. It is a question of ideologically motivated consumption, or an act of consumption which is encouraged by the wish to reach a certain political goal. The aim and motivation separates in the end political consumption from “ordinary” consumption, which instead is based on price, taste, quality etc. “Ordinary” consumers do not care about the politics behind products when they do their shopping; political consumers do.

In Norway surprisingly little research has been done on political consumption, which is also reflected in limited data available. There is, however, some data over time about participation in boycotts, and which shows a significant increase. In 1981 only 4 percent of the respondents in the “Democracy in Norway” survey answered that they had participated in a boycott “once” or “more than once”. The World Value Studies ask slightly different questions, but the development is clear. In 1982, 7 percent answered that they had joined in boycotts, and 38 percent that they “might do”. In 1990, 11 percent answered that they had boycotted, and 48

⁷¹ This is not the only ways one can use consumer decisions to express a political message. A third, more peculiar method is “pseudo-shopping” – to buy as much as possible of a certain product, and then return it to the shop right after. For example the British organisation “Fancub” has used this method by for example buying as many green sweaters they could carry from GAP on Oxford Street, London, and then returning them because they were “not green enough – not as long as the company exploit third world workers” and by buying white shirts at Niketown, and then returning them because “it is a dirty mark on them” (the NIKE swoosh) (Paulsen, 2002).

percent that they “might do”, and in 1996, 18 percent had participated and 56 percent “might do”.⁷² This demonstrates that political consumption has developed to be both a more used and a more legitimate channel for political participation.

In this paper I shall use data from 2001 to look closer at who the political consumers in Norway are. The data is from a comprehensive survey about citizenship carried out to 5000 persons living in Norway (“The Citizenship survey”). 46.5 percent of the respondents answered the questionnaire (N=2297).⁷³ In addition, a separate survey was sent to a representative selection of 592 young people between 14 and 17 years, of which 50.8 percent answered (N=297).

In this Citizenship survey 44 percent of the respondents answer that they have deliberately bought certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons (boycotts) the last year. It is not quite as usual to have boycotted products, but 30 percent nevertheless answer that they have participated in boycotts the last twelve months. This makes political consumption one of the most popular forms of political participation in the country.⁷⁴

Because the motivation behind the act is so decisive when we talk about political consumption, it is a phenomenon that can be quite difficult to measure. In this survey the questions have been directly related to motivation by asking whether the respondents have done any of a range of different participatory acts during the last twelve months *in an attempt to bring about improvements or counteract deteriorations in society*. In the analyses I separate between those who have both boycotted and boycotted during the last year, those who have done one of the two and those who have done neither. Approximately half the Norwegian population are political consumers according to this definition (have at least done one of the two). 25 percent have both boycotted and boycotted the last year, 6 percent have participated in boycotts only and 19 percent have not participated in boycotts, but have bought products for political, ethical or environmental reasons.

In spite that political consumption is so widespread, and in contrast with the situation in for example Denmark and Sweden, political scien-

⁷² The data presented in this section is made available from the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD). NSD is not responsible for the analyses or interpretations made here.

⁷³ The survey was part of the Norwegian Power- and Democracy research project (1998-2003), and is also a part of the ESF-project “Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy” (CID).

⁷⁴ If we also include donating money for different charities, which 66 percent of the respondents have done during the last year, no other participatory act besides voting attracts so many people as the political consumer-activities (Strømsnes, 2003). In fact, when we use a factor analysis to distinguish between different forms of political participation, based on 19 participatory items from the Citizenship survey, these three participation forms (boycott, ethical shopping and donating money) comes out as one separate dimension in the analysis (Strømsnes & Aars, 2004). This is in contrast to analyses from Denmark, where boycotting and boycotting comes out as part of a factor labelled “Individualised political action”, and which also includes signing petitions (Andersen & Tobiasen, 2001; 2004).

tists in Norway have not become alive to this kind of political participation.⁷⁵ My attempt here is to give a first view of who the political consumers in Norway are, why they choose this specific form of participation and how this participation form stands in relation to other forms of political participation. In particular I will focus on three questions:

- The social background of the political consumers: *Who* are political consumers in Norway? Here I will look at the social profile of the persons who report that they have participated as political consumers the last year. I will concentrate on differences related to gender, age, level of education, income, place of residence, political interest and party sympathy. Is political consumption a participation form that primarily attracts the most resourceful, or do the political consumers mirror the population at large?
- *Why* do the political consumers choose this form of participation, and how can political consumption be seen in relation to other participation forms? Do political consumers choose this participation form instead of or in addition to the more traditional participation forms? Do those who use this participation form express a lesser degree of confidence in political institutions? In what other ways do they engage politically? Furthermore, to what degree does political consumption on an individual level reflect globalisation- and individualisation-trends in society? Does political consumption have roots in collective, organized activities? And are the political consumers more oriented towards the international society?
- *Does it have any effect?* Even if there are many people participating in boycotts and buycotts, it can be questioned whether this is an activity that gives them real political influence. This is, of course, a question that can't be properly analysed with the kind of data presented here. Survey data can, however, tell us how those who participate as political consumers themselves evaluate this participation form, i.e. to what extent they look at this as an efficient way to influence politics.

The questions raised are then: Who are the political consumers in Norway, why do they choose this means to influence politics, and do they feel that it have an effect?

Who are political consumers in Norway?

In analysing the social profile of the political consumers I shall concentrate on differences related to gender, age, education, personal income, place of residence, political interest and party preferences.

⁷⁵ In the last few years however, there have been some more popular introductions discussing the consumer and the consumption act, like Blindheim et al. (2000; 2004) and Holm (2004).

Gender is a variable of special interest as political consumption often is described as a participation form that appeals to women more than to men (Micheletti, 2004). This is partly because women still often have the main responsibility for buying food and clothes for the family, they are the “family shoppers” (Micheletti, 2004, 255). According to Blindheim (2004, 40) women are responsible for 82 percent of what is bought in an average Norwegian household. Another reason why political consumption is expected to be a participation form that attracts more women than men is that women in general often choose more decentralized and non-hierarchical forms of political participation, and that the everyday-nature of political consumption can make it easier for women to take part. If it turns out to be true that political consumption is a more accessible participation form for women, this can be seen as a contribution to a gender-equalisation in political participation.

Political consumption is also expected to be more common among the youngest, as the individual, network-based and global connection that characterise political consumption often appeals more to them than to older people. Political consumption has been described as an access point for people to express themselves politically (Micheletti, 2003, 15), and may be important as an entrance to politics for the youngest. Other explanations for the attractiveness of political consumption for young people is the appeal of life style politics, trends towards individualisation and as a reaction towards the formal political system (op cit., 17). In the analysis I shall, by using the youth-part of the survey, also include those who are so young that they still formally and judicially are on the outside of the political system; they are for example not qualified to vote (14 - 17 years).

Education is positively related to more or less all kinds of political participation, and it is reasonable to expect that this also is the case when we look at political consumption. There is also good reason to assume that political consumption is income dependent. Those who want to buy ethical or environmental friendly products will often experience that this is expensive compared to buying ordinary products, which makes income a highly relevant variable to include. One criticism directed towards political consumption as a kind of political participation is precisely that it is dependent on the economic resources of the participants. Political consumption is in effect about using the wallet to vote, and money is the admission ticket for the participants. The worry is that democracy as a consequence becomes limited due to peoples spending power.

Furthermore, political consumption is often described as an urban phenomenon, and we shall therefore also see how it varies according to the respondents' place of residence.⁷⁶ In addition, we shall see to what

⁷⁶ “Big city” = “Big city with 100.000 inhabitants or more (Oslo, Bergen, Stavanger, Trondheim)” or “Suburbs or outskirts of a big city with 100.000 inhabitants or more”. “Small city” = “City with 50.000 – 99.999 inhabitants” or “Outskirts of city with 50.000 – 99.999 inhabitants”. “Town” = “Town / village with 30.000 – 49.999 inhabitants” or “Town / village with 10.000 – 29.999 inhabi-

extent political consumption is driven by political interest. This is important because many researchers have questioned to what degree political consumption is at all *political*. A close relationship to political interest indicates that it is.

Lastly I shall ask whether political consumption is a phenomenon that is equally distributed across the political spectrum, where the expectation is that those who support the parties on the left-wing, more often than those who support right-wing parties, are political consumers.⁷⁷

Table 1: The social background of the political consumers (percent).

	N	Both boycott and buycott	Either boycott or buycott	Neither boycott nor buycott
Men	1115	22,2	25,4	52,4
Women	1122	27,3	23,4	49,4
14-17 *	290	11,7	20,7	67,6
18-25	286	23,4	25,5	51,0
26-35	401	31,4	24,2	44,4
36-45	512	24,8	27,7	47,5
46-55	456	28,3	22,1	49,6
56-65	301	22,6	21,6	55,8
66+	281	13,2	23,8	63,0
Low education	325	13,2	16,6	70,2
Middle education	969	20,2	25,3	54,4
High education	916	34,1	26,4	39,5
- 100.000	364	24,7	24,7	50,5
100.-199.000	516	22,7	23,1	54,3
200.-299.000	689	24,4	23,8	51,8
300.-399.000	341	30,2	25,8	44,0
400.000 +	233	26,2	28,3	45,5
Big city	620	28,4	24,5	47,1
Small city	195	27,7	27,2	45,1
Town	558	21,3	23,8	54,8
Village	574	25,8	22,1	52,1
Rural area	269	19,7	27,9	52,4
Very interested	214	33,6	25,2	41,1
Fairly interested	1089	30,1	26,8	43,1
Not very interested	830	17,3	22,2	60,5
Not at all interested	91	7,7	14,3	78,0
RV	29	55,2	24,1	20,7
SV	154	46,8	24,7	28,6
DNA	568	22,0	23,1	54,9
SP	150	29,3	23,3	47,3
V	74	25,7	43,2	31,1
KrF	234	23,5	26,1	50,4
H	330	20,3	25,2	54,5
FrP	217	19,8	22,1	58,1

* These data are from the youth part of the survey.

tants". "Village" = "Town / village with 2.000 – 9.999 inhabitants" or "Smaller village with 200 – 1.999 inhabitants". "Rural area" = "Rural area".

⁷⁷ This is measured as the party the respondent voted for in the latest national election, which also means that only those who actually voted in this election are included here (N=1756).

Table 1 reveals that more women than men are participating as political consumers, as was expected, but the difference between the sexes is not overwhelming. 51 percent of the women and 48 percent of the men have boycotted or / and buycotted the last year. 27 percent of the women and 22 percent of the men have both boycotted and buycotted, but there are slightly more men than women answering that they have done one of the two (25 percent of the men, 23 percent of the women). This result is close to what is found in Denmark (Andersen & Tobiasen, 2001), but differs from Sweden, where women dominates to a greater extent as political consumers (Micheletti & Stolle, 2004).

The next hypothesis is also only partly supported. Those who are between 26 and 35 years old have most frequently participated as political consumers. Both for the youngest and the oldest this is a less used form of participation. Among those who participated in the youth-part of the survey only 32 percent reported that they had boycotted or / and buycotted products the last year. But also within the age category between 18 and 25 less than one of two have participated as political consumers. Political consumption can, then, not be described as a typical youth-phenomenon, but is rather a participation form for those who are somewhat more established.

Political consumption appears, furthermore, first and foremost to be an activity for those with the highest level of education. While only 13 percent of those with low education have been boycotting and buycotting during the previous year, the same holds for 34 percent of those with a high level of education. And when 40 percent of those with a high level of education have neither boycotted nor buycotted, the same is true for 70 percent of those with a low level of education.

Quite surprisingly, and contrary to what was expected, political consumerism is not dependent on the respondents' personal income. Even though those who have a high salary (more than NOK 300.000 a year) participate a bit more than those with lower salaries, the difference between the groups is too small to be significant. And even among those with the lowest level of income (less than NOK 100.000 a year), nearly 50 percent have participated as political consumers the last year. This could have been a consequence of more women participating as political consumers, at the same time as women often earn less than men. I have, however, as a control for this also looked at household income (11 categories), but the relationship between income and political consumption is still not significant.

When it comes to place of residence, political consumerism is somewhat more common in cities than in smaller towns and rural areas, as was expected. One reason for this can be that the supply of ethical and environmental friendly products is better in the cities (cf. Terrangi & Kjærnes, 2004). On the other hand, boycotts of products are also more

common among those who live in urban areas, which signify that this is about more than limited supply.

Political consumerism is furthermore a kind of political participation that varies according to how interested the respondents are in politics. Those who are most interested in politics also participate most as political consumers. While 59 percent of those who are very interested in politics have participated as political consumers the last year, the same is true for only 22 percent of those who are not interested in politics at all. I shall look further on political interest on different levels in the next part.

Lastly, when we look at party preferences, a considerable majority of those who voted for the parties on the far left, the Red Electoral Alliance (RV) and the Socialist Left Party (SV), have participated as political consumers the last year. In addition many of the people who voted for the Liberal Party (V) answer that they have participated in ethical or environmental friendly shopping only. Fewest among those who voted for the Progress Party (FrP), the Labour Party (DNA) and the Conservative Party (H) have participated as political consumers in the last year.⁷⁸

In sum, political consumption is an activity that appeals to a young, urban, politically interested and well educated radical elite, but at the same time it is an activity that is slightly more appealing to women than to men, and it is, surprisingly, an activity which is more or less unrelated to income. Political consumers are nevertheless people with a lot of political resources, and political consumption should most likely not be seen as a participation form for those who feel alienated towards the political system. But why do people choose this particular form of participation? This is to be discussed next.

Why political consumption?

During the last decades most Western democracies have experienced a decrease in traditional, representative political participation (Pharr & Putnam, 2000), and we have been witnessing what some scholars have characterised as a shift in the political action repertoires in Western societies (Stolle & Hooghe, 2004a; 2004b). Turnout in local and national elections is decreasing, political parties and voluntary organisations are losing members and the recruitment of candidates for elections is getting harder. At the same time there is a tendency for citizens' participation in politics to turn towards more individualistic and short-term focused participation, and towards participation related to single-issues.

⁷⁸ This finding mirrors to a surprisingly degree the party preferences found among those who are members of environmental organisations in Norway. The Socialist Left Party and the Liberal Party are much more popular among the organised environmentalists compared to the general population. On the other hand, the Labour Party and the Progress Party are twice as popular in the general population as among the environmentalists (Bortne et al., 2001, 70-71).

Political consumption can be seen as one element within such a development. But what does a shift like this mean? Should it be seen as *a reaction against the current representative political system*? Do those who utilise consumer choices in the market to communicate their political view express a lesser degree of confidence in political institutions? Is political consumption chosen instead of or in addition to other, more representative, participation forms?

Secondly, does political consumption reflect an increasing *individualisation* in the way people are participating in politics? Political consumption is often described as a loose, non-bureaucratic, individualistic, and often sporadic and spontaneous kind of political action (Stolle & Hooghe, 2004a, 273). But on the other hand many of the different acts of political consumption are, after all, planned and organised by collective associations. It is then an open question how much political consumer activities are solely individualistic and how much are based on activity within voluntary organizations and social movements. But although political consumerism might be influenced by different (global) consumer associations, the actual consumer act is individual (Stolle & Hooghe, 2004a, 273). This is also reflected in Michelettis (2003, 24-34) description of political consumerism as *an individualised collective action*.

Thirdly, political consumerism is often described as a mode of *global* political participation (Tobiasen, 2004). To what degree does political consumption reflect a global orientation among those who takes part? Is political consumption a kind of political participation that picks up on globalisation and network-oriented trends in society?

Based on the data available I shall concentrate on these three questions: 1. Is political consumption a reaction against the representative political system and against traditional forms of political participation? 2. Is political consumption based on collective organised activity? 3. Are political consumers more oriented towards the international or global level compared to people in general?

Is political consumption a reaction against the representative political system and the traditional political participation forms? First I shall look at trust in different political institutions, where the level of trust is marked on an eleven-point scale running from 0 ("No trust at all") to 10 ("Very strong trust"). Table 2 shows the mean scores for those who are political consumers ("both" or "either") and those who are not.

Table 2: Trust in political institutions, mean score.

	Both	Either	Neither
The local council *	4.7	5.0	5.0
The cabinet	4.8	5.1	5.0
The political parties	4.0	4.2	4.2
The national parliament	5.2	5.3	5.2
The courts	6.4	6.6	6.4
The civil service	4.9	5.1	5.0
The police *	6.6	6.9	6.9
Politicians	3.7	3.8	3.9
The European Union *	3.4	3.9	4.0
The United Nations *	5.9	6.1	5.8

* The differences are significant at minimum .05-level.

Political consumers are not systematically more distrustful of traditional political institutions than people who do not engage in political consumerism. Most of the differences between the groups are insignificant. Those who have both boycotted and buycotted do, however, express lower trust in the local council, the police and the EU compared to those who either have done one of the two or neither of them. Those who have either boycotted or buycotted are on the other hand slightly more trustful when it comes to the United Nations compared to those who have done both or neither.

In table 3, political consumption is seen in relation to other forms of political participation. In the table the different participation forms are classified according to four modes of participation: Activity within parties and organisations, contact-activity, direct actions and charity. Is political consumption most often combined with other direct forms of participation, or is it as likely to be combined with the more traditional participation forms through parties and organisations?

Table 3: Political consumers' participation within other participation forms. Percent.

	Both	Either	Neither
Worked in a political party	4.9	6.4	4.1
Worked in another organization or association *	37.9	32.7	23.5
Attended a political meeting or rally *	11.8	10.7	7.4
Contacted a politician *	16.5	18.2	12.0
Contacted an association or organization *	35.7	32.0	21.9
Contacted civil servant, national/regional/local *	38.0	35.2	20.8
Contacted or appeared in the media *	13.3	10.7	7.7
Contacted solicitor or judicial body *	12.2	9.6	7.5
Worked in a political action group *	9.7	7.7	4.2
Worn or displayed campaign badge / sticker *	10.8	9.3	3.9
Signed a petition *	54.6	40.0	26.7
Taken part in demonstration *	13.7	8.8	5.5
Taken part in strike	5.3	5.0	5.4
Participated in illegal protest activities	0.2	0.9	0.3
Donated money *	81.2	73.9	54.0
Raised funds *	16.4	15.3	10.2

* The differences are significant at minimum .05-level.

If political consumption was a reaction towards the representative political system, those who participated within these participation forms should to a lesser extent participate within the traditional forms. Instead, as the table shows, the political consumers participate more within all other participation forms, both representative and direct, compared to those who are not political consumers. The only exceptions, where there is no significant difference between the groups, are to work in a political party or to participate in strikes or illegal protest activities (which also is the participation forms where fewest people take part). Those who have both boycotted and buycotted, are also as a rule more active than those who have done one of the two.

I shall then turn to the next question: Is political consumption first and foremost an individual form of participation or is it rooted in collective organisations? This can of course only be very indirectly tested with the data available here. But as we saw in table 3, there is at least no indication of political consumers being disconnected from the voluntary sector. Table 4 shows how much time the respondents report that they spent on activities within clubs, associations, groups, networks or on supporting other persons during the last month.

Table 4: Time spent on activities in clubs, associations, groups or networks. Percent.

	Both	Either	Neither
< 1 hour	11.6	15.0	16.7
1 – 4	30.5	25.2	33.9
5 – 10	28.1	31.4	26.6
11 – 20	18.9	16.2	12.8
> 20	10.9	12.2	10.1

The table reveals that the political consumers are slightly *more* active within different kinds of clubs, associations, groups and networks compared to those who are not political consumers. While 58 percent of those who have both boycotted and buycotted the last year and 60 percent of those who have done one of the two, spend more than 5 hours each month on different kinds of activity within the voluntary sector, 50 percent of those who have neither boycotted nor buycotted spend that amount of time on organised activities.

In table 5 we shall see what kind of organised activity which is most closely related to political consumerism. How many of those who answer that they are members of different kinds of organisations have participated as political consumers the last year?

Table 5: How many of the members of different organisations have participated as political consumers the last year? Percent.

	Political consumers	N
Total	49.1	
Environmental organisation *	93.2	45
Peace organisation *	75.0	22
Parents' association *	74.0	76
Association for animal rights/protection	73.3	16
Human rights organisation *	72.6	74
Spontaneous action group, ad hoc	70.6	17
Investment club *	66.7	36
Religious or church organisation *	65.5	241
Farmers' or fishermen's organisation *	64.2	108
Consumer association *	62.9	290
Other hobby club / society *	62.8	295
Professional organisation *	61.6	443
Cultural, musical, dancing or theatre society *	61.6	215
Association for disabled *	61.3	76
Outdoor activities club *	60.6	372
Immigrants' organisation	60.0	7
Humanitarian aid organisation *	58.8	347
Other club or association *	57.7	231
Women's organisation	57.4	55
Association for patients, specific illnesses or addictions *	57.3	209
Residents', housing or neighbourhood association *	56.6	409
Housing cooperative	53.4	289
Trade Union *	52.8	981
Youth association (scouts, youth clubs)	52.3	109
House owner / landowner association	52.2	114
Lodge or service clubs	52.1	49
Automobile organisation	51.5	551
Charity or social-welfare organisation	51.4	70
Political party	51.4	223
Business or employers' organisation	50.0	60
Sports club	49.4	619
Pensioners' or retired persons' organisation	46.4	116
Association for war, victims, veterans, or ex-servicemen	45.5	11

* The differences are significant at minimum .05-level.

Table 5 shows that those who are members of one organisation or another as a general rule also have participated more as political consumers. Political consumption is most common among those who are members of environmental organisations, peace organisations and parents' associations. Environmental organisations stand out among the others as 93 percent of those who are members of such organisations have participated as political consumers in the last year. This indicates that political consumerism and green consumerism are strongly connected.⁷⁹ Also those who are engaged with human rights often use their consumer choices to influence politics.⁸⁰ Among those who are members of consumer associations, only 63 percent have participated as *political* consumers in the last year, which is a lower number than what is found for investment clubs,

⁷⁹ One reason for this is of course also that the question of boycotts relates directly to environmental friendly shopping.

⁸⁰ Due to small N, the differences are not significant between those who are members of associations for animal rights and not and between those who have been engaged in spontaneous action groups / ad hoc organizations and not.

religious and church organisations and farmers' and fishermen's organisations, in addition to the before mentioned organisations.

It is of course difficult based on these data to tell how much of the activities related to political consumption that are rooted in collective movements or organisations. But the fact that those who are political consumers are more active within the voluntary sector than those who have not used their consumer choices to influence politics makes it problematic to read this activity as solely individualistic.

Should political consumption be seen as a mode of global political participation? Are political consumers more oriented towards the international or global level compared to those who have not participated as political consumers? On an eleven-point scale measuring to what degree the respondents feel attached to "the world", those who have both boycotted and buycotted the last year have a mean score on 5.4. The mean score for those who have either boycotted or buycotted is 5.0, and for those who have done neither it is 4.8. This suggests that the global orientation is stronger among the political consumers.

In table 6 I look at political interest at different levels, comparing those who have boycotted or / and buycotted the last year and those who have not.

Table 6: Political interest on local, national, European and international level. Percent.

	Both	Either	Neither
Local politics			
Very / fairly interested	67.1	69.4	59.6
Not very / not at all interested	32.9	30.6	40.4
National politics			
Very / fairly interested	78.8	73.7	62.0
Not very / not at all interested	21.2	26.3	38.0
European politics			
Very / fairly interested	53.9	44.5	32.2
Not very / not at all interested	46.1	55.5	67.8
International politics			
Very / fairly interested	57.7	47.9	35.8
Not very / not at all interested	42.3	52.1	64.2

Those who are political consumers are not only more interested in international politics, but also in European, national and local politics. The gap in political interest between the groups is, however, largest when we look at how interested they are in international and European politics, and smallest for local politics. Those who have both boycotted and buycotted are also more interested in politics on the national, European and international levels compared to those who have only done one of the two.

How often do political consumers use the Internet, in general and more specific to obtain information about politics and society, compared to those who have not participated as political consumers? This question is dealt with in table 7.⁸¹

⁸¹ "How often do you use the Internet?" "...and how often do you use the Internet to obtain information about politics and society?"

Table 7: Use of Internet. Percent.

	Both	Either	Neither
Generally:			
Every day	24.9	24.7	18.0
3-4 days a week	18.1	14.5	11.5
1-2 days a week	12.5	11.3	11.8
Less frequently	16.7	16.9	13.5
Never	27.8	32.7	45.1
Politics and society:			
Every day	5.3	5.6	3.8
3-4 days a week	8.6	6.9	3.4
1-2 days a week	13.0	10.4	5.2
Less frequently	29.0	27.6	23.8
Never	44.0	49.4	63.9

Clearly, those who are political consumers use the Internet much more frequently compared to those who have not participated in this way in the last year. The same result is found for both use of Internet in general and use of Internet to obtain information about politics and society. In addition, those who have both boycotted and buycotted use the Internet more frequently than those who have done one of the two. 45 percent of those who have not participated as political consumers in the last year do never use the Internet, and 64 percent never use it to obtain information about politics and society. The corresponding numbers for those who have both boycotted and buycotted are 28 and 44 percent, respectively.⁸²

A global orientation among political consumers is, then, confirmed based on the data presented here. On the other hand political consumption should not be seen as a reaction towards the traditional participation forms or as an individualistic form of participation solely. In the last section we shall ask whether political consumption is evaluated as an effective way to gain political influence, among people in general and among those who themselves have participated as political consumers.

But does it have an effect?

Is political consumption seen as an effective means to influence politics? The Citizenship survey includes a question about whether the respondents judge different forms of political participation as effective or not.⁸³ The answers are marked on a scale from 0 (“Not at all effective”) to 10

⁸² In relation to the questions reported in table 3 there is also a question asking if the respondent used the Internet in connection with any of the different activities. This shows similar results as those reported in table 7. Of those who have both boycotted and buycotted the last year, 28 percent gives a positive answer, as do 22 percent of those who have either boycotted or buycotted, and 15 percent of those who have done neither.

⁸³ “There are many opinions on how one can most effectively influence decisions in society. I have a list here of some ways that are used, and I would like to ask you how effective you think they are. How effective do you think it is to...”, and then the following are listed: Work in a political party, work in voluntary organisations and associations, vote in elections, personally contact politicians, work to get attention by the media, boycott certain products, participate in public demonstrations and participate in illegal protest activities,

(“Very effective”). The most effective participation forms as seen by the respondents are to vote in elections (6.9), and to work to get attention by the media (6.4). But also to work in voluntary organisations and associations (5.9), work in a political party (5.7) and to personally contact politicians (5.2) are seen as more efficient than to boycott certain products (5.0). Only to participate in public demonstrations (4.5) and to participate in illegal protest activities (3.2) are seen as less effective than consumer activity.

Boycotting is, with a mean score of 5.0, seen as a “middle of the range” effective political tool. But what about those who actually takes part in this form of participation? How do those who have participated in boycotts evaluate this form of participation in comparison to the other participation forms? Table 8 gives us some answers.

Table 8: How political consumers evaluate different participations forms compared to those who are not political consumers, percent.

	Both	Either	Neither
Vote in elections	6.8	7.1	6.9
Media attention	7.0	6.7	5.9
Work in associations	6.2	6.1	5.7
Work in party	6.0	5.9	5.4
Contacting politicians	5.5	5.3	4.9
Boycotting	6.5	5.4	4.0
Demonstrations	5.4	4.8	3.9
Protest activity	4.0	3.4	2.6

Those who have both boycotted and buycotted, more often than those who have not, see this as an effective way of participating politically. But those who have done both nevertheless evaluate to gain media attention and to vote in elections as even more effective, and those who have done one of the two also range to work in voluntary organisations and associations and to work in a political party before boycotting as a political means. The fact that media attention is given such high score among the boy- and buycotters comes as no big surprise, as boycotting often is a media-oriented kind of political action. According to Monroe Friedman (1999, 218), boycotts became to an increasing extent media-oriented throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and are sometimes even more oriented towards gaining media-attention than to influence on the actual sale of a specific product (cf. Sørensen, 2004).

Conclusion

I have in this paper been looking at who the political consumers in Norway are, why they choose this form of participation, and to what extent it is judged as an effective way to influence politics. The analyses have shown that the political consumers are among the most resourceful citizens. It is a form of participation that appeals to those who lives in urban

areas, are well educated, political interested and vote for the parties on the left wing. This basically reflects what is found in other studies. It is, however, worth noting that the results from this study do not support the impression of political consumption as an income dependent kind of political participation. It is not peoples spending power that decides who participate or not.

Political consumption should furthermore not be seen as a reaction towards the representative system. Political consumers participate at least as often within this channel, they are not more distrustful towards the political institutions, and they are more interested in politics at all levels compared to those who have not participated as political consumers. The fact that the political consumers emphasise voting, together with media attention, as the most effective ways to influence politics, points in the same direction. Political consumers do consider boycotts to be an effective means to gain political influence, but that does not imply that they evaluate other, more representative, participation forms to be less efficient.

The analyses also indicate that the political consumers are highly involved in voluntary organisations and collective activity, and a lot of the “individualised” political consumption activity is probably rooted in collective activity within the voluntary sector. This is, however, an area where there is a need for further research. We have as well seen that political consumption reflects a global orientation among the participants. Those who are political consumers are more interested in international and European politics, they feel more attached to “the world” and they use the Internet more often than those who have not participated in this way.

Lastly, we saw that the political consumers themselves evaluated participation in boycotts as an effective means to influence politics, which also support this as a legitimate mode of political participation. Whether the respondents are right in their evaluation or not, is another story.

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9. Private Choice and Public Influence: Political consumers behind the mirror of the market

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Abstract

The notion of political consumption has two implications: First, consumers wield some kind of power that they can use to effect social change through the marketplace. Second, political consumption refers to and somehow combines the rationalities of two subsystems, politics and the economy. Yet regarding their everyday, highly individualized shopping decisions, consumers do not appear to command a great deal of power. What kind of influence, then, can individual economic decisions have on corporate policies? Is that influence robust enough to attribute power to consumers? And if consumers do indeed have power, how can we conceive the implied translation of political concerns into the monetary logic of the economy? An answer to those questions needs to take into account the societal context of political consumption. This paper analyses how political consumerism relates to the functional differentiation of modern society and how a sociological concept of the market can help us understand its efficacy.

Introduction

Nothing could be more obvious than the fact that consumers in a modern market economy can and indeed have to choose. For almost any extant and imagined need, there is not only one option but often a staggering variety of brands and commodities. Nowhere is the astonishment about the 'immense accumulation of commodities' (Marx 1961: 15) more appropriate than in a modern supermarket. It seems to be a characteristic feature of market economies that there is no scarcity of commodities (like in socialist systems), but of consumers (Luhmann 2002: 44). If the consumer faces an abundance of commodities on the one hand and budget restrictions on the other, she therefore has to make a choice. Yet this standard description of the consumer, which informs both common sense and economics, is not without its problems. It is hardly surprising that

social scientists should insist that the free choice of the consumer is not so free after all. Once again confirming Duesenberry's quip that 'economics is all about choice, while sociology is about why people have no choices', Miller (1987; 1995) argues that consumption is properly conceived as *lack of choice* rather than its abundance. Consumers, after all, only have a 'secondary relationship' to the services and goods they buy. They depend on others to produce commodities for them – and thus on their choices.

What does that mean for the 'power' of the consumer? If the consumer wields any power at all it must derive from the ability to choose among a range of options. Yet if we have to regard those options as secondary derivatives of the choices of producers, what remains of the power and influence of the consumer? Is it a mere illusion? Or does it exist, if only in a limited and secondary form? In this paper, I suggest that we need to go beyond a simplistic notion that derives consumer power – the prime tool of 'political consumption' – from the existence or lack of choice. Not the individual consumer exercises power but a rather fragile and ephemeral 'collective' of aggregated and communicated choice. The sociologically interesting question is not whether there are 'real' choices or not, but how a collective choice can be simulated and communicated in an atomistic market economy. Put differently, how can a political social process (collective decision-making) inform the individual choices of economic agents?

The paper proceeds in four steps. The first section discusses the relationship between power and consumption. In the following section I turn to a major obstacle to political consumerism in modern society: the differentiation of societal subsystems and the 'privatization' of consumption choices. The third and fourth sections then show how political consumption is made possible by social movements that 'collectivize' private choice and use this social capital as a signalling device in the market.

Power and Consumption Choices

The 'weapons' of consumers are first and foremost monetary ones. But money does not equal power. Money can be the incentive to induce a certain course of action. Only power can make an offer that 'one cannot refuse'. Strictly speaking, money can only be used to reward, but not to punish; it is an instrument of positive, not of negative sanctioning. The consumer can reward a certain company and buy its products. She can also threaten *not* to buy a certain product, but cannot expect that threat to have a big effect in a mass market. That raises the question of what kind of power the consumer actually has in the market. Is it sociologically sound to speak of power at all in this case?

This is not the place to embark on a detailed discussion of power as a sociological concept (cf. Lukes 1974; Wrong 1979; Clegg 1989; Stewart 2001). Despite various efforts to define and clarify the concept and numerous applications, not too much has changed since Dahl's characterization of the study of power as a 'bottomless swamp' (Dahl 1957: 201). However, the concept's amorphous nature and its conceptual history are in some important ways pertinent to our discussion of consumer power. The sociology of power has come a long way since Weber's rather one-sided systematization of the subject. For Weber and still for many theorists today, the essence of power lies in the chance to assert and carry out one's will in a social relationship even against resistance (Weber 1980: 28). This is on the one hand a very inclusive definition of power that, for instance, leaves entirely open on what the 'chance' is based. Yet on the other hand it restricts power to the intentional acts of individuals who first have to formulate their 'will' in order to then explicitly 'assert' it. That power does not always take the form of obvious and intentional acts but may also occur in the form of non-decisions or as structural power was an early and necessary correction to this bias (Bachrach & Baratz 1962; Lukes 1974).

The most recent and possibly last step in this development toward a more encompassing notion of power was taken by Michel Foucault. Through his studies on power and discipline (Foucault 1973; 1979; 1983) he developed a conception of power as a pervasive feature of sociality. According to Foucault, power is 'present at every level of the social body' (1979: 141) and 'employed and exercised through a net-like organisation' (1980: 98). Inasmuch as such statements postulate that power does not 'belong' to anyone, it is in line with a non-individualistic conception of power as being embedded in social relations. Yet Foucault went further than seeing power as *embedded in* social relations and regarded it as *constitutive of* social relations per se. For instance, regarding power and knowledge, Foucault arrived at such a close connection between the two that they became almost indistinguishable: 'power/knowledge' (Foucault 1980). It necessarily becomes difficult to distinguish the effects of power from other factors with such a generalized understanding of the term. Within a Foucauldian framework it becomes almost trivial to state that 'money is power', if power as discursive practice is all but synonymous with selectivity as such.

Although power is not selectivity *per se*, it has very much to do with the *transfer* of selectivity. From Weber to Dahl there is much agreement that power implies some kind of influence of one element on another. This can be turned into a theory of social power relations if we conceive power as a medium that interrelates two sets of selections, namely the selection of a two interdependent courses of action (Luhmann 1988b). Power enables the 'power holder' to define a social situation so as to turn it into a decision between a desired course of action (i.e. the power hol-

der's plan of action) and an alternative, undesired option (i.e. the use of some sort of sanctions). *Neither* side in a power relationship wants the undesired alternative to happen. The one who is subject to power clearly does not want to face the negative sanctions; but if sanctions have to be used the power holder, too, does not get what she aimed for. Instead, she has to use force, execute a punishment or the like. Of course, the power holder should have fewer problems with such a development – that is why she is more likely to get what she wants in the first place (Luhmann 1988b; 2000: Ch. 2). For example, consumers can 'punish' a company that does not live up to their expectations through a boycott of its products. But then they have to do without those particular products. They will not get what they originally aimed for – the product *and* the correct behaviour – but at least for some period of time, they will get neither.

In this very simple case of a consumer boycott the sanction is not used to threaten and thus to induce a certain course of action, it is merely used as a form of punishment. That is because the negative sanctions are 'parasitic' upon a prior allocation of *positive* sanctions: consumers refuse to buy a brand or a product that they *used* to buy.⁸⁴ Positive sanctions are then transformed into negative ones because the expectation to receive certain rewards or payments is disappointed (Luhmann 1987). However, positive sanctions may also be used directly to induce a desired course of action. All they require are resources – usually economic ones – that can be deployed to reward a specific behaviour. Thus political consumers and investors can use their financial resources to acquire products or shares that they regard as compatible with their environmental, social and ethical preferences. To perceive those activities as positive sanctions they must be large enough to warrant a change or at least a confirmation of behaviour. This may result from an aggregation of individual preferences and decisions. The potential market is perceived as an opportunity by business. Companies may thus decide to provide the apparently demanded range of products and services. This again means better opportunities for buying these products and therefore a bigger demand and so on.

Even without the threat of boycotts, there can be no doubt that the potential for positive sanctions encapsulated in the '*purchasing power*' of consumers can induce change in the economy. Money may not make the world go round, but it certainly is a potent tool to establish a social relation in which 'A gets B to do something he would not otherwise do': to sell him something (Baldwin 1971: 582). However, there is also an important restriction. Purchasing power usually serves to facilitate exchange. If A pays for something, that makes it more likely that B will tolerate A's taking possession of it. Yet it is far more demanding to get B to actually *do* something (rather than to just tolerate A's actions) merely on the basis of 'purchasing power'. Common sense has a lot to say about all

⁸⁴ For a more detailed discussion of the relationship between power and positive/negative sanctions see Holzer & Sørensen (2003).

those things ‘money can’t buy’. Amongst those is the capacity to actually *ensure* that a particular course of action will take place. Money is only an offer one cannot refuse if one does not have any. We should therefore regard ‘purchasing power’ based on money as a rather restricted and derived form of power. Since it mainly operates on the basis of positive inducements, it depends on options already available (thus echoing the aforementioned characterization of consumption as ‘lack of choice’).⁸⁵

But if we talk about the power of consumption, we are not necessarily concerned with the individual consumer. The power behind political consumption cannot be understood in individualistic terms. It is not the power of the individual consumer, but the power of agencies that command enough credibility to influence many people’s decisions and to catalyze ‘individualized collective action’ (Micheletti 2003: 24ff.). Social movements in particular are thus the transmission belts for the effective translation of monetary resources into political power. Under certain circumstances, social movement organizations can claim to be able to influence the decisions of consumers and thus ‘borrow’ their purchasing power. They can then use this as a threat, i.e. as a potential negative sanction, against business. To understand how that particular power is established, however, we need a clearer understanding of the mechanism that makes individualized collective action possible. In the following, I shall unpack this mechanism in more detail. I argue that rather than being the solution, individualization is the first serious obstacle to political consumption.

Individualization: The Privatization of Economic Choice

The role sets of movement participants and the more general public play a decisive role in the transmission of the political and other concerns into economic decisions. A modern individual is usually a member of both worlds: of the economy as a consumer and of the polity as either an active politician or as a more passive voter. And besides the two, she also regularly participates in a range of other subsystems of society, such as the legal system, religion, education, sports and so on.⁸⁶ In modern society, individuals are therefore not members of one and only one particular segment, sphere or system of society but always participate in many of them. At least since Simmel’s work on social circles (Simmel 1989 [1890]) sociologists routinely locate the individual at the ‘intersection’ of the differentiated spheres or subsystems of modern society. Individuality, then, consists of the specific pattern of multiple yet always partial inclusions into a variety of subsystems and subgroups. If one looks for a

⁸⁵ It is thus clear that we cannot fully concur with Fiske’s argument: ‘If money is power in capitalism, then buying, particularly if the act is voluntary, is an empowering moment’ (Fiske 1991: 26).

⁸⁶ For the implied theory of functional differentiation of society see Luhmann (1977a; 1982; 1997: Ch. 4).

transmission belt between economic and political processes, the individual and his or her role set combining roles from both spheres may thus be a good starting point.

This fact has of course been noted with regard to political consumerism. Scholars speak of its potential to 'cross' or even 'erase' the boundaries between economic and political action on the one hand and the private and the public on the other (Micheletti 2003: 4f., 2). In a similar vein, the political consumer is supposed to reunite the Mr Jekyll and Dr Hyde of modernity: the *bourgeois* and the *citoyen* (Sørensen 2001). The very term implies that political consumption combines two logics of action. Yet that does not mean that the logics therefore disappear or blend into one another entirely. In my view, such statements gloss over the delicate balance that political consumerism has to strike with the functional differentiation of modern society. Like similarly 'de-differentiating' activities such as environmental teaching, religious research or scientific politics, political consumption has to deal with the demands of at least two different societal spheres. Their separation is not cancelled out once and for all: The religious scientist will have two audiences instead of only one to satisfy, each according to their respective criteria; and the political consumer has a financial budget that cannot be topped up by doing politics alone. The 'de-differentiation' inherent in such cases is first and foremost a combination, maybe even a temporary blending, of *roles*. Role structures are of course an important element of the differentiation of subsystems such as politics and the economy. However, there is a significant difference whether the roles concerned are what sociologists refer to as 'professional' roles or 'complementary' roles.

The distinction between professional and complementary roles is essential in order to understand the interlock between inclusion and functional differentiation.⁸⁷ Professional roles (sometimes also referred to as performance roles) such as politician, entrepreneur, doctor, teacher or scientist emerge around the highly specialized and visible tasks that represent a subsystem's function in society. Therefore, they come to mind first when one is asked to specify the human resource basis of functional subsystems. However, professional roles also depend on their counterparts: complementary roles such as voter, consumer, patient, student or layman. That is because the rationalities of differentiated subsystems can only be adequately served in the highly specified relationship between professional and complementary roles. If the inclusion into subsystems and thus the access to their performances were not mediated by differentiated roles, there would be severe limitations to their operation. First, in the absence of complementary audience roles many potential participants would be excluded on the basis of criteria external to the subsystem in question, for instance because of their status, gender or race. Despite

⁸⁷ The distinction was introduced by Nadel (1957). My application here derives from its integration into the theory of functional differentiation (cf. Luhmann & Schorr 1979: 29ff.; Stichweh 1994).

historical and regional deviations, audience roles in general are defined in universalistic terms: Everyone should be able to be a consumer, a voter etc. regardless of status and other role contexts. If those however get to determine access to subsystems, the pool of potential membership diminishes. Second, in the absence of a functionally specialized counterpart the performance of the professional could not be guided by professional (i.e. medical, economic, political or other) criteria alone, since it could not rely on the bracketing of status and other considerations achieved by a clear role orientation. If the doctor cannot treat the King, the CEO and Prime Minister as patients like others (if, sometimes, special ones), it becomes difficult to envisage how his actions could be guided by medical concerns alone. For reasons of inclusion and differentiation the institutionalization of professional and complementary roles is therefore indispensable.

Regarding the question of blending roles, there is an important asymmetry between professional and complementary roles. It should be obvious that the transfer of evaluative and motivational criteria from one role context to another is a problem in a functionally differentiated society based precisely on the separation of role contexts. Accordingly, it is usually an important element of the norms of a professional role *not* to let other roles interfere with it. The scientist would be a bad scientist indeed if she decided to oppose a theory because of political loyalties or religious beliefs, or because her husband does not like its implications. Undue transfers between a professional role and other roles are often deemed 'corrupt' and thus inhibited. This is possible because we usually only hold one professional role at any given time. Therefore we are by and large able to submit to the special – and sometimes exceedingly demanding – requirements regarding the isolation of our professional role from other roles. The situation is entirely different, however, for complementary roles. For anyone can and usually will occupy more than one of them. Despite some anxieties on the part of some critical observers of modern culture, individuals do not usually 'compartmentalize' their own identity according to their various roles.⁸⁸ Rather, the concentration of a variety of complementary roles in one person tends to crosscut the fault lines of functional differentiation. The surprisingly simple solution to this conundrum is the *privatization* of decisions in complementary roles.⁸⁹ More and more of the decisions associated with complementary roles – as consumer, patient, believer etc. – are socially neutralized by

⁸⁸ Watching an interview with the coach of the German Olympic female hockey team at the time of writing, I came across a prime example of role isolation. The coach is also the partner of one of the players, but strictly separates his professional role from his partnership role. When the two leave for a tournament or a training camp *together*, they nonetheless say goodbye to each other – and only 'see' each other again (as lovers) when the professional interlude is over. Some observers might regard this as an exaggerated case of compartmentalization, but it obviously is a working solution to an inevitable problem.

⁸⁹ The sketched theory of privatization was first developed with regard to religion, but it can be easily generalized (Luhmann 1977b: 232ff.; Beyer 1990).

declaring them private. Consequently, also the personal pattern of interference between roles becomes a matter of legitimate private choice: Of course, we can 'consume according to religious conviction or cast our vote on the basis of aesthetic criteria' (Beyer 1990: 376), but such combinations are relegated to the realm of individual choice and therefore publicly neutralized.

The privatization of our decisions as consumers (and as believers, patients and even, to some degree, voters) ties in well with individualization. It thus appears that precisely through the highly personal pattern of interference between complementary roles, the individual displays something like an identity. However, this pattern cannot be imposed onto others without violating their respective rights to follow their own pattern of interference. Effectively, the mere postulation of an individualized pattern of decision-making is enough to achieve that the communication of individual choices cannot demand to be binding for others anymore.

Collectivization: Role Mobilization and Social Movements

The individualization achieved by the privatization of decision-making is however not irreversible. But it needs a 'collectivizing' agent to make patterns of interferences communicable. Here, I want to argue, lies the significance of social movements for political consumerism. Generally speaking, the characteristic *modus operandi* of new social movements can be fruitfully analysed using the concepts of role theory.⁹⁰ It has often been noted that new social movements, unlike 'classic' movements such as the labour movement, do not primarily seek to seize state power. Rather, they strive for a more indirect influence on the political centre from the fringes. Quite aggregated descriptions of this process in terms of 'identity' or 'cultural politics' prevail in the literature (Nash 2000: Ch. 3; Stewart 2001: Ch. 8). Rather to invoke the sociologically amorphous placeholders of culture and identity, one might just as well say that new social movements do not address their audience only in their *political* roles (i.e. as voters or politicians) but as persons including their *other* roles as well. To be receptive to the claims of the environmental movement does not merely mean to vote for the Greens but also to pay attention to environmental criteria in other areas of everyday life – as a consumer, of course, but for instance also as a mother, as a scientist, or even as a believer.

It is far from obvious that such an overarching determination of behaviour in various contexts should exist in modern society. As mentioned

⁹⁰ Although seldom couched in role terms, the much quoted relationship of new social movements to 'identity issues' appears to relate to the same feature (amongst many others see Melluci 1989; Eyerman & Jamison 1991; Eder 1993; Buechler 1995; 2000; Castells 1997).

above, such an endeavour seems to run counter to functional differentiation as a basic parameter of modern society. We have seen that the privatization of role interferences prevent them from gaining any public relevance. Infusing one's consumption choices with religious concerns or one's voting behaviour with economic considerations thus becomes a matter of personal choice that does *not* lead to de-differentiation beyond one's own role set. In order to transcend the limits set by privatization role interferences need to be amplified, aggregated and communicated. In other words, they have to be *collectivized* so that they become a societal fact instead of an individual quirk. That is exactly what social movements and their organizations can achieve.

The collectivization of private choice involves a particular kind of mobilization that has not been the focus of social movement research so far. The reason for this is an underdeveloped concept of movement participation. When it comes to any kind of social aggregate, be it a group, organization, movement or society as a whole, many sociologists still conceive of its elements in terms of human beings. Nothing seems to be more obvious than that a group consists of people. It is however clear that those 'people' are not physical, palpable entities but social abstractions and constructions. An organization does not consist of the arms and legs or the digestive and thought processes of human beings, but of *members* whose membership makes them accountable to the organization in *some* aspects of their personality.⁹¹ The same goes for participation or membership in social movements. It is not evident that and why movements participants should engage their whole personality in movement activities. They might as well regard it as just another role that is occasionally relevant. Yet successful social movements – and political consumerism is a prime example – manage to prevent such a compartmentalization of movement participation.

Nothing could capture better how new social movements have tried to achieve that than the well-known 1960s slogan that 'the personal is political'. One way to understand it is that the private realm should not be exempt from public scrutiny, for instance regarding standards of gender equality. By providing a common language to communicate grievances, social movement activity may accordingly appear to turn 'private troubles into public problems' (C. W. Mills, quoted in Eyerman & Jamison 1991: 56). Yet it is equally plausible to regard it as turning *public* problems into *private* troubles, since it urges individuals to regard their everyday private life as the appropriate turf to introduce social change. Considering the circularity of grievance recognition and claims making, it is in most cases hard to say whether the grievances or the claims came first. At any rate, to put the question this way ignores an important insight of social movement theory: that the emergence of movements cannot be explained solely with reference to primary grievances that are then taken up by social

⁹¹ The informative exception may be the total institutions depicted by Goffman (1961).

movements. Social movements are not a function of extant, objective social problems or grievances. Social problems themselves are the result of social construction and attribution (Kitsuse & Spector 1973; Spector & Kitsuse 1973; Gusfield 1989). And yet their (social) existence alone cannot explain if and when social movements arise. Rather, such an explanation must be based on the available human and organizational resources that determine mobilization ('mobilizing structures'), the political and legal contexts and their conduciveness to social movement activities ('opportunities'), and the interpretation and definition of instances of grievances or threat ('framing processes') (McAdam et al. 1996; see also McAdam et al. 2001).

Political consumerism and some other new social activities, too, combine those factors to a process that could be referred to as *role mobilization*. It involves, first, a specific kind of 'resource mobilization' (cf. McCarthy & Zald 1977) that relies on the financial resources and social capital of potential movement participants, i.e. their purchasing power and their entanglement in various role contexts. Second, it depends on a reasonably affluent social environment to provide an opportunity structure in which consumers make recurring choices between different and to some extent substitutable commodities. And third, it needs to legitimize the de-differentiation of roles so that movement participants can account for their sometimes unusual blurring of role boundaries, for instance, if spending more on an environmentally sound commodity needs to be justified against a restricted budget or other money-spending opportunities.

Financial and social capital as well as choice opportunities abound in affluent western market economies. Therefore the most critical task for the collectivization of political consumption through social movements is the appropriate 'framing' (Snow et al. 1986; Snow & Benford 1988; Gamson & Modigliani 1989; Benford 1997; Benford & Snow 2000). To construct a social problem means to put a *topic* on the public agenda so that both movement participants and 'outsiders' can relate to a set of issues (Luhmann 1996). That requires two interdependent framing tasks to be accomplished: First, new claims should be related to an existing pool of knowledge. This is achieved by successful '*frame alignment processes*' between movement claims and common-sense or individual interpretations, for instance by processes of frame bridging, amplification, extension or transformation.⁹² Second, a rationale for action should be given.

⁹² *Frame bridging* involves the linkage of a focal frame to an ideologically similar pool of sentiments, for instance, an environmental movement that successfully appeals to religiously minded people with a claim to preserve biodiversity. *Frame amplification* is the clarification of a specific frame by stressing certain of its inherent values or beliefs. The women's movement, for example, elaborated the value of equality as a vehicle of amplification. *Frame extension* means to widen the focus of the primary framework to include other aspects. For instance, many environmental movements in the 'Third World' include development into the frame of nature conservation in order to adapt to local priorities. *Frame transformation* is the re-interpretation of known facts and events within a new framework. Workers, for instance, were able to interpret their relationship to employers

Mobilization will depend on (1) *diagnostic* framing, i.e. the identification of a problem, including the attribution of blame and causality; (2) *prognostic* framing, i.e. the proposal of solutions and possible actions to achieve it; (3) *motivational* framing, i.e. a call for action, including selective incentives for the participants (Snow & Benford 1988: 199-204). The upshot of these distinctions is that the successful framing of a movement issue inevitably establishes it within accepted frameworks of knowledge, both personal and social.

Albeit a detailed discussion of the various tactics would require looking at a specific campaign and is thus beyond the scope of this paper, certain general features of political consumerism can be noted. First, *frame transformation* is central to political consumption. By providing an explanatory framework that translates individual acts into public consequences, the shopping situation is transformed. Even if they have not heard about 'life politics' or 'subpolitics' many shoppers today interpret the choice faced in the supermarket differently. Second, *frame bridging* utilizes that there is often more than one unambiguous reason to select or avoid a certain product. Campaigns are therefore most successful if they are not confined to one set of criteria. A good example is the combination of gender and Third World issues in the Nestlé Infant Formula campaign (Sethi & Post 1979; Gerber 1990; Micheletti 2003: Ch. 2). Third, the mobilization through *prognostic and motivational framing* is self-enforcing if campaigns are successful. The promise that individual shopping can 'make a difference' becomes plausible with effective campaigns, which in turn are more likely to happen if the prognostic and motivational frames of political consumerism are accepted. In terms of motivation the question of possible disincentives appears to be more crucial than the one of incentives. For instance, products of 'Fair Trade'-schemes are often more expensive than normal ones. Past experience has shown that those price differences often prevent commodities associated with political consumerism from achieving larger market shares (for the case of coffee see Transfair & RUGMARK 2001).

Successful framing makes it more likely that new consumers 'join' the political consumerism movement and adjust their actions accordingly. In the terminology suggested here that means that participants accept the movement's topic(s) as relevant and informative to *all* segments of their life. By thus giving priority to their movement identity, political consumers can turn their consumer role into a conductor for political programmes. From their perspective, the frames of political consumerism in general and specific campaigns in particular make it sensible to include consumption choices in the repertoire of legitimate and necessary movement activities. Considering the priority of individualization (grounded in the differentiation of role structure), it might therefore be more appropriate

in a different way by using a Marxist frame of 'exploitation' rather than one of a patron-client relationship (Snow, Rochford, Worden & Benford 1986: 467-476).

(though a bit more awkward) to speak of ‘collectivized individual action’ than the other way round.

From the perspective of social movements, individual consumers ‘lend’ their purchasing power to them and thus enable them to establish effective threats on the marketplace. Social movement organizations (SMOs) can then collectivize patterns of role interference so as to generalize their influence on the consumption choices of their participants to a level that permits them to put pressure on producers. One could also say that SMOs administer part of the purchasing power of their adherents. If not actual money, then at least a good deal of power is thus transferred onto them.⁹³ It makes sense for the individual to lend support to an organization if that appears to be an effective venue for collective action. The organization, after all, can exercise much more power than any particular individual – and sometimes even more than the actual ‘sum’ of power. Since we are not talking about the measurable *purchasing* power of political consumers but rather about the derived *social* power, there is no objective measuring rod. Accordingly, the potential for both appeal and threat is greatly expanded. SMOs can use their access to their adherents’ role structures as a basis for both positive and negative sanctions: They can either threaten to mobilize against a certain product or company (for instance through a boycott call) or they can lend their credibility to labeling schemes that subject products to scrutiny according to the presumed preferences of consumers.

The Efficacy of Political Consumption in the Market

There are plenty of reasons for the individual to use economic decisions as an outlet for political motives, i.e. to regard consumption as part of the political ‘repertoire’ (Stolle & Hooghe 2003). Not only is there a remarkable structural homology between democratic elections and consumption choices. Apologists of the market system in western countries do not tire of advertising it as a kind of ‘economic democracy’ (Burke 1996: 127), in which the consumer is the sovereign.⁹⁴ Moreover, the distinction between professional and audience roles also applies to political inclusion. Most people’s participation in politics is limited to the complementary role of the ‘voter’ who regularly goes to the ballot box, where only periodic, summary decisions about whole political agendas are possible. In contrast, the act of shopping allows for the timely expression of highly

⁹³ It is not coincidental that we speak of members or adherents *lending* support to a cause or an organization. As sociologists and political scientists observed, there is an interesting parallel between lending political support and depositing money in a bank (Parsons 1963; 1969; Baldwin 1971). Just like a bank can use its customers’ money to either make own investments or grant loans to other customers, a political group can use its ‘borrowed’ support to wield power and authority.

⁹⁴ In some countries, though, the interpretation is more aristocratic. In Germany, for instance, the principle that the customer is always right translates as ‘*Der Kunde ist König*’ (the customer is king).

specialized and individualized preferences – including aesthetic, religious and political ones. For the individual consumer, political consumption thus appears to be an appropriate and usually not very time-consuming valve to express political and other motives.

Yet how do such ‘politically’ minded decisions affect the producers? Political consumers seek to effect change ‘through the marketplace’ (Friedman 1999), but how can markets become tools of political action? The consequences of political consumption are often explained in terms of the supply-demand mechanisms of economics textbooks. If consumers change the demand curve, for instance by turning to ‘Fair Trade’ products, producers will react by adjusting their supply accordingly. However, recent work in economic sociology argues that the questions of what markets actually are and how producers observe ‘what the market wants’ are not that trivial. To make sense of empirical phenomena, equilibrium models of supply and demand are not very helpful. Rather, markets must be conceived as social structures exhibiting a historically shaped configuration of roles (White 1981a; 1981b; 1988; 2002; Leifer & White 1987). In actual markets, producers cannot observe aggregate measures of demand. They can only operate on the basis of tangible observations of the consequences of their own and their competitors’ actions. The motives of consumers and their individual preferences, however, are usually unknown. Even if they were known they can seldom be related to concrete production schedules. Yet for a winery, for instance, it is not of much value to know that dry wine is popular; it needs to know how much wine can then be sold (Luhmann 1988a: 108). The requisite demand curves, however, belong to a ‘mythical information setting’ (Leifer & White 1987: 86) not available to actual social actors. Since no such detailed observation of what the consumers want is possible, producers observe their own experience – and one another. Harrison White therefore argues that markets actually work as ‘mirrors’ in which cliques of producers observe themselves: ‘Markets are tangible cliques of producers observing each other. Pressure from the buyer side creates a mirror in which producers see themselves, not consumers’ (White 1981b: 543f.).

Against this backdrop, political consumption enters the picture as a highly instructive device for corporations to peek *behind* the mirror of the market. While normal consumption provides only few clues as to the preferences behind it and how they could affect production schedules, political consumption – combined with public mobilization – makes that part of the market temporarily transparent. As we have seen, political consumerism as a social movement serves to collectivize and publicize the individualized choices of consumers. SMOs act as ‘signifying agents’ (Snow & Benford 1988: 213): They transform part of the micro-diversity of individual consumption choices into a condensed signal that can be communicated and used in the marketplace. They thereby introduce an element of what Hirschman (1970) calls ‘voice’ into the market context

(cf. Pestoff 1988). Where the individual consumer can only choose between 'exit' and 'loyalty', i.e. to either stop or continue buying a certain product, the consumer associations and other SMOs can turn this decision into a public statement. Private choice thus becomes an instrument of public influence.

This is the reason why the rhetoric of political consumption is not completely adversarial but also includes win-win scenarios. Those producers who are willing to adjust themselves to the particular niche of political consumption can benefit from substantial information advantages. For instance, they can participate in labelling schemes to send positive signals toward a consumer group with a particular interest; they can then derive the necessary adjustments directly from the labelling scheme's prescriptions and do not need to second-guess the individual standards of consumers. Taking the standards of such labels as a guideline may not only facilitate 'ethical' decisions in a company (cf. Davies & Crane 2003), but also makes it easier to arrive at an informed decision about production schedules in the first place. Far from being just a nuisance, political consumption can therefore be useful for producers to shed light on the otherwise impenetrable motives of consumers.⁹⁵

The important question with regard to the idea of political consumerism is to what extent such an influence can lead to change. Against the backdrop of markets as 'real' social structures, this question becomes even more critical. Not maximization and equilibrium but observation and reproduction characterize empirical markets. If producers can only use actually observed outcomes of the past as a 'menu of fates (i.e. roles, or niches), to select from in the coming period' (Leifer & White 1987: 86), they cannot in a meaningful way seek to 'maximize' their revenues. Their interest rather lies in *reproducing* their role in the market on the basis of past experience: 'the producers become locked into a self-fulfilling framework in which their unique fate (role) is perpetuated from period to period' (ibid.: 88). Markets as role structures tend to reproduce on the basis of a 'quality ranking' of the different producers within their respective niches. The socially constructed quality level determines which price is paid for which product or brand. From the perspective of the individual producer, the menu of price and volume combinations is a fixed set of option because price and volume decisions cannot be made independently. Higher volume tends to lead to lower reputation and therefore to lower prices, too. If a producer wants to step outside this given menu of options, he either needs extensive market research – or external hints. This is where the signalling function of organized political consumerism enters the picture. By introducing new valuations of quality (e.g.

⁹⁵ However, the variety of labelling schemes may cause orientation problems both for consumers and producers. One solution is the formal legalization of labels, but even then differences between national regulations remain (for the case of food-labelling see e.g. Boström & Klintman 2003). Again, SMOs often play an important role in transnational diffusion processes that may lead to a greater degree of harmonization (Kern et al. 2001).

environmental concerns) *and* communicating them across the market, political consumerism introduces new information that producers can then use to search and establish new niches.

Information (about market positions and quality evaluations) and its communication are decisive factors in the reproduction and change of market structures. This conclusion drawn from the new economic sociology of the market ties in with the theory of political consumerism developed in this paper. Private consumption choices remain individualized within a context of differentiated roles unless they are plausibly aggregated and publicized by social movements. Thus understood, political consumption can serve as an important signalling device of actual and possible market development and help producers to identify new niches beyond the reproduction of established structures of competition.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have sketched elements of a theory of political consumption that takes into account the specific obstacles and opportunity structures of a modern, functionally differentiated society. The power of consumption cannot be understood in individualistic terms. In modern society, decisions associated with 'complementary roles' such as being a voter, consumer or believer become increasingly privatized in order to defuse the de-differentiating potential of role interference. This makes it a matter of individual disposition to apply religious criteria to one's voting behaviour, or political ones to one's shopping. However, the social context of political consumerism is characterized by social movements and their organizations that generalize such individual patterns of role interference and communicate them to others. By credibly representing the purchasing power of their adherents, those SMOs can thus use either negative sanctions (boycotts) or positive sanctions (labelling schemes etc.) to exercise influence on companies. From the perspective of producers, political consumption thus becomes a source of otherwise unavailable information about consumers' preferences.

Political consumerism sheds temporary light on the world behind the mirror of the market. Essential to achieve that are the signalling activities of social movement organizations that serve to make individual consumption choices appear as collective action. By indicating potential demand, political consumerism can thereby facilitate changes in the role structures and niches occupied by producers that would otherwise be unlikely to emerge. By modulating and expanding the consumer role, however, that also makes it more difficult for firms to base their decisions on clear-cut economic concerns alone and thus introduces a new element of uncertainty. The regulation of product quality standards and voluntary labelling schemes mitigate the resulting information problems to some extent. To

get a clearer picture of their risks and chances producers are likely to spend more time and effort on consumer research in critical market segments in the future (and, possibly, to show more interest in empirical research on political consumerism). That could however also be a risk for the hitherto successful signalling activities of consumer associations and other SMOs. After all, the closer look at the (statistical) individual consumer may well reveal that many consumers show little consistency in their consumptions patterns. The political consumer may at times also be an aesthetic, a religious, or just a thrifty consumer. Yet as long as the agents of political consumerism can credibly claim to be able to mobilize their adherents' role sets even occasionally, they will exercise considerable influence in the markets.

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10. Private Food Strategies and Political Consumerism

Anna-Lisa Lindén

Abstract

A number of policy instruments are used in order to provide consumers healthy products produced in a proper way as regards environmental impacts. The policy instruments are mainly directed to enterprises and companies producing products. Such actors are often addressed in terms of laws or regulations and represent different actors in a production chain. Policy instruments and the way they are used in Product Policy Chains will be discussed theoretically and from empirical examples. The government often uses a vertical policy chain in the communication process with actors in the process. Consumers, the end users, are often addressed by informational instruments, e.g. pamphlets, campaigns, content declarations or labelling. However, consumers' reliance in food products can vary for several reasons. They may dislike the price, the quality, the labelling process and organisation or the food products for ethical reasons. Consumer power can be activated for some or several of these reasons. Two types of consumer power will be discussed and analysed namely the *individualised power of consumers*, e.g. buying resistance, and secondly the *collectivistic power of consumers*, relying on an ideology, which can be ethical, e.g. animals rights movements. Consumer power and influence can be performed on a local, national or global level. Consumer strategies in purchasing behaviour and influencing the market will be analysed concerning reliance on products, use of information and labelling. This is a pilot study aimed at formulating a frame of concepts to be used in analysis of consumer power and political consumerism. Statistical databases and a number of in-depth interviews with environmentally concerned consumers, vegans and vegetarians is used as an empirical base.

Food and National Policy

Food belongs to products every citizen has to buy often for consumption. Choice of food products often creates a very private relation to food and dishes, which goes back to experience and knowledge. In an urbanised society most consumers have to buy their products in groceries or super-

markets. The possibilities for consumers to control the products are restricted to the information about the contents declared on the product, earlier experience or confidence in the producer and shopkeeper. Production and consumption phases are separated not only from personal relations but also spread over geographical distances around the globe.

The close relation between food and health aspects was early identified to be a crucial issue in national policy. The first identification of problems had to do with getting rid of leftovers and waste in densely populated areas. At least in Sweden national policy first focused on the hygienic aspects of waste problems in late 19th century (Lindén, 2004). The last phase, destruction and waste management, in the product chain became the first to be regulated in national policy. Other phases of food production, distribution and commerce and consumption were identified as targets for national policy later (Figure 1). In the middle of the 20th century a number of severe outbreaks of mouth and foot disease and paratyphoid fever among cattle led to governmental decisions about isolation of areas and slaughter-houses to prevent an increase of infected cattle and unexpected effects on human health. The outbreaks of diseases led to a number of administrative policy instruments regulating hygienic aspects and medical use in processed food and meat production. A number of laws combined with supervision programmes controlling production of food are now in use addressing farmers, slaughter-houses and food industries to guarantee consumers good and safe food products.

The distribution of food products and commerce was brought into focus in the middle of the 20th century when the population of harmful animals, e.g. rats and insects, increased in urban areas and threatened to cause a spread of diseases became a problem. A law regulating hygienic standard in groceries as well as handling and packaging food products was accepted and led to a development of new kinds of stores and packaging logistics. Distribution companies and provision shops were directly addressed and controlled in order to reconstruct and change routines in handling food products (Figure 1).

The third phase in the product chain was addressed by governmental proposals in the 1960s when declarations of contents on processed food was regulated by law. Later in the 1980s, the policy instrument *labelling of products* from health perspectives was introduced, e.g. the Keyhole established in 1989 and controlled by the National Food Administration. Labelling as a policy instrument has since then been developed and includes a number of symbols (Figure 2). Most of them are regularly controlled from environmental perspectives by NGOs. The labelling of food products has a starting point either in the production process, e.g. KRAV/Ecological Farming, or in the processing of food products regulating the contents from mainly chemical aspects, e.g. Bra Miljöval/Good Environmental Choice (See Boström, 2002).

Figure 1. A vertical communication process and examples of policy measures

Phase	Actors addressed	Policy measures
Production	Farmers, food industries	<i>Administrative instruments:</i> Act about feeding cattle <i>Administrative instruments:</i> Prohibition of a number of chemical ingredients
Distribution	Distributors, shops	<i>Informative instruments:</i> Advice, information, controlling hygienic standard <i>Administrative instruments:</i> Licences for food distribution
Consumption	Consumers	<i>Informative instruments:</i> Declaration of contents, labelling health and environmental aspects
Destruction, waste	Households, municipalities	<i>Administrative instruments:</i> Disposal and management Recycling Act <i>Informative instruments:</i> information

National policy, addressing actors in different phases of a food chain, is characterized by using policy instruments from top-down perspectives. Actors, either they are producers, distributors, consumers or municipalities are addressed by the same measures although there ought to be great variations of knowledge, attitudes and physical conditions among members of each group. The food sector is far from unique from this perspective of national policy. There are very few examples in Swedish national policy using instruments in horizontal communication processes (Lindén, Carlsson-Kanyama & Eriksson, 2004). Such examples can almost exclusively be found in implementing new technology and behavioural change in production and consumption processes within the energy sector.

However, the policy instruments used in a top-down perspective presented above also fosters consumers, not only to widen their knowledge, but also to be aware of aspects of food production and consumption, which may have effects on individual health, the natural environment, animals' health or equality and human rights perspectives. National policy points out aspects to be considered, which makes an increasing number of consumers formulating their private food consumption strategy. Thus national policy is one important factor for raising awareness about individual preferences and strategies for food consumption.

Consumer Generations and Food Consumption

A common driving force behind changing national food cultures on a macro level is a confrontation between new trends and old traditions. New food cultures include new dishes or new ingredients, drinks and sometimes even new eating habits. Change is driven by a variety of fac-

tors. They can be described as internationalisation, differentiation, traditionalisation and globalisation of food consumption (Warde, 1997; Lindén, 2001).

In internationalisation of food cultures, new trends meet food traditions in which domestic ingredients closely resemble ingredients in the new trend. In Sweden there is an old domestic tradition of macaroni dishes. Macaroni resemble Italian pasta but is of traditional Swedish design and made of domestically produced wheat meal. The spread of Italian food culture has followed two routes into Swedish food cultures since as early as the 1950s. Some of the ingredients, pasta and bread, were well known to young and travelling Swedes in those days. They encountered Italian food as tourists or by Italian immigrants from southern Italy establishing restaurants offering pasta and pizza in Sweden. As a result, Swedish macaroni dishes were given an international taste. Italian food and Italian restaurants are still loved in Sweden and are regarded as almost being of Swedish origin, at least by younger Swedes.

Differentiation of food cultures has to do with establishing several food cultures side by side in a nation. Lots of immigrants from different parts of the World established restaurants in Sweden during the second half of the Twentieth Century (Lindén, 2001). The ideas behind the immigrant restaurants were to provide employment, earn money and to serve immigrants from the same country with their food. In this way, Greek, Hungarian, Austrian, Turkish, Chinese and Thai restaurants came to be established. However, at the same time, younger generations of Swedes began to travel around the world as tourists, back-packers or on business. Their international experiences spilled over to cooking in Swedish homes. Nowadays, for example, complete dishes are increasingly cooked in Swedish homes with ingredients bought in specialist food shops in order to attain the right taste. The more foreign a food culture is to the existing one, the more it will be accepted unchanged and be able to develop beside other food cultures in a new cultural setting.

Food cultures meeting new trends often spurs a reaction to preserve national culinary traditions. Special interest in domestic dishes leads to a traditionalisation of a food culture where domestic ingredients and old traditional recipes are put in the foreground (Lindén, 2001). Several first class restaurants established in Sweden in the past ten years promote Swedish traditional food as their speciality. However, most of them do not only serve traditional Swedish dishes. They have also recreated old-style dishes by using ingredients such as Swedish turnip, celery or black potatoes, which have almost been forgotten in Swedish cooking.

Globalisation of food cultures differs from the former types of change by transferring not only dishes but also drinking and eating habits. Coca-Cola instead of fruit-syrup, and eating habits, holding the dish in the hand instead of using fork and knife, have been taken over unchanged from their origins. This is a kind of massification of food and eating habits

which differs from its new cultural setting (Ritzer, 1993; Warde, 1997). Hamburgers and CocaCola are classic examples. As far as Swedish eating habits and food cultures are concerned, kebabs and falafel are other examples.

Table 1. National food cultures and consumer generations in Sweden.

Dishes	Spices	Drinks	Consumer generation
Pork, steak, meat-balls	salt, pepper, parsley	milk, beer, snaps	retired persons
Pizza/pasta	oregano, tarragon	water, beer, wine	older middle-aged persons
Chinese food	soy sauce, vinegar	water, beer, wine ginger	middle-aged people
Hamburger	tomato ketchup	CocaCola, beer	younger middle-aged people
Thai/ Indonesian	lemon grass, coconut milk	water, CocaCola, beer	young people

(Lindén, 2001; Carlsson-Kanyama & Lindén, 2001, p.395).

In all change processes there is a need for innovators, trying new experiences, informing about them and offering them to their guests. In Sweden, the innovators among food consumers are most often young people travelling abroad or living in cities, where they daily meet foreigners. The introduction of new food cultures can be quite well localised to consumer generations having their first experiences in other food cultures (Table 1). This is probably a general pattern for generations in other nations as well.

The fact that Sweden has had high annual numbers of immigrants since World War II has also contributed to changes in food cultures. During the 1950s and 1960s, immigrants from European countries dominated. In the seventies, they were replaced by large numbers of immigrants coming from countries in Asia, East Asia, South America and Africa. American culture invaded countries in Western Europe not only by immigrants but also by all forms of media, such as TV-programmes, films and music (Ritzer, 1993). The other interface with foreign food cultures coincided with tourism. Swedes began their travelling by visiting European countries and in later decades extended their travels to the Far East and other continents.

The diversification of national food cultures is closely connected to generational belonging and the socio-cultural surroundings. The process of changing national food cultures proceeds faster in densely populated areas with high rates of migration turnover (Lindén, 2001).

Food Consumption and Political Consumerism

Food as means for survival has got socially added values. Thus preference for Asian food among some people may indicate internationalism, preferences for vegetarian food may indicate ethical ideologies, traditional national food may indicate nationalistic values etc. Food as products for consumption has turned into the same process as clothing and cars in former periods in industrialised societies, that is to say to be a marker of ideological and social belonging (Simmel, 1903; 1904). *Consumption has a rich meaning in today's globalized, post-modernized world. But this is not really a new development. A lesson from history is that many political struggles began when people – particularly women – expressed problems about feeding. Consumers' goods became politicised because of private family woes.... Today consumption involves broad concerns of global justice and solidarity as well as more specific private concerns about the ability to serve one's family a healthy nutritious meal* (Micheletti, 2003). Food consumption has been politicized not only from a social systems perspective, e.g. food for all, but also from an individualistic perspective indicating one's private ideology, e.g. concerning animals rights, global justice, environmental awareness or private health (Halkier, 2004).

The added values for food consumption cut dividing lines between political parties. The political ideologies and organisations still have strong similarities with ideologies developed during earlier historical periods. They change slowly and thus have difficulties to incorporate new items to satisfy young people in post-modern societies. Citizens, and particularly young people, seem to prefer new strategies to express urgent ideologies and ways to handle problems. The decreasing number of members in political parties and the increasing number of members in different kinds of NGOs is an indication of such a development (Beck, 1995; Giddens, 1991). This is an ongoing process also in Sweden (Sörbom, 2002), although there has been a small increase of members during the last few years. Joining a NGO often means a compromise between private values and the ideology promoted by the organization. On the other hand it offers a way to perform *collectivist collective actions* (Micheletti, 2003). Despite an increasing number of NGOs a substantial number of people want to formulate their private strategy to raise a question and perform their *individualised collective actions*. They represent more or less "hidden" groups of opposition, which probably have a large share of performers. The diversity of opinions about food products and food consumption allow collectivistic collective as well as individualised actions. In a Danish study it was found that political consumerism is more widespread among women than men. The political consumers are more often below fifty years of age than older, they have quite a high level of education and generally high annual incomes (Goul Andersen & Tobiasen, 2004).

Figure 2. A selection of labels on consumer products for everyday use

(From the upper left: Treklövern/The Clover, Änglamark, Hälsosignalen/The Health Signal, Nyckelhålet/The Keyhole, Ekologiskt jordbruk/Ecological Farming, Bra Miljöval/Good Environmental Choice, Rättvisemärkt/Fair Trade, Sadesaxet/The Ear, Svalan/The Swallow, Svanen/The Swan, Demeter, EU-blomman/The EU-flower, TCO, FSC, KRAV/Ecological Farming)

Labelling of products, not least food products, have increased consumer awareness on environmental, health, global justice and animal rights issues (Figure 2). In that way labelling as a policy instrument is one important factor turning food consumption into a diversified sphere of political consumerism. However, that does not necessarily mean that well-informed consumers perform their power in organised strategies. *Political consumerism adds to this conception in that citizens turn directly to the market with a variety of political concerns* (Follesdal, 2004). Consumer power and influence address actors on a local level as well as on national

and global levels and can be performed by informal or formal strategies. Political organisations in its traditional definition may never be involved in the use of individualised political power. In spite of that national policies expressed by labelling of products often is used in shopping of food products. The relation between food consumption, private food strategies and political consumerism is just one example of the diversified strategies consumers can use to perform influence.

Private Food Strategies and Food Consumption

More than 80 percent of the population in Sweden report a high degree of environmental awareness (Lindén, 2001). Awareness about food and its impact on health score almost as high as environmental awareness. As far as food is regarded there is a close relation between environmental aspects and health aspects. What is good for the environment is also supposed to be good for one's health (Lindén, 2004). Declarations of contents are often read by consumers, but seldom fully understood. In a recent survey four out of five reported that they often read declarations of contents on food products, but 33 percent of them meant that they are difficult to understand (TnsGallup, 2004). The situation is reported to be the same in Norway (Wandel & Bugge, 1996). The declarations are very often read in a selective way. That holds for 60 per cent of consumers buying food products. With their private food strategy as a background they try to avoid some defined substances. Most often they try to avoid fat products, high percentages of sugar and artificially coloured products. Very close to the bottom of the list are a number of aspects that are important to avoid by people with allergic diseases, e.g. nuts and milk, but also ingredients which more or less are looked upon from ethical perspectives, e.g. soy, and broth from meat. Women with children, 40 years or more, living in high income households are more aware of the contents of food products and often read the declaration (TnsGallup, 2004).

The idea of labelling products regarding environmental, health, ethical or other aspects is to make it easier to understand the contents of the product but also to guarantee a product against wider ideological aspects. A Norwegian study shows that consumers appreciate labelling for presenting complicated information with a symbol which is easy to understand (Tufte & Lavik, 1997; Wandel, 1999). However, the confidence in labelling is closely related to the way it is done and controlled. Producers labelling their own products get very low credibility. Most appreciated are labelling performed and supervised by organisations independent of the producer. During almost two decades a number of symbols have been developed (Figure 2). The oldest of the labels, Nyckelhålet/The Keyhole, Bra Miljöval/Good Environmental Choice, Svanen/The Swan and KRAV/Ecological Farming, are well known and can easily be identified

by consumers (Konsumentverket, 1995; Solér, 1997; Tufte & Lavik, 1997; Nordiska Ministerrådet, 1999). Others are more easily identified to be important in combination with diseases and specialised food cultures, e.g. allergic diseases, ethics about global justice.

There is a lot of evidence that declarations of contents and labelling of food products have had a great influence on consumers. Their knowledge of food has been widened, the awareness regarding nutritional, environmental and ethical aspects have increased. Almost all consumers have developed a private food strategy where one or more aspects on health, the environment or social inequality are kept in mind when they are buying their food. However, little is known about how consumers use their knowledge and private food strategy to influence other people, the market, national or global food policy. In this pilot study the aim is to develop a frame of concepts to get a better theoretical understanding of

- how consumers use labelling to satisfy their values about and attitudes to food consumption
- how consumers establish private food strategies
- what strategies consumers use to influence the food market, other people or national policy

In-depth interviews with 2 concerned consumers, 5 vegetarians and 2 vegans have been performed to get additional material (See Note at the end of the text!). The empirical material from the pilot study are undertaken to exemplify the theoretical discussion.

- Concerned consumers and political consumerism

About 90-94 per cent of the Swedish population are supposed to be food consumers eating both vegetables and meat in varying proportions. They are often looked upon to be just food consumers in general. Surveys indicate that just a small share of them, about 25 per cent, does not check the declarations of contents on food products they buy (TnsGallup, 2004). Thus the majority, 75 per cent, either check the declarations of contents, or the labelling or both when they buy food products. In Britain it has been found that extremely concerned and well-informed consumers are living in “two career” families with professional occupations (Kennedy, 2004). For lower professionals their lower incomes were a restriction for fulfilling their private ideology and wishes regarding their consumption of food. This large group of food consumers are in this study classified as concerned consumers although they may have different reasons for and ideas behind their interest in food.

A 55 year old woman with children living in the home now and then, seem to appreciate meals, which can be prepared easily and quickly, but the meals must also have a good taste and look attractive. To fulfil her

wishes for quick cooking, as well as for attractive and tasty meals her food consumption has turned over to more vegetarian, as well as fish and chicken dishes on behalf of meat consumption. On the other hand she was not necessarily eager to have a variation in her consumption. The time used for cooking seemed to be the most important factor for her private food strategy.

I eat more and more vegetables. I eat irregularly and what comes into my mind at the moment. It can be noodle soup, sometimes several weeks. That period can be followed by a period of salmon and spinach or Thai food or pasta with vegetables. I like vegetables, meals looks attractively colourful and they can be prepared quickly.

The weekly hours used for food preparation have decreased with about one hour over a decade in all age groups studied (Carlsson-Kanyama & Lindén, 2001, p.402). In the year 1993 age groups 18-29, 30-54, 55-64 and 65-85 used 3,5, 5,5, 5,5 and 7 hours weekly for food preparation.

This woman represents a very large group of consumers where time available for housework and cooking is very restricted due to employment and working hours. It has been found in surveys that all kinds of housework is affected by working outside the home (Carlsson-Kanyama, Lindén & Eriksson, 2003; 2004). The solutions and effects for housework differ due to generational factors. Among younger households it is more common to use semi-manufactured food products, e.g. frozen fish dishes, to save time.

Yes, we buy semi-manufactured products now and then, e.g. fish meals and meatballs, when we have to serve the meal quickly for our son. My wife is very aware of nutritious aspects. We do our purchasing in a couple of supermarkets and often buy labelled products (KRAV/Ecological Farming and Änglamark). We want to have the production process and use of fertilizers and chemical substances controlled. Lamb meat from New Zealand is ridiculous when we can have locally produced lamb meat. We also prefer food products labelled Bra Miljöval/Good Environmental Choice before other labels on processed products. We have been members of Naturskyddsföreningen for a long time and feel trust in their way of supervising that kind of labelling. We are also members of Greenpeace. (Man, 35 years old, married with three children)

Older households more often want to do the cooking from raw ingredients.

I almost never use semi-manufactured products for cooking. I want to do everything from the beginning myself. It has led to an increasing awareness especially of the quality of vegetables. At the moment there are very few places I accept for purchase, some stands at the market-place and my nearby supermarket. Labelled products as KRAV/Ecological Farming are not important to me, but I want them to be of Swedish origin. I think we are better controlling the use of fertilizers for example. It is the same thing when I buy fish or chicken or meat. No foreign

products for me. I take notice of labelling and declarations of contents extremely seldom, as I almost never buy semi-manufactured products. (Woman, 55 years old, two children)

Another dividing line between older and younger generations of food consumers is that young people seem to watch their behaviour from more extended perspectives than the older generation. They also classify themselves to be very environmentally aware on a ten graded scale.

We also look upon our food consumption from other perspectives. My wife is very aware of health aspects so we often buy low fat and fibre products labelled with Nyckelhålet/The Keyhole. Especially when my wife was pregnant we read a lot about the risks for one's health eating fish from lakes and fat fish from the sea, salmon for example. We watch several aspects of our consumption from health, environmental and animal rights perspectives when buying paper, using our washing machine or using our car. We are very environmentally aware and active in organisations. (Man, 35 years old, married with 3 children)

Neither husband nor wife are members in an organisation, but the husband score a 7 himself environmental awareness.

We try to be aware of how we use the car, we do our sorting of waste. I have read about the campaigns Naturskyddsföreningen perform now and then. I am very interested in local aspects on the environment. My daughter Anna is more interested in international aspects, human rights. Our perspectives differ. (Woman, 55 year old)

The concerned consumers belong to a large group of consumers with different motives for their attitudes and behaviour when buying food products. Health aspects is a factor with a very high priority on their agenda, which leads to a very careful choice of shopping places and especially for younger people an awareness of declaration of contents and labelling as a meaningful tool when shopping food products. Although the concerned consumers have a high degree of information about different aspects of food products their behaviour is very much restricted to the private sphere, e.g. care of family members and the close environment. The younger households are members of environmental organisations and thus promote organisational processes and sometimes they discuss food issues with friends. Older generations seem to be more locally oriented in their motives for consumption than younger generations when discussing food issues.

- Vegetarian food strategies

A number of surveys have been undertaken in order to estimate the share of vegetarians in Sweden. Although vegetarianism have been known and practised by individuals from the early 20th century in our country the

practising persons in those days were very few. Since the 1970s a steadily growing number of vegetarians can be noticed, including religious and cultural belonging among new immigrants. From survey results it is estimated that about 5 per cent of the population are vegetarians. About 3 per cent are supposed to be lacto-vegetarians and 2 per cent demi-vegetarians (Larsson & Johansson, 2002). The newcomers in the increasing number of vegetarians are younger individuals and women to a greater extent than men. However, there are uncertainties about these figures. The reservations around the figures are supposed to be an underestimation of the share of vegetarians rather than an overestimation. However, a fact is that the number of vegetarians are increasing, especially among young people. Besides being vegetarians they are an important group of food consumers.

In a British study vegetarians were found to promote health aspects and ethical aspects in their consumption (Kennedy, 2004). It was found that vegetarians have several arguments for being a vegetarian. Although ethical reasons are common they are not always the gateway to vegetarianism. It can as well start the other way around, e.g. socialised by private food strategies from parents or family members.

My mother is a vegetarian since a long time ago, my brother and sister also, but not my father. He was an expert preparing two kinds of meals every day. I liked his Spaghetti Bolognese very much. During my high school period I was a vegetarian for some period. Unfortunately I had to change my food strategy and eat meat products again. I ate too little and lost weight. I moved to England when I was twenty-one years old to study. It was easy to find good and tasty vegetarian food there. At the same time the English way of feeding and treating animals was terrible in my view. I felt ill just looking at meat products. Since then, seven years ago, I have been a vegetarian. Sometimes I eat cheese and yoghurt, but never eggs and no sweets containing gelatine. I never buy any kinds of fast food, since I can not stand the industrialised processes any longer. My mother is very happy about me being a vegetarian. (Man 28 years old, cohabiting)

But also children can introduce new food strategies in a family.

My daughter, eleven years old, made me change my/our private food strategy. When she was seven she became very interested in food and particularly how food was produced and the care for all kinds of animals. She informed herself and wrote a book about animals rights in school. Quite soon she refused to eat anything that was not vegetarian, e.g. fish, meat. Now my two daughters and I are vegetarians. My eldest daughter and I eat fish, and sometimes when we are guests somewhere we make an exception and eat a hamburger or file steak. But nowadays it is much easier to tell in advance that we do not eat meat products. As a child I lived in the countryside. We did not even know about vegetarians. But today it is very easy to cook vegetarian meals. I use ordinary recipes and change meat ingredients to vegetables according to my own liking. It is not difficult at all any longer, when I do not need to prepare two kinds of meals. My youngest daughter is also very interested in cooking. (Woman, 39 years old with two children)

Socialisation into a private food strategy can also have a starting point in a very personal experience.

During my pregnancies I had almost phobias. Expecting the first child I drank a lot of soft drinks. During the second pregnancy I was mad about salty sweets and during the last pregnancy I could not stand meat. I tried to cheat myself by buying sausages instead, because they looked nicer than pure meat, but it did not work. Since then, twenty-four years ago, I have been a vegetarian. Two of my children are also vegetarians and my husband. He is doing all the purchasing and enjoys it very much. The first years as a vegetarian were very tiresome. It was not so common and accepted in those days. But nowadays it is accepted. All our friends know that we do not eat meat and respect our standpoints totally when we meet. (Woman, 55 years old, married)

A third attitude to choosing vegetarianism can be more or less theoretically inspired.

I have been working in an organisation providing support to developing countries, I studied several environmental courses at university and now I work with environmental issues in my daily work. I have a lot of knowledge about environmental problems and the third world which makes me aware not only of environmental issues, but also of global perspectives on human rights and the environment. The ethical ideology behind my vegetarianism has developed gradually during more than ten years. My husband and my daughter (seven years old) are vegetarians too, they try to eat meat if it happens they are offered. But my little son loves meat. (Woman, 37 years old, married with two children). My job has increased my awareness about food and environmental issues which has increased my confidence in vegetarianism. I myself have been a vegetarian for about twenty years now. My husband and my children are also vegetarians. I think I was born a vegetarian. Even as a child I liked and preferred beans, spinach and all kinds of vegetables, quite opposite to other children of my age, who liked meat and meat balls. At the age of eighteen I decided to be a vegetarian and to accept that I liked vegetarian meals better than anything else. (Woman, 38 years old, married with two children).

Shopping is sometimes a difficult task for vegetarians. Most often it has to do with finding a varied supply of good quality vegetables. Everybody has their favourite places to do their shopping. These shopping places are carefully sorted out and along the way other shops are more or less boycotted for various reasons.

We like spicy and tasty meals with a variation of vegetables and fruits. We often mix basic Swedish vegetables, like carrots, onions and potatoes with more exotic ones and fruits. I have two shops where I buy almost everything. These shops have a number of brands that we have found out have good products. We have no car, which means that we have to find what we need on biking distances, so we can never buy vegetables directly from farmers. I almost never buy semi-manufactured products, besides quorn beefs. I am aware of labelling and often ta-

ke a look at vegetables labelled with KRAV/Ecological Farming, but it is not important for what I buy. I am more interested in where the vegetables are being produced. I prefer Swedish products and when I buy other products, grapes for example, I place them in water for at least an hour to get rid of all chemicals used to protect them from insects. That is the way I handle products of foreign origin to protect our health from chemicals. Among all labels I prefer Nyckelhålet/The Keyhole declaring low fat and fibre contents. I prefer quality to a low price. Among other products I prefer products which are not tested on animals, which has the consequence that I have to go to special shops for buying shampoo and soaps. My vegetarianism has had a spill-over effect on all our everyday consumption. Especially my daughter presents a lot of facts and arguments which are important to take into consideration. She asked for vegetarian cheese, when she got to know via Internet that it existed. I asked our dealer and he introduced vegetarian cheese in his assortment. I was astonished that it was possible to influence quite a big shop to do so for customers. To me health aspects are most important. I am very interested in the development of functional food and search for information and products on the Internet. (Woman, 39 years old)

Moving to a new place often leads to a long period of missing the old shopping places before new ones have been sorted out.

When we moved from a big city with several marketplaces and supermarkets to a small town it was very difficult to find both a variation of supply and good quality of vegetables. The number of shops was also very restricted. We were forced into a more active shopping behaviour. Once a week my husband drives to a nearby town to do some shopping. I have spoken several times to our local dealer to encourage him to enlarge his supply of fruits, vegetables and quorn products. He was willing to do so and in a few days all things I had asked for were in place. I noticed soon that the products I asked for were sold out when I came for shopping. There must be some more vegetarians living in this town, who appreciated the enlargement of the assortment. Nowadays my dealer always has a few items of the products he knows I am asking for in stock. Today it works very well to be a vegetarian in a small town. But you have to be active. Obviously there are more vegetarians living here, who have never discussed the supply with our dealer. (Woman, 55 years old)

Most vegetarians belong to households with quite high incomes, they are well-informed and can afford to buy products without looking at the price. They also choose places for shopping which are known to be high quality stores in general. But what happens when the price of products must be considered?

It was very difficult for me to find new places for shopping when we moved to this area. All my routines failed. As I have two small children, and I am working full time, commuting to my workplace, my time for shopping is very restricted. Earlier I had several prejudices to some of the shops in the neighbourhood, especially the low price supermarkets. However, we got a decrease in our family income and I had to watch the prices carefully. So it happened that I visited our low price supermarket. There was an enormous supply of vegetables and quorn products. I was astonished and I also found that the quality was good. It is important that most of the fresh products I buy are of Swedish origin, but they need not be

labelled with KRAV/Ecological Farming any more. On a monthly base I calculated a monetary saving of SEK 1.500 (about 20-25 percent reduction of costs for food) for our family doing my shopping in the low-price market. My prejudices have vanished. Now I take note on fresh and good quality and place of origin, I rely more my feeling and knowledge than before. (Woman, 38 years old)

For some vegetarians the ethical and ideological aspects are very much in the foreground together with health and quality aspects.

In our family it is very important that the food we buy is labelled KRAV/Ecological Farming or Fair Trade. We actively look for such products and we go to special shops to buy our coffee labelled fair trade for example. I ask our dealers for labelled products and very often they can do something for us. Also in other spheres of consumption and lifestyle we take animals rights, human rights and global aspects into consideration. I think our academic background and my daily work with at least environmental issues are important factors. I am an active member of Naturskyddsföreningen, Världsnaturfonden as well as Amnesty International. (Woman 37 years old)

From the in-depth interviews in this pilot study we notice that vegetarians seem to practice political consumerism in a variety of ways. They influence their dealers to enlarge their assortment. They tell friends about their vegetarianism and have gained respect for their standpoint and eating practice. Several of those who have been vegetarians for a long time argue that it is much easier to get respect nowadays from friends than earlier. Close friends notify very carefully what can be accepted. A few try to influence their working place.

I work in a children's day care centre and I discuss with our cook quite often the vegetables we use the possibility to introducing new kinds of vegetarian meals. She is very interested and she uses my proposals, especially when it comes to buying vegetables. (Woman, 39 years old)

However, besides discussing their private food strategy with friends and colleagues they stay private with their food practice (Barmark, 2000). The role of labelling plays a second hand role in their shopping. They buy semi-manufactured products to a little extent and rely more on aspects of food origin and ethics. In a wider perspective some of them support organisations on environmental, animals rights, or human rights issues, but only a few seem to work actively in the relevant organisations.

- Vegan food strategies

It is more difficult to get figures about the share of vegans in Sweden compared to vegetarians. There is a national organisation for vegans with about 25.000 registered members. However, many vegans are not organised and do not even know about the organisation. A number of minor

surveys estimates of the share of vegans is about 0,1 per cent. They are often people with high education and professionals with a strong ideological background for their food consumption and lifestyle. Also in international research very little can be found about veganism, at least when it comes to consumption.

The way to veganism sometimes has a background in vegetarianism. To be a vegan means a change of life-style almost completely and in a way to marginalise oneself from a collective life of food consumption. To a vegan the private food strategy has a strong ideological base either based on moral and ethics or political values.

I was a vegetarian for ten years, before I switched over to veganism about two years ago. It was my girl-friend who took the initiative. My parents are farmers and I grew up in the countryside. The farm is still in family ownership. My brother and I are supposed to take over, but I am studying and intend to finish my medicine studies and practice the profession. My mother is a vegetarian and nowadays we produce vegetables and ostriches (a local dealer wanted that kind of meat and my parents agreed. It is a moral dilemma to me and at the same time respect the older generation). We are working for a qualification of our products according to KRAV/Ecological Farming labelling. It was not difficult for me to become a vegetarian as I never liked animal products, milk and cheese for example. The philosophy behind my veganism stems from my private thoughts and from my free wish. It is like an endogenous power, which has nothing to do with political ideologies at all. Already as a vegetarian I had a strong dislike in the way animals were treated in the food industry. As a student I have extended knowledge about diets, medical processes and effects. Besides that I do not estimate animal products at all. I feel better physically as vegan than I did before. To become a vegan was to fulfil my private philosophy more or less. Today I avoid everything with ingredients originating from animals, like sauces based on beef cubes, sweets with gelatine and so on. It is better to avoid such things totally than to try to find out the ingredients from the table of contents, as some ingredients are often not declared. Labelling, such as KRAV/Ecological Farming and Ånglamark as well as declaration of contents are good help in shopping food. When I haphazardly have been served something which include only a bit of beef cubes I feel physically ill, although I did not know about it in advance. Many people, also friends, think that such minor ingredients do not matter. But it does directly. I eat salad and fresh fruit and nothing else to be sure. My girlfriend and I almost never visit a restaurant. The waiters most often do not know if a meal is strictly vegetarian or not. None of us have allergic diseases, but I have been worried about our health being a vegan. I had a B12 test taken and it was ok! I am aware of effects on my health in details, which makes me using natural products only, like ascorbine (C-vitamin) for conserving vegetables and fruits. (Man, 31 years old, cohabiting)

I was active in the Syndicalistic Youth Union when I was studying. In those days I was as supporter of activists, took part in demonstrations and so on. The development of my veganism started in that way. In the left wing political organisations you can find several vegans. Socialism as an ideology is not that far from what is basic for a vegan. I have never been a vegetarian, so I went directly from being a "normal" person to be a vegan. My father has a supermarket in a minor town and from him I sometimes get vegetables and food products that I can ac-

cept. I try to influence him to widen his supply of products and he is interested. Friends do not understand my private food strategy and it is sometimes a bit tricky for me to find something to eat when we meet. I am a social worker and my colleagues have almost no understanding for my eating. They often neglect to order something which suits me when we have meetings for example. Although it can be troublesome to be a vegan I have managed for two years now and will probably continue. (Man, 23 years old, single)

To be a vegan is to perform a special life-style, which easily can be isolating in relations with other people. Practising the food strategy takes time as far as shopping and preparing meals are concerned and it is extremely important feeling in control of fresh products and ingredients in semi-manufactured products. As a consequence the vegans have to do their shopping in several places to satisfy all aspects of their ideological motives.

I do my shopping in a number of stands in the marketplace, but also in one supermarket with a rich supply of labelled products that I ask for. But it is not enough. To satisfy my need for fair trade products I have to go to global world shops and some immigrants also have a good supply of products which they can guarantee the ethical aspects behind the products. They often know the producer and import directly. From them I can widen my diet with more exotic products. I have found my shops, so there is no need for me to influence them to offer something else. Then it is worse in my workplace. I have tried to introduce my vegan meals when we have meetings, but so far no progress in understanding and behaviour can be noticed. When I was younger I took part in organised demonstrations, but I am not active any longer. To be a vegan seems to be extremely exotic to many people, they accept, but it has no impact on their way of thinking. I am extremely environmentally aware and score environmental issues to be most important in society, but the way to handle that issue and yield results is by politics and policy instruments. (Man, 23 years old)

We have found one supermarket where we can find many labelled products (KRAV/Ecological Farming, Ånglamark) that we prefer buying. The marketplace in a big city is like a paradise with all sorts of vegetables and fruits. There are lots of immigrants living in the neighbourhood, and lots of products they ask for suit us well. The supply is very well served for as we have to do our shopping almost daily to get fresh products. It will be worse when we move to a smaller town. (Man, 31 years old)

Vegans heavily stress their ideological motivation for food consumption. Policy instruments such as labelling of products and declarations of contents of products are important for their choice, but also access to shops where products can be guaranteed for fair trade, whether they are labelled or not. Their food strategy is time consuming regarding shopping and it is hardly accepted by friends and colleagues. The respondents stress the importance of policy instruments to get better and acceptable food products rather than more informal ways to influence.

Discussion

There is a number of policy instruments implemented within the food sector. The government use the policy instruments to address several actors in the food chain from producers to consumers. The policy instruments most often used when addressing consumers are information, e.g. labelling of products or economic instruments, e.g. pricing and taxing, and legislation. There is a lot of knowledge concerning food consumption, changes in preferences and differences between consumer groups according to generation, gender and income for example. A large share of consumers is aware of labelling of products and declarations of contents and uses them when buying food. Thus, on an aggregate level the knowledge regarding consumer groups and trends are quite good. Less known, however, are the ways and strategies to inform oneself as a consumer and make practical use of information to satisfy needs of quality, price, ethical aspects in relation to private values. In this pilot study questions are raised; how consumers establish private food strategies, how they use policy instruments to inform themselves about food and what strategies they use when buying food products and influencing the market and other people. A number of in-depth interviews with three categories of consumers are performed, concerned consumers, vegetarians and vegans. The aim of the study is to be able to systematise concepts and strategies to influence the production and supply of food, rather than to present valid empirical results.

To all three groups of consumers health aspects and environmental aspects of food consumption are very important and closely related, which also have been found in surveys. Younger generations and those relying on some sort of ideology often widen their ethical perspectives on consumption by including animals rights, human rights and fair trade to a greater extent than older generations. The differences in perspectives seem to be related to the private food strategy. The added values and perspectives are more consciously pronounced by vegetarians and vegans in particular in comparison to concerned consumers. The health perspectives seem to be most important to middle aged concerned consumers, who stress the importance of not only ones personal health, but also the health of family members. The selection of interviews with concerned consumers, vegetarians and vegans was done in order to get as much information as possible from persons who are supposed to reflect very consciously on their motives for food consumption.

The personal choice of food strategies shows a great variation. For some individuals strong ideologies about animals rights, human rights and ethical ideologies are important. Such perspectives are stressed by vegans, some vegetarians and young persons in all three groups. Other ways of developing private food strategies are via inspiration and pressure from family members, either from parents or children.

When buying food and semi-manufactured food products declarations of contents and labelling are carefully and in a critical way used by vegans and vegetarians, which quite often lead to more trust in personal ideology and extended knowledge from other sources than policy instruments. However, they have trust in national policy instruments as an important way to influence consumers. Concerned consumers, on the other hand, have great trust in policy instruments and the way NGOs supervise the labelling processes. Labelling, in particular, is a good help in buying products and different labels are well known to them.

Political consumerism in its wide sense influences the market, national policy or personal relations. These are performed by all groups but in different ways. Concerned consumers carefully choose their place for shopping in order to find out where they can find the products and quality they ask for. They boycott shops and supermarkets they do not like in an individualised way. Vegetarians do the same, but they also more actively influence the market by discussing desirable food products with dealers. It is still an individualised way of influencing the market but visible and pronounced in an active way, which also has positive effects for other and more passive consumers. Some of the vegetarians holding a wider ideological base for their consumption also watch extended aspects of consumption as fair trade and influence the market and national policy by being members in environmental, animal rights and human rights organisations. Some perform their membership very actively. They influence the market and national policy by individualistic as well as collectivistic actions. Their private food strategy has a well-founded ideological base, which stresses ethical or political ideologies. They use labelling and declarations of contents when buying food, but want to be sure and often distrust the information. They do their shopping in several carefully chosen places to fulfil their ideology. They ask dealers for information and thus influence the shop-keepers in an individualised way. But their trust is in political processes and they stress the importance of labelling and national policy, including animals rights, human rights and fair trade.

Theoretical perspectives of political consumerism stress the power and influence performed by consumers in an individualised or collectivistic way. With the interviews in this study as a background provides at least two other dimensions that ought to be taken into consideration. Consumers express their power and influence in an *informal* or a *formal* way. The choice of places and shops for purchasing food can be performed as an individual choice or in a collectivistic way by establishing a group of demonstrators or by being a member of an organisation. The exercise of power and *influence can be performed on several levels in society*. On the *local level* talking to the dealer is an individualistic and informal way of influence, as well as discussing with friends and colleagues. A formal way of influencing the local situation is to perform protests by occasionally organising local people against local producers or dealers e.g. The

milk mothers. The *national level* can be influenced formally by being a member of an NGO passively or actively or in an individualistic way by letters to the press. On the *global level* a collectivistic way to influence is by being a member of an organisation. The individualistic way to influence the global level is for example to buy products labelled Fair Trade. However, this is a pilot study trying to formulate additional perspectives to be taken into account when studying political consumerism, rather than a general validation of a number of private food strategies.

Note! The interviews were performed by PhD Erika Jørgensen, Department of sociology during the spring of 2004. In-depth interviews with 2 concerned consumers, 2 vegans and 5 vegetarians were performed: 4 men and 5 women, 55 to 23 years old, living in households with at least 2 members, and 1 single person.

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11. Between the State and the Market: The political struggle between the animal rights movement and the Swedish fur industry

Mattias Wahlström and Abby Peterson

Abstract

This study is an attempt to widen the perspective on the relationship between a business/business sector and its external stakeholders to include social movements. The article is centred on the case of the Swedish animal rights movements' political pressure on domestic fur farming. We depart from a three-part model of political opportunity structures including the state, cultural and economic opportunity structures. The animal rights movement has had considerable success by engaging with a relatively open cultural opportunity structure, winning a framing war as to the moral issues raised. In spite of the fur industry's attempts to counter-mobilize, the animal rights movement has found a hearing in the formal political channels and has achieved considerable success. However, since the movement is faced with an economic opportunity structure that is not vulnerable to the demands of stakeholders, and where the discrepancy is great between the interests of the industry and the demands of the stakeholders, it is not surprising that the farmers have been non-compliant.

Introduction

Contentious politics organised within the frameworks of social movements understood broadly as political action networks have enjoyed a dramatic resurgence during the last decades. In both national and transnational political contexts people are increasingly extending their civic participation beyond traditional forms of political participation. Going to the polls, lobbying or participation in established political parties, while they continue to be major avenues for political participation, are not the only avenues for civic activism. We can observe a diversification of the types

of activities used for political expression, from mass demonstrations to Internet networking, street protests, direct action and consumer boycotts. And as Pippa Norris (2001) points out, the targets of contentious politics are diversifying as well, beyond exclusively nation-state actors, to international agencies and intragovernmental organisations, as well as to economic actors, national and multinational corporations and enterprises, industrial sectors or branches, etc. Citizens are more and more engaging with the market, lodging their challenges and concrete demands directly to businesses and corporations. (cf. Micheletti, 2003)

The goal of this article is to illustrate how social movement theories can contribute to an analysis of corporate social responsibility and stakeholder pressure. The study can be characterized as an attempt to widen the perspective on the relationship between a business/business sector and its external stakeholders to include social movements and their incumbent social movement organisations (SMOs), as well as action networks. In order to capture the sense of political agency on the part of social movements in relation to corporations and business sectors in the remaining pages we will be using the notion of ‘stakeseeker’, for these groups. Organisations, groups and action networks, which actively seek out and define a stake in the corporation/business sector, are generally not securely “holding” a stake, but need to “seek it out” and defend it from contestation (cf. Holzer, 2004). ‘Stakeseeker’ is therefore a more appropriate term.

In contrast with most stakeholders which traditionally more or less share the interests of corporations and business sectors, SMOs are *external* observers and the corporation’s/business sector’s survival or profitability does not directly affect their interests. “Therefore their logic of action often runs counter to the interests of the corporations” (Holzer, 2004, 11). Whereas many stakeholders primarily call into question the “pragmatic legitimacy” of a corporation/business sector, that is, whether the corporation’s/sector’s activities are in their best interests, SMOs will tend to challenge the “moral legitimacy” of a corporation/sector by appealing to widely held societal norms and cultural values (cf. Suchman, 1995). Subsequently, “moral legitimacy reflects a prosocial logic that differs fundamentally from narrow self-interest” (p. 579), which underlines the logic of stakeholder struggles more generally engaged with the pragmatic legitimacy of a corporation/sector.

We will attempt to create on the one hand a model of what factors have implications for the effectiveness of different action strategies, and on the other hand an analysis of the effect these strategies have on each other. We will try to enhance an understanding of the social movement’s field of action, pointing out both opportunities and constraints posed by state, as well as non-state actors and institutions.

The article will be centred on the case of the Swedish animal rights movements’ political pressure on domestic fur farming. This case has

been chosen since it lends itself well to a sociological analysis of the structure of political opportunities for stakeholders to instigate change. More specifically, our question is how to make intelligible, partly the choice of methods by different factions of the animal rights movement, partly the varying success of these methods, starting from a version of the concept of *Political Opportunity Structure* (POS).⁹⁶

The concept of POS was introduced by Eisinger (1973) and its current use is strongly influenced by McAdam (1982) and Tarrow (1994). It is an expression of an attempt to analyze the (political) circumstances that have an effect on social movements' emergence, structure, scope and success (McAdam, McCarthy & Zald, 1996). What is distinctive about this theory is its emphasis on external structures influencing the movement, instead of focusing on structures within the movement itself. The scientific use of the concept of POS can be generalized as an attempt to connect the local, and sometimes temporary, characteristics of a movement to its concrete context. The structures are specific to different locations and can vary from time to time. A POS is generally described as more or less open, where a more open structure facilitates the emergence of certain movements and makes it easier for a social movement to influence the political system from a particular aspect – the 'input' side of policy processes. A POS can also be described as more or less strong in regards to a polity's capacity for policy implementation – the 'output' side (Hilson, 2002, 243; Kitschelt, 1986).

Normally, increased opportunities for a movement have to be apprehended, framed, as opportunities by activists to have an effect on a movement's emergence or shape (Gamson & Meyer, 1996). However, to the extent that the structure affects the success of the movement, unnoticed parts of the political opportunity structure can have an effect as well. An unknown conflict between elites will of course not affect the mobilization of a protest group, but once it has started to act the division could very well influence the result of the action.

The causal relation between the POS and the activity of a social movement is not a one-way street. Not only does the POS have an effect on a movement, but movements can also contribute to the creation of opportunities for themselves, changing the POS (cf. Della Porta, forthcoming). Likewise, the development and actions of a social movement may cause the POS to become more closed than it was earlier during the protest-cycle of the movement. Donatella della Porta, for example, has carried out research on the reciprocity between movements and the POS, in this case the repression by the state (della Porta, 1996).

⁹⁶ We will be using the concept in terms of structure, aware that some of the aspects we will be emphasizing are rather contingent and unstable, and may therefore not appear as 'structural' in some senses of the term. Therefore, some have suggested that one should simply speak of 'political opportunities' (Rootes, 1997; Hilson, 2002). In our view, structures do not necessarily have to be very stable, and we will consequently stick to the original concept for the time being.

Doug McAdam (1996) has examined how a number of influential researchers use the concept of POS, and has put forth a set of four aspects that should be included in the concept:

- 1) the relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system; 2) the stability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity; 3) the presence of elite allies; 4) the state's capacity and propensity for repression (p. 27).

The first of these aspects concerns the formal structure of the government, particularly people's actual access to the political system. The other aspects concern the informal and more contingent power relations of the political system. While agreeing with his general line of reasoning, we would also like to include: 5) the relative strength of the judiciary. This aspect relates to policy implementation, and more specifically to the relative independence and authority of the judiciary (Hilson, 2002; cf. Michelletti, 1994, 38f).

It is evident from McAdam's analysis that he is primarily concerned with structural factors shaping the relations between social movements and the state. In order to be able to analyze movements that are active on an international arena, the concepts 'transnational POS' and 'international POS' have recently appeared in the literature (e.g. Martens, 2001; McCarthy, 1997).

Gamson and Meyer (1996) argue in favour of a distinction between the cultural and institutional aspects of the POS. The latter more or less corresponds to McAdams list in their model, while they argue for the inclusion of cultural aspects of the POS with factors such as values, myths and worldviews (more stable), as well as zeitgeist, class-consciousness and media representations (more contingent). The attempt to include cultural factors in the POS has been criticized on the grounds that it makes the concept too inclusive, and that it thereby loses its "analytical bite" (McAdam, 1996). However, regardless of whether cultural factors are included in the POS or not, the cultural factors that Gamson and Meyer (1996) mention belong to a general societal structural environment that influences a movement's emergence, shape and possibility of bringing about change. Their approach to POS in their own version is that the concept

is too broad to be useful by itself in helping us to understand what conditions or circumstances produce more or less space for movement action. Any explanatory power comes from the specific variables that are part of it (pp. 282-283).

We argue that it is important to uphold interesting distinctions by keeping relatively broad concepts as clearly defined as possible. It is useful to have access to concepts, which retain their explanatory power, but which nevertheless are more wide-ranging than the specific aspects of POS

mentioned by either Gamson and Meyer or McAdam. Subsequently, the model we propose is both more comprehensive while it is at the same time analytically restricted. We will limit our definition of what we call the *state opportunity structure* (SOS) to McAdam's concept of the POS, in addition to our fifth aspect related to judiciary strength/weakness. In order to include the external cultural factors which Gamson and Meyer emphasize we postulate a *cultural opportunity structure* (COS) beside the state opportunity structure in our model.

Now that we have distinguished two types of "political opportunity structures" in a social movement's field of action, a gap presents itself in the picture. Where do economic institutions come in? Do not the structures of these institutions have implications for social movements and their outcomes? Perhaps we should make it clear that we are not referring to economic structures in the Marxian sense, i.e. the structure of the economic system as a whole, but rather to the meso- and microstructures of profit-seeking institutions. Hypothetically, the structures that are influential in a similar way as the SOS and the COS belong primarily to economic institutions targeted by a social movement, when SMOs try to manoeuvre in the context of these institutions.

This perspective is especially relevant in the current situation where social movement organizations (SMO's) increasingly direct their protests towards businesses and corporations (Klein, 2000). Generally, people in Western Europe and North America increasingly turn directly to companies with their demands for change of their practices, in addition to, or instead of, going through the state (Micheletti, 2003). More and more people in Western Democracies take part in consumer boycotts (Norris, 2002:198). Consumers generally level more powerful demands at companies, regarding influence, transparency, and responsibility, not unlike citizens' demands on governments (cf. Vogel, 1996, 182). Even though structural factors connected with the nation-state still may have the most decisive external influence on the majority of the social movements around the world, it does not seem far-fetched to seek an analogue to the SOS among the companies/branches that a movement target.

This may be a way of amending what Jasper and Poulsen (1993) call two blind spots in most POS literature, namely the absence of other actors besides social movements and the state, as well as the dynamic interactions between a social movement and its environment. In their article they show how characteristics of, and responses from, economic organizations have an effect on the success of campaigns directed against them. It is also reasonable to suppose that, on a more general level, the total effect of opportunity structures related to culture, economic institutional environment and the state is a major explanatory factor of macro phenomena, such as the general tendency to use boycotts as a political tool in different regions or nation states. The strength of this theoretical approach is most importantly revealed in comparative studies of, for instance, dif-

ferences between companies, states, or different periods in time. However, since the aim of this paper is to explain and illustrate this theory, and not to test it, we will presently focus on a single case.

Our conclusion from these considerations is that in order to achieve an understanding of the external factors influencing contemporary social movements, one should construct a model of political opportunity structures, including characteristics of the state and the dominant political culture, the cultural tendencies of the action environment, and economic actors. In the remaining pages will introduce and illustrate our draft for such a three-part model. To begin with, we will present our empirical case⁹⁷ - Swedish fur farming and the domestic animal rights movement's struggle against it. Thereafter, the theoretical model will be presented, which will be elucidated by applying it to our case.

Fur Breeding in Sweden

In Sweden, mink and chinchilla are the two main species that are bred as fur products. In addition there is marginal fur farming of polecats, and fur can be a by-product from rabbits bred for their meat (*Djurens Valfärd och Pälsdjursnäringen* [DVP], 2003). Foxes have formerly been reared for their fur, but since the legislation regarding required living standards for foxes became more demanding in 1995, the industry is now non-existent.

The first mink breeder in Sweden started his business in 1928 (*De stängda burarna*, 2004). Today, mink farming is by far the largest fur industry, including about 180 farms and currently producing roughly 1,300,000 fur skins a year. Mink farming is spread throughout the country from Lycksele in the north of Sweden, to Simrishamn in the very south. All but a small minority of the fur breeders are members of the Swedish Fur Breeders Association (Sveriges Pälsdjursuppfödarens riksförbund), which was founded in 1938. This association administers the interests of fur farmers, in addition to funding research and providing recommendations for the farmers. Together with the equivalent associations in the other Nordic countries, the Swedish Fur Breeders Association is part-owner of the world-renowned marketing organisation *SAGA Furs*, which works with information campaigns and public relations, as well as design.

There are about 30,000,000 skins produced yearly in the world, of which the Swedish production amounts to slightly more than 4% of the total global production. The largest producer is neighbouring Denmark,

⁹⁷ The empirical material in this study is of both qualitative and quantitative character. However, our treatment of it will be purely qualitative, in the sense that no statistical connections will be calculated. The quantitative data is merely used to indicate tendencies of our object of study. The qualitative data consists in interviews with representatives of Animal Rights Sweden, the Animal Protection Sweden and the Swedish Fur Breeders Association, and documents such as reports from the Swedish Security Police, as well as bills and transcribed debates in the Swedish Parliament.

which produces 40% of all the mink furs in the world, fully 12 million skins a year. Fur farming is found in 25 countries in the world and most of the production is centred in Europe. According to the Swedish Fur Breeders Association, Russia is currently the largest importer of furs.

During the last decade, there have been some clear changes in the domestic market of fur products in Sweden. Even though sufficiently detailed statistics of sold fur products are unavailable, we can for instance note a significant decrease in both the number of fur retailers as well as in the number of employees in this branch. From 1993 to 2002 the number of shops specializing in the sale of furs has decreased from 129 to 57, while their employees have diminished from 213 to 177, according to statistics from SCB.

The number of fur breeders has diminished as well, from 213 breeders in 1995 to 162 breeders in 2002 (Source: SCB). It is important to note that the total number of mink breeders estimated by the Swedish Fur Breeders Association (about 195 in 2002) is generally slightly higher than these figures. However, the general trend appears to correspond to reality. However, it is again not evident that the decrease in the number of breeders corresponds to a decrease in the demand from either the Swedish or the global market. Rather it seems to be a combination of a slight overproduction, as well as an expression of the general tendency that agricultural businesses are growing in size and decreasing in numbers. While the branch as a whole has not been affected by the increase in direct actions carried out by militant activists, some small breeders in Sweden have been affected. Their actions have resulted in some cases with a rise in the insurance rates for breeders, as well as increased costs for security at the farms. These added economic costs for fur breeders are of course most acutely felt by the smaller farmers.

Meanwhile, the production of mink skins has been relatively stable during the last decade (about 1,300,000 skins, according to *DVP*, 2003) and the number of female minks for breeding has been more or less constant during the same period (*Svensk jorsbruksstatistisk årsbok*, 2003). So while domestic consumption appears to have decreased, this has not affected the domestic production of furs. The statistics are not unambiguous, but indicate relatively clearly that there is no decrease in skins exported. So while the number of fur farms has decreased, the value of the skins exported in 2002 is almost three times that of 1995. The table below shows the value of fur skins going on export from 1995 to 2002.

Figure 1: Value of total export of mink products from Sweden, 1995-2002.

Source: SCB.

Additionally, when studying the amount of fur imported we can see a clear decrease during the last years.

Figure 2: Value of total Swedish import of mink products 1995-2002.

Source: SCB

Fur farming is regulated by the Animal Protection Act (SFS 1988:534). It stipulates that animals should be well treated and protected from unnecessary suffering (physical and psychological) or illness. Animals in captivity must be looked after and given sufficient amounts of food. Additionally, animals must be kept in an environment that is beneficial for their

health and enables them to “behave naturally” (4 §). Formally, these prescriptions cannot be balanced with regards to loss of production capacity; the law is in this sense absolute. It is not entirely obvious, however, exactly how ‘natural behaviour’ ought to be defined. There are two competing suggestions: either ‘natural behaviour’ denotes the behaviour of the same species in the wild, or it simply means the inherited biological needs of the animal. The latter is a considerably narrower group of behaviours, and one that is less demanding for the breeders to safeguard. One phenomenon that is generally used for indicating an absence of opportunities for the animals behaving naturally is the presence of stress reactions, such as stereotypes⁹⁸ in their behaviour. Whether certain common mink behaviour, e.g. pacing in their cages, should be regarded as stereotypes or as ordinary “exercise” is subject to a framing competition between breeders and the animal rights movement (cf. *DVP*, 2003). The issue of the fur industry’s compliance with the Animal Protection Act is treated in the state commission’s report *Djurens Vålfärd och Pälsdjursnäringen* (2003). While chinchilla breeding is deemed to comply with the Animal Protection Act, mink breeding is considered deficient with regards to the “natural behaviour requirement”. (p. 33) The report suggests that mink breeders should adjust their business to amend these deficiencies in accordance with scientific research, which clarifies the actual biological needs of minks. The report puts forward that “indications of non-compliance with section 4 of the Animal Protection Act should have ceased by the end of 2010 [or] the mink farming industry should be entirely or partially closed down” (p. 34).

The Animal Protection Act (16§) also stipulates that fur breeders require a license for their business. The local authorities are responsible for the supervision of the breeders’ adherence to the regulations. A new central public authority for animal protection has, moreover, recently been established. Additionally, there are recommendations for fur farming produced by the EU, as well as the Swedish Department of Agriculture (Jordbruksverket) (SJVFS 2003:6, L 100). These concern regulations of cage size and design, access to water, as well as dealing with stress reactions of the animals.

The Animal Rights Movement

There are three major non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) working with animal rights or animal protection in Sweden: Animal Rights Sweden (Förbundet Djurens Rätt), Animal Protection Sweden (Djurskyddet Sverige), and The Swedish Animal Protection Organization (Svenska Djurskyddsföreningen). Animal Rights Sweden, founded in 1882, is the

⁹⁸ ‘stereotype’ refers to ‘a tendency to think or act in rigid, repetitive, and often meaningless patterns’.

largest and seemingly the most politically active NGO. Its initial primary objective was abolishing the suffering of animals in scientific experiments. The organization entered the struggle for the rights of fur animals in the 1970s, and today this struggle is central in its work. The association works for the rights of animals on two levels. On the one hand, its goal is to ultimately abolish fur farming, while on the other hand they work for the existing farms to follow the current legislation. The forms of action vary. In order to influence legislation their political strategies include protest demonstrations, traditional lobbying, as well as participation in government commissions on animal rights, making use of the Swedish State's corporate structure. Their cultural strategies to transform public opinion on these issues include information campaigns and strategies to actively access its messages in the media. Finally, the organisation's economic strategies directed towards market actors include boycotts and pre-written e-mails sent to the targets of the campaigns. We can see that the organization both provides a developed frame for its members' activities, at the same time as it facilitates individualized collective action (Micheletti, 2003) through information leaflets and homepages.

Animal Protection Sweden is also critical of fur farming, given its current state. Unlike Animal Rights Sweden, it is not acting in favour of a ban of fur farming, even though it promotes changes in legislation that would make such breeding in practice unprofitable. Animal Protection Sweden does not organize boycotts, but focuses on lobbying politicians.

Within the broader animal rights movement in Sweden, there are activist networks with a radical approach to animal rights issues, which often employ illegal means for conveying their message, for example, graffiti, inflicting damage on property, and threats of violence (*Brottslighet kopplad till rikets inre säkerhet 2002* and 2003). These action strategies are not condoned by the wider animal rights movement, and do not appear to have had serious economic effects upon the fur farming branch as a whole, although some individual breeders have been hurt financially. However, they are psychologically very straining on the individual fur farmers, and tend to create animosity and suspicion towards established animal rights organizations. The number of illegal actions by animal rights activists appears to have reached a peak in the middle of the 1990s. Regrettably, the systematic mapping by the state security police did not commence until 1997, which means that our statistics only display a decline from this year on, aside for a rise in 2002.

Figure 3: Number of reported crimes connected with animal rights activism, 1997-2002.

Source: Brottslighet kopplad till rikets inre säkerhet 2002. (2003:67)

The largest groups of offences are unlawful damage (*olaga skadegörelse*), scrawling or graffiti (*klotter*) and unlawful threat/molesting (*olaga hot/ofredande*). The report of the Swedish security police *Brottslighet kopplad till rikets inre säkerhet 2002* (2003, 72) also shows that the most common targets of animal right crimes have been fur breeders and furriers. Concrete examples of crimes are cages cut open and animals released, windows of furriers broken and nearby walls scrawled with messages such as “animal liberation”, “murderers” and “we’re gonna kill you” (p. 69).

Finally, within the animal rights movement we also find people who, while not members of an organisation, nevertheless take part in demonstrations and individualized political action such as boycotts, so-called individualized collective action (cf. Micheletti, 2003).

The Conditions for Animal Rights Activism Directed against the Fur Industry

The question is now whether the actions of the animal rights movement in relation to the fur industry can be understood with the use of our model of opportunity structures. The interpretations below are necessarily tentative given the quality of our empirical materials, but nevertheless suffice for us to make some important theoretical distinctions and for sketching directions for future research.

We will base our analysis on a general model grounded on a synthesis of existing research. The aim of the model is to provide a general grip on a social movement’s environment and its interactions with its environment, while still maintaining some relevant analytical distinctions. In

relation to existing research on social movements within the *political process* approach, our contribution is to create a model that includes the dialectic of influence between the movement and possible non-state targets. In connection with CSR research, we hope to be able to widen the perspective on stakeholder influence by pointing at important elements of the context *beyond* the corporate/stakeholder interactions. Because of its aim to bring together different research traditions, the model is necessarily complex, and any systematic research using the whole model would be unavoidably very extensive. Subsequently, we wish to emphasize that we are not arguing against research which uses only a part of this model, or merely takes one of the relations, illustrated by arrows below, into consideration.

Figure 4: Theoretical model of the 'political opportunity structures' in a social movement's field of action.

The figure above describes the relations between the social movement and its formation, development and outcome on the one hand, and the structures connected with its field of action on the other. In order to make explicit the dynamic mechanisms of influence in the model, there is not only a structural level in the figure but also an agency level, which represents the concrete interactions between the movement and its environment. Corresponding to societal spheres, the structural level is divided into the three different political opportunity structures that were distinguished in the introduction – state, cultural and economic opportunity structures, SOS, COS, and EOS respectively. Depending on the goals and targets of the social movement, the separate aspects of the structures will differ in significance for the movement. However, the elements of the structures are not completely independent, but influence each other through other channels than the social movement. The boxes representing the structures interlinked with connecting lines illustrate this. For

instance, a change in public opinion (cultural opportunity structure) could have implications for how the police handle protest events (state opportunity structure) (cf. della Porta and Reiter, 1998). Also, there are borderline cases in the opportunity structures, which cannot unequivocally be placed in one or other of the boxes. For example, while we place mass media as the most important institution within the cultural opportunity structure, media access plays a crucial role in both the state opportunity structure (in placing issues on the political agenda), as well as for the economic/corporate opportunity structure (in mobilizing support or organizing resistance by targeted organisations against the demands lodged by stakeholders). This reminds us of the interplay between the three opportunity structures, which we will deal with in the conclusions to this article.

From the structures to the social movement box, the arrows are filled, which underscores the impact of the structures on the movement. However, the dashed arrows emphasize that under certain conditions social movements can create structural opportunities for themselves. The structures exert an influence on the movement, both directly – through the movement participants' apprehension of the structures – but also indirectly through their influences on the outcomes of the movement's interactions with its environment. As illustrated by the dashed arrows, this interaction can also have an effect on the shape of the structures, opening and closing opportunities for the movement. Again, the elements of the structure are not isolated but interconnected, meaning that an interaction in one area can indirectly change the structure in another.

In the model, the more specific aspects of each part of the structure are left out. This illustrates that each part of the structure can be treated as a single variable for analytical purposes, for example comparing the relative influence of the different parts of the structure on a movement. We will now proceed by applying the theoretical model to the case presented above. Each part of the structure will be treated separately, and some of their different aspects will be elaborated. In conclusion, we will discuss to what extent the empirical observations regarding the tactics and success of the animal rights movement can be explained by the three 'political opportunity structures' in our model.

The State Opportunity Structure

The relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system

By international standards, Sweden can be regarded as a relatively open political system, and it is generally easy for its citizens to gain access to its political institutions (Rothstein, 1995). Its highly developed corporate structure makes access particularly easy for movement organisations and

associations. Karl-Werner Brand (1985) summarized the comparative findings of a study of social movement marginalisation, respectively incorporation, by institutional politics in Western Europe and the United States, as primarily determined by the existence of corporate political structures. Sweden distinguished itself in this comparative study as a nation-state with a developed corporate structure, which readily incorporates movement organisations/associations, as well as their demands (or some of these demands) within traditional political channels and institutions. (see also Micheletti, 2003 and Rothstein 1992) An important example of such channels of influence is that proposed political measures often are referred to interest organizations for consideration. In the state commission's report on mink breeding mentioned above, two representatives for animal rights' SMOs (Animal Rights Sweden and Animal Protection Sweden) took an active part as experts, naturally balanced by two representatives from the fur breeders (*DVP*, 2003, 3).

Michele Micheletti (2003) points out that corporatist countries like Sweden have a better track record in regards to environmental issues in general, which would include animal rights. The highly institutionalized animal rights movement organisations (SMOs), such as Animal Protection Sweden, appear to be content lobbying within this open corporate state structure, apart from working with information to the public.

Some significant changes in the SOS appear to have taken place during the last century. We refer to changes in legislation, and the establishment of new public authorities, which creates better opportunities for the animal rights movement for supporting its grievances when addressing these to government. The establishment of the new Department for Animal Protection (*Djurskyddsmyndigheten*) is a step in the direction of a more open SOS for the animal rights movement, which is conversely becoming more closed for the interests of fur farming. Stricter legislation is, however, a double-edged sword since breeders can also use it for legitimating its practices as long as they comply or at least partially comply with its stipulations. Partial compliance is what Oliver (2001) designates as a pacifying tactic, which is employed by organisations, in our case fur farmers, in order to placate the authorities by following at least the minimum standards of care (pp.153-54).

Related to the issue of allies among the political elites, which we will discuss below, are general policy changes within the political establishment. During the last decades, noticeable changes have taken place, and issues related to animal rights are firmly planted on the political agenda. Animal protection issues have received more space in the political discussion and some important political decisions have been taken in the direction of improved conditions for animals in agriculture. During the last decade, a search in the database of the parliament (URL: <http://rixlex.riksdagen.se>, 15/1-2004) shows that 224 private bills, and 91 government bills, in some way have concerned 'animal protection'

(‘djurskydd’). Note, however, the political consensus on the importance of promoting economic activity in the countryside and in smaller towns; a frequently recurring argument, put forth by fur breeders and their local politicians, is that stricter legislation of fur farming would deal a serious economic blow to some rural areas.

Internationally, the SOS regarding the rights of fur animals also appears to have opened up. Fur farming was banned in Great Britain in 2003, and is in practice illegal in Austria and Switzerland. In Italy, new regulations will come into force in 2008, which will make mink breeding in practice impossible. Other European countries have lately been revising their policies on fur farming and there are indications of activity within the European Union on the issue. Simultaneously several eastern European countries are entering the European Union, which means that even more fur-producing countries will be affected by possible stricter regulations.

Regarding these changes in the political institutions, it is not surprising that the animal rights movement has placed considerable effort into further ‘improving’ the legislation.

The relative strength/weakness of the judiciary

Both the original animal protection act from 1944 (SFS 1944:219), as well as its newer version from 1988 (SFS 1988:534), makes it possible for the animal rights movement to anchor their claims in established legal norms. Highlighting the openness of the Swedish political system, the new Animal protection act in 1988 created an opportunity that a private person used to instigate a legal process in 1989 concerning the regulations of fox breeding. This process eventually led to stricter legislation on fox breeding, a step which made it subsequently easier to demand further regulations of other kinds of fur farming. Hilson (2002) separates legal from political opportunities and subsequently argues that only court-based litigation counts as a legal strategy. In our analysis we include a broader notion of legal strategies, including complaints lodged with the new Department for Animal Protection, which may choose to prove the complaints in the formal judiciary system. In contrast with a form of government which is built upon the principle of the division of power, where the judiciary bears a great responsibility in a system of checks and balances, Sweden’s form of government is based on the principle of the people’s sovereignty, where the judiciary is relatively autonomous from politics. Nevertheless, since 1974 when some constitutional changes were made the judiciary has some increased political power (Larsson, 1994: 349). However, how this increased judiciary power is used differs from those implemented in countries such as USA (based on a system of checks and balances), where individuals will tend to directly turn to the courts. Turning to the authorities, as opposed to an organization itself

suing for damages, is the normal strategy in the Swedish context. It should be noted that the amount of damages resulting from legal processes is generally quite low in Sweden compared to, for instance, the U.S., where court litigation is common (Hellner & Johansson, 2000). The major strength of legal strategies in the Swedish case is, therefore, not putting financial pressure on an opponent, but the possibility of establishing a legal praxis which businesses will have to comply with, or face closure by the authorities.

The stability of the broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity

The stability of elite alignments is the key to understanding the prevailing political culture in a country. In Sweden, the Social Democratic Party and its allied elites have more or less reigned in the country since the 1920s. The strong and highly stable Social Democratic leadership can also be characterized as proactive and problem-oriented, which has provided the animal rights movements with a stable focus and arena for its political action strategies. (cf. Micheletti, 2003; Rothstein, 1992) The dominant political culture in Sweden reflects this stability. The institutional political system is more open to traditional forms of civic activism, such as lobbying, organisation/association participation as a body to which government measures are referred to, and to a lesser degree, mass demonstrations. When looking for partners in political dialogues, the state is more apt to choose partners which resemble the state itself, that is, traditional associations in civil society, which marginalizes the more radical factions of the animal rights movement.

Presence of elite allies

The animal rights movement has three particularly significant categories of allies: politicians, journalists and scientists. Strictly speaking, only politicians belong to the state opportunity structure; the latter categories will be dealt with within the framework of the cultural opportunity structure. Individual politicians that have a particular interest in advocating the rights of animals in their respective parties are key elite allies. An example of an influential ally is Margareta Winberg, who made a case for the minks during her years as agricultural minister, causing controversy in 2001 (Fagerström, 2001) with her statements about banning mink farming. Naturally there are a number of politicians dedicated to animal protection or animal rights in the Social Democratic Party as well as in other Swedish parties (particularly on the political left). Their influence on policy varies, however. Judging by respondent narratives from the Social Democratic congress in 2001, the working class-culture that still

remains in the Social Democratic Party appears to provide a basis for some member's criticism against the "bourgeois" practice of wearing fur.

The state's capacity and propensity for repression

One could be tempted to suggest that the state's capacity, and propensity, for repression has remained unchanged with regards to the activities of the animal rights movement. The abilities of the state to physically protect the farmers from sabotage remain very weak. And the state does not appear to have employed any particular coercive measures against the more peaceful factions within the movement. No spectacular clashes between the animal rights movement and the police have occurred that are comparable to the recent conflicts between, for example, 'reclaim the streets' or 'anti-globalization' activists and the police. (cf. Björk & Peterson, 2002)

However, such assumptions can be misleading. An important change in the work of the state's repressive apparatus is the systematic mapping of the illegal activities of animal rights activists by the Swedish Security Police (SÄPO). This attention on the animal rights movement, and the labelling of its illegal activities as 'a threat to national inner security', is certainly a relevant change in the political opportunity structure in relation to the movement. The repression is primarily discursive rather than physical; the state contributes, through the police, to the framing of militant activists as illegitimate in their methods and, by association, perhaps also in their grievances. However, one can argue that surveillance of animal rights activists is more than discursive in the sense that it infringes upon their personal integrity. A telling example is the interrogation by Swedish Security Police of employees at school dining-halls on the island of Gotland about the names of vegetarian pupils. Given the Swedish history of registering dissenters (Töllborg, 1991; Peterson, 2001), this is certainly a very tangible form of repression. It is also a kind of repression that affects not only the militant activists, but also potentially everyone engaged in the struggle for animal rights.

Recent discussions in parliament also point towards attempts to close the political opportunity for the militant elements of the movement. Several ministers of parliament regard the attacks on fur farms and the threats to farmers as a serious threat to democracy in Sweden. Correspondingly there is a strong political will to improve police protection of furriers and fur farmers.

The Cultural Opportunity Structure

A cultural opportunity structure can be more or less open to the messages of the animal rights movement. It appears that the culturally based opportunities for the animal rights movement in general are increasingly open. In 1986 a research group studying Swedish worldviews and values posed the question: "Should one show greater respect for human-beings than for other living creatures? To their surprise only 37% responded affirmatively. In 1995 another questionnaire designed to capture Swedish worldviews and values found that 78% of the respondents felt that human-beings and other living creatures had the same intrinsic value and the same right to life! (Lundmark, 2000:33-35) Swedish values as to animal rights appears to be highly receptive to the messages of the movement.

The framing of veganism in the media, while still dominated by stereotypes, appears to have become more nuanced and slightly more positive in recent years (Stubbendorff & Thell, 2002). It remains a fact, however, that a majority of the population in Sweden still eat meat, and are not likely to change that habit overnight. The ultimate aim of many animal rights activists, to ban the practice of keeping animals captive, to eat them or to take their eggs or milk, still appears to be far out of step with the lifestyles and values of the general public. In regards to these ultimate goals of the animal rights movement, the cultural opportunity structure remains more or less non-receptive. But the relative openness of the cultural opportunity structure, compared to the past, should not be neglected as contributing to the movement's mobilization.

Concerning the cultural opportunities for forming public opinion against fur farming the case is slightly different. Not nearly as many people wear fur as those who eat animal products. In addition, Animal Rights Sweden managed to collect 100,000 signatures to a petition in 2004 for a ban of fur farming in Sweden, and according to an opinion poll conducted in 2002, 57 % of the Swedish population is against fur farming⁹⁹. The action focus that animal rights organizations have on fur farming can therefore, be at least partially, explained with reference to cultural opportunities. Even though many other farm animals fare almost as badly as minks and foxes, the possibility of succeeding to prohibit keeping or eating them within a near future is not significant. Directing one's main focus against mink breeding can therefore be viewed as a

⁹⁹ The poll was conducted by the Swedish Gallup institute, on behalf of Animal Rights Sweden. The following question was posed to 1000 interviewees: "Today, minks, chinchillas, rabbits and polecats are raised in cages, then their lives are taken for the sake of their fur. Do you think that this business should be banned or do you not think so?" Of the interviewees, 57 percent answered "yes", 34 percent answered "no", and 9 percent answered "don't know". Young people (18 – 29 years of age), women and people classifying themselves as 'working class' appear to have been particularly negative to fur farming. Because of the way the question was posed, the figures should be interpreted with some caution.

tactical choice, since a prohibition of it would appear to be an attainable goal.

Since many people in Sweden have never bought a fur garment of any kind and attractive alternatives to fur coats are numerous, the threshold for taking part in a boycott is generally very low. The flip side of the relative indifference towards the fur industry is that any attempt to boycott fur products is likely to have a relatively small effect on the industry, since so few people buy fur anyway. Boycotting meat (i.e. assuming a vegetarian lifestyle) is a potentially more powerful tool to create a change in society.

Despite this weakness, the boycott is, nevertheless, used as an action strategy in the struggle against the fur industry. A way of sharpening the blade has been for the animal rights movement to focus on dealers that have fur products as a part of their range of products. On the Internet site www.modeoffer.com, a white list has been created, listing the dealers that have promised that they do not sell fur, as well as a black list of dealers that do sell fur. By widening the scope of the boycott, the organization attempts to get around the problem of the decidedly small group of potential consumers of fur products.

Mass media, as the central societal institution included in the cultural opportunity structure, makes journalists important allies for both the animal rights movement and potentially for the fur farming industry in Sweden. Even if Swedish media in general are not extremely supportive of the animal rights movement, some journalists have lately written articles or produced news coverage, which appear to have had an impact on the opinions among politicians as well as the public. A telling example is Elisabeth Hägglund, a popular television news reporter, who has consistently taken up animal rights issues in a number of dramatic series of commentaries. The prime minister's statement in his Christmas interview 2000 (cf. Hedström & Stenberg, 2000-12-23) on the slaughter of animals was directly preceded by her dramatic news series on the maintenance and slaughter of pigs. Media exposure of the demands of the animal rights movement is not only crucial for the formation of public opinion; it is also decisive for the placement of these issues on the political agenda, which illustrates the interconnections between the cultural opportunity structure and the political opportunity structure.

Naturally, the animal rights movement is dependent on the research of biologists. In the case of mink farming, the results in ethology are particularly decisive for the strength of the animal rights movement's claims. While some scientists only indirectly back up the animal rights movement by producing results that support the movement's claims, there is a significant direct support from other academics, particularly philosophers, biologists and theologians. (cf. Linzey, 2002) The fur farming industry, in turn, through the Swedish Fur Breeders Association, sponsors scientific

research, which counters the results from scientists allied more closely to the animal rights movement.

Certainly, influential professional philosophers such as Peter Singer and Tom Regan are extremely important elite allies for the animal rights movement. Even if their thoughts were not completely new, their work (Singer, 1990; Regan, 1983) appears to have been decisive in the shaping of the animal rights movement into its current form. The so-called master frames which organise the core of the animal rights rhetoric, its framing efforts (cf. Snow & Benford, 2000), can be traced to either of these philosophers.

Scientific discourses, and academic discourses in general, are decisive for the construction of movement identities and their construction of meaning. Furthermore, scientific discourses underpin all of the arguments for and against further legislation on fur farming. Subsequently, scientists as movement allies are crucial for the support of their grievances directed towards the political system and the legitimization of their demands for legislative change, once again highlighting the interconnections between opportunity structures.

The most important way of exerting social influence (cf. Wijen, 2002) (directly or indirectly) is through transforming the existent frames in the COS, or even trying to impose completely new ones, upon the business/branch one wants to change. Cultural politics matter! Informing politicians and the public, debating and demonstrating, together with various “culture jamming” techniques, are commonly employed movement strategies for frame transformation. The violent attacks on farmers and furriers can also be viewed as framing attempts (apart from trying to directly affect the business economically). The animal rights movement and the supporters of the fur farming industry are locked in a cultural struggle over how issues related to fur farming, the meaning construction of animals farmed for their furs, are publicly framed. According to Burstein (1999), in order to influence legislative action by the state, a movement must relate to what we call the cultural opportunity structure. Either it has to influence politicians’ perception of public opinion, changing the opinion itself, or changing the issue’s salience among the public. In the case of fur farming, the animal rights movement seems to have employed all these strategies, with an emphasis on influencing the public’s moral evaluation of the fur farming industry; an industry’s moral legitimacy rests on discursive ethical evaluation (cf. Suchman, 1995). The animal rights movement has vigorously generated a public discussion, which explicitly calls into question the moral legitimacy of the fur farming industry.

Mark Suchman (1995) has argued that the moral legitimacy that an organisation enjoys or lacks is “sociotropic”, that is, “it rests not on judgements about whether a given activity benefits the evaluator” (which is the case in pragmatic legitimacy), “but rather on judgements about

whether the activity is ‘the right thing to do’” (p. 589). The movement has rather successfully assumed the moral high ground in the debate, leaving the fur farming industry hard pressed in retaining their legitimacy in this moral sense.

The Economic/Corporate Opportunity Structure

The economic/corporate opportunity structure can be more or less open, just like the state opportunity structure and the cultural opportunity structure. Regarding the economic opportunity structure, we would like to emphasize that its specific contents are still to be elaborated. However, based on existing research and our own observations we will offer a sketch of some of its components¹⁰⁰. We are primarily inspired by Oliver (1991), Jasper and Poulsen (1993) and Wijen (2002). Oliver’s typology is perhaps the most ambitious and multifaceted attempt to map the “predictors of strategic responses” (1991, p. 159) on the part of targeted organisations/branches. However, some of the factors she defines belong in our model to other opportunity structures or to the social movement. Below is our preliminary list of five categories of factors, which can be included in an analysis of the economic/corporate opportunity structure in relation to our specific case.

- The availability of *cognitive and economic resources for change* (Wijen, 2002) and how these resources are affected by the unity/fragmentation of the targeted organisation or business sector (cf. Oliver’s ‘interconnectedness’, 1991, 160 ff); the general openness to change in the targeted organization/sector (the balance between explorative and exploitative learning strategies);
- *Other stakeholders/-holders*: presence of elite allies, multiple conflicting stakeholders/-holders (cf. Oliver’s ‘multiplicity’);
- Resources available for *counter-mobilization* (cf. Jasper and Poulsen, 1993).
- *Target vulnerabilities* (Jasper and Poulsen, 1993); e.g. dependency on stakeholder (Wijen, 2002; cf. ‘dependence’ in Oliver, 1991), dependency on stakeholders’ immediate area of influence, generally unpopular practices.
- *Discrepancy* between the target’s current state and the movement’s goal (cf. Oliver’s ‘consistence’). The degree of ‘discretionary constraints’ (cf. Oliver) that are demanded by an external stakeholder may also be subsumed under this category.

¹⁰⁰ This list is by no means intended to be conclusive. We have focused on “producer related” factors of the EOS. When studying issues such as political consumerism, a possibility is also to include factors related to structures of retailers and middlemen, such as centralization of ownership and availability of alternative products (cf. Terragni & Kjærnes, 2004).

When considering the situation of the fur farmers, some characteristics of the economic/corporate opportunity structure appear particularly prominent. The first set of factors on our list is the availability of *cognitive and economic resources* for change in the target organisation/branch. Fur farmers are relatively fragmented, when considered as a collective target for the animal rights movement. However, fur farmers appear to work in a relatively interconnected environment due to their central organization, the Swedish Fur Breeders Association. Compared to, for example, a corporate organization, the fur farmers' relative fragmentation and the central organization's inability to issue binding regulations make them a relatively slow moving body. The interconnectedness of the fur farmers through their central organization, nevertheless, improves individual member's potential for organizational learning.

The relative fragmentation of the target of the animal rights activists has, hypothetically, several effects. On the one hand, the business as a whole is not particularly prone to change. Central directives cannot effectively regulate fur farming, as a business sector or branch. However, each unit has difficulties for shouldering the economic costs of possible changes, which is indicated by the dramatic decrease of fur farmers during the last decades. Each single farmer is vulnerable to changes in the market, as well as for the direct actions of militant activists.

Secondly, as regards the *multiplicity of stakeholders/-holders* of the fur industry, we can begin by noting its allies among the political elites. From bills and debates in the parliament it is clear that these mainly belong to centre- and rightwing parties, but they can also be found among social democrats from rural areas with a high density of mink breeders. From the perspective of the single fur farmer, their national and international interest organizations are the most important stakeholders for this business sector. These interest organisations provide mink farmers with the possibility of counter-mobilization (see below).

Thirdly, while the fur industry is a fragmented business sector, its central interest organization is fully capable of *counter-mobilization*. For instance, it is a body to which proposed measures in relation to fur farming is referred for consideration, and the organization additionally works with direct lobbying of MPs¹⁰¹. On the European political level, the European central organization, EFBA, performs the equivalent tasks. The collectively owned marketing organization SAGA, is an important instrument for establishing favourable framings of Swedish fur farming among foreign consumers.

The fur industry's counter-mobilisation in response to the attacks on their moral legitimacy as an industry has been to firstly oppose criticism of their handling of the animals with research in support of their techni-

¹⁰¹ An institutionalized practice of lobbying could also be said to belong to the state opportunity structure.

ques and secondly, and perhaps most importantly, it has attempted to shift the debate. Suchman (1995) points out that while organisations are somewhat limited in their choice of moral stands, the range of moral criteria remains quite broad. He argues that the “relative weighting of various disiderata depends largely on the goals that the organisation sets for itself and on the domain of activity that these goals imply” (pp. 598-90). The fur industry’s spokesmen have shifted the goals of fur farming so as to place emphasis upon employment maintenance and agricultural production in depressed rural areas. Here they are weighting the moral arguments of preserving opportunities for the livelihood of rural areas threatened by de-population to counteract the moral indictments of animal maltreatment lodged by the animal rights industry. In a country such as Sweden, rather recently urbanized and sensitive to the cultural importance of the vitality of its rural heritage, these moral arguments find some resonance.

Fourthly, a set of factors, which bear considerable weight in regards to a targeted organisation/sector’s compliance or non-compliance to stake-seeker demands, are organised around the theme of *target vulnerability*. A factor that has some bearing on the possibilities of the animal rights movement to directly influence the fur industry is its status as a stake-seeker. Research on organizational learning (Wijen, 2002) suggests that in order to effectively adjust to external demands, an organization either has to itself wish for such change or has to be strongly dependent on the stake-seeker. In the case of fur farmers, it is obvious that they are not directly dependent on the Swedish animal rights movement (judging by the existing size of the business, and by the fact that most of the production is exported); in other words, fur farmers are not in a position of economic vulnerability to the stake-seekers. Subsequently, it is relatively clear that they would be resistant to change their farms in accordance with all of the demands of the animal rights movement. The fact that the market appears to be limited to a relatively small part of the population, and that it lies chiefly outside Sweden, should be the primary reason for the restricted possibility to make the business restrict itself “beyond compliance” (Micheletti, 2003; Wijen, 2002).

With its emphasis on export, the fur industry has relatively low vulnerability to pressures from animal rights activists. The Swedish animal rights movement certainly has less influence over foreign (read: Russian) consumers than Swedish, and a boycott in Sweden, *however successful in terms of its participants*, does not strike directly against Swedish production, but against the global production, which can probably manage quite well without Swedish consumption. While the Swedish imports have decreased in the last years, as shown above, the global retail sales have increased from 8.2 billion US\$ in 1998/1999 to 11.3 billion US\$ in 2001/2002, according to the International Fur Trade Federation (<http://www.furcommission.com/news/newsF07d.htm>, 2004). Furthermo-

re, fur is not bought by the majority of the citizens, which makes it important for a boycott campaign to recruit particularly the groups consuming fur. These may not be the ones most likely to join a boycott. A boycott may in this case be a less effective tool for creating change, than lobbying for legislation (cf. Carnell, 2000).

Another vulnerability of the fur industry in general, is the capacity of fur animals to awaken general sympathy among the population (cf. Jasper & Poulsen, 1993). This factor is perhaps best characterized as a relationship between the economic and the cultural opportunity structures. It is striking that the fox, the cute cubs that are so often displayed on leaflets from animal rights organisations, was the first animal to become in practice impossible to breed in Sweden. The slightly less cute (and indeed quite smelly) mink probably cannot arouse the same sympathy as foxes. Nevertheless, as a small furry animal it is can still be considered a vulnerability for the mink farmers in their attempts to morally legitimize their activities.

Finally, the *discrepancy* between the current state of the business and the goals of the animal rights movement plays an important role for the possibilities for a movement to instigate change in a business merely by directly communicating their grievances to their target. This can be clarified as the difference between if a change in organizational practices is regulative or constitutive to the business. By 'constitutive change' we mean a change that would render a business unrecognizable – a radical change of its core practices – as if a confectionery starts selling clothes instead of sweets. Regulative changes are more modest, such as the confectionery shops stop selling chewing gum. Naturally a regulative change of a business practice is easier to achieve than a constitutive one.

The demands lodged by the animal rights movement on the fur industry are both constitutive and regulative. A complete cessation of a business is of course a constitutive change, which lies beyond what can reasonably be achieved by direct pressure by a relatively weak stakeholder. A change in the conditions under which the minks live, which is also a goal of the animal rights movement, is a regulative change that in principle could be attained without legislation. That direct demands for regulative changes, according to several sources, have not worked out satisfactorily must be attributed to other factors, which will be described below.

The distance between the current situation and movement goals can also be viewed as an indication of the incentive for a movement to act. If a business is run in a way that is far from what a stakeholder deems acceptable, the stakeholder can more readily mobilize for a change. However, one must not be tempted to regard the distance between the existing situation and aimed-for situation as a simple relation. It is not necessary that radical demands from a stakeholder are *per definition* more costly to respond to compared to more modest ones, even though this may be like-

ly. A distinction should therefore be made between technical and normative discrepancy. Normative discrepancy can be expressed as how morally disturbing the practices of an organization/sector are to a stakeholder, while technical discrepancy entails how radically the practices have to change to make it acceptable to a stakeholder (i.e. regulatively or constitutively).

In the case of the fur farming, the normative discrepancy is great between the current situation and the goals of the animal rights movement in general. This particularly applies to the radical factions of the movement. This discrepancy creates important incentives for mobilization, and hypothetically increased energy that each member is prepared to spend. We can also make intelligible the predilection of radical factions for illegal forms of action.

Cultural factors, based on norms and values in society, should not be underestimated in their implications for organizational action. When the discrepancy between the current state of the organisation/sector and the goal of the stakeholder is too large, widely held values and worldviews seem to have a very limited direct effect on the organisation/branch¹⁰². In short, when the moral legitimacy of an organisation/branch is hopelessly out of tune with widely held norms and values, the organisation/branch can only respond defensively by abandoning the debate. However, boycotts can for example inflict severe damage to trademarks by raising the general consciousness as to the 'skeletons in the organization's cupboard'. Additionally, a boycott can work as an opinion poll, as Micheletti observes (2003, 63), affecting the shape of the government's formal pressure (Wijen, 2002) on the fur breeders.

Conclusion

Social movements as stakeholders are challenging directly the market with their demands for change in business and corporate practices; stakeholder campaigns against Shell's activities in Nigeria, against the practices of the Nike Corporation, Sunkist Tuna – the examples are becoming legion. The economic/corporate opportunity structures they are engaging with provide both constraints and opportunities for their struggles. Miriam Abu Sharkh, international studies scholar, reminds us that pressure directed towards market actors exclusively is in most cases insufficient. Demands for change often require state legislation in order to see that the demands are actually implemented. (Personal communication. 03.09.24) In our model, the state opportunity structure, the cultural opportunity structure, together with the economic/corporate opportunity structure,

¹⁰² Exceptions *do* exist. An informant from Animal Rights Sweden knows of one mink farmer who apparently closed his enterprise partially for moral reasons.

will have a decisive impact on the emergence, structure, and success of these attempts.

In the case we have analyzed with the help of our conceptual model, the Swedish animal rights movement's struggle against the domestic fur industry, it is apparent that the animal rights movement has had considerable success by engaging with a relatively open cultural opportunity structure, winning a framing war as to the moral issues surrounding the breeding of animals for their fur. Their mobilization of public opinion as to their cause has given them a certain edge in their engagement with a relatively open state opportunity structure. In spite of the fur industry's interest organisations and their attempts to counter-mobilize, the animal rights movement has found a hearing in the formal political channels. Stricter legislation in 1995 on the farming of foxes led to the shut-down of this form of fur farming. It opens up for stricter legislation on other kinds of fur farming. Together with the establishment of the new Department for Animal Protection, the animal rights movement has achieved considerable success in their struggle against the domestic fur industry through state channels.

Struggling with the mink farmers directly, through boycotts and direct action, has had little or no success. While perhaps some individual farmers have felt the impact of the direct actions against them, the fur farming branch taken as a whole is not dependent on the domestic market. Furthermore, it is not vulnerable to national boycotts in that their production is for export. Faced with an economic opportunity structure that is not vulnerable to the demands of domestic social movement stakeholders, and where the discrepancy is great between the interests of the industry and the demands of the stakeholders, it is not surprising that the farmers have been non-compliant. While the cultural opportunity structure has been relatively open, as has the state opportunity structure, the economic opportunity structure is more or less closed for these stakeholders' demands.

The focus in this study has been on a national context and structures that shape the conditions for the animal rights movement in Sweden. However, observations bring to the fore the importance of taking the transnational level of analysis into consideration when studying stakeholder pressures on corporations/branches that are part of a global market. All of the three political opportunity structures in our model are in turn nestled within transnational political opportunity structures. Given the power of the global economic opportunity structure to have an effect on the struggles of stakeholders, in general, and the fur industry in our study in particular, the industry is unlikely to comply with their demands. As long as the global demand of fur is constant, national animal rights movements can do little by themselves to seriously restrict, or abolish, fur farming. Not until consumers in Russia and in Asian countries change their opinion about wearing fur will there be a chance for the animal

rights movement to reach their final goal. National legislation may, however, be a way of exerting pressure on foreign governments to adjust and influence the POS abroad.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Frank de Bakker, Frank den Hond, John Mahon, Michele Micheletti and Dietlind Stolle for their valuable comments on earlier versions of this paper.

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12. A Case of Discursive Political Consumerism: The Nike e-mail exchange

Michele Micheletti and Dietlind Stolle with Laura Nishikawa and research assistance from Matthew Wright

Abstract

Discursive political consumerism, the newest and most understudied form of political consumerism, is the focus of this paper. It investigates how the anti-sweatshop movement engaged in discursive political consumerism by using the Nike Email Exchange (NEE), which is estimated to have reached 11.4 people globally shortly after it was released electronically, as its case study. The paper uses the 3,655 emails received by the NEE originator as its main empirical material. This material is examined with a triangulation of methods: quantitative content analysis, qualitative textual (discourse) analysis as well as by situating the NEE in the history of the anti-sweatshop movement and in the literature on social movements and Internet activism. The study shows that scholarship on social movements is not able to explain newer forms of activism taking place in the virtual public sphere because it understands movement activism mostly as targeted at the nation-state or governmental institutions. Discursive political consumerism, however, uses the market as a political arena, targets corporations and challenges life styles and values of fellow citizens. Moreover, the case study also demonstrates that several of the fears about Internet activism expressed by social scientists need to be modified.

Introduction

Political consumerism, formally defined as the choice among producers and products with the goal of changing institutional or market practices that one finds ethically or politically objectionable (Micheletti, Follesdal & Stolle, 2003, xiv-xv), has always played a role in social movement activism. Boycotts and buycotts (explained below) have played a role in the union, environmental, student, peace, abolition, and women's movements. Particularly boycotts have been a central form of political expression for groups who have been marginalized in conventional politics (cf.

Micheletti, 2003, ch. 2). Boycotts and buycotts reflect the expression of attitudes and values about issues of justice, fairness, or non-economic issues that concern personal and family well-being and ethical or political assessment of favorable and unfavorable business and government practice. Boycotts and buycotts continue to be important for social movements. But globalization and the increasing power of transnational corporate enterprises has led activists to pursue another kind of market-based political involvement, discursive political consumerism. Discursive political consumerism is not defined as monetary transaction or denial of monetary transaction. Rather, it acknowledges that citizens who problematize the politics of products by seeking and relaying information on corporate policy and practice act as political consumers as well.

Discursive political consumerism reflects how citizens understand and react to the changing role of corporations and even governments in the world today. Also, it highlights how new forms of information communication technology have become important in the marketplace arena for politics. More than boycotts and buycotts, it shows how people both inside and outside social movements attach political messages to corporate brands and how support is mobilized by holding corporate brand image hostage (cf. Bennett, 2003b, 106). In some cases, as illustrated in the discussion of Nike in later sections, activists may have gone as far as hijacking corporate logos and slogans. Discursive political consumerism is expanding the scope of political action to include communication campaigns that target corporate actors and mobilize participants into more awareness about the practices of corporations and even into further political action. In doing so, it challenges many of the tenets of social movement theory and even some of the adamant conclusions about the role of Internet in civil society and the public sphere.

Purpose of the Paper

In this paper, we examine an important case of discursive political consumerism, the Nike Email Exchange (NEE). Although political consumerist campaigns against Nike have been a favorite focus of social scientists studying social and political activism (e.g., Shaw, 1999; Manheim, 2001; Knight & Greenberg, 2002; Friedman, 1999; Carty, 2002; Bullert, 2000; Bennett 2003ab) and the NEE is frequently offered as an illustration of the impact of communicative efforts (e.g., Blood, 2000; Boje, 2001), no scholar has yet been able to analyze the collected email responses generated by the initial exchange between Jonah Peretti, the NEE originator, and the Nike corporation. Jonah Peretti has given us his complete collection of the NEE emails for analysis.¹⁰³ Our case study involves only the

¹⁰³ The Research Ethics Board at McGill University approved the content and discourse analyses of the emails provided by Jonah Peretti under the project title "Forwarding Justice."

emails sent to Jonah Peretti in response to his Nike culture jam and represents, therefore, an isolated instance of communicative efforts via email to discuss sweatshop issues. As witnessed by the high number of emails sent and the estimate that over 11.4 people globally received the NEE shortly after it was released electronically (Macken, 2001), the Nike culture jam had a considerable impact in the virtual public sphere and shows how sweatshop issues are communicated broadly and globally through Internet email program systems.

Whereas several studies detail the activist and leadership networks of social movements and Internet campaigns (e.g., Bennett, 2003ab), no study has ever examined the character and structure of an Internet campaign for fair trade in the global garment industry at the micro-level. The analysis of the 3,655 individual responses received by the originator of the culture jam (explained below) Jonah Peretti between January and April 3, 2001 allow a triangulation of research methods, which has been noted as a necessary step in the analysis of digital networks (cf. Bennett, 2003a, 160). First, we use a *quantitative* content analysis of the nature and character of responses including the power of the NEE to mobilize people into action. In addition, we have conducted a websurvey with the respondents and are currently analyzing data from it. Second, we *qualitatively* examine the discourse surrounding the politics of production practices. Third, we embed the NEE case in a *historical* analysis of the sweatshop movement. The NEE case study is, therefore, a unique opportunity to examine the impact of discursive political consumerism on the recipients of the emails and on corporations, the targets of the campaign.

The paper is organized in the following way. The next section presents the different forms of political consumerism and discusses their strengths and weaknesses as political action and ability to affect change. Then a brief history of anti-sweatshop political consumerism is presented. This section is followed by one that explains why Nike has been a particular focus of this movement. The paper continues with a section on anti-sweatshop discursive political consumerism. The case study of the NEE emails is then discussed in two sections, one presenting descriptive results from the content analysis and the other presenting the discourse analysis of the main issues and actors communicated in them. The paper ends by addressing some of the challenges posed by the NEE for social movement theory, and it confronts some of the conclusions about the role of the Internet for citizen activism. The final section ends with a few reflections on why discursive political consumerism has become important for the global movement for social justice.

Political Consumerism's Three Forms

Previous research that takes its point of departure in the narrower definition of political consumerism makes a distinction between what has been called “negative” and “positive” political consumerism. The narrower definition of political consumerism focuses on the purchase of products based on ethical, environmental or political considerations and on attempts at influencing corporate actors directly through either boycotts or buycotts. The broader definition includes discursive political consumerism, which politicizes the market by giving preeminence to the importance of communication, opinion formation or deliberation, and framing of issues related to corporate practices – not monetary exchanges.

Consumer boycotts (“negative” political consumerism) are an old form of political action that can be dated back at least to the American War on Independence. Boycotts encourage people to disengage with corporate actors by refusing to buy their products, with the goal of forcing change in corporate or governmental policy and behavior. Although survey research shows a large increase in boycott use (and citizen consideration of its use) (see Stolle & Hooghe, 2004), many political consumerist activists voice concern about its mobilizing potential and effectiveness. Boycotts are viewed as problematic because it is increasingly difficult to decide on whom to boycott and to mobilize consumer support for them. The shift to “contracting-out” manufacturing diffuses the boycott target, thus making it hard to decide “who” to boycott. Boycotts are also problematic because it is not clear whether the targeted companies are sufficiently harmed by them. Their actual financial harm is hotly debated. Some studies find that boycotts are economically harmful (Pruitt & Friedman, 1986) while others, using different methodologies, show that they have no effects or may even lead to slight short-term increases in stock prices because they give the company name recognition (Koku et al., 1997). Boycotting may also economically harm more than help workers in contracted-out factories, which explains why many political consumerist transnational advocacy networks do not support them officially. Activists also fear that companies may use legal means to prohibit mobilization for boycotts outside retail stores and that the conservative court climate in the U.S. (a normative force in this context) will support such legal efforts. Moreover, the growing use of Internet shopping in many countries implies that “main street” department stores are declining in importance, thus making it more difficult for activists to publicize boycott calls widely face-to-face and, thereby, reach consumers directly for their support (Ballinger, 2004). Even though newspapers can be accessed via Internet, declining levels of daily newspaper readership and subscription in many countries makes it difficult for activists to mobilize consumers (cf. Shaw, 1999, Ch. 6). Yet even when mobilization is successful, a boycott action against a particular corporation can gather ideologically

different people and, therefore, lack a coherent message to send to corporate elites. The highly heterogeneous groups backing the Disney Boycott illustrate this problem well (see Micheletti 2003, 68f). Another problem with boycotts is that it may be hard for boycott organizers to demobilize supporters once the boycott has been called off (for an interesting discussion see Friedman, 2003). Finally, cross-corporate ownership makes it difficult to pinpoint specific corporations for boycotts, though it is still possible to target specific products as is now done in the on-going Nestlé boycott that focus on Nescafé (IBFAN, 2004).

“Positive” political consumerism (buycotts) or citizen use of labeling schemes to guide their consumer choices began to mushroom in the 1990s along with rising awareness about environmental destruction and corporate practices in Third World countries. Labeling schemes require a good working relationship among corporate actors, non-governmental organizations, the academic community, and even government (see Cashore et al., 2003, Micheletti, 2003, Ch. 3-4). The problems with this form for political activism are that it may be difficult to convince corporations and other actors to cooperate, many products – in particular brand name clothing and shoes – are not covered by labeling schemes, and buycotts lack the mobilizing bite of more protest-oriented forms of political consumerism. Finally, many labeled products are more costly than non-labeled ones, for example organically labeled olive oil in Finland and chicken in Denmark can be four times more expensive than conventional products (Hamm, et al., 2002).

These problems do not characterize discursive political consumerism, the newest and less-researched form, whose main goal is neither depriving corporate actors of payment for a good (boycotts) nor rewarding certain corporate actors for good behavior, policies, and products by purchasing their products (buycotts). Rather, it is the expression of opinions about corporate policy and practice in communicative efforts directed at business, the public at large, family and friends, and various political institutions. The discursive setting for these claims may be local, national, regional, global, or a combination of them. Examples of discursive political consumerism are culture jamming and adbusting, public dialogue about corporate policy and practice, and debates and negotiations with business on the need to develop business ethics, codes of conduct, and independent code monitoring systems. Discursive political consumerism plays an important role in the “no sweat” movement. It confronts corporations without the use of boycotts that can jeopardize workers in garment factories, and it offers citizens a marketplace venue for their political activism even though labeling schemes are not in place.

Anti-Sweatshop Political Consumerism

Sweatshop conditions in the garment industry did not begin in the current era of free trade. Rather, they developed long ago together with industrialization and the factory system. In the early 1900s, political reformers lobbied governments to ban them, and trade unions fought them through unionization. This stage of the anti-sweatshop movement was mostly oriented towards domestic conditions. In the late 1980s, garment sweatshops were discovered in the contracted-out factories in Third World Countries used by transnational garment manufacturers and in immigrant areas in Western nations (Bender & Greenwald, 2003). Public revelation of this state of affairs led to collective action endeavors to stamp out sweatshops. Today's anti-sweatshop political consumerism has two roots – solidarity with the Third World and struggles by Western trade unions to keep manufacturing plants from leaving the country. This means that the movement has a value base that ranges from materialist protectionism to postmaterialist global solidarity. As shown in the NEE analysis discussed below, the anti-sweatshop discourse includes rhetoric from the fair trade as well as the international human rights' and workers rights' regimes. It demands workers' rights and good working conditions for all garment workers. Labor unions, women's, students and religious groups, policy institutes, international humanitarian associations, and networks focusing specifically on fair trade issues work together on these issues. Old civil society associations with their emphasis on membership strength, pressure group politics, and boycotts couple up with new PR-oriented civil society groups using the communicative skills of spin doctoring and Internet to mobilize consumers into action and to demand improvements from the global garment industry (Bullert, 2000; Mannheim, 2001; Fung, O'Rourke & Sabel, 2001).

By the late 1990s their efforts had put the word sweatshop back into the public debate in North America and Europe.¹⁰⁴ Sweatshop also has been frequently used in the names of many North American civil society-based watchdog campaigns (see Micheletti, 2004 for examples), and it is the rallying cry and common mobilizing frame uniting the diversified groups without a common ideological core that form the anti-sweatshop movement.¹⁰⁵

This framing of the cause has been highly successful. National magazines began to report on dubious working conditions in the Third World in the early 1990s and then in the mid-1990s national television news programs and local newspapers and those with national and international

¹⁰⁴ A common dictionary definition of sweatshop is a shop (that is, workplace) employing workers at low wages, for long hours, and under poor conditions. The word "sweat" is used to denote that work is sweated out of people.

¹⁰⁵ The lack of common ideological core characterizes many of the loose networks that use communication, and particularly, Internet-based communication, as their main political strategy. For a discussion see Bennett, 2003a, 150f.

readerships followed suit. Many journalists use the word sweatshop in their reports and began to cover sweatshop issues closely, which culminated in the second peak of reporting on sweatshop issues around the year 2000 (see Appendix 1, Figure 1, see also Bennett, 2003b, Figure 2 for more a more detailed graph of sweatshop themes in the New York Times and Washington Post). The NEE falls into this period, that can be characterized as a mounting fight against sweatshop conditions in outsourced factories. After the transnational advocacy network Global Exchange helped with the publicity blitz, a critical report written by Thuyen Nguyen (a Vietnamese immigrant in the U.S. who started the anti-sweatshop group Vietnam Labor Watch and who was invited by Nike to tour its Vietnamese plants), made headlines in the mainstream media and was picked up in the Doonesbury comic strip (with its strong popularity among university students and graduates), muckraker Michael Moore, and the Tonight Show.¹⁰⁶ The report opened a media and mobilization window of opportunity for the anti-sweatshop movement. Journalists began to write about the incoherence between Nike image-making and advertising and the reality in Nike outsourced clothing manufacturing plants. The phrase “to Nike” began to be used to mean taking out one’s frustration on a fellow worker, which reportedly was a common practice in Nike’s Vietnamese operations at the time, and some journalists began to write the name Nike as “N-e,” implying that it was an obscene or offensive word (Shaw 1999, 48, 53), thus bedding the way for culture jamming efforts. Media coverage spurred on university students to mobilize their campuses for anti-sweatshop resolutions (see Shaw, 1999, 47ff).

The Political Consumerist Nike Focus

The anti-Nike campaign started in 1992. Figure 2 in Appendix 1 traces general media interest in matters concerning the Nike corporation, and it shows how it culminated in the New York Times in the late 1990s and early 2000s (see also Bennett, 2003b, Figure 2 for information on the sweatshop issue). Although not the only brand name clothing corporation targeted, the Nike Corporation has been a particular favorite of anti-sweatshop political consumerism. Anti-sweatshop activists are careful to point out that Nike is not the only global garment company with questionable labor practices, but they argue that there are several rational reasons for choosing it as a favorite strategic vehicle for the struggle. For one, Nikes’ logotype has image power. Its name recognition in consumer society – the stickiness of its logo (cf. Bennett, 2003a, 152) – ensures that

¹⁰⁶ The comic strip can be viewed at <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/5232/comicmay97.htm> and is partly reproduced in Shaw, 1999, 82, 86. Jay Leno joked on his show in 1998: “It’s so hot out I’m sweating like a 10 year old Malaysian kid in a Nike Factory.” Michael Moore interviewed Nike CEO Philip Knight in 1997, see his website “Mike & Nike” <http://www.dogeatdogfilms.com/mikenike.html>

critical voices will be attention-getters. Nike has also boasted publicly about its progress in labor practices in the Third World. Thus, not only can Nike be held accountable for its ambitions, it provides a good rhetorical target for criticism.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, Nike has supported several progressive campaigns, including promotion of women in sports and community improvement. This meant that Nike was held in high esteem in progressive circles, which had high expectations of the corporation on social issues (see footnote 14). Nike has also not dealt with media relations well. Particularly Nike CEO Philip Knight has reacted defensively – at times hostilely – to negative reporting, and he has tried to suppress negative publicity¹⁰⁸, a reaction which has provoked journalists in their search for more spectacular Nike news (Shaw 1999, 58, 62ff, 85, 93). Another important reason is the character of corporations like Nike that are highly dependent on publicity, which makes them very vulnerable to counter-publicity (see Stabile, 2003; Knight & Greenberg, 2002 for interesting discussions).

Moreover, Nike's corporate development represents a typical process in the global garment industry – outsourcing in overseas countries with poor labor conditions – that anti-sweatshop political consumerism wants to change. As stated by Medea Benjamin (2001, ix-x), Global Exchange's founding director:

Nike became the poster child for this new-age company where the product itself was somewhat incidental. Nike owned no factories at home or overseas but purchased millions of pairs of shoes from Asian factories. So disinterested was CEO Philip Knight in these overseas factories and workers that he never even bothered to visit the countries...where Nike was setting up shop. Nike did, however, put billions of dollars into selling a lifestyle, a brand name, a logo. The swoosh became ubiquitous. And Philip Knight, worth over \$ 5 billion by the 1990s, was the epitome of the savvy businessman who knew how to steer his company through the shoals of the global marketplace.

Global Exchange's Nike Campaign page "Why pick on Nike, if other shoe companies are just as bad?" contributes three final reasons (Global Exchange, 2003). More Nike workers and local labor groups than others have filed complaints with the AFL-CIO in Indonesia; unlike other companies it can afford the cost of improvements without increasing its retail prices, and as the largest shoe company in the world, changes it makes will have industry-wide effects. So the argument is that if Nike "falls" so will the entire global garment industry. Finally, Nike's high market profi-

¹⁰⁷ Corporations that listen to political consumerist concerns are often monitored more carefully than other ones that do not pay heed to them. The Clean Clothes Campaign argues that Nike is a good target for just this reason: "...Nike not only refers to its position as a market leader, but also sees itself as leading the industry in labour practices initiatives. They take their leading position very seriously. On their website, Nike says they are the first one to implement independent monitoring and the only one to pay minimum wage in Indonesia." (CCC, 1998, 1). For an interesting discussion on the demands put on corporations with an ethical profile see Kennedy, 2003.

¹⁰⁸ The Nike Corporation unsuccessfully asked Doonesbury cartoonist Garry Trudeau's University Press Syndicate to prevent further anti-Nike columns (Shaw 1999, 56).

le and proclivity to contract sports, political, and other celebrities keeps it on the public scene and, therefore, the anti-sweatshop movement can use discursive actions to free ride in Nike's general limelight. Nike's high profile also means that freelance journalists know that they can sell their story if they write about Nike's profits, profiles, and problems.

Timelines and track records of Nike's corporate practices are available on many anti-sweatshop websites and in the numerous publications now available on Nike campaigns.¹⁰⁹ They begin in the 1960s with Nike CEO Philip Knight's decision to close Blue Ribbon Sports'¹¹⁰ U.S. plants and outsource production to Japan, continue in the 1970s when the Nike brand was launched and Nike decided to terminate its Taiwanese and South Korean contracts after workers organized for better wages and to move to Indonesia, the People's Republic of China and Vietnam, jump to the late 1980s and highlight media reports on poor working conditions, and give considerable attention to the 1990s which is rich with dates, events, and continue to the present date. In the 1990s, Nike's sweatshop woes really began to hit the media fan.¹¹¹ The media information struck the nerve of politically-sensitive students (Featherstone & USAS, 2002, 9), who were displeased and provoked with Nike's proclivity to adopt a hostile and blame avoiding strategy.

A series of different strategies have been pursued by the anti-sweatshop's anti-Nike campaign. Nike has been successfully sued for its offshore labor practices and false advertising¹¹², boycotted, bombarded with consumer messages, honed (see next section), criticized at shareholder meetings¹¹³, and forced to answer critical questions when meeting the press¹¹⁴. Activists have pressured the U.S. government to enact laws to regulate American-based multinational garment industry corporations. Nike's attempts to develop an image of corporate social responsibility and later its attempts to develop and improve its corporate practices have been watchdogged and the focus of numerous field and academic investigative evaluations.¹¹⁵ In particular, Nike's corporate image – the swoosh

¹⁰⁹ For examples see *Nike's Track Record 1988-2000*
<http://www.cleanclothes.org/companies/niketrack.htm>,
 accessed January 28, 2004, *Boycott Nike*.
<http://pweb.jps.net/~dcasner/SFSANikeChronology.html>, accessed November 1, 2002, *Nike Updates*
<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/5231/newnike.htm>, Shaw, 1999; Manheim, 2001.

¹¹⁰ Blue Ribbon Sports is the forerunner of Nike.

¹¹¹ The expression "Nike's sweatshop woes" comes from an article by Corbett Miller, "Just Sue it," *The Golden Gate [X] Press Magazine*. Publication of the San Francisco State University Journalism Department (no date). Accessed April 29, 2003. Online at
<http://express.sfsu.edu/custom/magazine/nike2.html>

¹¹² The best-known court case is *Marc Kasky v. Nike, Inc., et al.* that was heard and settled in Nike's disfavor. It concerns the status of commercial speech. For brief information on the case see ReclaimDemocracy, no date.

¹¹³ No sweat groups have purchased stock in the Nike Corporation to give them access to shareholder meetings. See for instance *Industry Week*, 2001 and *Worldwide Faith News*, 2002.

¹¹⁴ A good example is Philip Knight's special presentation at the National Press Club in May 1998.

¹¹⁵ In-the-field, expert, or activist investigations of Nike include *Community Aid Abroad's Sweating for Nike* (1996), *Global Exchange's Still Waiting for Nike to Do It* (2001), and *Press for*

logotype and slogan “Just do it”- became the prey¹¹⁶ stocked by political consumerist actors who began to combine the word sweatshop, the swoosh, slogan, and sports metaphors to publicize their activities. Journalists hungry for catchy story titles had a field day.¹¹⁷

Anti-Sweatshop Discursive Political Consumerism

Discursive political consumerism concerns the use of symbols and signifying practices (i.e., a semiotic view of language) to communicate information and values on politics in the marketplace (on semiotics see Ryder, 2004). Some discursive political consumerist actions, such as culture jamming, are highly ideological and aim at breaking corporate power and changing the fundamentals of consumer society. Other actions seek direct contact with corporations to create a dialogue about sweatshop issues. A final group of discursive actions involves constructive negotiations between anti-sweatshop groups and garment manufacturers. As this paper studies a culture jam, culture jamming will be presented more fully (see Micheletti, 2004 for a discussion of the other forms of discursive political consumerism).

Culture jamming is the most ideological, flamboyant, and contentious form of discursive political consumerism. It uses humor and symbolic images from the corporate world in order to break corporate power and hegemony. Its activists have an anti-corporate ideology, stressing the distrustful nature of corporations and capitalism and their aims at manipulating consumers (Lasn, 1999). Ideologically, culture jamming “represents a more radical rethinking of the assumptions that drive the capitalist

Change’s *Behind the Swoosh* (1997). An example of an Academic report is Elliot J. Schrage’s *Promoting International Worker Rights Through Private Voluntary Initiatives: Public Relations or Public Policy?* (Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa Center for Human rights, 2004). See also the bibliography for journal articles, reports, and books on the garment industry authored by academics.

¹¹⁶ They are prey because they are very strong identity symbols. Advertisement experts consider the slogan, coined incidentally in 1988, the “most famous and easily recognized [one] in advertising history” to be about Nike’s own renaissance: “‘Just do it’ succeeded in that it convinced Americans that wearing Nikes for every part of your life was smart...and hip... (CFAR, 1999), and the swoosh first drawn in 1971 and used by Nike’s predecessor (NikeBiz, no date) came to be synonymous with the lifestyle Nike wants to promote (COB, no date). But even before they became part of the political consumerist discourse, the logo and slogan appeared on business pages, in advertising courses, and in book titles as a way of summarizing Philip Knight’s successful leadership and Nike’s ability to lift itself after an economic slump in the 1970s and 1980. Nike had other successfully forceful slogans – “If You Let Me Play” that promoted the personal and social benefits of women’s participation in sports, “It’s My Turn” that featured inspiring and aspiring young Asian athletes as endorsers, and the Nike-sponsored project “Play Zones” to upgrade adopted playgrounds. These endeavors positioned Nike as a corporation engaged in its community and completed “the linkages among the product, the brand, sport as an activity and value, and societal benefit” (Knight & Greenberg, 2002, 549, 547-49).

¹¹⁷ Examples of titles of news articles are “Nike is a Four Letter Word” (San Francisco Examiner, February 1997), “Nike: The New Free-Trade Heel” (Harper’s magazine, 1992), “The Glob-Trotting Sneakers” (Ms. Magazine), “Sweatshop Christmas” (U.S. News & World Report, 1996), “Making Nike Sweat” (The Village Voice, 2001), “Are You Ready for Some ‘Unswoshing?’” (Salon.com, no date), “Sweatshops: Finally, Airing the Dirty Linen” (Business Week, 2003), “Is Nike Still Doing It?” (Mother Jones, 2001)

global system” (Carty, 2002, 140). As stated by its foremost spokesperson and founder of the magazine *Adbusters*:

We call ourselves culture jammers. We’re a loose global network of media activists who see ourselves as the advance shock troop of the most significant social movement of the next twenty years. Our aim is to topple existing power structures and forge major adjustments to the way we live in the twenty-first century. We believe culture jamming will become to our era what civil rights was to the ‘60s, what feminism was to the ‘70s, what environmental activism was to the ‘80s. It will alter the way we live and think. It will change the way information flows, the way institutions wield power, the way TV stations are run, the way the food, fashion, automobile, sports, music and culture industries set their agendas. Above all, it will change the way we interact with the mass media and the way in which meaning is produced in our society (Lasn, 1999, xi).

Culture jammers view themselves as an international grassroots effort that uses the logic of commercial images to critique corporate hegemony and rampant consumerism (Baker, 2003).¹¹⁸ It aims at co-opting, hacking, mocking, and re-contextualizing corporate messages to discuss the problematic nature of consumer society and to encourage consumers to rethink their consumption practices. Culture jammers wage war on expensively-crafted logotypes and marketing slogans and, thus, threaten corporate images in discursive boomerang effects that throw the carefully-crafted messages in reinterpreted fashion back into corporate faces. Reacting to these stunts by laughing is an important goal of the reinterpretation process, with humor and laughter as an important step in hegemony-breaking processes.

The Nike Corporation has been an open target for culture jamming and other forms of discursive political consumerist action. As discussed earlier, journalists have played with the Nike slogans, and many culture jamming parodies focus on the Nike Corporation, with “the swoosh” and the slogan “Just do it” as favorite targets of attack, as shown in Figure 3 in Appendix 1.

Forwarding Justice: The NEE Email Content Analysis

The Nike Email Exchange began when Jonah Peretti, a former MIT graduate student working at the MIT media lab decided to test Nike’s electronic customer service by ordering a pair of customized shoes with the name “sweatshop” on them. Appendix 2 includes the entire email communication between Peretti and Nike. Peretti has explained his actions in different ways. He has stated that his interests were only profes-

¹¹⁸ Two important sources of inspiration are the Canadian media scholar Marshall McLuhan (“World War III will be a guerilla information war...”) (as quoted in Lasn, 1999, 1) and the Italian cultural critic Umberto Eco who coined the phrase “semiotic guerilla warfare” which allows individuals to “trace a tactic of decoding where the message as expression form does not change but the addressee rediscovers his freedom of decoding” (Eco, 1999, 150).

sional, that he wanted to test the electronic filter mechanisms used by the Nike corporation. He has also acknowledged in interviews and conversations that he was part of the anti-sweatshop movement and had, in his younger years, been involved in billboard liberation or modification, which is a form of culture jamming. His familiarity with the anti-sweatshop cause and its campaign against Nike are very clear in his argumentation for his name choice. When the Nike customer services' department repeatedly denied his request by stating that his choice was unsuitable for different reasons, Peretti challenged this decision with the following culture jamming argument:

Your web site advertises that the NIKE iD program is 'about freedom to choose and freedom to express who you are.' I share Nike's love of freedom and personal expression. [...] My personal iD was offered as a small token of appreciation for the sweatshop workers poised to help me realize my vision. I hope that you will value my freedom of expression and reconsider your decision to reject my order.

Peretti collected his email exchange with Nike and sent it to a dozen or so friends. Then the emails – completely independent of his control or encouragement – went from inbox to inbox and reached an estimated 11.4 million people around the globe (Macken, 2001). Peretti was surprised that his communication with Nike had gone global. Over a four month period he received 3,655 emails from people who decided to contact him and offer various responses to it. Once the NEE became public, Jonah Peretti became a media celebrity bearer of the anti-sweatshop cause. Through his publicity on television and radio programs as well as through interviews with newspaper journalists in many countries, Peretti has proved to be an important vehicle for the global anti-sweatshop movement.

The email collection is not a representative sample of opinions and voices on sweatshop issues. Only 0.02% of all estimated receivers sent an email to Peretti. Yet, as shown below, their messages document what aware people think about a broad array of sweatshop issues.

Our research on the entire collection of emails involves an extensive quantitative content as well as a qualitative discourse analysis of the responses.¹¹⁹ The websurvey, which is not reported on here, further investigates how the original culture jam was contextualized in their general understanding of “no sweat” issues and whether it triggered the responders into further political action. The email collection along with the websurvey show the impact of a culture jam whose initial purpose was neither movement mobilization nor consciousness-raising.

¹¹⁹ The emails form the Nike Email Exchange Data base (NEED). Matthew Wright coded them on the basis of a codebook formulated by Dietlind Stolle and Michele Micheletti. Barbara Hobson offered useful comments on the codebook. The codebook contains over 100 variables.

Table 1 shows the topics addressed in the emails.¹²⁰ The responses have been categorized in four general categories: whether they offered assessments of or judgments on the NEE or Jonah Peretti's culture jam; sought or offered information; motivated the receivers to take political action on sweatshop issues, and offered Peretti suggestions about how to deal with the Nike customer service unit. Although the emails cannot be seen as truly reflecting the distribution of opinions about sweatshop issues, they do convey the nature of opinions and attitudes as well as arguments that float in the virtual (and real) world of discursive political consumerism. Table 1 presents information on the topics of the email responses.

Table 1. Topics Addressed in Email Responses to the Nike Email Exchange (percentages)

Topic category	Sub-Category Illustrations and Percentages
Judgment (45 %)	<p>7 % Pure anti-sweatshop messages: explicit or general support for anti-sweatshop movement (e.g., against child labor, corporate ethics/behavior, exploitive working conditions, human rights and justice)</p> <p>41% Pure culture Jamming messages: explicit support for Peretti's actions acknowledging the importance of raising awareness this way, the power of the Internet or humor.</p> <p>40% Anti-Sweatshop and Culture Jamming combination</p> <p>12% Pure Critical messages: offered an explicit critique of Peretti's actions or of the anti-sweatshop movement</p>
Information (25 %)	<p>42% Info-Culture Jamming messages: seek or share information about this case of culture jamming</p> <p>12% Interview request by media</p> <p>23% Info-Corporate Practice messages: seek or share information about Nike practices, other corporate practices in other countries or even provides personal testimonies of own experiences in factories.</p> <p>29% Info Truth messages: like to confirm whether the jam has actually happened or not.</p>
Mobilization (21 %)	<p>27% Conventional: indicated that would or has contacted the media, politicians, written about the culture jam, published on it.</p> <p>80% Sharing with others: talking to others, forwarding to others, posted the culture jam on a list or website.</p> <p>33% Political consumerism: indicates that will or has boycotted Nike, will or has watched out for better companies, contacted Nike, followed similar campaigns, etc.</p>
Suggestion (8 %)	<p>40% Alternative suggestion messages: offered advise on how to could get around the Nike censors</p> <p>21% Alternative types of activism</p> <p>19% Suggestions regarding or directed at Nike</p> <p>20% Suggestions to further publish this episode</p>

Source: Nike Email Exchange Data (NEED).

Comment: The actual number of emails analyzed was smaller than 3,655 because many of them came from the same author. Multiple messages from the same author were collapsed into one email. The final email database contains 2,384 emails.

As Table 1 shows, most of the responses include a judgment or evaluation about the culture jam or about anti-sweatshop issues. Several responders (41%) applaud Peretti for his use of humor, acknowledge the

¹²⁰ The actual number of emails analyzed was smaller than 3,655 because many of them came from the same author. Multiple messages from the same author were collapsed into one email item. The final email database contains 2,384 email items. Data in the second column in Table 1 do not always add up to 100% as many emails have multiple contents.

power of the Internet, or are impressed by the fact that he found an effective way to raise awareness. Their responses range from very short ones like "Well done, Jonah" or "You are the best, Nike got the thumb" to longer messages over several pages. A smaller group of emails (7%) offers supportive comments about the anti-sweatshop movement. The sweatshop issues most often addressed concern exploitative labor conditions, corporate ethics, the increasingly dangerous power of multinational corporations, and child labor. These concerns have also been found in surveys that ask about multinational corporations and political consumerism (Micheletti & Stolle, 2004; Stolle, Hooghe & Micheletti 2004). Several messages include supportive comments about both the culture jam and sweatshop issues.

A minority of responders (about 12 %) view the sweatshop cause or Jonah Peretti's culture jam in a critical light. What is interesting is that a significant number of them express some concern for sweatshop conditions, but they are critical of Peretti's decision to order a pair of Nike shoes from a company whose values he does not cherish. Even though Peretti never bought a pair of customized Nike shoes, many responders believe that one should adopt a consistent approach to political consumerism. For them, the discourse on labor and sweatshop conditions should be accompanied by similar consumer behavior. Corporations should either be punished (boycotts) or rewarded (buycotts) for their stance and policy on labor standards. This group is interesting because it signifies a unified political consumerist approach including the two prominent forms of market-based activism. Other critical messages include attacks about Peretti's middle-class, MIT-educated view of international production conditions that lose track of the actual benefits of inexpensive labor and foreign investment in developing countries, or are hate messages against liberal values.

Many messages (25 %) are informational in character. They either share or seek information about the culture jam or the corporate and labor practices in other companies or countries. About a fourth of these messages also inquired about the truthfulness of the Peretti-Nike exchange. This concern is nurtured by the endless influx of email hoaxes and spam, and the relatively high proportion of spam inquiries in this category questions the assertion from critics of virtual communication that the Internet and email can only promote public gossip and urban legend without mechanisms for source criticism (cf. Ayres, 1999; Deibert, 2000). Shortly after the NEE began to spread virtually, it was investigated and confirmed by Shey.Net, a website which assesses the validity of stories (urban legends) sent via email (www.shey.net).

For students of political participation, it is of particular interest whether a communicative effort as the Nike Email Exchange can encourage people to take further political action. Figure 1 shows the general distribution of the political mobilizing effects of the NEE culture jam.

Figure 1. NEE Political Mobilization Effects in Percent

Analysis of the Nike Email Exchange Data shows that a relatively large group of responses contains indications of mobilization efforts. The responses give us a good overview of some of the types of mobilizing effects that can be expected of culture jamming campaigns. In Table 2, three mobilization efforts – use of conventional political methods, exchange with others, and explicit political consumer strategies – are distinguished. Contacting others and forwarding the NEE or posting it on a website are the most frequent form of mobilization activities. These forms of “armchair activism” (Deibert, 2000, 263) do not require much time and effort. Fewer responders mentioned that they used the NEE as an opportunity to talk to others in person. Some indicate that they have or will become political consumers (that is, boycott Nike products, contact Nike, or follow similar campaigns), and very few became involved in conventional forms of political participation like contacting the media, politicians or organizations.

Table 2. The NEE's Political Mobilization Effects

Forms of mobilization	Number	Percentage
Conventional		
Published email offline	203	24
Posted email online	84	10
Contacted media	26	3
Contacted a politician	5	1
Contacted an organization	3	0
Joined a demonstration against sweatshops	2	0
Exchange with Others		
Contacted Other People	685	80
Forwarded the email	386	46
Talked to individuals offline about the emails	34	4
Explicit Political Consumer Strategies		
Contacted Nike	194	23
Boycotted Nike	66	8
Sent Nike a request for "Sweatshop" shoes	47	6
Participated in similar campaigns	19	2
Changed to more responsible shoe manufacturer (buycott)	3	0

Note: The data in the second column does not add up to 100 percent because many emails mentioned more than one form of political mobilization.

The Email Responders' NEE Discourse

The content analysis offers findings on the supportive and critical nature of the email responses and whether they have mobilized responders into political action. The discourse analysis reveals how sweatshop issues are discussed, framed, and deliberated via the Internet. This section presents an analysis of the issue frames communicated in the NEE email responses, the main actors discussed in them, and the suggestions they offer for alleviating sweatshops.¹²¹ Quotations from the emails (with identification references for documentation purposes) as well as quotation marks around certain words and phrases appearing in the Nike Email Exchange Data (NEED) are used to illustrate the discourses identified in the analysis. Three discourses were found in the NEED. They are discussed in this section and compared to fair trade discourses on the problem frame, actor responsibility, and public debates on effective measures for ridding the world of sweatshops. Also, as the NEE is a culture jam, we compare and contrast the responders' discourses with the culture jamming ideology. This analysis shows how well the responders are embedded in "no sweat," fair trade, and culture jamming discourses. The section begins with a comparison of the culture jamming ideology and the NEED discourse narratives, continues with a presentation of the main NEED actors which are also contextualized in the general fair trade/no sweat discourse

¹²¹ Two types of messages were selected for the discourse analysis. The first type are messages containing more than ten lines and, therefore, deliberative in character. Messages of this type are 267 in number (11.2% of the NEED data). The second type includes 101 message items that were flagged Matthew Wright (who coded for the content analysis) because of their discursive content. The two message types overlap considerably in their content. While reading through them, we conducted an exploratory analysis focusing on the assumptions, values and worldviews implicit in them.

on actor responsibility, and ends with a look at the proposed solutions to the sweatshop problem, also compared with the general public discourse.

As discussed earlier, culture jamming is ideologically opposed to the pervasiveness of multinational corporations in the public sphere and naïve acceptance of consumer society. It is noteworthy that little trace of this ideological commitment is present in *NEED*. In general, the emails frame the central problem in terms of the existence of sweatshops and the exploitation of Third World (child) workers. With the exception of child labor, the raised issues are economic in character (wages and vaguely undefined “working conditions”). The narratives surrounding child labor involve discourses on the “Third World,” economic development, poverty, and equate cultural difference with economic disparity.

Instead of a comprehensive critique of capitalism, a reformist theme emerges in the *NEED* that reinforces discussions of political consumerism as focusing on changing the policies and practices of corporate actors rather than the capitalistic system itself (see Follesdal, Micheletti & Stolle, 2003). Culture jamming and most kinds of political consumerism are ideologically opposed. This tension may explain the lack of political consumerist activist email response to the *NEE*. Most likely, many and perhaps most political consumerist activists received the *NEE*, but few sent email messages to Peretti. Activists found the *NEE* to be fun but generally do not consider culture jamming as an effective method for solving sweatshop problems globally (Lindfors, 2004). Like the responders who supported Peretti’s cause (but not necessarily his approach), they believe that the problem is the presence of sweatshops – not corporate domination, consumerism, or capitalism. The *NEED* discourse analysis shows that supportive responders seem to believe that pressuring corporations to improve working conditions and wages (albeit incrementally) is the optimal solution. With few exceptions, the email responses outline a narrative of pressure for change within the system and an implicit hope that “corporations can change AND make more money” (ID 548) and that “maybe Nike will one day do something about sweatshop labour” (ID 1257). In the majority of emails, sweatshops are not seen as structurally endemic but rather as historical anomalies. We just need to “keep up the pressure” (ID 1082) and corporations will “change from within” (ID 603). Even those opposed to Peretti’s discursive political consumerism hold the same reformist view.

Some of the critical responses express supportive views of free trade as a form of poverty reduction. They claim that the *NEE* is counter-productive because the benefits of job-creation and investment in developing countries outweigh any negative impacts of low wages or poor working conditions. “NIKE is actually a saint for continuing to employ those people despite the bad publicity... In (the ten-year-old Vietnamese girl’s) economy, without the NIKE job, her parents would be instead sending her out to beg, or they would be waiting hopefully for her to reach puber-

ty so they could sell her into white slavery like a piece of meat” (ID 484). Or less harshly: “To the workers who must travail in what you call ‘sweatshops’ the opportunity to eat on a regular basis may just compensate for the conditions that your well-fed imagination feels are inexcusable” (ID 478). Similar views are expressed by those supportive of Peretti’s action, who – while decrying the “exploitation” of these workers – also envision the benefits that foreign investment and free trade can potentially bring to the Third World, although this is rarely stated explicitly. The pro-free-trade or tamed free trade approach is apparent in many of their proposed “solutions” to the problem of sweatshops.

Hope is also placed in socially responsible corporations – with The Body Shop and New Balance as commonly cited examples. In fact, the responders conceive of corporations in developing societies as filling the traditional roles of the state (e.g. education, health, welfare, economic “development,” etc.). One person wrote:

YOU (Nike) can make a difference. And you can do it in such a way that the world WILL listen AND you will increase your good will AND you will ultimately make MORE money! (...) Take part of the advertising funds that would ordinarily go to someone like Michael Jordan. Go to the village where your factories are. Create a Foundation to pay for a medical program for your laborers, an educational grant program so that they can better themselves and their community, a disability program to help those laborers who can no longer work, particularly if it is because of poor working conditions, improve their working conditions, etc. (ID 584).

Given this, it is not surprising that the email responses also reveal low trust in government action. The state is absent in their discourse and in the solutions they suggest to solve the sweatshop problem, as are conventional forms of political participation that target governments (Table 1). General references to governments, regulatory bodies, trade organizations, and other institutions that could potentially hold corporations “accountable” are almost completely absent. While many emails grapple with the powerlessness individual consumers feel in face of multinational corporations, very few give recognition to those already-existing actors that can potentially play a role in solving the sweatshop problem.

It is quite interesting that there is no focus on the empowerment of garment workers to improve their situation in NEED. In stark contrast to fair trade and “no sweat” activists, the responders do not discuss the right of workers in outsourced factories to organize into unions. Perhaps this reflects an American bias, as many of the responders live in the United States and the American union movement does not have a strong presence as an actor for societal improvement. The lack of a “Southern” perspective of workers empowerment feeds into the critic’s view that political consumerism (boycotts and labeling schemes) and transnational advocacy networks generally cannot have an empowering effect. Rather

they are a “Northern” strategy to make guilt-ridden consumers feel better about their shopping desires and choices (e.g., Batliwala, 2002).

The NEED discourse analysis identifies three main characters – the consumer, the corporation, and the worker. A closer look at them reveals a great deal about how the responders conceive of the role of corporations in society as well as their imaginings of the Third World, their self-identification as consumers, and their understanding of market-based political action.

Generally, the email responses show a desire to hold corporations accountable for their practices. Nike is commonly described as tyrannical, unaccountable, anonymous, hypocritical, arbitrary, untruthful, inhuman, gutless and amoral. These accusations include an underlying statement that Nike should be accountable, personal, consistent, human, moral, honest and courageous. They condemn Nike for failing to meet these expectations and feel that Nike let them down by not living up to the image it creates of itself, which consists of a portrayal of itself as a socially responsible actor that promotes the rights and freedoms of women and minorities (Stabile, 2000; footnote 13).

An interesting contradiction is, however, present in the different responses as well as within individual ones. On the one hand, Nike is seen as a unified corporate entity with a single will and as a profit-making machine, as “a corporate Goliath” (ID 619) in contrast to “the little people [who] are always watching, [demanding] that corporations act with a conscience” (ID 1086). On the other hand, several emails personalize Nike, address it directly in the second person, and talk to the individuals who make up the Nike corporate “machine.” Many attempt to pin down the individual within the corporation who is responsible for the official reply to Peretti’s customized shoe request (e.g. “Dear Nike personal service representative” (ID 797), and a few seek to hold the individual who responded to Peretti’s request in accord for his/her actions. Some emails call for a “spiritual awakening of individuals” in corporate leadership more generally (ID 812) while others attempt, via email, to mobilize support for the anti-sweatshop cause among Nike employees. “NIKE, God of Victory and Glory, please help us make it a better World for everyone! YOU can make the difference! Thank you for listening. Please pass this to as many desks as it takes until it gets to that decision making table” (ID 548).

Personalization also appears in the second main character, the worker, through the character of the ten-year-old Vietnamese girl who supposedly made Peretti’s sneakers. It is clear that Peretti’s final, ironic exchange requesting that Nike send a picture of the girl who made his shoes had a significant effect on NEE receivers. Hypothesizing about the life of this imaginary girl occupies a good part of the emails and illustrates the importance of testimonials and personal accounts in transnational advocacy (cf. Keck & Sikkink, 1998, 19ff; Jordan & Van Tuijl, 2000). For

instance: “We are all also more connected to the little girl who may have assembled Jonah’s shoes, than we could ever know. Perhaps as we sit in our cushy western worlds, she is stitching the name of some American girl on some pointless shoes & that name is HOPE...” (ID 603). Opponents also focused on her but did so in discussions about her life chances outside the sweatshop factory and, thus, echo the critical view of political consumerism as situated in Western thought. “Consider, the alternatives. What if the 10 year old Viet Nameese girl did not have the job in the Nike sweat shop? Her alternatives are two, she would be begging from tourists at some holy shrine as they are doing currently doing in the neighboring country of Cambodia at Ankgor Wat, or she could become a prostitute” (ID 484). Some responders viewed her as a symbol of child labor use, which they see as the primary NEE issue: “It hurts me for these children. I have worked on projects that involve children. It is painful to see children lose their childhoods. Children are hurt in many ways... I feel somewhat responsible for these children in developing countries” (ID 118).

The narratives of the ten-year-old Vietnamese girl and child labor also reflect the way people generally view the Third World. Often she is a stand-in for garment sweatshop workers, thus infantilizing and feminizing third world workers, which in some ways corresponds with reality as garment works are disproportionally young women. Even when the ten-year-old girl is not mentioned, the workers are “othered” and disempowered, that is, kept completely separate from those making claims on their behalf. They are generally depicted as lacking in agency, as exploited and downtrodden, and more specifically as lacking a voice. They become “young disadvantaged people... who should be in school” (ID 195) and are defined by their poverty, the underdevelopment of their bodies (due to their youth) and minds (due to their supposed lack of education), and a metaphor for their economic underdevelopment and their poor countries’ standing in the world economy.

The NEE is seen as providing “voice” to these workers. A few responders “thank” Peretti “for being a voice for those unfortunate workers” (ID 1096) and for “his efforts on behalf of workers” (ID 2036) and his “concern for children” (ID 2040). A critic writes:

I assume you know what’s best for her--after all, you’re a *graduate* student--... Then after you figure out what’s best for this Vietnamese girl and put her where you think she should be, then perhaps you can move on to better things, like telling me what I should be doing with my life. (...) Then, after you’ve implemented your plan for me, you can go on from there to bigger and better things like planning for whole societies like Vietnam and New York City (my place of residence). Vietnam could clearly use your skills, as they have a long list of unmet socialistic goals to fulfill. (...) Your concern about the ten-year old Vietnamese girl who is working in one of Nike’s factories, oops I mean “sweatshops,” is touching, but I really don’t think she needs your help (ID 490).

Thus, whether perceived as benevolent or presumptuous, a common view is that Peretti is speaking *for* those workers and that solidarity actions are taken *on their behalf*. This lends credence to a common critical view of political consumerism and global NGOs and transnational advocacy that Westerners are intervening on behalf of others whose lives barely affect our own and that we do so more out of guilt, charity, sympathy, or altruism than solidarity or global social justice responsibility-taking (cf. Jordan & Van Tuijl, 2000). Many opponents who wrote emails perceive anti-sweatshop activists as white, middle-class youth who “have too much free time” (ID 488) (presumably due to their lack of real-life experience and their dependence on their parents’ money) or “lazy rich kids that don’t feel right about the luck God has bestowed upon them” (ID 470). Opponents also emphasize the difference between activists and workers, while the supporters’ rhetoric of sameness (e.g. about the universality of human rights) falls up short next to their objectifying and “othering” of the individuals and communities to whom they claim to give a voice.

The third character is the consumer. In the majority of cases, responders identify themselves as consumers. Whether praising Peretti for bringing people to “reflect on their behavior as consumers” (ID 1253) or arguing that “the accusing finger should be pointed at the mirror” (ID 4521), they consistently identify themselves in the role as “we the consumers.” In the game of pronouns, Nike is *you*, the oppressed workers are *they*, and the consumers are *we*.

“Consumer” is both a collective and individual actor identity. Jonah Peretti is the individual consumer actor identity of “David” in the David and Goliath media version of the NEE (ID 5024). His strong underdog struggle not only fits with a strong national narrative from North American political culture, but it appeals to feelings of frustration, powerlessness, isolation, or what can be called a discursive action vacuum expressed in several of the emails. One woman thanks Peretti for “voicing what myself and I am sure many others feel;” another remarks that “now I know that I’m not the only one who questions Nike’s methods” (ID 1201, 1147). There is a sense that by reading this message and passing it on, people become part of a discursive setting much larger than themselves. The NEE became a kind of virtual imagined community for like-minded people. Although forwarding the message took minimum effort, many of the emails allude to a sense of empowerment afforded by this form of Internet activism and by the culture jam in particular.

At the same time, it must be kept in mind that the individual responders had no knowledge of other people sending Peretti emails and their responses. A typical email begins with “I hope you opened this email even though you don’t know me and possibly fear that I have sent you a virus” (ID 832) that was sent by a responder fully unaware that Peretti received thousands of similar messages, and continues with the respon-

der's overwhelming desire to be part of a larger movement, the collective consumer identity. While some responders advocate ethical purchasing, i.e., simply choosing "good" over "bad" corporations, many others emphasize that action must be collectively mobilized to be effective. They express the empowering nature of being "a link in a chain of CHANGE which will lead to ACTION... It's about US creating the communities that we wish to live in" (ID 603). "I will forward it to everyone I know" is a common response and many ask Peretti how many people in how many countries have received the email (ID 1218).

Many emails refer to the NEE's rapid spread as "a movement." For example, one person asks "may I forward it to everyone I know so that it will become a movement? I want it to be on the news" (ID 5103). Several suggest that "many of us should get together and make the same request" (ID 245). A widespread concern is how to be "counted" in this movement. As one boycotter writes:

Sometimes boycotts just aren't effective because the vast majority of North American consumership is thoughtless and careless. I believe that thousands of people will read the forwarded emails of your correspondence and will share your views about transnational corporations and their sweatshops. But we have to make sure that they are aware of the many who object. I won't buy Nike shoes, and it is only when I am counted among the email protest crowd that my objection might be counted. (ID 18)

The NEED also reflects a sense of consumer power. Some go so far as to state that this is "the greatest power" we have against corporations and that "*if you don't like it, don't buy it*" is how a person applies *real* power and gets things to change" (ID 392, 488) and that "If more people could only realize how much power we consumers have I had the thought ... years ago ... that consumers affect the quality of our world ... and that was followed immediately by the realization that we actually CREATE our world by our choices as consumers. Which gives us ultimate power, IF WE ONLY USE IT!" (ID 5540). The emails are, however, split between those that posit consumers as victims of evil corporations and those in which consumers ultimately control corporations. Alongside the helplessness many consumers feel *vis-à-vis* transnational corporations is a sense of or a desire for empowerment related directly to consumers' self-image as a community or a group that can act collectively.

Finally, different types of possible action to solve sweatshop problems are proposed in the email responses. Supporters frequently mention its humor as a positive quality that contributed to its rapid spread from inbox to inbox and to the mass media in many different countries. The benefits of this humorous discursive approach are well-articulated in one of the emails:

Unfortunately in this busy world that we live in, too few of us have enough time on our hands to read long information filled articles containing statistics and facts

[...] However if one email, slightly humorous in its irony but memorable for it's ingenuity catches peoples attention and leaves them primed to bother to watch the next late night documentary on such a subject or take 15 minutes out of their day to read the next newspaper article on exploitation, then that email has done some good! [...] it has caught our attention. Advertising and media companies realize this, they employ humor, irony and short snippets of things all the time. [...] what matters is a window of opportunity has now been opened in people's minds (ID 400).

Another said that it is "the easiest read of a much-forwarded email I've ever had" (ID 812). Similarly, many supporters praise Peretti's way of obtaining important publicity for current problems. Many of these positive responses applaud the public spectacle created by the NEE and its snowball effect. Emails that praise the tone and medium of Peretti's message generally see the campaign as spreading information and raising consciousness. Others oppose Peretti's approach and call instead for rationality, consistency, and material action: "If you really want to accomplish your goal [...] I recommend doing so in a civilized, logical, and effective method. That is how one accomplishes goals in this world" (ID 480). The solution discourse fits well with the framing of the problem in its reformist approach of privileging economic means of action. Some emails refer to this as "rational" and "civilized" methods for change.

An example of rational action are monetary donations, a form of political participation increasing in importance and popularity (see Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). Some suggest donating money to poor countries: "Even if they do use sweatshops, how does it affect you? Do you donate money to unfortunate children in foreign countries? I didn't think so" (ID 482). Yet the fact that monetary donations are viewed by some as the only valid course of action for those concerned with the situation of Third World workers is revealing in terms of the discourse of poverty. Since workers in these countries are viewed as objects of poverty, the obvious answer is to give them money rather than viewing them as subjects who seek help with self-empowerment.

Apart from rationality, consistency in words and deeds is also highly valued. Peretti is chastised for criticizing Nike but wanting to buy its shoes. Many responders feel that no matter how much publicity the NEE receives, no matter how many people stop buying Nike products because of it, the (mistaken) fact that Peretti bought the shoes discredits his entire argument. Thus, he is criticized for being inconsistent: his ideological words are not represented in his consumer deeds. In addition, responders express the opinion that his actions are nothing but talk: "What saddens me and compels me to write is that you have a lot of talent and opportunity - it takes both to get to MIT and the Media Lab - and are using them for a quick laugh instead of to come up with a *positive* solution to a very real problem" (ID 477).

Linked to rationality and consistency is the notion of authority (expert knowledge) and authenticity of claims (personal experience). Several responders believe that Peretti presents no “concrete” facts or statistics in his NEE, does not “[take] the trouble to present a balanced argument backed by objective information” (ID 4846) and cannot offer personal experience for his claims. “I got the below email about you wanting NIKE to screw themselves by submitting to your sophomoric demand to ‘make a statement’ -- all for your daddy’s \$50 [...] Being a ‘Media’ student or ‘whatever’ at MIT tells me you probably had not been out of your protected childhood neighborhood until it was time to go to MIT, courtesy of daddy’s money. It also tells me you haven’t been to South East Asia, or China, or Thailand, or Hong Kong, or Indonesia, Sumatra, the Philippines, Malaysia, or even the Ukraine” (ID 459). The question of Peretti’s authenticity corresponds with the general somewhat correct image of anti-sweatshop activists as young, white, American, middle class students and a Northern bias in fair trade discourses.

Some responders consider Peretti’s actions as irrational, inconsistent, and insubstantial. They maintain that boycotts are the preferred way to solve sweatshop problems. “Imagine if no one even BOUGHT Nike’s products because he/she disagreed with what Nike is doing regarding sweatshops. This would send a much more powerful message to Nike than selecting a derogatory ID. Use the greatest power you have against Nike - buy another product whose values are in line with those you want to support while telling others about your experience with Nike AS WELL. Put your dollars where your mouth is, return the shoes, and tell them it’s because they are defective” (ID 392). Boycotts are seen as rational action that results in clear and effective material changes (supposedly lower sales of the corporation’s products) and consistent in that they unite words and deeds. This solution fits with other NEED discourses that frame the problem as economic in origin. What is interesting is that the discourse surrounding boycotts seems to range between those who place blame and responsibility on corporations and those who believe consumers should be made accountable for their shopping choices. This range of responsibility is currently discussed by scholars who make distinctions between cause and treatment responsibility (see Javeline, 2003) and those who focus on ecological and ethical footprints left by individual choice and action (Rees, 1998, Young, forthcoming).

Responders advocating consumer cause responsibility link boycotts to damage control and ethical consumerism. Consumers are seen as a group causing the sweatshop problem through their purchasing choices. The goal of boycotts is not so much to change the behavior and ethics of corporations as it is to refuse to take part in (that is, cause) particular systems of exploitation: “I too think we should never forget who makes our shoes, clothes, etc. But we all spend a lot of time criticizing the ‘bad’ companies that dominate our society and often miss the bigger point about the indi-

viduals that make them up (us)” (ID 195). In the corporate responsibility cases, boycotts are viewed as treatment consumer responsibility, that is, necessary, positive, collective action to promote change within corporations to solve the sweatshop problem. Boycotts are combined with discursive tactics which are seen as “actively throw[ing] this in people’s faces” (ID 593) in terms of educating the public, mobilizing others to join the movement, and informing corporations of the reasons for boycott. While also using the language of consumer responsibility, these emails place more importance on the collective role consumers must play in holding corporations accountable and, thereby, the role of collective consumer action for solving the sweatshop problem (i.e., treatment responsibility). Faced with “corporate Goliaths,” this community of consumers advocates the combined force of discursive and material involvement, with a focus on collective action initiatives.

The Role of Discursive Political Consumerism in the Global Social Justice Movement

Jonah Peretti created a culture jam that revealed the politics behind Nike’s brand name sports’ apparel. It reached millions of people around the world. Image-making consumer-driven corporations like Nike find themselves in a potentially vulnerable situation when faced with this form of branded political communication (for a discussion see Bennett, 2003ab). This vulnerability combined with the on-going postmodern shift from production to consumption as the structuring force in society has led to the creation of groups and loose networks that question the virtues of consumer goods as well as production and consumption practices. It is noteworthy that the Canadian group Adbusters, the most ideologically driven of all groups focusing on consumer society, has now branches starting up in different countries. Neither is it surprising that mass media, political communication, and business scholars want to study the market and corporations as an arena for politics. Many scholars have also used the NEE as an interesting example of new forms of communication and corporate-consumer relations (e.g., Knight & Greenberg, 2002, Stabile, 2000, Boye, 2003).

The NEE and the NEED analysis presented in this paper show how consumer and citizen activism has evolved from conventional notions and understandings of social movements, as collective challenges in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities” (Tarrow 1994, 4) to a new form of participation which emphasizes exchange of information, mutual mobilization and communication of values. This corresponds to other analyses of communicative campaigns of the anti-sweatshop movement, which have been characterized by the rejection of conventional political solutions for common problems, a shift in focus from govern-

ment as the arena and target for politics to transnational settings and the global marketplace, the lack of a unified or central ideological and organizational core, a focus on loose and more personal forms of association and lifestyle politics, and the polycentric order of the anti-sweatshop transnational network (cf. Bennett, 2003a, 147ff).

The NEE analysis reveals that governments and conventional political institutions do not play a role at all in the discussion about solving the sweatshop problem. Rather, the responders' ideas for societal change are focused on the role of consumers and consumer power and at corporate actors and their practices. This finding challenges scholarship on social movements, which even in more recent work on theorizing social movements in a globalizing world, continue to focus primarily on the importance of the nation-state arena and the role of government as the target of social movement activism (see della Porta, Kriesi & Rucht, 1999). The finding also confronts the nation-state focus of theories of transnational advocacy groups, whose "boomerang" model of influence is directed at governments (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, see esp. figure 1).

Focus on corporate advertising, branded political communication, the market, and consumer society opens up many new avenues for political groups to engage in politics. Their goal is to use these new political arenas to raise public consciousness on the effects of economic globalization and corporate power in the world today. As such, they view corporations as "private governments" (Vogel, 1975) that need to conform to universal norms for human and workers' rights. They use political consumerist tactics in their struggle to open up corporate doors and corporate minds to new and different interpretations of their policies and practices.

The NEE can also be situated in the academic discussion on the increasing role of the Internet for political activity and social interaction (Gronbeck, 2004; Norris, 2002; Putnam, 2000). Technology has generally been seen as an important source of and resource for movement activities (Tarrow, 1994), and the Internet has been praised for creating loosely-structured horizontal networks over the dense ones previously relied upon by movements (Bennett, 2003ab). It has, however, also been feared that the Internet only allows for "ultra-targeting" of single issues (Gronbeck, 2004), simplistic thinking, deliberative isolation (Barber, 2003), and gossip-spreading or what is called electronic panics and e-riots (cf. Ayres, 1999, 141, 135). The NEED content and discourse analyses give some weight to the cry of "ultra-targeting" of single issues as the email responses zoomed into the issue of garment workers and sweatshop conditions and only rarely attempted to connect these problems to an encompassing ideological framework of global structural social injustice. But as the analyses also show, the speed of forwarding of the NEE globally did not lead to simplistic thinking and deliberative isolation. Rather, NEED is characterized by a complex deliberative communication with several frames. Moreover, the NEE made several responders feel connected and

part of a collective movement. Contrary to certain assertions (Buchstein, 1997), it created new democratic public space for them to reflect on their political identities and become part of a virtual community of people alerted to global sweatshop conditions (cf. Bennett, 2003a, 145). The NEE struck the collective nerve of people who began to identify themselves as consumers with the ability to act on the issue. The websurvey mentioned in an earlier section will offer more findings on the effects of the NEE on citizen awareness, understanding, and actions on sweatshops.

The initial “sweatshop” culture jam in the request to Nike for a pair of customized shoes, the entire NEE, and its subsequent magnitude in various forms of media are important for research on political consumerism, corporate social responsibility, political responsibility-taking, and global governance. They demonstrate how citizens are using transnational corporations as a vehicle in their struggle for global social justice by targeting the prized resources of corporate image, logotypes, and marketing slogans (Knight & Greenberg, 2002; Boje, 2001). Thus, the NEE represents a form of political activism differing considerably from those of conventional social movements, which worked on worker rights’ issues through unionization, strikes, and boycotts in defined territorial settings and through face-to-face contact. This kind of political activism has developed for two reasons. First, it is being created by the Internet, which gives newer, resource-poor organizations and networks a tool for political experimentation outside of conventional national political channels (cf. Bennett, 2003a, 144f). Second, it finds fertile ground in the global marketplace because corporate image is crucial for buyer-driven global commodity chains (like Nike) that sell a set of values and symbols to identity with. But as more time, effort, and resources are spent on image creation, transnational buyer-driven corporations become highly dependent on publicity and, therefore, vulnerable to publicity attacks about blame and responsibility avoidance.

Anti-sweatshop and other activists use this vulnerability to develop new strategies and tactics to confront global new age garment companies on their own turf. Through discursive political consumerism, they have found ways of targeting these companies that do not own factories in the country where they have their headquarters or in any other country and, instead, contract out production to overseas factories not necessarily imbued with the values and symbols that are used to communicate the brand name in consumer society. Discursive strategies and tactics that “jam” corporate messages, reveal the costs hidden behind the brand labels, make politics out of products, and force clothing corporations to debate and negotiate social justice issues are important in this regard. This makes them worthy of more scholarly attention in the social sciences.

Appendix 1

Figure 1 Articles from New York Times Using the Word “Sweatshop” (1855-2004)

Source: New York Times archive. Articles with the word sweatshop were counted in five year intervals.
The authors thank Arnav Manchanda for research assistance.

Figure 2: Articles in the New York Times on Nike (1981-2004)

Source: New York Times archive. Articles with the word Nike were counted in two year intervals. The authors thank Amav Manchanda for research assistance.

Figure 3. Nike Culture Jams

Postcard from the Clean Clothes Campaign Collection

Film poster from the group Educating for Justice

Adbusters' spoof ad (adbusters.org/spoofads/fashion/nike.ad.jpg)

Finnish cartoon (www.seppo.net/nike.html)

Appendix 2

*The Nike Email Exchange between Jonah Peretti and Customer Service Representatives at Nike iD**

From: "Personalize, NIKE iD" <nikeid_personalize@nike.com>
To: "Jonah H. Peretti" <peretti@media.mit.edu>
Subject: RE: Your NIKE iD order o16468000

Your NIKE iD order was cancelled for one or more of the following reasons.

- 1) Your Personal iD contains another party's trademark or other intellectual property.
- 2) Your Personal iD contains the name of an athlete or team we do not have the legal right to use.
- 3) Your Personal iD was left blank. Did you not want any personalization?
- 4) Your Personal iD contains profanity or inappropriate slang, and besides, your mother would slap us.

If you wish to reorder your NIKE iD product with a new personalization please visit us again at www.nike.com

Thank you,
NIKE iD

From: "Jonah H. Peretti" <peretti@media.mit.edu>
To: "Personalize, NIKE iD" <nikeid_personalize@nike.com>
Subject: RE: Your NIKE iD order o16468000

Greetings,

My order was canceled but my personal NIKE iD does not violate any of the criteria outlined in your message. The Personal iD on my custom ZOOM XC USA running shoes was the word "sweatshop." Sweatshop is not: 1) another's party's trademark, 2) the name of an athlete, 3) blank, or 4) profanity. I choose the iD because I wanted to remember the toil and labor of the children that made my shoes. Could you please ship them to me immediately.

Thanks and Happy New Year,
Jonah Peretti

From: "Personalize, NIKE iD" <nikeid_personalize@nike.com>
To: "Jonah H. Peretti" <peretti@media.mit.edu>
Subject: RE: Your NIKE iD order o16468000

Dear NIKE iD Customer,

Your NIKE iD order was cancelled because the iD you have chosen contains, as stated in the previous email correspondence, "inappropriate slang".

If you wish to reorder your NIKE iD product with a new personalization please visit us again at www.nike.com

Thank you,
NIKE iD

From: "Jonah H. Peretti" <peretti@media.mit.edu>
To: "Personalize, NIKE iD" <nikeid_personalize@nike.com>
Subject: RE: Your NIKE iD order o16468000

Dear NIKE iD,

Thank you for your quick response to my inquiry about my custom ZOOM XC USA running shoes. Although I commend you for your prompt customer service, I disagree with the claim that my personal iD was inappropriate slang. After consulting Webster's Dictionary, I discovered that "sweatshop" is in fact part of standard English, and not slang. The word means: "a shop or factory in which workers are employed for long hours at low wages and under unhealthy conditions" and its origin dates from 1892. So my personal iD does meet the criteria detailed in your first email.

Your web site advertises that the NIKE iD program is "about freedom to choose and freedom to express who you are." I share Nike's love of freedom and personal expression. The site also says that "If you want it done right...build it yourself." I was thrilled to be able to build my own shoes, and my personal iD was offered as a small token of appreciation for the sweatshop workers poised to help me realize my vision. I hope that you will value my freedom of expression and reconsider your decision to reject my order.

Thank you,
Jonah Peretti

From: "Personalize, NIKE iD" <nikeid_personalize@nike.com>
To: "Jonah H. Peretti" <peretti@media.mit.edu>
Subject: RE: Your NIKE iD order o16468000

Dear NIKE iD Customer,

Regarding the rules for personalization it also states on the NIKE iD web site that "Nike reserves the right to cancel any Personal iD up to 24 hours after it has been submitted".

In addition it further explains:

"While we honor most personal iDs, we cannot honor every one. Some may be (or contain) others' trademarks, or the names of certain professional sports teams, athletes or celebrities that Nike does not have the right to use. Others may contain material that we consider inappropriate or simply do not want to place on our products.

Unfortunately, at times this obliges us to decline personal iDs that may otherwise seem unobjectionable. In any event, we will let you know if we decline your personal iD, and we will offer you the chance to submit another."

With these rules in mind we cannot accept your order as submitted.

If you wish to reorder your NIKE iD product with a new personalization please visit us again at www.nike.com

Thank you, NIKE iD

From: "Jonah H. Peretti" <peretti@media.mit.edu>
To: "Personalize, NIKE iD" <nikeid_personalize@nike.com>
Subject: RE: Your NIKE iD order o16468000

Dear NIKE iD,

Thank you for the time and energy you have spent on my request. I have decided to order the shoes with a different iD, but I would like to make one small request. Could you please send me a color snapshot of the ten-year-old Vietnamese girl who makes my shoes?

Thanks,

Jonah Peretti

{no response}

* Nike iD is an on-line service that lets people buy personalized Nike shoes. The dialog began when Nike cancelled an order for a pair of shoes customized with the word "sweatshop." For more recent information on this story see they.net

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13. Ecolabelling and Sustainable Management of Forestry and Fisheries: Does it work?

Olav Schram Stokke, Lars H. Gulbrandsen, Alf Håkon Hoel, and Jonette Braathen

Abstract

This article gives an overview of leading sustainability-oriented certification and labelling schemes in the forestry and fisheries sectors and explores the conditions for such schemes to affect actual management practices. Today, several schemes based either in industry or environmental groups have achieved a level of producer participation and market penetration that will sustain a positive interest in maintaining them: they are here to stay and continue to grow at a high speed though largely, so far, in developed countries. Substantiating causal impact of such schemes requires the identification of causal drivers, or mechanisms, as well as careful assessment of other possible explanations for any development in the state of the problem addressed by the ecolabelling scheme. This article identifies three generally formulated causal mechanisms that may mediate between ecolabelling schemes and environmental outcomes: altering incentives, modifying perceptions of appropriateness, or promoting learning among producers, distributors, and consumers. On this basis, we explore whether certain ecolabelling schemes are well designed to render sustainable forestry or fisheries practices more rewarding, normatively compelling, or cognitively prominent than would otherwise be the case. Particular attention is given to such institutional features as performance- vs. management system-based assessment, differentiation among participants with respect to standards and certification fees, patterns of involvement in the development and application of standards, and the scope and means of verification, review and response.

Introduction

During the last decade, a market-driven form of governance has achieved salience in the environmental realm, largely in parallel with traditional

state-driven structures for rule-making and enforcement.¹²² Sometimes coined ‘privatization of environmental governance’, its main characteristics are the participation of non-state actors in the formulation and oversight of standards, the voluntary nature of those standards, and reliance upon markets to stimulate compliance (Cashore, 2002; Jordan et al., 2003). Product differentiation by means of environmental labels awarded by non-state certification bodies is a prominent example of this new governance trend. It mimics for new purposes a well-established commercial tactic: the US Alaska pollock industry, for instance, troubled by inexpensive Chinese exports into the US of pollock caught in Russian waters, strives to distinguish its own product by means of a label assuring that it is ‘genuine Alaska pollock’ (Cherry, 2003). Fearing however that such appeals will not suffice to fence off competitors who sell more or less equivalent products at considerably less,¹²³ many engaged in the US pollock fishery take comfort in the upcoming environmental certification under the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). The latter is a private organization that, following an extended scrutiny, may certify that a particular fishery is sustainably managed and permit usage of its label on products certified to originate in that fishery. The organization grew out of a partnership between a leading transnational food company and one of the ‘big five’ environmental organisations and is modelled on the ecolabelling frontrunner, the Forest Stewardship Council. Certification under high-profiled programmes such as these is also promoted by the growing attention to corporate social responsibility, especially among large firms relying upon strong brand names.

The purpose of this article is to give an overview of some sustainability-oriented certification and labelling schemes in two sectors – forestry and fisheries – and to explore the conditions for such schemes to affect actual management practices. Although earlier contributions have addressed the geographic and sectoral spread of environmental certification schemes (Jordan et al., 2003) and how they differ from traditional means of governance in the way standards are developed (Cutler et al. eds., 1999) and legitimized (Cashore, 2002; Raines, 2003), the effectiveness of certification and labelling schemes in shaping corporate and public authority decisions has received limited attention so far. Institutional effectiveness is conventionally defined as significant contribution to solving the problem that motivated the formation of the arrangement (Young and Levy 1999). This article will develop a simple model of causal drivers, institutional features and contextual factors likely to influence the effectiveness of ecolabelling schemes and review on this basis major forestry and fisheries schemes. A set of more intensive case studies applying this

¹²² Funding for this paper and a set of more intensive case studies of ecolabelling in forestry and fisheries has been provided by the Research Council of Norway through the programme *Marked og samfunn*.

¹²³ In fact, the English name of the species is ‘Alaska pollock’, whether caught in US, Russian, or high seas waters; Alaska itself was Russian until 1867.

framework while examining a smaller number of programmes in various national contexts will be reported separately.¹²⁴ We focus on forestry and fisheries because in both sectors, private ecolabelling schemes have been launched in response to what is perceived as inadequate management practices on the part of many governments and industries.

Ecolabelling in Forestry and Fisheries

Whereas sustainable forestry certification is perhaps the most advanced case of private, market-driven governance systems (Cashore, 2002), ecolabelling is so far rather marginal in fisheries. Technically speaking, ecolabelling is 'a voluntary multiple-criteria-based third party programme that... authorizes the use of environmental labels on products indicating overall environmental preferability... based on life cycle considerations' (ISO, 2002).¹²⁵ The life cycle approach implies an assessment of environmental impacts not only from the use and disposal of a product but also from its production – also called 'cradle-to-grave' analysis. To illustrate, a recent life cycle assessment of a specific seafood product concluded that all categories of adverse environmental impacts examined, including eutrophication, acidification and global warming potential, occurred predominantly in the harvesting stage rather than later in the supply chain (Ziegler et al., 2003). Ecolabelling forms a subset of the wider category environmental labelling, which includes symbols or environmental claims unilaterally made by manufacturers, distributors and service providers without any third-party assessment, as well as quantified environmental information with pre-set categories.¹²⁶

Since the appearance in 1978 of the German cross-issue 'Blue Angel' label, and later the Canadian and Nordic counterparts 'Environmental Choice' and the 'Swan', environmental labelling programmes have proliferated considerably. Typically, ecolabelling schemes establish not only environmental production standards, which are emphasized in this study, but also social and economic standards.

Forestry Programmes

In the forestry sector, a multitude of certification schemes have emerged during the last decade and have been applied, primarily, but not exclusively, in developed countries. The initiatives to establish private forest

¹²⁴ See Gulbrandsen (2004) on the interplay between private labelling schemes and international forest rules, Gulbrandsen (forthcoming) on the effectiveness of the Forest Stewardship Council in Sweden; and Hoel (forthcoming) on the effectiveness of ecolabelling in fisheries.

¹²⁵ The definition is contained in ISO 14024:1999, 'Environmental labels and declarations – Type I environmental labelling – Principles and procedures.'

¹²⁶ There is no ISO standard for the last type (III) of environmental label; see WT/CTE/GEN/1. On the spread of the ISO definitions of environmental labelling, see Appleton (1997: 3-5).

certification schemes result from several recent developments in global environmental politics (Bernstein & Cashore, 2000). One is the growing role of voluntary agreements, self-regulation, market-driven tools, and private authority in environmental governance, especially in developed countries. In the forestry sector as in other sectors, the rising attention to 'new' environmental policy instruments in contrast to traditional 'command-and-control' measures paved the way for non-governmental initiatives (Boström, 2003). Another factor was the refusal of the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO) to support NGO initiatives in the late 1980s and early 1990s to study the prospects for developing a forest certification and ecolabelling system (Humphreys, 1996, 74-5). ITTO's failure to take action on forest certification convinced major NGOs such as the WWF that the only way in the foreseeable future to develop forest certification systems was by initiative from non-state actors (*ibid.*). A third factor was the early abandonment, during the preparatory process for the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), of the aspiration to negotiate a global forest convention due to serious disagreement between developed and developing countries.¹²⁷

In 1993 the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) was founded as one of the first forest certification schemes in the world. The FSC was established by environmental and social groups, indigenous peoples' organisations, timber traders, forest owners, community forest groups and other stakeholders. Its formal objective is to promote environmentally responsible, socially beneficial and economically viable management of the world's forests. To this end, the FSC provides global principles, accompanied by a number of criteria, for forest management; elaborates global, regional and national certification standards; and acts as an accreditation body for certifiers of forest owners.

Much as a response to the FSC, forest owners in many countries took steps to establish competing schemes. With the launch of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 14001 standard in 1996, forest organisations could opt for a credible alternative to the FSC for third-party certification. ISO is a world-wide federation of national standardisation bodies founded in 1947 to establish international standards and facilitate trade. The five first standards in the ISO 14000 family of environmental management standards were adopted in 1996 and they are recognised by the World Trade Organization (WTO) and a number of states. These are generic management system standards, which means that they can be applied to any industry, service or sector. Hence, ISO 14000 is not a specific forest certification scheme, but it has been widely applied to forestry. Organisations can be certified only to the environmental management system (EMS) standard ISO 14001. The other standards in the series provide guidelines in the application of ISO 14001 or

¹²⁷ Forest-rich developing countries argued that a forest convention could be a potential trade barrier to their timber and forest products, and opposed the idea from its conception.

address related environmental management issues. With a mix of private and public involvement in standard development, ISO 14000 is a hybrid private-public regime dominated by private industry (Clapp, 2001; 1998).

In 1998-99 and responding to demands for internationally recognised certification systems and ecolabels attesting specifically to sustainable forestry standards, national forestry interest groups of several European countries set up what is now the Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC).¹²⁸ In North America, the American Forest and Paper Association (AF&PA) had initiated the Sustainable Forest Initiative (SFI) already in 1994, while the Canadian Pulp and Paper Association and other forestry interests took the initiative to develop the Canadian Standards Association's (CSA) forest certification programme. The Standards Council of Canada adopted this programme in 1996 as the national standard for sustainable forest management.

Ecolabelling in Fisheries

Fisheries ecolabelling initiatives have come from a diverse array of organisations and institutions. Private schemes based in advocacy groups dominate, most of which are US-based environmental organizations, although some programmes have originated primarily in industry. Consumer concern was first brought to bear on fishermen and management authorities in the 'tuna-dolphin' case, where the tuna fisheries in the Eastern Tropical Pacific gave rise to a substantial by-catch of dolphins. The establishment of the Dolphin Safe label for tuna products in the US domestic market was based on these concerns, which were also translated into the 1991 Dolphin Protection Consumer Information Act. The associated import restrictions were later brought to a GATT Panel by countries whose tuna products were denied access to the US market. The Panel found the import restrictions to be in contravention of international trade law under the GATT but the voluntary certification scheme was found to be acceptable (Appleton, 1997).

Indeed, several different Dolphin Safe labels exist, adding to a widespread perception of ecolabels as confusing rather than enlightening (FAO, 2002; Erickson & Kramer-LeBlanc, 1997; Deere, 1999). Earth Island Institute (EII) runs the initial scheme, which was started in cooperation with and funded by the companies that control the major US brands of canned tuna. Recently, in 1999, the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) established its own labelling standard through the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program (AIDCP).¹²⁹ The main arguments for establishing the AIDCP were lack of transparency in the other schemes, as well as their failure to pro-

¹²⁸ The original name, replaced in 2003, was the Pan-European Forest Certification (PEFC) Scheme.

¹²⁹ See <http://www.dolphinsafetuna.com/>

duce the scientific evidence about gear-bycatch relationships necessary to operate the schemes effectively. Still another single-issue label is offered on shrimp as being Turtle Safe, implying that the methods by which the shrimp is harvested are not harmful to sea turtles.

Other advocacy-group based initiatives include the Audubon seafood wallet card, directed towards the restaurant segment of the seafood business. A list of species categorized according to traffic-light colours from green to red is provided in credit card size and is intended as a guide to what kind of fish is environmentally most sound when ordering seafood. Similar schemes are operated in the US by the Seafood Choices Alliance, Environmental Defence, the Monterey Bay Aquarium and in Europe by the North Sea Foundation, the Marine Conservation Society and the Blue Ocean Institute (Oosterveer, 2004). The Seafood Choices Alliance has currently more than 1750 subscribers ranging from fishermen, fishmongers, and restaurant chefs to specialty grocers. The basis for the categorisation of species is data provided by several different environmental organizations and research institutions.

Multi-criteria, global, third-party certification schemes are a more recent phenomenon, starting with the WWF-Unilever initiative in 1996 to set up the Marine Stewardship Council. Formally established two years later, the MSC was the first private ecolabelling organisation to develop a set of general principles and criteria for evaluation of fisheries management. The principles reflect the overarching concerns for fisheries management as played out in a number of international fora, aiming for sustainable stock management, sound ecosystems and the establishment and maintenance of robust management regimes. The scheme is applicable on a global scale. Industry-based competitors have appeared, notably the Responsible Fisheries Society initiative of the National Fisheries Institute – the primary trade association of the US fishing industry (Carr & Scheiber 2002) – but have yet to take off.

Governments have followed the proliferation of largely private ecolabelling schemes with some concern. The issue was debated at the 1997 and 1999 biannual meetings of the Fisheries Committee (COFI) under the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). A Technical Consultation had examined the matter in 1998, but did not reach agreement on the practicality and feasibility of ecolabelling of fish products, and that disagreement carried over to the COFI meeting that did not produce any consensus regarding actions to be taken by the FAO (FAO 1999). In 2003 COFI considered the matter again, and an Expert consultation in June 2003 produced a set of proposed global guidelines for ecolabelling of fish and fish products that will be considered by another Technical consultation in the fall 2004, with a view to adoption by COFI in 2005.

A Nordic labelling initiative was a response partly to the establishment of the MSC and partly to the failure of FAO to start work on global norms in this realm. One driver was profound scepticism to the MSC,

which was perceived as something of a usurper: a self-appointed judge on the performance of governmental management regimes. Another driver was the perception that the global standards developed by the MSC were overly general and inadequate as a tool for improving regional resource management, especially in the Nordic area. Accordingly the Nordic Council of Ministers, a political institution responsible to the governments in the Nordic countries, set up a Technical Working Group on Fisheries Labelling Criteria, which produced a report on the design of a Nordic voluntary ecolabelling scheme (NCM, 2000). The proposed standards target stock aspects and ecosystem effects, and include considerations for the precautionary approach, monitoring and control mechanisms and selective fishing methods.

Ecolabelling as a Means of Governance: The Effectiveness Issue

From one perspective, ecolabelling programmes are primarily means for better market information that enable producers, distributors, and consumers to signal environmental commitments through the market. If this were the whole story, the most relevant effectiveness criterion would have been sufficient participation among products and service providers for ecolabelled products to be available for potential political consumers, i.e. those prepared to choose producers and products with the goal of changing objectionable institutional practices (Micheletti et al., 2004, xiv).

Indeed, participation in programmes and market penetration of labelled products are quite natural starting points when assessing the political relevance of ecolabelling schemes. Although we argue below that those indicators promote rather than constitute effectiveness, a brief review of existing evidence from the forestry and fisheries sectors is in order.

Participation in Ecolabelling Schemes

Forest certification has been widely applied around the world, particularly in developed countries. In several forest-rich developed countries, for example Sweden, Norway and Finland, more than half of the forest land is covered by a certification scheme. Measured in terms of certified forestland world-wide, PEFC is now the world's largest forest certification scheme, followed by the FSC and the SFI coming third. PEFC had certified about 52 millions of hectares forestland, FSC 46 millions, SFI 38 millions, and the CSA 33 millions of hectares.¹³⁰ The SFI scheme is by

¹³⁰ Data reported as of August 1, 2004: CSA: www.sfms.com; SFI: www.afandpa.org/; FSC: www.certified-forest.org; PEFC: www.pefc.cz/register/statistics.asp; see also (Raunetsalo et al. 2002).

far the largest forest certification scheme in the United States, and it is also applied in Canada although here the CSA programme is the largest. Although PEFC this far has only endorsed European certification schemes, it has established governing bodies in several non-European countries.¹³¹ To date, 13 national certification schemes in Europe have been endorsed by PEFC.

In developing countries, however, where most of the forestry production occurs, participation in ecolabelling schemes is much more limited. According to the FAO (2001), less than three percent of the world's total forest land had become certified by 2000. Unlike the other two major programmes, the FSC certifies forest lands in some developing countries, including Brazil, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand: as of 2002, around 15 percent if its certified forest land were located in developing countries (OECD, 2003, 13). The relatively low share of certified forestland in developing countries may be explained by high certification costs, lack of knowledge about certification programmes, limited and uncertain control over forestland which favour rapid extraction (Dauvergne, 2001), as well as difficulties with meeting the requirements of quite demanding certification schemes such as the FSC (OECD, 2003, 13). Certain national programs have also been established in developing countries, such as the Indonesian Ecolabelling Institute (LEI – Lembaga Ekolabel Indonésia) programme and the Malaysian Timber Certification Council (MTCC) scheme.

With respect to fisheries, the US government-backed Dolphin Safe label was issued in conjunction with the decision of the major US tuna processing companies that they would buy fish only from harvestors who adhered to bycatch provisions based on the US Marine Mammals Protection Act (Carr & Scheiber, 2002). Since the USA is the single most important market for canned tuna, participation in this particular programme has therefore been very high – but the conditions were unusually favourable (Teisl et al., 2002).

For its part, only ten fisheries are thus far certified by the MSC, with another dozen currently undergoing the full assessment procedure. Among the ten are Alaska salmon, New Zealand hoki, Western Australia rock lobster, Burry Inlet cockles, Southwest Handline mackerel, Loch Torridon nephrops, and Thames Blackwater herring. Another dozen fisheries are currently in the full assessment process.¹³² With the exception of hoki, the certified fishers are minor in terms of volume on the world market. This will however change with the certification of the Alaska pollock fisheries if that should come through.¹³³ The New Zealand hoki fishery, the largest whitefish fishery certified so far, has yielded annual catches around 200 thousand tonnes, while the Alaska pollock fisheries

¹³¹ PEFC News, 19 (2004).

¹³² The Wave 16 August 2003.

¹³³ This applies both to the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands fishery and the Gulf of Alaska fishery. The Wave, 26 September and 24 November.

will constitute more than one million tonnes.¹³⁴ Relative to the world production in capture fisheries, these figures are not overwhelming - about 1 percent - but products from certified fisheries will constitute a substantial share of the global whitefish market if Alaska pollock is to be certified.

Like in the forestry sector, ecolabelling in fisheries is largely a developing country phenomenon. Only one of the stocks certified under the MSC thus far are managed by developing countries - a small Mexican lobster fishery. In the longer run this may represent a problem to this scheme, as developing nations are an important source for imported seafood in the EU, the present stronghold of the MSC. Compounding this problem is the cost of certification and maintenance of it, which is to be borne by the party requesting certification.¹³⁵

Market Penetration and 'Green Premium'

An important condition for ecolabelling programmes to work effectively is that a significant share of consumers are prepared to pay more for certified products than for similar, non-certified products. Preference-statement studies of forestry and seafood markets indicate some willingness to pay more for environmentally superior products (Rametsteiner et al., 1998; Pajaari et al., 1999; Veisten, 2002; Johnston et al., 2001).

Education and income are the two background factors that most clearly differentiate political consumers from ordinary consumers of forestry and seafood products. In a study on political consumerism more broadly, Andersen & Tobiasen (2004) report from a Danish survey that as much as 45 percent of respondents claimed to have deliberately chosen, during the past year, certain products for political reasons. This was, interestingly from an ecolabelling point of view, more than twice the proportion that reported negative choice, i.e. participation in a boycott. Andersen & Tobiasen (2004, 216) found that education, not income, was the key factor distinguishing political consumers from others. Their study does not address the price differentiation that political consumers were prepared to accept, however, which could be seen as a measure of their 'politicalness'. There is much to suggest that such preparedness is largely restricted to certain parts of the world. As noted, a number of fisheries labelling schemes are US-based single-issue programmes targeting 'charismatic' marine fauna like dolphins and turtles. And while under the MSC more than 180 product lines are now available in 14 countries,¹³⁶ this programme is firmly established only in some Northern European markets, especially the United Kingdom, and to a lesser extent Australasia and North America (May et al., 2003, 28).

¹³⁴ Source: <http://www.msc.org>

¹³⁵ The costs can be substantial - in the case of Alaska pollock, more than \$500,000 is spent on the certifying process before the objections procedure stage.

¹³⁶ The Wave, 3 December 2003.

Even in wealthy countries with high levels of education and environmental awareness, the acceptable price premium does not appear to be very high. Studies in a series of sectors identify an acceptable range between 1-5 percent.¹³⁷ Vitalis (2002, 7) reports studies of price differentiation in markets where certified products have made significant inroads at about the same level as those found in stated-preference studies. He also notes a tendency that the willingness to pay more for ecolabelled products decreases over time.

That said, under conditions that are frequently present in forestry and fisheries trade, notably a strong market position for large wholesalers or retailers with strong brand names and concerned with their environmental profile, ecolabelling schemes does not require a substantial green price premium among consumers to influence the cost-benefit analysis of firms. Much as a result of pressure from environmental NGOs and fear of negative exposure, several large professional buyers of paper and other forest products now demand certification. Prevention of an expected loss of income appears to be a more important driver for certification than an expected premium for ecolabelled forest products. Similarly, large food market players like Sainsbury and McDonald's have recently pledged to source only from sustainably managed fisheries (Cameron, 2003).¹³⁸ Such commitments can be vulnerable to changes in market conditions, however. While Unilever initially committed itself to buy fish only from environmentally sound stocks certified by the MSC by 2005, this leading food transnational has later modified its policy and developed its own system for evaluating environmental condition of fish stocks and management. As pointed out by a Unilever representative, declining fish catches are making it more difficult for producers to put pressure on their suppliers towards certifying their fishery (Kuntzch, 2003).

Institutional Effectiveness is Problem Solving

Important as they are, participation and market penetration are not the ultimate measures of ecolabelling scheme effectiveness. In the context of consumer boycotts, Friedman (2004, 47) refers to corresponding indicators as 'execution criteria', differentiating successful schemes from unsuccessful ones. Effectiveness, however, is not a matter of execution or performance but of actual consequences (Underdal, 1992; 2002; Young & Levy, 1999; Friedman 2004).

From the governance perspective adopted in this study, ecolabelling schemes are not primarily means for improving market information but rather instruments for inducing policy change among corporate actors and public authorities with a view to improving the state of the environment.

¹³⁷ See Veisten (2002) (forestry products), Loureiro et al. (2002) (organically produced apples).

¹³⁸ The former is the UK's biggest seafood retailer whereas McDonald's sells pollock-based fishburger in many of its 30,000 stores worldwide.

For this, participation and market penetration can be important intermediate steps, but the ultimate effectiveness criterion is whether an ecolabelling scheme contributes significantly to solving the problem that motivated its creation.¹³⁹ A pragmatic specification is inducement of management and industry practices that are more in line with standards promulgated by the ecolabelling scheme than they would have been if the scheme had not existed.¹⁴⁰ Specifying the relevant practices is easiest in the case of single-issue labels such as Dolphin- and Turtle Safe. Since they are essentially bycatch-oriented, both base their assessment of a fishery on a set of criteria for gear and catching methods. They do not evaluate the stock condition or other negative impacts that the fishery might inflict. Effectiveness is a matter of significantly reducing or preferably eliminating bycatches of dolphin and turtle in the tuna sector.

In the case of MCS, the problem is defined less narrowly. Three basic principles state that a fishery should not lead to overfishing,¹⁴¹ it should allow for the maintenance of the ecosystem, and there should be an effective management system. For each of these principles a number of criteria, designed to make the principles operative and empirically verifiable, are listed. Even more broadly, the FSC seeks to operationalize sustainable development in the forestry context and emphasizes not only the development of management plans, the monitoring and preservation of old growth forests, and environmental impacts of forestry but also tenure and user rights, community relations and workers' rights (Cashore et al., 2004a, 182). Accordingly, when assessing the effectiveness of MSC and FSC, a broad range of behavioural, social, and environmental consequences are relevant and include not only corporate behaviour but also that of public institutions.

The causal nature of an effectiveness claim - i.e. that a scheme has made a significant difference towards solving the problem it was formed to address - means that improvements along the dimensions highlighted by an ecolabelling scheme would not be sufficient to judge it effective. Such judgement must await examination of other causal process that may be at work alongside the ecolabelling institution. The state of the environment, the economic viability of industries, and social affairs associated with fisheries and forestry are affected by a number of factors other than social institutions, including changes in demand and supply, technological innovations, and societal beliefs. Moreover, among social institutions, ecolabelling schemes is only one of several.

¹³⁹ This notion of institutional effectiveness draws upon the study of international environmental regimes; see Young and Levy (1999) and Miles, Underdal et al. (2002); also Stokke (1997).

¹⁴⁰ On empirical assessment of effectiveness based on outputs (rules and decisions), outcomes (behaviour) and environmental indicators, see Underdal (1992, 2002). The counterfactual element of causal analysis is discussed in Tetlock and Belkin (eds. 1996).

¹⁴¹ When a fish population is depleted, the fishery should be managed so as to bring about recovery of the stock in question. MSC principle 1.

Such causal analysis must also be alert to unintended, negative impacts (Young & Levy, 1999). It can sometimes be questioned, for instance, whether measures taken in compliance with a particular ecolabelling scheme is actually instrumental for solving the targeted environmental challenge. Particularly the Dolphin Safe labelling of tuna has been criticized for changing fishing practices in ways that enhance pressure on younger fish. The labelling of shrimps as Turtle Safe has also been criticized because it favours capture shrimp over farmed shrimp, the production which poses no threat to turtles, insofar as the latter is not eligible to use the label. As to precision of the scheme, the certification of New Zealand hoki under the MSC has been met with criticism for not taking sufficiently into account the fact that the stock is divided into two different areas with different stock conditions and different levels of fishing pressure sufficiently into account.¹⁴²

With the understanding of effectiveness presented here, there is much to suggest that persuasive assessments of causal impact, including their relationship to specific problems addressed by the institution, cannot at this stage be done by extensive analysis of many programmes in a large number of countries. Instead, it will call upon the full portfolio of intensive case study analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994, 148): identify possible causal mechanisms, trace complex events and processes, sort out temporal relations, and deal with alternative explanations by cycling back and forth between variables and processes. Since labelling schemes are well established in some countries and less in others, and because the state of play in the fisheries and forestry sectors varies considerably from one geographic context to another, findings about ecolabelling scheme impact on industry and governmental practices will differ from one country or problem aspect to another.

This is why the case studies currently under preparation within this project will examine the effectiveness of only two programmes, FSC and MSC, and only in a few national contexts. In accordance with the above, these case studies will specify the problem addressed by the scheme and relate it to a set of practices shown to be particularly vital to problem solving. Changes in those practices, as well as any relevant indirect or unintended effects, will be recorded and evaluated according to programme objectives. An important part of the causal assessment will be to specify alternative, rival explanations for any such changes and examine the weight of such rival explanations relative to one focusing on the ecolabelling scheme.

¹⁴² Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand (RFBPS) press release 16 December 2002

The 'How' Aspect of Effectiveness: Causal Mechanisms

There is another and more indirect approach to the question of institutional effectiveness. Rather than asking whether a particular scheme has been a significant causal factor explaining changes in behaviour and the state of the environment, one may explore the *ways* in which the programme may induce problem-relevant behavioural adaptation. One advantage of attending to this 'how' aspect of effectiveness, as compared to the empirically demanding 'whether' issue, is that it permits discussion of institutional adequacy even before the scheme has been in place for a considerable period of time. This is because the how question provides a linkage to insights generated in the broader study of institutions and their impacts on social behaviour; this is particularly relevant when assessing instances of a relatively novel institutional form such as ecolabelling.

We have noted above that the causal leaps involved in making effectiveness assessments are frequently rather long. One way to render causal assessment possible in such complex situations, is to trace certain processes that mediate between the institution and outcomes that are relevant to problem-solving. To be persuasive, such tracing must relate the institution to causal mechanisms, i.e. certain constellations of agency and context that are generally believed to trigger behavioural adaptation (Stokke, 2004). The prime causal mechanism believed to connect ecolabelling programmes to behavioural adaptation is straightforward. If consumers reflect in their purchasing behaviour a preference for products certified as flowing from sustainably managed resources, this may provide *incentives* for industry players to join the programme and comply with its standards. In addition to this utilitarian 'logic of consequences' (March & Olsen, 1989), another causal mechanism turns on *legitimacy*: a particular certification scheme may acquire a high level of normative compellence within a sector in the sense that participation and compliance by producers and distributors, as well as the choice of labelled products by consumers, stands forth as right and appropriate. In general, institutional legitimacy may flow both from procedural considerations, such as involvement of stakeholders (Raines, 2003) or relevant expertise (Bodansky, 1999; Cashore, 2003), or from examination of distributive aspects of substantive outcomes (Albin, 1995). Thirdly, institutions may affect the priorities that actors assign to various goals or the actors' knowledge about various ways in which the goals can be realized, namely by altering the *cognitive prominence* of certain ends and means.

The three mechanisms are closely connected. The ability of an ecolabelling scheme to raise awareness about itself and its objectives will impact upon its financial basis, which in turn is likely to affect its ability to reward participation and compliance. Also, if the legitimacy of a scheme is widely questioned, for instance on grounds that it will benefit large companies in wealthy nations at the cost of smaller competitors in developing countries (Clapp, 1998), non-participation can be more easily

justified and thus likely to carry less costs to producers and distributors. Legitimacy credibly questioned may also pave the way for competing schemes with different standards. Several competing schemes put the effectiveness of ecolabelling in jeopardy by breaking the link between programme participation and acquisition of a green premium: consumers cannot be expected to differentiate between a broad range of green labels. As we have seen, both the forestry and fisheries sectors comprise a confusing number of environmental labels.

Institutional Design and Effective Labelling Programmes

We have seen above that there is considerable variation across existing forestry and fisheries schemes in organizational origin and functional scope. They also differ along other institutional design dimensions, including whether they are performance- or management system-based, the stringency of their standards, their involvement of various groups of stakeholders in standards development, and their relationship to government-based norms and principles. These various institutional designs imply different emphases on the three general causal mechanisms highlighted in this study.

Management- or Performance-based Criteria

A salient difference between certification schemes is whether they are management system based or performance based. Management-system based schemes such as the ISO 14000 series do not set substantive criteria but require that producers define and implement their own standards which must, in the ISO case, at a minimum comply with national regulations (Clapp, 2001). The FSC in forestry and the MSC in fisheries use substantive performance criteria and indicators. By using a system standard such as ISO or the EU's eco-management and auditing standards (EMAS) alongside with substantive sustainable forestry standards, the other forestry schemes mentioned here combine the system based and performance based approach.

As a result of the great interest in applying ISO 14001 to forestry, ISO recognised the need to facilitate and guide the implementation of the standard to forest management. Thus, ISO created a special technical report (ISO 14061) to assist forestry organisations in the application of ISO 14001 to forestry.¹⁴³ Although that report stresses the relevance of international and national sustainable forest management criteria and indicators, forest organisations applying for ISO certification are responsible for identifying environmental aspects of their operations and build

¹⁴³ ISO 14061, Information to Assist Forestry Organisations in the Use of Environmental Management System Standards ISO 14001 and ISO 14004.

management programmes with performance targets themselves. Forest holdings can also become and remain certified before they comply fully with these objectives, as long as they can demonstrate performance improvement from one assessment to the next.¹⁴⁴

Many forest companies are only certified under ISO, without any linkage to externally defined principles and criteria of sustainable forestry. Among the three causal mechanisms that may mediate between an ecolabelling programme and improved environmental practices in forestry or fisheries, management system based schemes largely invoke that of learning. They direct the attention of producers and distributors to environmental sustainability issues and best management practices, and request the development of institutional procedures or structures to maintain environmental awareness. Indeed, the management approach is sometimes perceived as more dynamic than performance-based systems because of the requirement for continuous improvement rather than clearly defined and frequently fixed criteria. There is also an element of normative commitment involved and linked to an explicit review procedure, but the fact that such commitment are substantively defined by the organization itself implies that any costs associated with meeting commitments can be estimated prior to assuming them.

However, ISO certification of an organisation's environmental management system is often used in combination with international or domestic sustainable forestry standards, leaving individual forest organisations with less opportunity for determining their own performance objectives.¹⁴⁵ The European and North American competitors to FSC all refer to internationally agreed criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, more precisely the so-called pan-European and Montreal Process criteria.

Even when ecolabelling standards are lenient in the sense that meeting requirements does not imply high adaptation costs, such anchoring in broader norms is likely to enhance the normative compellence of the scheme. Compared to the environmental and social requirements of the FSC, the standards used by the three major industry-based programmes are widely regarded as less intrusive and rigorous (see e.g. Cashore et al., 2003, Rametsteiner & Simula, 2003; Humphreys, 2003; Subak, 2002). The industry-based programmes in general place greater weight on procedural, organisational and management measures and offer considerable flexibility in applying sustainable forestry standards (Cashore et al., 2003). The industry and landowner based schemes have repeatedly been criticised by environmental organisations for not offering adequate protection of biological diversity in forestry practices, such as registration, careful handling and conservation of key-biotopes and old-growth forests

¹⁴⁴ On the role of ISO 14000 in forest certification, see also Elliot (1999) and Humphreys (2003).

¹⁴⁵ It is also possible to combine ISO 14001 system based certification with FSC certification, but this has only been done by a few companies.

(see e.g. Ozinga, 2001; Vallejo & Hauselmann, 2001). That said, there are important differences in the ecological and social ambitiousness of those schemes (Rametsteiner & Simula, 2003; Wood, 2000). Some stress an ecosystem-based approach to harvesting, while others place greater weight on maximising yield and forest productivity. Similarly, much as a result of the multi-layered governance approach in forest certification, there are considerable variations in the strength of regionally developed FSC standards (*ibid*). Beyond this, standards in all of the schemes are regularly amended, meaning that any comparison of substantive standards may soon become inaccurate.

In the fisheries sector, performance-based schemes predominate. The single-issue labels are absolute standards, meaning that either they are met or they are not. In some countries this only means that the fishery has to meet the standards laid down in domestic legislation. In other countries the performance of the fisheries has to exceed those standards. In the case of MSC, fisheries are assessed according to certain substantive principles on outcomes (no overfishing), management scope (ecosystem), and institutional capacity. The latter principle is operationalized in 17 criteria requesting, i.a., that no fishery be conducted under an unilateral exemption to an international agreement, that the long-term objectives of the management system are consistent with the MSC principles, that the management system observes the legal and customary rights and long term interests of people dependent on fishing for food and livelihood, that it has a dispute resolution mechanism, a research plan that addresses the information needs of management, specifies measures and strategies that control the degree of exploitation of the fishery, and contains procedures for effective enforcement and compliance.¹⁴⁶ Many of these criteria are of a nature that is difficult to assess precisely so whether a given management system actually meets them fully is a matter for consideration rather than precise yes/no assessment. A fishery is therefore evaluated according to its overall performance, rather than on the accurate scores it obtains on the various criteria.

The standard developed by the Nordic initiative is intended to be similar to the MSC standards, as guidelines with scoring-posts.

While the substantive strength of certification schemes is a critical variable when assessing potential to impact on forestry or fisheries practices and ultimately the state of the environment, the relationship is not straightforward. At the outset, one might expect that the stronger the certification scheme, the greater the potential to impact on forestry practices. On the other hand, substantial influence on the part of environmental, social and community interests may reduce the scheme's credibility in the forestry or fisheries trades, and in turn, industry's willingness to participate in them. Moreover, as mentioned above, the costs of complying with substantively stringent schemes such as the FSC are likely to be high,

¹⁴⁶ See (www.msc.org); cfr. criteria 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, and 11.

which in part explains the emergence and proliferation of less intrusive and demanding schemes. This has severely reduced the potential of the FSC to impact on forestry practices across a wide front.

Differentiation

The more stringent the standards, defined in terms of normative specificity and associated adaptation costs, the more does effectiveness rely upon mechanisms other than learning. Normative compellence is in part based in considerations of the distributive aspects of rules; most practical equity considerations in today's environmental politics revolve around Aristotelian notions of 'balance' and 'proportion' (Albin, 1993, 238). In general, this would imply that the costs and benefits of a given programme should be distributed proportionally to relevant endowments or contributions.

The fixity of the standards upheld by an ecolabelling scheme is a pertinent issue here. Developing countries sometimes portray ecolabelling schemes as a form of eco-imperialism (Raines, 2003, 55) especially if standards largely developed in wealthy nations are mechanically applied in developing-country contexts without adaptation to local conditions. Thus, incorporating some flexibility regarding certification criteria depending on local conditions is one way to enhance a scheme's legitimacy. This strategy may have the downside of trading the substantive strength of the programme for broader acceptance and participation.

The dilemma described here is clearly recognized in recent efforts on the part of MSC to gain a foothold in developing countries (OECD, 2002). Today, a developing country fishery can be certified, as witnessed in the case of Mexican baja red lobster, even if the management system in question does not yet fully meet its standards. While pragmatic and adapted to real-world conditions, this policy also makes the MSC vulnerable to critique for being too weak, undermining its own goal of long-term sustainability.¹⁴⁷

Similar comments are in order with regard to the second component of certification costs, i.e. the fees that must be paid for the certification process and for carrying the associated logo. High certification fees may be a barrier to both small forest owners in developed countries and forest holdings in developing countries. For example, the initial cost of certification to ISO 14000 for a small to medium sized American company is estimated to be about USD 250,000 (OECD, 2003, 23). Concern about high certification fees has also been voiced in the case of MSC; according to OECD (2003:23), a pre-assessment study can be expected to cost around USD 20,000, primary certification costs in excess of 100,000, and chain-of-custody certification between 1,000 and 5,000 per retailer.. In

¹⁴⁷ The MSC is wary of such criticism, also because its certification of the hoki fishery in New Zealand caused an uproar among environmental activists, who claimed that stock was overfished and the fishery had negative ecosystemic effects. This certification is presently the subject of a complaints process.

addition there are costs of maintaining the certification, as well as the fee to MSC for the right to use the label. This fee currently stands at USD 2,000, plus an additional fee per extra million USD of sales.

This matter of fees poses a two-layered institutional dilemma centered on balancing the operation of the incentive- and normative-compellence mechanisms. On the one hand, high fees may dissuade producers who are uncertain about the benefits of joining an ecolabelling programme and pose barriers to participation by small producers or industries located in developing countries (Clapp, 2001). At the same time, high fees can be important for maintaining the institutional structure needed to implement a scheme without financial reliance upon one or a few stakeholders. Such reliance might compromise the integrity of a programme and thus jeopardize the normative compellence of the scheme for another reason than equity. One way to cope with this dilemma is to introduce institutional means that permit differentiation of cost depending on size. Indeed, many national certification programmes in forestry were established in part to provide an affordable certification scheme for small holdings. Other schemes have developed group certification options to allow the sharing of a single certificate among several forest owners. Following allegations that the scheme was not affordable for small-scale forest owners, the FSC in 1998 responded by setting up a group certification option.

Involvement

We have seen that anchoring substantive labelling criteria in national or international standards can be one way to strengthen its compelling force among producers, distributors and consumers. Programmes with a narrow ownership, i.e. is largely based in one category of stakeholders such as industry, can enhance their normative compellence by operational means, including high transparency and broad involvement of other stakeholder categories in the development of certification criteria.

With regard to transparency, whether regarding standard development, accreditation procedures, certification, and auditing, the FSC and MSC receive the highest scores.¹⁴⁸ Certification processes are quite open and inclusive at all levels and summaries of accreditation, monitoring and certification reports are publicly available, usually easily accessible at the organizations' international and (for FSC) national websites. Although there are some differences between the industry-based schemes, it is generally less easy to obtain information about them; there is, for instance, considerably less information publicly available at websites.¹⁴⁹ ISO has also been criticized for lack of transparency, exemplified with exclusion

¹⁴⁸ For a comparison of the forestry schemes on this account, see Ozinga (2001); note that this report was commissioned by FERN, an environmental NGO based in Europe.

¹⁴⁹ See (www.fsc.org); (www.pefc.org); (aboutsf.org); (www.afandpa.org); (www.sfms.com); (www.csa-international.org/certification/forestry/); and (www.msc.org).

of media access to its meetings and restricted NGO participation (Clapp, 1998, 303).

Actual involvement of governmental actors in the operation of the programme can be another way to enhance normative compellence, especially if the scheme has a narrow ownership. Thus, the minimum performance level defined in the Canadian Standards Association scheme elaborates on sustainable forest management criteria and elements developed by the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers. Similarly, the PEFC programme is an umbrella certification scheme that facilitates the mutual recognition of national certification schemes and provides an international framework and a common ecolabel for such schemes. Nationally developed schemes, in which government actors are frequently involved in standard development and consultation, may be approved by the PEFC Council if they conform to the criteria, indicators and operational level guidelines of the scheme. In fisheries, several of the single-issue schemes have high involvement of governmental actors, the AIDCP Dolphin Safe programme operated by the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission being the clearest example.

The FSC approach is radically different. Because its aim is to provide stronger environmental and social regulations than states have been able to agree on in international negotiations, the performance standards are not linked to any state-based internationally agreed criteria. Indeed, FSC rules have explicitly prohibited the participation of public sector bodies in the organisation. Involvement of governmental actors can also be a way to build public commitment to the standards upheld by a labelling programme, however, which may in turn influence regulatory action. The FSC are presently exploring the advantages and risks of various options for public bodies' involvement in the scheme.¹⁵⁰

As to stakeholder involvement, a typical FSC certification process starts with the establishment of a national, regional or company working group with equal representation of ecological, economic and social interests. The working group will elaborate and adapt the FSC's global principles and criteria, and FSC's international board will approve the locally adapted standard if they are in conformity with the scheme's regulations. Independent certification bodies accredited by the FSC audit forest operations on the ground. If the certification body approves forest operations, the forest owner obtains a certificate and is allowed to market his wood as FSC certified.

Under the CSA programme, the general criteria established by public authority are further elaborated and adapted to local conditions through an open and inclusive multi-stakeholder process. While there is some variance among the national schemes under the PEFC umbrella, those schemes and the SFI generally pay less attention to broad stakeholder involvement than do FSC and CSA.

¹⁵⁰ See the report by Garforth (2002), commissioned by FSC.

In the fisheries sector, the MSC principles and criteria were developed through a series of consultations with stakeholder groups in different regions. Workshops were held in USA, Germany, Canada, Australia, Scotland, New Zealand, and Norway; following criticism for not involving developing countries, a workshop was held also in South Africa. The assessment report that is prepared as part of the certification process is subject to public review in which all interested organisations can comment on the panel's findings. Those responses from public hearings, along with the panel report, form the basis for the decision on whether a fishery is eligible to MSC certification and use of the MSC label. This process is however problematic in that it is very time-consuming – the certification of Alaska pollock is now into its fourth year – the competence of parties with a say in the process on the issues at hand varies considerably, and the process is costly. Also, American non-governmental organizations are given a prominent role in the final objections procedure stage of the certification process.

Yet another institutional means to enhance the normative compellence of an ecolabelling scheme is to place scientific expertise prominently in the certification process. Hence, the process by which MSC-certification is obtained follows a series of steps from pre-assessment by a certifier accredited by the MSC, through full assessment by an expert panel nominated by the MSC accredited certifier.¹⁵¹ The nominated experts should have certain qualifications defined by the MSC certification methodology: a fishery stock assessment expert, an ecosystem expert and a fishery management expert. The expert panel shall make the principles and criteria operational for each fishery and give scores with respect to the latter's performance.

Audit Scope: Verification, Review and Response

As a market-driven approach to governance, green certification schemes seek to exploit profit-seeking calculations among private firms for environmental purposes. The ability of a programme to trigger the incentive mechanism, however, depends upon its audit scope, i.e. its procedures for third-party verification and review of participant practices and withdrawal of the label if procedural or substantive standards are no longer met. All of the schemes discussed here include third-party assessment and certification is subject to renewed assessment after a certain period of time. Under the SFI programme, forest owners can choose between first-party (self-assessment), second-party (another company, industry association or customer) and third-party (accredited certification body) verification. Only those that are subjected to third-party verification may become certified, meaning that not all members in the program are certified.

¹⁵¹ See www.msc.org

A fundamental requirement for verification, review and response is traceability, or the ability to track the origin of products through what is frequently referred to as the 'chain of custody'. To avoid 'contamination' by non-certified inputs, the FSC used to require that solid wood products carrying its label contain 100 percent certified wood while chip, fiber and component products must contain at least 70 percent. In 2000, however, following pressure from Swedish forest companies, the FSC reduced the thresholds for important product groups providing the remainder is not 'controversial' (Cashore et al. 2004b). Segregation and tracking of certified and uncertified wood is mandatory.

For the MSC too, usage of the label requires the performance of a chain of custody assessment, to ensure that the labelled products entering the marked actually stems from the certified fishery. Under MSC a chain-of-custody certification distinct from the fishery certification is designed to ensure that products carrying the MSC logo actually originates in a certified fishery. Particular attention is directed at the processing stage, and plants must document satisfactory control systems for keeping MSC produce apart from other inputs (Scott, 2003, 89-91). Main components are MSC-endorsed chain-of-custody certificates issued by suppliers, physical or temporal separation of certified and non-certified products, product labelling, output identification, and adequate record keeping.

With the development of the TRACEFISH programme, external conditions for such tracing are improving in important markets such as the EU, largely for food security reasons but also because national import quotas has necessitated separate treatment of fish landed by vessels of different nationality.

Summary of institutional differences

Table 1 summarizes some of the institutional differences that have been highlighted in this section.

Table 1: A Comparison of Fisheries and Forest Certification Schemes

	Marine Stewardship Council	Forest Stewardship Council	Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes	Sustainable Forestry Initiative Program	Canadian Standards Associations SFM Program
Initiation	WWF-UK and Unilever, 1996	WWF and other NGOs, 1993	European forest owners' associations, 1998	American Forest and Paper Association, 1994	Canadian Pulp and Paper Association, 1994
Territorial focus	Global	Global	Europe, later expanded internationally	North America (primarily the US)	Canada
Stakeholder participation	Deeply integrated in rule-making and consultation (MSC Stakeholder Council)	Deeply integrated in rule-making and consultation	Generally minimal, but varies among national schemes	Minimal	Integrated in rule-making, but little or no consultation
Government participation	Minimal	Minimal	Stakeholder in standard development and consultation	Minimal	Stakeholder in standard development and consultation
Performance-based or management-system-based	Performance	Performance	Generally combination, but varies among national schemes	Combination, but primarily system-based	Combination, but primarily system-based
Stringency of standards	Quite strict and non-discretionary	Quite strict and non-discretionary	Discretionary	Discretionary	Discretionary
Scope of standards and auditing	Intermediate: include fishing practices, management and (vaguely) fishers' rights	Wide: include environmental performance and indigenous peoples' and workers' rights	Narrow, environmental improvements	Narrow, environmental improvements	Narrow, environmental improvements

Conclusions

The attention given to ecolabelling in international fora on trade, environment and development indicates a perception that such programmes are powerful tools for influencing resource management. Few empirical studies exist to substantiate this perception. Existing empirical studies of the potency of ecolabelling schemes have largely focused on certain conditions for ecolabelling programmes to influence industry and public management decisions, especially producer participation and the preparedness of consumers to pay a premium for ecolabelled products. While such conditions are significant, the ultimate effectiveness test for ecolabelling schemes, like for other environmental institutions, is whether they contribute to solving the problem they were formed to address.

Schemes differ as to how they define that problem, including how they balance environmental, economic and social objectives. There is also cross-scheme variance in how narrowly the problem is defined with sing-

le-issue labels, such as the bycatch oriented schemes in fisheries, presenting the simplest effectiveness puzzles. While not denying the relevance of other objectives, the focus of this article is environmental effectiveness, i.e. whether and how the programmes have contributed significantly to more sustainable practices in the fisheries and forestry sectors. In some cases, the causal pathway mediating between the scheme and industrial practices passes through adaptation of public regulations and standards.

The following conclusions seems warranted: Private, voluntary ecolabelling initiatives alongside public regulatory action are here to stay in the forestry and fisheries sectors. Several existing schemes, primarily based either in industry or environmental groups, have achieved a level of producer participation and market penetration that will sustain a positive interest in maintaining them. They continue to grow at a fairly high speed though largely, so far, in developed countries. The fact of several competing labels with different ownership provides also a negative interest in maintaining an existing programme: leaving the field will leave it open for others who may pursue different objectives.

At the same time, there is little to suggest that the green price premium that consumers are likely to accept, i.e. the strength of their political consumerism, is more than a few percent even in environmentally conscious markets. This places a limit on the certification and adaptation costs that can be expected of producers and distributors. However, their cost/benefit analysis is also affected by dominance in important market segments of large wholesalers or retail chains with considerable concern about corporate environmental responsibility and in a position to require certified products from their suppliers.

Substantiating causal impact requires the identification of causal drivers, or mechanisms, as well as careful assessment of other possible explanations for any development in the state of the problem addressed by the ecolabelling scheme. At the present state of knowledge, this calls for intensive case studies focused on a small number of schemes and country context: two such studies are underway. In preparation for those studies, this article has identified three generally formulated causal mechanisms that may mediate between ecolabelling schemes and environmental outcomes: altering incentives, modifying perceptions of appropriateness, or promoting learning among producers, distributors, and consumers. On this basis, we have explored whether certain ecolabelling schemes are well designed to render sustainable forestry or fisheries practices more rewarding, normatively compelling, or cognitively prominent than would otherwise be the case.

The three effectiveness mechanisms sometimes point in opposite directions: an institutional feature likely to trigger incentive-based adaptation may undermine the perceived integrity of the scheme and therefore its normative compellence. In those cases, effectiveness becomes a matter of balancing competing concerns and we have tried to bring out how various

forestry and fisheries schemes have approached such dilemma. To keep certification fees at a moderate level yet generate sufficient income to maintain structures for inclusive standards development, verification, review, and response, some programmes have introduced differentiation of certification fees including by means of group certification. To gain participation also from industries in developing countries yet retain eco-credibility, some of the standards applied by certification schemes are implemented more leniently in developing countries but only on a temporary basis and requiring step-wise improvement over time. In such cases, the difference between performance- and procedurally oriented management-system based schemes is less striking. The latter, often in combination with vaguer or softer standards, are frequently applied by industry-driven labelling programmes. To attract sufficient participation among producers and distributors while remaining environmentally progressive, programmes with relatively stringent standards emphasize involvement of a broad range of stakeholders, including industry and relevant expertise. And to obtain sufficient credibility among green consumers, programmes with relatively lenient standards anchor their certification procedures in international and national principles and rules.

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14. The Emergence of Non-State Authority in Forestry: Explaining different approaches in similar societies

Lars H. Gulbrandsen

Abstract

This article explores divergent approaches to forest certification in Sweden and Norway. While the NGO-supported Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) has five times the endorsement in Sweden than the industry-dominated Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC), virtually all commercially productive forests in Norway are certified by the PEFC-endorsed Living Forests scheme. The PEFC scheme leaves forest companies with less stringent sustainable forest management standards than the FSC, and greater leeway to apply those standards. Three explanations for the divergent approaches to forest certification are explored: public policy and government support; advocacy-group and market pressures; and industrial structure. It is found that although the government in both countries facilitated and legitimised certification processes, environmental group activism and supply chain pressure were more important for certification initiatives. Ownership structure and market exposure largely explain different approaches to forest certification. A group of large Swedish forest companies responded to market and advocacy group pressures by choosing the widely recognised FSC scheme. Non-industrial forest owners in both Norway and Sweden rejected this scheme due to narrower market and public exposure and their belief that environmental, social and forest company interests dominate the FSC decision-making process.

Introduction

Traditional state-driven top-down governance approaches are increasingly being complemented by shared public and private authority, cooperative partnerships, voluntary standards, codes of conducts and self-regulation, prompting widespread claims that we are witnessing a shift

from *government* to *governance* (Jordan, Wurzel & Zito, 2003a). Although studies of the proliferation of “new” environmental policy instruments find that in most states such tools tend to *supplement* rather than *supplant* traditional state-based regulation (Jordan, Wurzel & Zito, 2003b; Tatenhove, Arts & Leroy, 2000), a new arena of authority, championed by non-state actors, has emerged (Cashore, 2002; Clapp, 1998; Cutler, Haufler & Porter, 1999; Hall & Biersteker, 2002). In the absence of a global forest convention, non-state actors have established international programmes to certify sustainable forestry and label wood products, and turned to the market for rule-making authority (Cashore, 2002). A forest certification scheme is an environmental and social standard involving sustainable forest management rules, independent verification of compliance with those rules, and labelling of wood products flowing from approved forestry practices. Forest certification has become a great success in terms of supply-chain support and participation of forest companies and owners in Europe and North America, but there are significant differences between countries and regions in the proliferation of schemes (Gulbrandsen, 2004). As a consequence, a number of international schemes compete for market credibility and support of forest owners and other stakeholders. Why do some forest companies and owners prefer the Non-governmental Organisation (NGO) initiated Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) scheme while others prefer industry-dominated schemes? What is the role of environmental groups, the market supply chain and governments in granting non-state regimes legitimate rule-making authority? How can we explain divergence in support for non-state regimes in similar societies?

While these questions have been explored by Cashore, Auld & Newsom (2004), this study seeks to examine the Nordic context by investigating why two different forest certification schemes attracted backing in Norway and Sweden.¹⁵² These two forest-rich Nordic countries are selected not only because of the many similarities they exhibit, including forest biodiversity and ecology, dependence on paper products exports, administrative traditions, and relationship between business, non-governmental actors and the state, but, crucially, their differences with regard to the development and proliferation of forest certification schemes. In Norway, almost all productive forestland is certified in accordance with the nationally developed *Living Forests* sustainable forest management standards and the environmental management system (EMS) standard ISO 14001. This system is endorsed by the Pan-European Forest Certification scheme (PEFC), renamed the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes in 2003. By contrast, the FSC has certified about 40 per cent of the Swedish forestland, and it is almost five times larger than the competing PEFC scheme in Sweden

¹⁵² Cashore, Auld, and Newsom (2004) studied forest certification in Sweden and a number of other countries, but not in Norway.

(National Board of Forestry, 2003). The Swedish FSC standards generally appear more stringent, wider in scope and less discretionary than the Norwegian Living Forests standards (Gulbrandsen forthcoming). The overarching question is, then: Why did a quite intrusive and rigorous forest certification scheme become the largest scheme in Sweden, while a less stringent and more discretionary scheme attract widespread backing in Norway? In addressing this issue, the article first examines the emergence of forest certification schemes and theorises certification choices. In explaining the divergent approaches to forest certification I look at public policies, advocacy group and market pressures, and the two countries' forest industries. For the purpose of the study I consulted written material, including several studies on forest certification processes (in particular the work of Benjamin Cashore and colleagues, Magnus Boström and Chris Elliott), and interviewed policy-makers, environmental organisations and forest owners' interest associations.¹⁵³

Competition in the Non-State Rule-Making Authority Stakes

Despite increasing global concern over deforestation and forest biodiversity loss, state-based initiatives at the international level to negotiate a binding agreement or develop other instruments to protect the forests have met with little success. The International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO) in the late 1980s discussed and rejected a NGO-initiative to set up a state-based eco-labelling scheme to certify sustainable tropical forestry. A number of initiatives to negotiate a global forest instrument – such as a new convention or a protocol to an existing convention – in the lead up to the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (“Earth Summit”) also failed in the face of opposition from some forest-rich developing countries, notably Malaysia, which was unwilling to contemplate restrictions on its national forest management prerogatives (Humphreys, 1996; Porter & Brown, 1996). The failure of the ITTO to take action on labelling convinced the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and other environmental organisations to go ahead and establish a non-state, market-based scheme themselves (Humphreys, 1996, 74). Following a series of discussions among NGOs, timber traders and forest companies, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) was founded at a meeting in Toronto, Canada, in 1993 and legally registered in Mexico in 1995. The FSC aims to promote ecological, social and economic concerns in forestry by providing nine global prescriptive principles for

¹⁵³ Interviews were conducted with three environmental organisation representatives, two forest owners' association representatives, two officials at the Norwegian department of agriculture and three officials at the Norwegian departments of the environment. The interviews took place in 2001, and were supplemented with personal communication in 2004. Details are available on request from the author.

forest management (later expanded to ten) accompanied by a number of criteria. These principles include tenure and use rights of the forestland, indigenous peoples' and workers' rights and the well-being of local communities, maintaining the forest ecosystem and high conservation value forests, benefits arising from the use of forests, management plan, monitoring and assessment, and plantations. The principles and criteria need to be adapted and elaborated to the national or regional level in a process where ecological, social and economic stakeholders participate on a level playing field. FSC's international board endorses nationally or regionally developed standards that conform to the scheme's principles and rules. If FSC accredited certification bodies verify compliance with the standards in independent audits, forest companies obtain a certificate along with the opportunity to label their products with the FSC logo, thus permitting customers to signal a preference for certified wood over non-certified.¹⁵⁴

With the support of WWF and other environmental organisations, professional purchasers and consumers, FSC certification could translate into greater market access and sales for forest companies. However, many forest companies and small forest owners did not grant the FSC the authority to govern forest management owing to dissatisfaction with, *inter alia*, the stringency of its standards and labelling requirements, and the influence of environmental and social interests in decision-making procedures (Cashore, Auld & Newsom, 2004; Gulbrandsen, 2004). As a consequence, a number of business-led national and regional certification processes were launched in opposition to the NGO-dominated FSC scheme. While the FSC provides prescriptive performance standards and substantive rules for well-managed forests, the industry-dominated schemes place greater weight on organisational measures, procedural rules, discretion and flexibility in forest management (Cashore, Auld & Newsom, 2003). In general, the industry approach to certifying forestry imposes on forest companies a more lenient set of sustainable forest management standards than the FSC, and greater leeway in applying them. While Swedish forest companies opted for FSC certification, the Norwegian forest owners' associations, in partnership with the Swedish forest owners' associations and Finnish forest organisations, assumed a leading role in establishing the competing PEFC scheme. A similar development took place in the United States, with the American Forest and Paper Association's Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) programme, and in Canada, with the Canadian Standards Association's (CSA) certification programme, initiated by the Canadian Pulp and Paper Association. Owing to the widespread support of forest industries and forest owners for business-dominated schemes, such programmes have become larger

¹⁵⁴ Subject to chain-of-custody rules requiring that forest products be traced through the supply chain. These rules require that a certain share of FSC-certified wood are used in forest products to allow use of the logo.

than the FSC in both Europe and North America. Although the emergence of business-dominated schemes has provided forest owners with a number of certification options, the proliferation of different eco-label schemes may confuse customers and weaken the credibility of such instruments (Jordan et al., 2004), and damage the reputation of forest certification.

Theorising Certification Choices

Forest certification might be seen a new form of governance occupying an extra-territorial space, in that it is based on the support of producers and consumers along the market supply chain rather than on traditional state sovereignty (Bernstein & Cashore, 2004; Cashore, 2002). In the absence of the exclusive policy-making authority of the state, relevant audiences must grant rule-making authority to a scheme, and producers must authorise certification bodies to verify compliance with rules through regular audits and accept the consequences of non-compliance (ibid.). Because participation in certification schemes is voluntary, each and every producer must decide whether to join a programme and may suspend participation at any time. In the first place, producers could be expected to participate in a certain scheme if certification yields economic benefits, such as wider market access or a price-premium on certified products. However, a precondition for triggering cost-benefit-based producer adaptation to market demands is that consumers value and internalise certain norms associated with forest and biodiversity conservation. Norms are shared conceptions that prescribe certain actions, for example, the setting aside of key biotopes in forestry operations, and proscribe others, such as the clear-felling of old-growth forests. Internalisation of norms means that actors learn and accept them, and then use them to guide their behaviour without having to reflect on them (March & Olsen, 1989). Without some degree of valuation and internalisation of forest and biodiversity conservation norms in society, or at least in niche markets, it would be impossible for NGOs to mobilise consumer boycotts targeted at forest companies and the forest products supply chain. Decisions to grant rule-making authority to non-state regimes can therefore be influenced through two interwoven processes: by shaping the costs and benefits associated with participation and compliance with rules, and by establishing, strengthening and disseminating norms of appropriate behaviour or action among producers as well as a broader audience along the market supply chain. This would mean that firms would try to balance normative behaviour precepts with cost-benefit calculations when choosing between certification schemes.

In the present study I examine three variables likely to trigger or impede those mechanisms and interplay between them. First, *public policy*

regulation and government support for certification initiatives may vary in Norway and Sweden. In the absence of state legitimisation, private authorities are vulnerable to criticism for acting as self-appointed judges in a field where they have inadequate understanding, little experience and no legitimate right to regulate in the first place. There is also likely to be an “accountability deficit” in governance dominated by private authorities, because NGOs and business are not accountable for their actions in the same way as public authorities (Rosenau, 2000, 192). Government support for certification initiatives would be one mode of increasing legitimacy, thereby granting private authorities rule-making authority and strengthening claims that pursuing the certification track is “appropriate” action for environmentally concerned firms (Boström, 2003; Cashore, Auld & Newsom, 2004). For Cutler, Haufler & Porter (1999, 19), private authorities must be empowered by governments or international organisations granting them the rights to make decisions for others. Of course, if governments favour one particular certification scheme over another, it would be a very strong signal to firms considering different options. State agencies could also facilitate private sector governance schemes at a more practical level by tendering knowledge, expert advice and financial support in the development and implementation of such initiatives (Boström, 2003). What, then, was the role of the state in the Swedish and Norwegian certification processes? Did public policy and state agencies encourage private industry to search for new solutions, compromises and governance approaches? Did the government support and legitimise certain forest certification initiatives at the expense of other schemes?

Second, the level of *advocacy group and supply-chain pressure* may explain whether firms and forest owners choose to participate in the FSC or prefer to invest in industry-dominated programmes. Cashore (2002) argues that private authorities need not necessarily be empowered by public authorities, but could be granted rule-making authority from relevant audiences in the marketplace and civil society. In the forestry sector, NGOs have created governance schemes in opposition to what were widely perceived as inadequate public policy regulations and targeted companies and the forest products supply chain to ensure producer participation (ibid.). Forest companies and owners responded either by joining up with these programmes or setting up industry-dominated schemes. According to Haufler (2001), the threat of advocacy group shaming is a major driver of firms’ participation in voluntary, private sector programmes. Have differences in advocacy group and supply chain pressure impacted on choice of certification scheme in Norway and Sweden? Have market players supported the proposed solution? One would expect that the more NGOs target forest companies and owners and the greater the supply chain support for certification, the more likely they would espouse FSC-style certification owing to its NGO endorsement and credibility in the marketplace. Essentially, FSC certification could translate into increa-

sed competitiveness, greater public trust and a decreased likelihood of NGO targeting and consumer boycotts of hard-pushed firms.

Finally, *forest industry structure* may explain divergent responses to calls for FSC certification (Cashore, Auld & Newsom, 2004). The domestic distribution of costs and benefits may explain why certain policy measures are more easily implemented than others (Underdal, 1998; Underdal & Hanf, 2000). Similarly, participation in voluntary certification schemes is likely to depend upon the structure of the forest sector and the distribution of cost and benefits among potential applicants. In general, forest companies dependent on environmentally concerned foreign markets are more likely to participate in the FSC to avoid transnational consumer boycotts and loss of market shares – or to increase sales – than those who sell primarily in a domestic market (Cashore, Auld & Newsom, 2004). Furthermore, vertically integrated companies, that is, large firms involved in timber extraction, processing and sales, are more likely to acquiesce to NGO targeting and supply chain pressure to participate in the FSC than non-industrial forest owners owing to their public and market exposure (ibid). Non-industrial forest owners are less exposed to supply chain and civil society demands, and are therefore more resistant to calls for participation in advocacy-group-driven certification processes. Against this backdrop, it is pertinent to ask whether the different stances of Norwegian and Swedish industry facilitated or impeded FSC and industry-dominated certification processes. Have forest industries and forest owners felt a sense of ownership to certification initiatives and been more willing to grant rule-making authority to some certification bodies than others? Can ownership structure in the forestry sector explain different approaches to certification? These questions will be investigated in the following.

Explaining Forest Certification Choices

Public Policy and Government Support

Global biodiversity and forest policy instruments in the early 1990s shaped both domestic forest policy and certification initiatives. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), signed at the 1992 Earth Summit, requires parties to develop national strategies for the conservation of biological diversity and to protect ecosystems, natural habitats and viable population of species in their natural surroundings (*in situ* conservation). States also agreed on the non-legally binding Forest Principles and “Combating Deforestation”, chapter 11 of Agenda 21.¹⁵⁵ These soft-law instruments set out a number of forest policy recommendations, but do

¹⁵⁵ Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests.

not go very far in addressing measures that need to be taken to reverse deforestation and environmental degradation of forests. Nonetheless, the Earth Summit agreements strengthened global norms and principles to promote biodiversity concerns and sustainable forest management in *all types* of forests – not only tropical rainforests – and contributed to raise awareness of forest degradation and loss of biodiversity in temperate and boreal forests (Gulbrandsen, 2003).

However, concerns over the environmental impact of intensive forestry were nothing new in the Nordic countries. Following growing environmental awareness in the 1970s and 1980s, there were a number of conflicts in Sweden over such issues as clear-cutting and other intensive harvesting methods, protection of old-growth forests, the use of non-native species in silviculture and afforestation, and the use of herbicides (Hellström, 2001). The 1979 Forestry Act was detailed and prescriptive, but placed greater weight on economic concerns, in particular productivity, reforestation and maximising yield, than environmental concerns. With environmental NGOs lobbying to protect the forests, international commitments, a programme of deregulation of the economy, and several years of budgetary cutbacks to the National Board of Forestry, the detailed forestry regulation was replaced with a new framework law in 1994. The new forest policy may have contributed to certification processes in at least three ways. First, while environmental concerns in the old forest policy were secondary to economic goals, environmental and economic goals were given equal weight in the new regulation, thereby increasing the pressure on forest companies and owners to adapt practices to ameliorate environmental protection in forests (Cashore, Auld & Newsom, 2004). Second, the deregulation of the forestry sector encouraged the private sector to search for new solutions and assume greater responsibility for environmental protection in forests, and the public sector to support and legitimise forest certification (Boström, 2003). The government gave industry greater freedom to develop the means to attain the new environmental and production goals, while, at the same time, assuming that industry would take responsibility for implementing the necessary measures in forestry practices (*ibid.*). Finally, by engaging in dialogue to provide inputs on the new forest policy, different stakeholders interacted and conflict levels abated somewhat (Elliott, 1999). In applying the advocacy coalition framework to the Swedish forest certification process, Elliott & Schlaepfer (2001) found that the new forest policy allowed policy-oriented learning in the FSC working group and the certification process, which contributed to changes in core beliefs and the formation of a “sustainable forestry coalition”.

In Norway, the 1965 Forestry Act was renewed in 1976 to include some environmental and recreational concerns in its provisions, but these concerns were still secondary to economic concerns. The Act was revised again in the early 1990s, to incorporate principles regarding conservation

of forest biodiversity in the legislation. Nonetheless, the production goal is still more important than environmental provisions and requirements to conserve biodiversity in forestry practices are weak and, to a large extent, non-enforceable (Gulbrandsen, 2003). The Forestry Act is a minimal framework law guided by the general principle of “freedom with responsibility”, as stated in the Act, arguably leaving forest owners with more freedom than responsibility. On the other hand, this approach encouraged and paved the way for private rule-making projects and for public bodies to support and legitimise such initiatives, not unlike the new Swedish forest policy. By financing half of the Living Forests budget and participating on the standard development group, the Norwegian government and state agencies in fact went much longer in facilitating forest certification initiatives than their Swedish counterparts. Moreover, the Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture in 1997 launched the research project *Environmental Inventories in Forests* to develop a scientific method for biodiversity mapping that would enable forest owners to *voluntarily* set aside biological ‘hotspots’ in forests. Although environmental organisations are critical of the way the project was developed, the initiative may be seen as an effort to facilitate the implementation of the Living Forests standards, and all certified forest owners’ associations have made use of the method a requirement for their members.

The particular way of policy-making and enactment in Norway and Sweden is often referred to as “the Nordic model”, characterised by close interaction between the regulators and the regulated, extensive participation of large interest organisations, and consensus-oriented decision-making (Olsen, Roness & Sætren, 1982; Richardson, 1982; Kjellberg & Reitan, 1995; Micheletti, 1995). As pointed out by Boström (2003), this administrative culture may on the one hand favour state-centred corporatist solutions and impede non-state market-driven governance, while, on the other hand, the policy style of openness and pragmatism could facilitate private initiatives and the search for new solutions. In his study of the role of state in the Swedish FSC certification process Boström found support for the latter proposition, that the Swedish political and administrative culture encouraged private initiatives in the forestry sector, and state agencies facilitated their implementation through information and advice (*ibid.*). Similarly, the close connections between the Ministry of Agriculture, the Norwegian Forest Owners’ Federation and the forest industry facilitated the certification process in Norway. The Ministry not only granted legitimacy to the certification process by approving and encouraging the initiative, but also supported the project financially and was represented in the standard development group, as was the Ministry of the Environment.

In conclusion, the forest policies and administrative cultures of Sweden and Norway encouraged the forest owners to take responsibility for formulating sustainable forest management rules and implementing sy-

stems for verification of compliance with those rules. While the new forest policy in Sweden was part of a programme of deregulation and liberalisation, Norwegian forest owners had always enjoyed a great degree of freedom in interpreting legal provisions. In both countries public authorities from the early 1990s and onwards wanted forest owners to take environmental care and protection more seriously. However, the public authorities were careful to add that forest certification acted as a supplement to public policy instruments and, therefore, that the forest owners themselves should decide on the type of certification scheme. Clearly, while government support facilitated certification initiatives in Norway and Sweden, it cannot explain divergent approaches to forest certification in the two countries.

Green NGO and Supply-Chain Pressure

Environmental organisations have worked long and hard to protect old-growth forests and forest biodiversity. For many years their strategy was to target governments and influence public forest policy, such as increasing the number and size of government protected forests and campaigning for strict provisions to protect biodiversity in the forest policy. In the last decade or so, however, they have added a new tactic to their repertoire: targeting the forest products supply chain. The Rio Earth Summit in 1992 provided environmental NGOs with a grand opportunity to get together, establish transnational networks and co-ordinate their activities and activism. At the conference, they set up the Taiga Rescue Network to promote protection of the northern boreal forests and enable quick communication and organize actions in several countries simultaneously. This network established headquarters in northern Sweden in 1993, and is said to have successfully pooled the resources of a great variety of environmental groups with the common goal of protecting coniferous forests (Sæther, 1998, 189-190).

Similarly, many of the large environmental organisations, most notably WWF, Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, have national and local groups around the world, and are thus well placed to promote forest certification in the global marketplace. In the UK, the WWF in 1991 established a network of buyers to support sustainable forest management among manufacturers and retailers (WWF 95-group). Buyers in the group had to commit themselves to phase out timber from poorly managed forests. When the FSC was legally registered in 1995, WWF required members to sign a commitment to give preference to FSC certified wood. Some powerful members of the group, such as the DIY retailers B&O, went even further in their support for the FSC, and publicly announced their intention to phase out all non-FSC certified timber.

In Germany, Greenpeace targeted domestic publishing houses in 1993 and accused them of using printing paper originating from old-growth or

ill-managed forests in the Nordic countries. The giant Springer Verlag responded by asking its suppliers to document whether old-growth forests were set aside and harvesting operations were sustainable. As a result of the NGO pressure, the Association of German Paper Producers and the Association of German Magazine Publishers issued a position paper signalling a preference for products purchased under a credible global programme that could be implemented rapidly (Cashore, Auld & Newsom, 2004). Although they did not require suppliers to participate in the FSC, there was little doubt that the big German publishers had FSC-style certification in mind, and the major players on several occasions expressed support for this scheme (Mäntyranta, 2002).

The new strategy devised by the environmental NGOs, which targeted producers and purchasers in the forest product supply chain, was apparently much more effective than the old-style lobbying of governments. However, the environmental organisations had to balance their act; while putting pressure on forest owners by upping conflict levels, they wanted forest owners to co-operate with and participate in the FSC to develop standards for well-managed forests. In 1994, WWF Sweden established an advisory 'reference group' of scientists and forestry stakeholders to work out a set of criteria for biodiversity conservation in Swedish forestry. A year later, the group issued a set of preliminary certification criteria. Although some forest companies wanted to proceed with developing a FSC certification standard, many key players in the forestry trade were sceptical of what was perceived as rigorous demands of the environmental organisations. The forestry interests thus tried to establish a Nordic Forest Certification Project, but that initiative failed largely because it was boycotted by the environmental organisations in Sweden, Finland and Norway (Kern et al., 2001, 33). Instead of supporting the Nordic initiative, WWF and the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation set up a Swedish FSC working group and issued a written declaration of support for FSC's principles and criteria a requirement of membership. These organisations were joined by various stakeholders, including Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth (environmental interests); the Church, Ikea and the office furniture manufacturer Kinnarps (economic interests); and the Swedish Sami Association and labour union representatives (social interests). As a result of publicly announced preferences for FSC certified wood products by powerful buyers in the UK and Germany, the large forest companies AssiDomän and Korsnäs decided to undergo FSC pilot testing in 1995 (Cashore, Auld & Newsom, 2004). These companies declared in 1996 that they would join the Swedish FSC working group even if the other major forest companies decided not to participate along (Elliott, 1999). Under pressure from these companies and, perhaps more importantly, customers in Germany and the UK, the other forest companies in 1996 decided to have the Swedish Forest Industries Association represent all the Swedish forest companies on the

FSC working group. The six regional Swedish forest owners' associations, representing the non-industrial forest owners, agreed to collectively join the working group.

The NGOs largely set the working group's agenda (Elliott, 1999, 385-89). This was accepted by the forest companies, but led to resentment in the forest owners' associations (ibid.). The forest associations gradually became isolated as a result of the mutual support environmental organisations, labour and the Sami representatives gave each other, and, as a consequence, withdrew from the working group in May 1997. In particular, Sami representatives' demands concerning reindeer grazing, the relatively high environmental standards and uncertainties concerning group certification options frustrated the non-industrial forest owners. After Sweden expanded forestry in the 1980s to areas traditionally set aside for reindeer herding in the Northwest of the country, indigenous forestry usage has divided the country ever since (Hellström, 2001). The industrial forest companies did not oppose Sami demands, because they were mainly directed at non-industrial forest owners in Northern Sweden. Greenpeace also withdrew from the working group, because they were so strongly opposed to any intensive harvesting methods. By the end of 1997, the remaining environmental organisations, Sami representatives, forest companies and the other working group members reached agreement on a Swedish FSC standard that subsequently became the first nationally developed standard approved by FSC's international board.

Environmental organisations in Norway quickly adopted the new strategy of NGOs in Sweden, Germany and the UK. In 1994, the Norwegian Society for Nature Conservation wrote to Springer Verlag, the giant German publisher, informing the company of the danger to old-growth forestland by logging, and urging the company not to buy paper originating from that particular area (Gulbrandsen, 2003).¹⁵⁶ The campaign was directed at the Norwegian pulp and paper company Norske Skog, the second largest supplier of newsprint in the world, which had Springer as one of its most important customers. As a response to the market and NGO pressure, Norske Skog and the forest owners had informal discussions the same year on establishing a project that could build international and domestic confidence that the raw materials from the forest industry were based on sustainable forestry practices. The Living Forests project was officially launched in 1995 to work out national standards for sustainable forest management and build environmental skills among forest owners. The initiators of the process were Norske Skog and the Norwegian Forest Owners' Federation, representing the eight regional forest owners' associations in Norway. Ecological, economic and social interests were represented in equal measure on the standard development group, but Sami representatives did not participate, because their reindeer

¹⁵⁶ The area, called *Skotjernfjell*, is located north of Oslo and was originally included in the government protection plan for coniferous forests.

tend to graze in areas of little value to forestry. The main players in the working group were WWF Norway and the Norwegian Society for Nature Conservation, the Norwegian Forest Owners' Federation, the forest industry, outdoor and recreational interests, labour interest, and the departments of agriculture and the environment. In 1997, a certification committee was established as part of the Living Forests project to consider different schemes, including FSC, ISO 14001 and the EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS).

After almost three years of intensive negotiations, all participants in the Living Forests project agreed in 1998 on 23 prescriptive standards for sustainable forest management. The certification committee had not ranked any of the schemes to certify forest owners' associations, preferring instead to show how the Living Forests performance standards could be used in combination with different international systems. While the standards could be applied without further elaboration in combination with the management system-based schemes ISO or EMAS, certification by the FSC would require further elaboration to adapt the standard to its international principles and criteria. WWF and the Norwegian Society for Nature Conservation proposed to set up a Norwegian FSC working group to elaborate and expand on the Living Forests standards. This would require a new process where implicated economic, environmental and social interests – including Sami representatives – would participate on an equal footing, but the forest owners' associations rejected the proposal, and opted instead for ISO 14001 management system-based certification. Hence, the forest owners decided which type of certification scheme they would adopt on their own.

Although the tactics used by Swedish and Norwegian NGOs to promote sustainable forestry converge in many respects, there are some intriguing differences in environmental group activism in the two countries. Most importantly, the prevalence of forestry conflicts has always been greater in Sweden than in Norway (Hellström, 2001). Opinions initially differed on the need for FSC certification, but the forest companies were quite receptive to the idea when WWF tried to muster support for participation on a Swedish FSC working group. They probably thought that FSC certification could reduce conflict levels and add to their standing in the environmental movement. In contrast, initiatives to set up a Norwegian FSC working group met with little success, with the forest owners and industry instead took the lead in establishing a competing system to the FSC. However, to understand why the Swedish forest companies in general was more responsive to NGO demands than the Norwegian forest industry and forest owners, we also need to consider industry structure in the two countries.

Forest Industry Structure

When certification emerged as a salient policy issue in the early 1990s, five industrial Swedish forest companies controlled one-third of the forestland in Sweden.¹⁵⁷ These are all vertically integrated companies with their own sawmills and pulp and paper mills in Sweden. Non-industrial forest owners controlled about half of the forestland, while the state, local authorities and the Church controlled the rest. In contrast, Norwegian forestry is almost entirely in the hands of non-industrial, family-run small-holders. The only large pulp and paper company in Norway is Norske Skog, a minor forest owner compared to the Swedish forest companies, partly as a result of the company's strategy to sell off what forestland it has owned to specialise in industrial paper processing. In common with Swedish forestry, Norwegian forestry is highly dependent on the European export market for paper and wood products, in particular Germany and the UK. The forest sectors thus faced the same challenge when buyers in the important export markets demanded proof that forests in the Nordic countries were well-managed. Because the FSC was favoured in the German and British markets, certification under this scheme could translate into increased or at least unchanged sales for the large forest companies. Such considerations were less important for the non-industrial forest owners due to lower public and market exposure and less NGO targeting, but they could still have chosen FSC certification to accommodate the needs of the forest companies they were supplying with timber. After all, they too would have an interest in increased sales to the export markets. Why, then, did the non-industrial forest owners in both Norway and Sweden reject the FSC scheme?

First, they were not comfortable with the fact that environmental and social interests, comprising a two-thirds' majority, dominated rule-making in the FSC scheme. As might be recalled, one of the major conflicts dividing the Swedish FSC working group concerned Sami people's rights to use forestland in northern parts of the country for reindeer herding. The support environmental and social interests gave the Sami and the lack of protests from the large forest companies, largely owing to the fact that they do not own much forestland in Northern Sweden compared to the non-industrial forest owners, caused much ill-feeling among the forest owners (Elliott, 1999, 385-387). Moreover, the forest owners in both Norway and Sweden had doubts about the FSC from the start, because the scheme was initiated, promoted and supported by environmental organisations and not forestry interest organisations. Although the FSC promoted transparent procedures and the participation of economic, social and ecological interests on an even playing field, forest owners questioned the credibility and independence of the scheme and environmental organisations' legitimate right to govern forestry. In essence, the

¹⁵⁷ AssiDomän (now part of the state-owned Sveaskog), SCA, Stora (now Stora Enso), MoDo (now Holmen) and Korsnäs.

non-industrial forest owners' sense of ownership to the scheme was non-existent. They feared that if the FSC obtained a monopoly on forest certification, environmentalists – in partnership with social interests and industrial forest companies – could dictate the rules for sustainable forest management.

Second, the FSC was originally developed to certify the forestland of large companies and not small-scale forestry. Hence, certification costs for small forest owners were, in relative terms, much higher than for large forest companies. Although the alternative certification option at the time – the generic ISO 14001 standard – also would have been less costly to implement for forest companies than for non-industrial forest owners, this scheme allowed greater flexibility and discretion in applying sustainable forest management standards. In 1998, FSC established a group certification option to better accommodate the needs of small forest owners, but the emerging industry-dominated forest certification schemes seemed to offer the forest owners a better deal in terms of lower costs and more discretionary standards.

Third, and closely related to the above, the non-industrial forest owners were dissatisfied with the stringency and rigour of FSC's environmental and social principles and criteria. One of their main objections was that it would be much easier to set aside forest preservation areas and implement some environmental measures, such as management plans, for companies with large-scale forestry operations than for non-industrial owners practising small-scale harvesting. For example, interviewees in the Norwegian Forest Owners' Federation maintained that the Swedish FSC standards were tailor-made for the large forest companies, who, according to the interviewees, are allowed to continue industrial harvesting as before while setting aside a certain percentage of their forestland to appear "green". The Swedish forest owners' associations have voiced similar objections. In essence, the non-industrial forest owners felt that FSC paid too much attention to environmental and social considerations and the priorities of forest companies at the expense of small forest owners' needs.

In sum, while all the industrial Swedish forest companies are FSC certified, non-industrial forest owners in both Sweden and Norway rejected FSC and opted for management system-based certification in combination with sustainable forest management standards endorsed by PEFC. Ownership structure in the forestry sector thus seems to be particularly important for explaining different approaches to forest certification in the two countries. However, this does not imply that industrial forest companies are more likely to prefer FSC while small forest owners opt for competing schemes. In the United States, most industrial forest companies have chosen an industry-dominated certification scheme, because they are dependent on timber supplies from non-industrial forest owners and primarily sell to the domestic market (Cashore, Auld & Newsom, 2004). As

mentioned earlier, publicly announced preferences for FSC certified paper and wood products by powerful buyers in Germany and Britain convinced two Swedish forest companies to support FSC-style certification, which eventually moved the rest of the companies. Hence, the backing of major buyers in export markets largely explains FSC's success in attracting the support of the Swedish forest companies.

Conclusions

Public forest policy and the government facilitated certification initiatives in both Sweden and Norway. While the new Swedish forest policy encouraged the private sector to come up with fresh initiatives and take greater responsibility for environmental protection in forestry, Norwegian authorities supported the Living Forests project financially and participated in the standard development group. Global concern for loss of forest biodiversity, the set up of the FSC in 1993 and environmental group activism were important for the initiation of domestic certification projects. In particular, direct targeting of forest companies and supply chain targeting of manufactures, retailers and consumers by environmental NGOs gave participation and compliance with rules an added gloss while highlighting the costs of non-participation. The emergence of forest biodiversity conservation norms also contributed to a common policy discourse among environmentalists, business and government and perhaps even a shared understanding of appropriate behaviour. Whether these norms have been internalised or interpreted strategically by managers in forest companies, the result in any case was that companies chose the certification track.

Why, then, did attempts at establishing the FSC succeed in Sweden and fail in Norway? This study has shown that industry structure was particularly important for forest owners' decision to accede to the FSC rule-making authority or to go for an industry-based alternative. While the Swedish forestry sector is a mixed bag of large companies and small forest owners, the Norwegian forestland is almost entirely controlled by small forest owners. The Swedish forest companies, controlling one-third of the forestland in Sweden when the certification issue emerged, opted for the FSC to increase or at least ensure market access in Germany and the UK. The non-industrial forest owners in Norway and Sweden rejected this scheme because of its stringent and rigorous environmental and social demands and its inflexibility when it came to accommodating to the needs of small-scale forestry. They feared that the FSC would obtain a monopoly on forest certification, which, in their view, would mean that they would be left with little or no influence over forest management. The large forest companies, on the other hand, are directly exposed to market pressures and NGO targeting and, as a consequence, were more suscepti-

ble to supply chain demands than non-industrial forest owners. Hence, the most robust findings of this comparative study seem to be that while public policy encouraged and facilitated certification processes, NGO targeting, supply-chain demand, exposure to environmentally concerned export markets, and the structure of the forest sector largely explain divergent responses to such initiatives. In a number of European countries non-industrial forest owners, represented by forest owners' associations, have joined the PEFC scheme. This is not to say that while small forest owners resisted NGO pressures, large forest companies generally acquiesced to those pressures by choosing the FSC. However, NGO campaigns and supply chain pressure moved forest industries to seek certification, be it the FSC or a competing business-dominated scheme, which in turn put pressure on non-industrial forest owners to walk the same avenue. By pursuing international market campaigns, environmental groups created cross-territorial political spaces, linking the local with the global and reshaping forms of authority. While showing that the state and public policies influence private rule-making projects, the story told here thus challenges traditional conceptions of political spaces constituted by sovereignty.

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15. Global Regulation of Food and Consumer Involvement: Labelling of sustainable fisheries using the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)

Peter Oosterveer

Abstract

Food production and consumption is increasingly organised in global networks. Therefore, existing nation-state based environmental and social regulation is no longer sufficient and new regulatory arrangements are necessary. This article will review the possibilities of involving consumers as new actors in regulating the social and environmental consequences of global food production and consumption. Starting with elaborating Castells' view of globalisation as the creation of a network society, this article will look at 'the space of flows' dominating over 'the space of places'. Modern regulation of globalised food production and consumption is based on a WTO-dominated discourse allowing regulation only on the basis of product characteristics and product-related production methods, within the 'space of flows'. However, consumers in Western countries are more and more demanding regulation on the basis of the environmental effects of the production process, paying much more attention to local effects in the 'space of places'. Private labelling of food is a possible alternative in this conflict, combining regulation at the level of global flows of food with regulation of environmental and social consequences at the concrete places of food production and food consumption. One interesting example of such an alternative arrangement is the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) label and this article will apply the conceptual model to this case.

Introduction

Fish consumption is growing rapidly and to cater for this increasing demand global fish trade is growing as well, so currently 40% of the

world's fish production – worth over US \$ 52 billion – is traded internationally (Dommen, 1999). This growing demand for seafood is creating a pressure on the limited production capacity and despite a substantial growth in the global marine fish production from 20 million tons in 1950 to over 120 million tons 1997, there is general consensus that fish stocks are declining and that improved fisheries' management to conserve marine biodiversity becomes essential.¹⁵⁸ Conventional nation-state based environmental regulation of marine resources are however incapable of dealing with this challenge, because fish stocks and fishing boats move easily across national borders while fish trade is globalized. The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) labeling initiative forms a response to the challenge for innovative forms of global governance. Analyzing the MSC-label as a form of environmental governance in the era of globalization, demands the use of new theoretical models opening up to the involvement of non-state actors. Castells' network theory offers promising perspectives in this regard and will be further elaborated in this paper to provide the tools for analyzing environmental regulation of food in global modernity.

Castells' Global Network Theory

Castells (1996/1997/1998/2000) conceptualizes the process of globalization as the coming about of the network society, where physical space is becoming less and global flows are becoming more important. 'The material foundations of society, space and time are being transformed (and) dominant functions are organized in networks pertaining to a space of flows that links them up around the world' (Castells, 1996, 476). The 'space of flows' is more and more replacing the 'space of places' because social practices in the 21st century are less organized on the basis of face-to-face interactions and more via exchanges and interactions without geographical contiguity.

Modern information and communication technologies are creating the conditions under which different spatial locations can be linked, reintegrating the functional unity of different nodes in networks at distant locations at another level. Exchanges and interactions without face-to-face contacts can be called "flows" (of capital, information or images, etc.) and when these flows between physically disjointed positions gain some permanence, a 'space of flows' is being established (Castells, 1996).¹⁵⁹ The formation of a space of flows also results in shifting the

¹⁵⁸ 'In an hour, one factory ship could haul in as much cod (around a hundred tonnes) as a typical boat of the sixteenth century could land in a season' (MSC: Fish Facts).

¹⁵⁹ The space of flows still included a territorial dimension, because it requires a technological infrastructure that operates from certain locations connecting functions and people located in specific places (Castells, 2000, 14). But the orientation of these network nodes is much less on the specific

location and institutional structuring of power, exemplified by transformations of the state. A nation-state can no longer be defined as '(a sovereign state), whose hierarchically imposed commands are binding on all parties subject to its jurisdiction, while at the international level decisions are taken by sovereign states acting unilaterally or through formal or informal modes of inter-sovereign co-operation' (Karkkainen, 2004, 76). Nation-states struggle to deal with the 'space of flows', with the deterritorialized and decentred mobilities of the global network society, because global as well as local (environmental) problems are no longer soluble at the level of individual states enforcing national regulations alone.

Despite this transition, most people still live in the space of places with its time discipline, face-to-face interaction and socially determined sequencing. This 'contrasting logic between timelessness, structured by the space of flows, and multiple, subordinated temporalities, associated with the space of places' (Castells, 1996, 468), is creating a segmentation of contemporary society between the global and the local levels, resulting in a fundamental problem in contemporary society. Although most people perceive their life as place-based on which they build their identity, they live in a world dominated by the space of flows and timeless time on which they have to orient their life. Even if the relationships between the space of flows and the space of places, between simultaneous globalization and localization are not predetermined in their outcome, the local level cannot escape its influence. Human action at a certain place may, intentionally or unintentionally, pervasively influencing the daily lives of many people at large distances.

Food in the Network Society

Although the intimate link between food production and food consumption through self-provisioning has disappeared since long for many people in Western countries, most food remained until recently consumed within the same time-space-frame as it was produced. For a long time food production and consumption kept on being closely connected to specific geographical locations and particular times or seasons. However, through globalization the specific place and the specific time of the production of food are becoming increasingly irrelevant for the specific place and time of its consumption. Figure 1 provides a schematic representation of the principal dynamics concerned.

Figure 1: globalised food

Agricultural seasons are less and less guiding consumer choices in developed countries where consumers expect to find most food products all year round fresh on the supermarket shelves, encouraging food producers and processors to prolong the seasons and to trade food globally. For example, in supermarkets in Western Europe and the US avocados may one day come from Thailand and another day from Ivory Coast while the average consumer does not notice any difference. Food processors and retailers, especially in Western countries, are sourcing their food globally facilitated by decreased costs and times of transport and by improved communication, storage and preservation technologies. The lengthening of agri-food networks is intimately linked to a progressive industrialization of food (replacing and substituting natural processes with industrial processes), allowing food products to be transported over longer and longer distances. Food thus becomes a global flow, influencing the organization of agri-food networks and changing the lives of both producers and consumers (Beardsworth and Keil, 1997). (See figure 2.)

Figure 2: global flows of food

Networks are linking places at sometimes large distances thus synchronization of time between the different actors involved in food-production and consumption creating timeless-time is becoming a prerequisite. A modern agri-food network can be considered a complex social system, displaying a whole variety of social, technical, economic and natural components (Murdoch, 2000), characterized by time-space distantiation and reproduced within contextualized social practices (Giddens, 1979; Van der Meulen, 2000; Dicken et al, 2001). The active, relational and political role of consumers in the genesis and reproduction of modern agri-food networks should be acknowledged (Goodman, 2004). (See figure 3.)

Figure 3: agri-food networks

Agri-food networks can however never become fully disembodied from place and time, or as “footloose” as for example financial networks can. ‘Space and time still constitute the essential context (for the plant’s life-cycle)’ (Adam, 2000, 134). Despite attempts to *de*-contextualize food production, this remains a paradoxical and contentious issue more than with other products (Fine, 1998; Goodman, 1999).¹⁶⁰ Food consumption, although less directly linked to specific local material practices also remains for the foreseeable future embedded in specific and localized social practices.¹⁶¹ Despite the strong global economic, political and cultural forces at work all over the world, these forces have different local effects (McMichael, 1994/1996; Mol, 2001).

The tension between global flows of global food trade and the local space of places of food production and consumption is continuously creating problems between both levels. Regulation of the environmental and safety consequences of food production and consumption needs to ac-

¹⁶⁰ Goodman (1999, 18) speaks about the ‘corporeality: to signify organic, eco-social processes that are intrinsic to agriculture and to food’ and Fine (1998, 8): ‘what does set food apart is the necessary presence of the ‘natural’ at both the beginning and the end of the food systems – both in agriculture and in palatability’.

¹⁶¹ ‘We need to delineate the ways in which diverse and long-distant localities, almost on a daily basis, socially reconstruct the exchange context of certain types of food, using a post-traditional range of ideas and social practices associated with current volatilities between local and international markets’ (Arce and Marsden, 1993, 301).

commodate the dynamics of the global space of flows and of the local space of places at the same time while this relationship also changes over time.

Regulating Environmental and Safety Risks of Food in the Global Network Society

Reducing the negative environmental and food safety impacts of food today requires regulation, fitting into the global network society. Thus, regulatory instruments which are applicable at global level but simultaneously reduce the social and environmental consequences at the local level, combining regulation in the space of flows with regulation in the space of places, are preferred. This challenge fits into the broader ecological modernization approach, which raises the question 'how the contested relationships between civil society, the state and the market could be re-arranged in ways which would usher in different types of autonomous development which would incorporate ecological worth' (Marsden, 2004, 143).

Analyzing the regulation of environmental and safety risks in global network society has to include material and informational flows in global food networks and link the different practices of producing, processing, retailing and consuming food. Regulation of food may involve the domain of formal politics as well as different forms of sub-politics, while recognizing the interaction between both spheres. The global space of flows of food includes flows of information, money and food products, but is confronted with spaces of places covering different specific localized and time-bounded material and social practices of food production and consumption. Therefore, any form of regulation needs to include both dynamics and the tension between them explains several difficulties in regulating food and in the introduction of new forms of regulation. (See figure 4.)

Figure 4: regulation in the global flows of food

Regulation of food in the space of flows should as much as possible be based on product characteristics only, to facilitate a global flow of food. So, if a food product is safe at one place, the same product should also be considered safe at another place. Regulation in the space of flows, requires regulation to be global and abstract, devoid of specific characteristics of place and time. Several observers, in particular NGOs, claim that regulating food in the space of flows alone is currently not an option because the organic character of food makes it impossible for the foreseeable future to denounce space and time altogether. Regulation in the space of places should be based on specific place- and time-bounded characteristics. So, only a farmer in a specific region can produce regional products and place (and sometimes the time, i.e. wine!) of these products need to remain identifiable throughout the chain.¹⁶² This form of regulation can be multidimensional and bring in food safety as well as environmental and social concerns.

The tension between global regulation and local consequences could possibly be solved by strengthening global governance and by combining

¹⁶² Many consumer concerns regarding food (its safety and the environmental and social consequences involved) are directly linked to the production practices applied, but these practices can not simply be detected in the final product itself and require additional information via the supply chain or through a label. Whether eggs, poultry or beef are produced taking animal welfare into account is detectable only by a label indicating the production circumstances, and the same with regard to identify fair-traded products, GM food or fish produced through sustainable fisheries.

global trade politics with global environmental and social politics (Shaw, 2000). Such a form of global regulation combines regulation in the space of places with regulations in the space of flows under the responsibility of a global 'state-like' structure. Although this solution builds on the familiar example of the nation-state, it is unlikely that such a global government will be able to deal satisfactorily with the variety in specific local environmental problems. The tension with the global flow of food is then being solved via the active engagement of private firms and non-state actors, such as NGOs, in the regulation of food production and consumption. These non-state actors are generally better integrated in networks and able to cover different environmental, safety and social concerns in the space of places. Concretely these initiatives by non-state actors, creating more flexible forms of regulation, signify the "fluidization" of regulatory practices (Lipschutz and Fogel, 2002). Certification programs and eco-labeling schemes are becoming increasingly popular tools to certify specific production practices enabling consumers to include environmental considerations in their purchasing decisions.¹⁶³ A critical question remains whether positive purchasing decisions from individuals with discretionary income (creating limited niche markets) will lead to real transformations in production practices (Raynolds, 2000).

Forms of food regulation within the space of places alone will, just as little as regulation within the space of flows alone, solve the environmental and safety problems related of global flows of food. Solving the tension between regulation in the space of flows and regulation in the space of places requires the development of 'hybrid arrangements', i.e. regulatory practices that combine both through different dimensions, different levels of scale and different actors.

General Trends in Global Fisheries

Fish forms the main source of animal protein for many people and provides employment for some 35 million workers.¹⁶⁴ Production of fish, in particular of farmed fish (aquaculture), is increasing. (See table 1.)

¹⁶³ 'An eco-label is a claim placed on a product, having to do with its production or performance, that is intended to enhance the item's social or market value by conveying its environmentally advantageous elements' (Lipschutz and Fogel, 2002, 133).

¹⁶⁴ Nearly 95% of the people depending on fisheries for their livelihood live in developing countries (Aerni, 2001, 5).

Table 1. Annual growth in world animal protein production, by source 1990-2001

Source	1990 (mln tons)	2001(mln tons)	Annual growth (percent)
Beef	53	57	1
Pork	70	92	3
Mutton	10	11	1
Poultry	41	69	4
Eggs	38	56	4
Oceanic fish catch	86	95	1
Aquacultural output	13	36	10

Source: Brown et al, 2003, 47.

As the real market prices for fresh and frozen fish have increased since World War II, contrary to most other food products, it is not price considerations but taste and growing health concerns among consumers in Western countries that results in a shift from beef and pork consumption to poultry and fish (Brown et al, 2003, 47). Whereas in 1950, the global fish harvest was around 21 million tons this has risen, via 100 million tons in 1990, to 129 million tons in 2001 (table 2). By that time primary fisheries accounted for 59% and aquaculture for 41% of the total harvest (FAO, 2002, 3).

Table 2. World fisheries production and utilisation (million tons)

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Production						
Total capture	93.5	93.9	87.3	93.2	94.8	91.3
Total aquaculture	26.7	28.6	30.5	33.4	35.6	37.5
Total world fisheries	120.2	122.5	117.8	126.6	130.4	128.8
Utilisation						
Human consumption	88.0	90.8	92.4	94.4	96.7	99.4
Non-food uses	32.2	31.7	25.1	32.2	33.7	29.4

Source: FAO (2002) Table 1.

Global fish trade amounted to US\$ 55.2 billion in 2000, equal to about 33% of the total fish production (an increase of 52% from 1990 – 2000, see: Anderson, 2003a).¹⁶⁵ Currently China is the leading fish exporting country in value terms, taking over from Thailand (FAO, 2004, 1), while Japan is the main single importing country (US\$ 15.8 billion), whereas the EU forms the largest market for fish imports.¹⁶⁶ In terms of volume, the international fisheries trade is dominated by a few fish products only, especially shrimp (both cultured and wild), tuna, as well as fish meal and fish oil.

¹⁶⁵ Different new preservation techniques have allowed this. Besides the traditional techniques of drying, salting and smoking, early 19th century canning was added and cooling in the second half of the 19th century, followed in the early 20th century by freezing (Anderson, 2003a).

¹⁶⁶ 'Net export revenues from fish exports earned by developing countries reached US\$ 17.7 billion in 2001, an amount larger than for any other traded food commodity such as rice, cocoa, tea or coffee' FAO, 2004, 1). For low-income food deficit countries alone, net export revenues were \$ 7.5 billion (idem).

Fish consumption is particularly growing in richer countries and per-capita seafood consumption in Japan, USA and Europe is considerably higher than in most developing countries.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, fish remains an essential source of animal protein for poor people living in developing countries. The average per capita fish consumption at the global level has increased from about 9 kilograms per annum in 1970 to 16 kilograms in 1997 (7.8 kg/capita in least developed countries and 27.8 kg/capita in developed countries). The growing world population, the increased presence of fresh and frozen fish against affordable prices and changes in consumer attitudes ('consuming fish is healthy and prevents overweight'), as well as more traditional cultural traits and geographical characteristics are important driving factors behind the growing consumption of fish (Trondsen et al, 2004).¹⁶⁸ As shown in table 3, average annual fish consumption differs considerably between different regions in the world, while differences between countries are even larger: whereas people in Mongolia consume virtually no fish at all, people in Japan (66 kg) and in Iceland (91 kg) consume much more than the average 14 kg.

Table 3. Summary statistics of annual per capita fish consumption by region (in kg)

Region ¹⁶⁹	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Africa	10	10	0	45
Asia	18	19	0	66
Middle East	10	8	1	29
West	16	17	1	91
World	14	15	0	91

Source: York and Gossard, 2004; p. 296.

Globalisation of fish trade, coupled with technological developments in fish handling, preservation and distribution is resulting in new, often spatially extended, networks linking fish production to consumption. For example, 'some roe herring harvested in Alaska is exported to China where the roe is extracted, processed and exported to Japan. The carcass is retained and utilized in China' (Anderson and Martínez-Garmendia, 2003, 45).¹⁷⁰ The growing global demand for fish forces further industrialization (rationalization and vertical integration) of the catchment fishery

¹⁶⁷ Global demand for fish 'could be as high as 121 million tons by the year 2010. This is some 22 million tons more than the volumes that were available for consumption in 1999/2000' (Wijkstrom, 2003, 464).

¹⁶⁸ See Pillay (1992). But consumer research has shown that 'although seafood is very widely acknowledged as the healthy option compared to other proteins, there are varying levels of understanding and knowledge about detailed health properties' (Gross, 2003, 411). Western consumers prefer carnivore fish more than herbivore (York and Gossard, 2004) and the rising incomes in developed countries encourage 'away-from-home food expenditures and provides the discretionary income needed for purchases of higher valued prepared food products' (Harvey, 2003, 2).

¹⁶⁹ Countries are divided in four groups: West (Europe, N/S America, Australia and New Zealand), Asia (east), Africa (sub-Sahara) and Middle East (west Asia and north Africa).

¹⁷⁰ The processing of fish into surimi (an intermediate product of fish protein concentrate developed in Japan) provides another example of the industrialisation of fish.

industry, although artisanal fishing and intermediary markets still do exist both in developed and in developing countries.¹⁷¹ This results in continuously growing catches, putting certain fish stocks at risk through over-fishing (Hutchings and Reynolds, 2004).¹⁷² Currently around 70% of the worlds' commercial fisheries are now fully or even over-exploited and only 4% are under-exploited, so Myers and Worm (2003, 280) estimate 'that large predatory fish biomass today is only about 10% of pre-industrial levels'.¹⁷³ Such over-fishing is reducing existing fish stocks, which will inevitably result in lower catches. The levels of by-catch (non-target fish catch) have also reached threatening levels (some 29 million tons world-wide), contributing to the loss of biodiversity as well. Besides through over-fishing, the environmental situation in many seas and oceans is also worsened by bottom trawling in the North Atlantic and the use of dynamite and cyanide for fishing in the Indo-Pacific Ocean. In addition, chemicals and oil spills discharged by households, industries, the shipping trade and agriculture are contaminating certain parts of the sea as well (Constanza et al, 1999). The destruction of coastal zones, wetlands and mangrove areas by the growing aquacultural activities is impairing the role of these areas as natural spawning grounds and nurseries for the replenishment of marine stocks (Garcia et al, 1999).¹⁷⁴

Environmental Regulation in Global Fisheries

The combined trends of a growing global demand for fish and more environmental degradation result in an increasing call for regulation to safeguard the fishing resources for the future. The localized (or at least species-specific) environmental problems together with the globalized fish supply networks make environmental regulation a particular challenge. Over the years different forms of regulation have been introduced each with different combinations of regulation in the space of flows of fish with regulation in the space of places, particularly of production of fish. Initially nation-state based regulation in the space of places was introduced, whereby national governments distributed quotas for catching specific fish species at risk among the fishermen. This form of environmental

¹⁷¹ 'The gross tonnage in the world's fishing fleet grew 91% between 1970 and 1992' as a result of subsidies for vessel construction and operation (Hanna, 1999, 277).

¹⁷² The situation is aggravated by large bycatch and poor post-harvest facilities. An estimated average of 27 million tons of fish are annually discarded from commercial fisheries, representing about 20% of the total catch (Garcia and Willmann, 1999, 7).

¹⁷³ A 'fishery' is defined by a specific stock of a fish species in a specific area in combination with the fishermen trying to catch (part of) this stock.

¹⁷⁴ The declining marine capture fisheries result in a shift from marine fisheries to aquaculture (freshwater and marine farming) and this activity is now responsible for one-quarter of all fish destined for human consumption. Aquaculture is creating its own environmental problems, like the destruction of important habitats, such as mangroves for shrimp farms and pollution of waters surrounding aquaculture pens from the overuse of feeds, antibacterial washes and chemicals (Gardiner, 2002).

regulation in the space of places (production) alone left out processing and trade as well as consumption. (See figure 5.)

Figure 5: regulation of fish in the space of places

Regulating fisheries in the space of places (production) alone, however, is complicated because fish is an open access resource. “Fishing grounds are unrestricted ‘commons’ areas, and the ownership of a fish is not allocated until the moment of capture” (Stone, 2002, 290). Until the establishment of the 200-mile exclusive economic zones in 1977, oceans formed a common resource where everyone had equal fishing rights.¹⁷⁵ Despite the creation of these exclusive economic zones, the problems of over-fishing and of conflicts over access to certain fish stocks remain. Multilateral regulation seems indispensable and initially, FAO-sponsored, international commissions were created, charged with managing a specific species (for example the International Whaling Commission) or a specific area (Peterson, 1993). Global regulation started with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982), but until today this convention is only implemented to a very limited extent. The 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development underlined the need to create effective fisheries’ and coastal areas’ management regimes and the FAO (voluntary) Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (1995) and the UN Fish

¹⁷⁵ Countries had jurisdiction over just a narrow band of water outside their coast, usually three nautical miles wide.

Stocks Agreement (1995) formulated new guidelines to protect existing fish stocks.¹⁷⁶ However, despite these initiatives, their effects remain very modest as government commitment and capacity to put these guidelines into practice are often lacking, while the participation from NGO's and other stakeholders is insufficient (Peterson, 1993).¹⁷⁷ A possibility to strengthen regulation in the space of places, as suggested by several authors, is further privatization because private ownership rights would provide security, allow planning and investment and improve production and marketing management (Anderson, 2003b).

Nevertheless, the main problem with regard to this form of regulation in the space of places is its inability to really deal with the global flow character of fish in the network society. As fish trade is globalized and as fish stocks and fishing boats move easily across national borders, regulating sustainable fisheries has to deal with the space of flows.¹⁷⁸ Such a form of regulation would further reduce the involvement of national governments and strengthen market based regulation. Although, such a form of regulation is not fully elaborated until now, pleas for reducing fishery subsidies fall within this approach.¹⁷⁹ During the Johannesburg 2002 UN Conference on Environment and Development, fishery subsidies and non-tariff barriers were identified as the main factors leading to depleting fish stocks. 'Subsidies to fishing encourage inefficient producers to remain in the market and this results in depletion of fisheries' (Gowdy and Walton, 2003, 7). Reducing government involvement in fisheries management will shift responsibilities to the market partners and thereby facilitate regulation in the space of flows. If producers and consumers are not actively engaged in environmental regulation, this may result in a form of regulation in the space of flows alone. (See figure 6.)

¹⁷⁶ The centrepiece in the (voluntary) FAO code of conduct for responsible fisheries (1995) is the creation of exclusive use rights combined with political institutions and economic instruments to protect the resource base (Garcia et al, 1999).

¹⁷⁷ Scientific advice is playing a central role in orienting policy initiatives; see the shift from measures based on 'maximum sustainable yield', via 'optimal yield' to 'multispecies management' (Peterson, 1993).

¹⁷⁸ Registration of fishing vessels under the jurisdiction of certain countries (certain flags) who do not or can not comply with international regulations is an example of this globalisation process. In the past this practice already existed to evade taxes and labour requirements, but now evasion of environmental regulations is becoming a new reason for this practice (Garcia and Willmann, 1999).

¹⁷⁹ Estimates by FAO calculate an economic waste due to these subsidies of US\$ 54 billion (Stone, 2002, 293).

Figure 6: regulation of fish in the global space of flows

Leaving environmental regulation to the market alone, however, involves risks as long term concerns and the interests of (specific groups of) producers and consumers may disappear from sight. It is unlikely that regulation in the space of flows alone will sufficiently solve the environmental problems caused by catchment fisheries. The global character of the fish supply network will more easily facilitate displacement of fishing capacity than dealing with local environmental problems. Really dealing with these local problems and include the interests of producers and consumers in environmental regulation requires some form of a combined regulation in the space of places and the space of flows. Currently, consumers, particularly in Western countries, are a driving force in the realization of such innovative forms of regulation. These consumers are more and more concerned about these environmental effects of fisheries and about the health risks involved in fish consumption (the presence of heavy metals (mercury, copper, cadmium, molybdenum, chromium) and other chemical substances (dioxins, PCBs) which accumulate throughout the aquatic food chain). Combining regulation in the space of places with regulation in the space of flows may take different forms, for example consumer guides or certification and labeling.

Consumer guides, developed by several NGOs, represent a new instrument to reduce the environmental impact of fisheries, as the Audubon Society explains on its wallet: 'consumer demand has driven some fish

populations to their lowest levels ever. But you can be part of the solution. You can choose seafood from healthy, thriving fisheries'.¹⁸⁰ These guides are simple tools to help consumers and restaurant chefs to choose between different fish species which are common in the local market on the basis of their relative environmental impact. Examples are the seafood wallet card by the Audubon Society, the 'West Coast seafood guide' by the Monterey Bay Aquarium, the pocket seafood selector from Environmental Defense and other by Conscious Choice, Seafood Choices Alliance, the (Dutch) North Sea Foundation, the (UK) Marine Conservation Society (MCS) and the Blue Ocean Institute. The categorization of fish according to species only without further details on the applied production practices, makes the tool rather shallow. Such consumer guides may raise consumer awareness, but without regulation in the production areas, in the space of places by national governments, the growing consumption of not endangered species may result in endangering them.

ISO 14001, organic and the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) are labeling and certification practices used to improve environmental performance of fisheries themselves. ISO 14001 may provide regulatory compliance, because firms are required to establish an environmental policy and to set targets and objectives for environmental management performance. (Frankic and Hershner, 2003). ISO 14001, however, does not prescribe specific levels of environmental performance. Organic labeling of fish products would be an alternative, but remains a contested issue because catchment fisheries is not fully comparable with growing potatoes. For example, during the public process of defining general criteria for organic food in the US the participants concluded that wild fish may be natural but can not be considered organic because the production process is not controlled by humans. (Mansfield, 2003, 2004; Vos, 2000).

A more complex innovative approach of regulation in the space of flows combined with specific production practices, is the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) label. Unilever and WWF took the initiative to establish the MSC in 1997, based on the assumption that all actors involved in catching fish in a specific area have a common interest in guaranteeing the future of this fishery and in developing a common and coherent sustainable management plan. WWF considered improving the sustainability of fisheries with the use of a specific label an interesting opportunity for sustainable development and a reinforcement for other already existing certification schemes.¹⁸¹ Unilever realized that the future of its

¹⁸⁰ Audubon, 2002; website www.audubon.org/campaign/lo (accessed 21 October 2003). See also the Monterey Bay Aquarium: 'You have the power. Your consumer choices make a difference' Monterey Bay Aquarium, Seafood Watch, West Coast Seafood Guide, Fall/Winter 2003.

¹⁸¹ The following operational principles have been identified by a panel of experts to integrate trade, development and environmental policies, (WWF, 1999):

- Efficiency,
- Equity,
- Ecosystem Integrity,
- Good Governance,
- Stakeholder Participation and Responsibility,

commercial fishing activities will be jeopardized if the threat from over-fishing is not reversed. Initiated by these two, global, private actors the MSC has since 1999 evolved into an independent, global non-profit organization responsible for the labeling of sustainable fisheries using their own MSC-label. The objective of the MSC is to bring environmental, commercial and social interests together in sustainable fisheries, to provide powerful economic incentives for well-managed sustainable fisheries and to stop a catastrophic decline in the world's fish stocks by harnessing consumer power (Constance and Bonanno, 2000).¹⁸²

Figure 7: regulation of fish using the MSC-label

Although the organization acknowledges that, initially a transition to a more responsible and sustainable fisheries' exploitation will lead to a period of reduced catches, ultimately a sustainable management plan will result in a growth of the fish stocks and therefore in better yields. In order

• International Co-operation.

A well known case of WWF labelling initiatives is the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), developed for sustainably produced timber.

¹⁸² The definition developed for **sustainable fishing** is: fisheries conducted in such a way, that:

- it can be continued indefinitely at a reasonable level,
- it maintains and seeks to maximise ecological health and abundance,
- it maintains the diversity, structure and function of the ecosystem on which it depends as well as the quality of its habitat, minimising the adverse effects that it causes;
- it is managed and operated in a responsible manner, in conformity with local, national and international laws and regulations;
- it maintains present and future economic and social options and benefits;
- it is conducted in a socially and economically fair and responsible manner.

to reward environmentally responsible fishery management and fishing practices, a product label is developed on the basis of general standards for sustainable fisheries. Until August 2004, ten fisheries have received the MSC-label of which four in the UK and the other six in the US, New Zealand, Australia, Mexico, South Africa and Scotland. Fifteen others are currently undergoing the certifying process: US (6), Australia (2), UK (2), Chile, Canada (2), EU/Norway and Sweden.

Certifying a specific fish stock may be a complicated process because of the many different issues involved and the respective interpretations of sustainable fisheries that need combining as is clearly shown in the example of the New Zealand Hoki (see Box 1).

Box 1

An example of the complications involved in MSC-labelling: the Hoki-case.

The New Zealand Hoki is a fishery labeled by MSC as a sustainable fishery and Unilever is selling them as fish fingers (Iglo). From 2005 onwards, Unilever intends to sell only MSC-labeled fish but this intention can only be implemented if enough certified fish is available (Deere, 1999). As the New Zealand Hoki represents a major fish stock its labeling is important. Granting the MSC-label to the Hoki fishery has been heavily criticized by the New Zealand Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society. Their main objection concerns the killing of seals and albatross by the Hoki fishery. Interestingly enough, although invited to do so, this NGO refused to participate in the certification process itself and now criticizes the result. The MSC replied to this criticism that the labeling was conditional and that several corrective actions have to be taken by the fishery to retain its certification. In addition, the MSC claims that without the certification process many of the issues brought up by the New Zealand Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society would still be unresolved. MSC thus states that the label is not developed to confirm that a fishery is already sustainably managed, but that the fishery is engaged in taking a series of corrective actions towards sustainability that otherwise would not have been taken (Seaweb, 2001).

Guided by a certifying agent, accredited by MSC, the following three general MSC principles are translated into a concrete and detailed management plan for a specific fishery:

- a fishery must conduct itself in a manner that does not lead to over-fishing or depletion of the exploited fish population.
- a fishing operation should allow for the maintenance of the structure, productivity, function, and diversity of the ecosystem on which the fisheries is dependent.
- a fishery is subject to an effective management system that respects local, national, and international laws and standards and incorporates institutional and operational frameworks that require use of the resource to be responsible and sustainable.

In this management plan all actors concerned agree on the amount, the way and timing of catching fish, as well as on the implementation of certain accompanying measures to protect the fish stock. All stakeholders have to participate in the process to acquire public trust in the label. So, for example, certifying agents have agreed to actively contact the relevant environmental NGO's and request their participation in the process. The

MSC considers support from these NGO's vital 'if our program is to offer industry the credibility they expect' (MSC, 2002, 1). Governments do not have a special position in the certification process and are considered a participant at the same level as the fishermen and the retailers.

The MSC-label is an environmental label and does not include additional social or economic criteria because the organization considers that otherwise labeling in developing countries would become too complicated. Inclusion of such criteria demanding higher social and economic performances than required by the national legislation would bring these sustainable fisheries in an even further unfavorable economic position in their competition with unsustainable fisheries. Even without such social and economic criteria, MSC-labeling is already very complicated in developing countries as the available information about the fish stocks and fishing practices in these countries is often insufficient to develop a sustainable management plan. In addition, the lack of local certification capacity obliges these countries to hire expensive foreign certifying agencies. Therefore, although the MSC-label could be an incentive to implement environmental improvements also for developing countries, these countries can fulfil the conditions only with great difficulties.¹⁸³

The MSC label conveys to the consumer otherwise unobservable information concerning a product's environmental impact allowing them to buy seafood that is sustainably caught and thereby providing a market-based signal to resource managers creating an incentive to maintain sustainable fisheries resources. Research has shown that consumers are prepared to choose sustainably produced fish products provided the price difference with conventional products is not too large (Roheim and Donath, 2003). The MSC is preparing public information campaigns to inform consumers about the environmental impact of labeled fish-products and to encourage retailers to sell fish-products from sustainably managed and MSC-labeled fisheries. As, until now, the market for MSC-labeled fish remains to a large extent restricted to exclusive restaurants and shops and has not yet entered the mass markets for fish, communication to the general public remains rather limited. Entering mass markets for fish consumption, using mass media, would require the availability of larger quantities of certified fish and therefore the certification of more fisheries, which is not the case yet.

The MSC-label can be considered a concrete response to the seemingly dominant discourse in global institutions like the WTO, where global regulation of fisheries seems to remain limited to a plea for ending fishing subsidies by national governments. When, in addition, the access to fishing resources would be arranged through private ownership instead of public ownership sustainability in fisheries would increase according

¹⁸³ Therefore, WWF is elaborating a methodology for community based fisheries certification (see WWF website) to counter these criticisms. Community based fisheries certification maximises the use of local knowledge and is based on partnership with the local fishing communities. (See for example the report from a workshop by WWF Endangered Seas Campaign 2000).

to this view (Edwards, 2003). Such an approach would leave the regulation of fishing practices and global fish trade to the market, creating regulation in the space of flows only. The MSC-label offers an alternative by developing a form of regulation combining flows and place by actively engaging all market and non-market actors concerned in the production of fish. National states are considered as just one among many other stakeholders in the process of acquiring the MSC-label. This underlines the private character of the MSC-label, despite the legal obligations national states have to protect fish stocks within their exclusive economic zones and their task to co-operate with other governments in the management of shared fish stocks on the high seas (Deere, 1999). The MSC-label is an interesting attempt to establish environmental regulation within the local space of production (the fishery) in combination with regulation in the global space of flows. The MSC label has an explicit focus on reducing the environmental risks involved in catching fish without ignoring the importance of providing food for a global food market. The producers are actively involved in translating the general criteria of the label to practices fitting in a particular local context, thereby reinforcing the identity of this particular place. This model for regulating global food trade pays comparatively much attention to regulating the place of production because of the diversity in fishing circumstances and practices and of the obligation to include all actors concerned. Currently, consumer involvement in the MSC label remains nevertheless limited because the production of sustainable fish needs to grow first before it can become worthwhile to approach consumers on a broader scale.

Critics on the MSC-labeling initiative comment on the involvement of a large multinational who will probably put its own interests and those of consumers in developed countries higher than the interests of small-scale fishermen and people in developing countries. Such a powerful multinational will probably also impose its particular definition of sustainable fisheries on other actors and, by introducing market-based instruments, it is bypassing democratic institutions and privatizing regulation that was previously public. Constance and Bonanno (2000) consider MSC an initiative by a large multinational disciplining less powerful social groups through centralized grading and standards mechanisms. And, (item, 133) 'the MSC can be viewed as an attempt by a TNC to stabilize and legitimize its business practices by resolving (at least temporarily) the historical antagonism between capitalist accumulation and environmental protection through a "neutral" NGO-based joint venture'. They particularly criticize the absence of social considerations in the arrangement. The MSC appears to be a prime example of a more general trend where a green NGO occupying the regulatory spaces vacated by failures of the nation-state system in alliance with agro-industrial capital. Some commentators criticize the MSC-label for its limited effectiveness in improving the environmental conditions of fisheries in general because it cur-

rently covers only the exclusive, already more sustainable, fisheries and provides little stimulus for other unsustainable fisheries. Finally, the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations (Grader et al, 2003) suggests to build on the MSC-label and develop a more inclusive regulatory arrangement covering social and economic criteria next to the existing environmental ones: a fair trade fish label.

Conclusions

The intention of this article was to study to what extent and in what specific ways the MSC-label can be considered to represent new ways of regulating the negative social and environmental consequences of the globalizing food production and consumption. Building on Castells' analysis of globalization in general and on the tension he observes between the characteristics of global flows on the one hand and localized identities of places on the other, a conceptual model for the regulation of food was developed. With the help of this theoretical model the regulatory arrangements of MSC-labeled fish were analyzed. These examples have shown that the MSC-label can provide an alternative to the dominant trend of regulating global food production and consumption through market mechanisms only. The MSC-label deals with the place-bounded social and environmental effects of global flows of seafood without necessarily entering into a form of de-globalization, thereby creating an innovative governance arrangement that fits into global modernity. The information provided by such a label offers citizens the opportunity to influence production practices in fisheries through their daily consumption practices.

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16. Eco-labelling of Seafood in Sweden: Toward a Credible Tool for Consumer-based Environmental Improvement?

Magnus Boström

Abstract

This paper deals with the effort to develop a trustworthy eco-labelling scheme for seafood in Sweden. Although Sweden has proved to be a fruitful context for eco-labelling initiatives this case has been complicate. The fishery sector suffers from a huge lack of confidence, and desperately needs new arrangements that implement and demonstrate good environmental performance. Many hope that an eco-labelling scheme and concerned consumers would solve the problems. But the greater the lack of confidence, the greater the previous regulatory failures and the deeper the controversies, the trickier it is to develop a credible arrangement. And will consumers really trust a business (or a 'green' part of it) that has been so closely associated with cheatings and poor records in environmental performance?

This paper analyses the challenges in practising standard-setting ideals such as inclusiveness, independency, auditability, and scientific validity; all believed to enhance credibility. Context factors such as policy culture, existing regulatory framework, and organizational landscape including power structures facilitate or constrain the possibilities in fulfilling these ideals. The paper illustrates, *inter alias*, the importance of, but also difficulties in, developing organizational forms and procedures that all (state actors, social movement organizations, fishermen's organizations, fish processing industry, retailers, consumers, etc) accept and may interact in. The paper highlights certain topics that have to be addressed in order to create a trusted arrangement for green political consumerism.

Introduction

This paper deals with the effort to develop a credible arrangement for political consumerism in the form of eco-labelling. It is far from straight-

forward to introduce an eco-labelling scheme that many people and organizations will recognize and see as useful (cf. Cashore et al. 2004b; Jordan et al. 2004; Klintman & Boström 2004). One of the most important issues, for the eco-labeller, is to receive legitimacy from state actors, business actors, social movement actors, and consumers; which can be difficult because of the many controversies that we often see in environmental issues.

The acceptance and credibility of tools/standards for political consumerism is related to the way the standards are developed, the feasibility and stringency of the standards, and the possibility to verify compliance with the standards. In standard-setting activities, such as eco-labelling, participants refer to ideals such as inclusiveness, transparency, independence, and scientific validity (Lipschutz & Fogel 2002; Cashore et al. 2004a; Cochoy 2004; Gulbrandsen 2004; Jordan et al. 2004). These are normative checkpoints eco-labellers and other designers of consumer- and market-oriented regulatory tools are expected to consider carefully.

An eco-labelling scheme that many see as credible requires dialogue and collaboration among a broad group of stakeholders. This paper deals with the question how to create a credible political consumerist arrangement within a context that does not seem to be optimal for such an endeavour, i.e. where it is difficult to find this collaborative atmosphere. Empirically, it refers to a specific eco-labelling project in Sweden, i.e. the drawn-out process of creating an eco-label for seafood aimed at promoting sustainably managed fisheries that do not, for example, result in over-exploitation of fish stocks and damages on the marine eco-system, and that considers environmental aspects along the entire chain of production and distribution.

Sweden has proved to be a fruitful context for several other eco-labelling initiatives (Boström 2003a, 2003b; Micheletti 2003; Klintman & Boström 2004). Why is this case particularly delicate? The efforts began in 1996 when WWF took the initiative by proposing the Marine Stewardship Council's model. But state authorities and other key Nordic actors rejected MSC for different reasons and initiated their own meetings. Discussions and debates continued within informal groups, but not until 2002 a more efficient process was set up that managed to bring together the main Swedish stakeholders. A well-known Swedish eco-labelling organization and NGO (KRAV, [Association for Control of Organic Production]) carried the project. Two years later KRAV's Board decided that it accepts a final standard proposal and the label is now in operation.

Of central importance for the case is that the whole fishing industry suffers from a huge lack of confidence. Swedish fishermen and related industries think that they have got too bad publicity via the intensive media debate about over-exploitation of especially cod-fish in recent years (see e.g. Johansson 2003). As a result, fishermen, the fish processing

industry, and food retailers increasingly feel that there is a need for new regulatory arrangements that implement and, most importantly, visualize an image of good environmental performance; and in that way prevent a threatening decline in the demand for fish products (cf. Deere 1999:9). Although only a minority of fisheries will be able to get a certificate many nevertheless think that the very introduction and existence of this kind of instrument will help legitimising the whole industry.

However, an intricate problem immediately appears. The greater the lack of confidence in the industry, the more it hopes that eco-labelling will provide a solution, but the more complicated it will be to develop a credible arrangement. Will consumers and other stakeholders really trust a business (or a 'green' part of it) that is widely perceived as systematically over-exploiting fish stocks, damaging the marine environment, and not the least cheating with legal obligations? As the case will show the debates before and during the standard-setting process have been intensive and many issues are yet unresolved although the standard now exists.

The analysis of this case can contribute to a theoretical discussion of the interplay between a standard-setting process and its political context, and of the factors that both complicates and enables the creation of credible arrangements for political consumerism. The paper emphasises the relevance of focusing the *production* of political consumerist arrangements as a complement to a focus on consumers' practices; which together bring a more complete picture of the potentials of and conditions for political consumerism. It also contributes to a discussion of the possibilities and challenges in developing consumer-based environmental improvements. One must keep in mind, however, that the paper can say more about process matters rather than if such goals as credibility and environmental improvements really are achieved, because it is too early to assess such outcome matters including how, for instance, consumers will respond to this very new eco-label.

The case study¹⁸⁴ is based on interviews with 15 key persons and various documents. It has been important to select informants representing different types of actors. I have interviewed persons who are working in KRAV as well as key persons representing key-organizations in the project and its network. Interviewees represent KRAV, environmental organizations (EOs), fishermen, fish industry, state agencies, and science. I have asked the interviewees to give their view – as representatives of a specific organization and/or an actor category – about their own roles in, ideas about, and attitudes toward the labelling project/organization, other parties/members, and certain topics – included as well as excluded ones – in the labelling debates.

¹⁸⁴ In a longer Swedish report about this case (Boström 2004c) more details about method and informants are presented. This report also contains more information about the empirical themes presented here.

After the introduction I investigate what has been said in previous literatures about the creation of authority and credibility in eco-labelling and similar political consumerist arrangements. I first discuss commonly held ideals that are often seen to be instrumental in the building of arrangements and then I go on to discuss how context factors may constrain or facilitate the efforts in following these ideals, both in general and in relation to the specific fish case. Thereafter I give a short historical overview of the efforts in initiating eco-labelling of seafood in Sweden. Then I analyse how the eco-labelling project tried to create credibility by following the ideals. In the concluding section I discuss the relative impact of the pragmatic versus environmental stringency framing as well as the complexities in practising the ideals.

Creating Authority and Credibility: Process and Context Factors

The idea of credibility can be useful in order to understand how a labelling organization/project may expand its status in a regulatory field. Whereas authority refers to vertical relationships – ‘authority exists when an individual or organization has decision-making power over a particular issue area and is regarded as exercising that power legitimately’ (Cutler et al. 1999:5; see also Hall and Biersteker 2002:4-5) – credibility is also relevant when considering horizontal relationships. Credibility can be defined as perceptions and assumptions that the operations of an actor or agent are trustworthy, responsible, desirable, and appropriate.¹⁸⁵ The credibility of an actor’s operations must be understood in relation to others, which can be either generalized others or specific others.

Yet having slightly different meanings, authority and credibility can have the same or similar sources. I begin to present certain standard-setting ideals that actors draw on and try to practice in order to create credibility and then I go on to analyse how context factors can influence the possibility to practice them.

Standard-setting Ideals

I will concentrate on a set of ideals which I do not see as exhaustive.¹⁸⁶ A first is *inclusiveness*.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ For a somewhat similar definition of legitimacy, see Cashore et al. (2004b:188). Although the concepts are partly overlapping, legitimacy does not require the same degree of approval, as I see it. Legitimacy can include very passive and apathetic consent.

¹⁸⁶ In another paper (Boström 2004b) I also emphasise the importance of *international orientation* using the same empirical case. The delimitation of aspects here is motivated by the paper’s analytical focus, i.e. to investigate the interplay between context factors and the use of ideals in the standard-setting practice.

¹⁸⁷ In Boström 2005 I develop this theme more thoroughly.

Inclusiveness

In order to create a credible labelling scheme many have to be involved. Groups need to communicate and develop common understandings of problem situations and possible solutions in order to develop and negotiate standard criteria. As a principle, broad representation is as in it self important for gaining legitimacy. It provides a project with a democratic image. But we also have to consider what added value those represented can give. They may represent some knowledge, values, interests, and power mean that the eco-labelling project needs.

Participants with large power resources give added value to the eco-labelling process, but inclusion of such actors also mean that the eco-labelling organization must carefully prevent the development of asymmetric power relations. The temptation to include actors with high penetration power must be weighted against the demand for preserving the image of equal opportunities.

In regulation in general, big companies have privileged positions since they are important loci of power, reservoirs of expertise, bearers of economic change, and agents of enforcement in implementation processes (cf. Lindblom, 1977; Hancher & Moran 1989; Cutler et al. 1999). In non-state market-driven governance (Cashore et al 2004a), such as eco-labelling, it is even more obvious that their resources are fundamental. For example, it is essential for the standardizer to include actors with central network positions (Green et al. 2000; Sverrisson, 2001; Cashore et al. 2004a, 2004b; Gulbrandsen 2004; Jordan et al. 2004). A business actor, often a retailer, with high market penetration power does not merely reach consumers and trigger competitors. It can also direct powerful demands along the whole chain of production and distribution. Social Movement Organizations (SMOs) do not have the same self-evident positions in regulation but can provide the eco-labelling with symbolic power resources (reflecting good values, voluntarism, consumer power etc), new ideas/framings and alternative expertise (Boström 2003a; 2004a).

In standard-setting practices different groups have not the same opportunity to participate simply due to their unequal access to financial resources (Tamm Hallström 2004). Most apparent, groups representing consumer interests are very small and a difficult category to mobilise (cf. Cochoy 2004). In practice, the consumer interest is often seen to be represented by other organizations such as large retailers (cf. Marsden et al., 2000).

A potential quality that an inclusive labelling organization can add is an ability to mediate and overcome particularistic interests. Scholars have observed that repeated interaction over time in organized networks comprising a wide range of actors can result in common expectations about proper behaviour, a degree of mutual trust, and mutual learning (Cutler et al. 1999; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Rhodes 2000; Wälti et al. 2004; Boström 2005). Trust, common expectations and understand-

dings not only help to solve conflicts but lead to strengthened credibility of the labelling organization as well. For example, a certain degree of consensus among members/participants that normally reflect very different interests makes the organization more likely to receive a strong positive frame-resonance both in relation to a wider public and to specific others.

Independence

A second ideal which is closely related to the inclusiveness-theme is the ideal of *independence*. Indeed, inclusiveness, leading to a combination of roles and resources, can create an image of independence. Whereas all or most individual members reflect a certain 'interest' relative to the project's aim, and are therefore not 'independent' or 'neutral'; it is the combination and mutual adjustment of interests that create this image. In the eco-labelling vocabulary, independence is understood in a slightly different way. Third party labelling schemes are distinguished from first party labelling schemes (i.e. 'self-declarations') and second party labelling schemes (labels established by industry associations for their members' products). It is only the former that is said to have an independent quality in that the rule setter as well as the accredited certification organization works independently of producers, distributors, and sellers of the labelled product. However, because 'rule followers', i.e. producers etc, actually participate in rule setting activities their independent character is somewhat questionable. Yet, inclusion of other interests helps to maintain this image.

There are also other means to accomplish an impression of independence. Besides including and balancing participants that represent different interest groups, it may be important to include scientists who can figure as 'neutral' experts, at least in reference groups or in other arrangements for consultation (see e.g., Golan, et al, 2000).

Auditability

A third ideal is *auditability* understood in a broad sense.¹⁸⁸ A basic requirement for a credible scheme is the existence of independent certification organizations that regularly conduct auditing and on-the-ground inspection in order to verify compliance with standards. Scholars have noted problems connected with auditing due to dynamics in the certification practice (preference to approve rather than reject), arbitrary interpretation of certification criteria, expectation gaps, excessive trust in the auditing, etc. (Power 1997, 2000; Humphrey & Owen 2000; Gulbrandsen 2004). Although such factors mean that certification bodies hardly are as independent as they ideally should be, clearness and stringency in the stan-

¹⁸⁸ Power (1997, 2000) distinguishes between *auditing* - 'control of control', i.e. control of self-control arrangements - and *inspection* - direct control. Because control of licence holders in eco-labelling can include both the first- and second-order control, the term auditability here covers both.

dards may facilitate credible certification (Gulbrandsen 2004; Follesdal et al. 2004:295ff.). Performance based standards with measurable standard criteria, in contrast to standards of procedures that only regulate what routines an organization should have strongly enhance the possibilities to make substantive auditing (cf. Humphrey & Owen 2000). It is therefore an important task for labellers to carefully consider how all standard criteria should be formulated as well as how the auditing function should be designed.

Scientific Validity

A fourth ideal is *scientific validity* (cf. Klintman 2002a; Klintman & Boström 2004). Eco-labelling implies a signal to consumers that labelled products are better for the environment than their options. It is seldom, if ever, straightforward to make conclusions about environmental consequences of different production methods. The eco-labeller has to convince that the label is based on relevant knowledge. Reference to natural science and inclusion of scientists in one way or the other are more or less necessary in order to gain legitimacy and credibility. There cannot however be a perfect connection between all specific standard criteria and scientific advice since standard criteria also reflect certain ideological standpoints as well as practical knowledge that other groups have (cf. the inclusiveness ideal above). Nevertheless, eco-labellers often try to create an atmosphere of scientific legitimacy by linking eco-labelled products to the use of science (not seldom using the terminology of 'life-cycle analysis').

Context Factors Facilitating or Constraining the Labelling Process and the Fulfilment of the Ideals

Authority, legitimacy, and credibility may be more or less easy to establish depending on certain contextual and historical factors.

Political Culture

A first context factor is the *political* or *policy culture* within which the labelling process occurs. A political culture characterized by (selective) openness, pragmatism, reformist orientation, preparedness for collaboration and negotiation among different interest groups – as generally seen in the Swedish context – is more likely to facilitate eco-labelling partly because eco-labelling requires relatively permanent interaction between different types of groups (Mol et al. 2000; Boström & Klintman 2003; Boström 2003b; Micheletti 2003). Although the Swedish *state-centred* corporatist political culture might have led main actors not regarding consumer- and market oriented arrangements as legitimate or even conceivable, it seems as it nevertheless has provided actors with a latent preparedness to engage in dialogue and negotiations and to reach major

compromises and agreements. Hence, the Swedish political culture seems relatively suitable for the inclusiveness ideal.

Further, the Swedish political culture, especially in the environmental field, is also marked by a strong trust in natural science (e.g. Jamison et al. 1990), a trust that in turn can be helpful for labelling processes. For example, in Swedish labelling cases there are seldom as intensive debates on methodological issues connected to labelling and threshold levels as we can observe in the U.S. (Klintman 2002a, 2002b; Klintman & Boström 2004).

However, the Swedish fishing debate was so impregnated with controversies that it might be hard to imagine how a fruitful inclusive labelling dialogue could be achieved. In a political culture marked by consensus a certain degree of trust among interest groups prevail, but this was generally lacking in the fishing case. There is a commonly held suspicion and idea that fishermen tend to cheat; which is claimed in official reports (Hultkrantz et al. 1997) as well as in EO-journals (*Sveriges Natur*, 2001/06 'Fuskett som tömmer haven'). It is claimed that fishermen report about capture and by-capture incorrectly, practice illicit fishing, make use of loopholes in the regulation, etc. This situation creates a huge challenge for the establishment of a credible eco-labelling scheme. If many believe that fishermen are disposed to cheat the scheme would require something extra of the auditing function in order to secure that fishermen really comply with the standard criteria.

A special problem preceding the seafood labelling project is *how actors view each other's experiences and knowledge* (or lack of knowledge). Fishermen are criticizing the knowledge that researchers produce, and the recommendations resulting from their knowledge and the researchers in turn generally ignores fishermen's own experiences of, for example, changing levels in fish stocks (see Hasselberg 1997; Johansson 2003). One thing that renders fishery regulation in general particularly difficult is the highly migratory fish resource. Fishermen say that scientists have been unable to correctly analyse variations. They maintain that they are able to see increases in fish stocks long before scientists observe the same with their scientific methods. Others say that fishermen's experiences are not based on systematic research. Regardless of who is right: knowledge uncertainty seems to make room for controversies and makes it hard to create a dialogue between parties.

The Regulatory Context

A second general context factor that can both facilitate and constrain new rule-making initiatives is *the existing (transnational and state) regulatory framework and bodies*. Whereas observation of state regulatory failure or regulatory void is usually a main rationale behind non-state-driven rule-making initiatives – in order to pave out a regulatory space for new rule-making arrangements, initiative takers have to frame previous regulatory

efforts as insufficient, inadequate, inert, and so on – they must, in some way, relate to the existing regulatory frameworks (e.g. Streeck & Schmitter, 1985; van Tatenhove et al. 2000; Rametsteiner, 2002). A minimum requirement is that the eco-labelling scheme complies with the law, but a general idea with eco-labelling is to provide a scheme that sets standards beyond the minimum law-level in order to visualize good environmental performance. This embeddedness means that the labeller has to adjust to an existing regulatory framework as well as consider inclusion of regulatory experts (cf. inclusiveness). Existing regulatory bodies may not the least have certain objections regarding the new initiative, especially when it promises to bring something better in light of previous failures.

State actors can also have an important role concerning questions of legitimacy and accountability; given the unclear role private authorities have in questions of accountability (cf. Rhodes 2000). Because state authority is made legitimate by appeal to popular will, via the representative democratic political system, state actors' framing of private initiatives as welcome, relevant, important etc can help making private initiative be perceived as more 'public', 'democratic', 'accountable', etc (Hofer, 2000; Boström, 2003b; Wälti et al. 2004).

If there is a positive relationship between a 'strong' state and effective non-state-driven rule-making (Boström 2003b), it is relevant to ask if the combination of a relatively weak but still centralised regulatory apparatus can be problematic for the labelling. Will existing regulatory bodies make room for and help to legitimize new non-state authorities?

In this case a complicating factor is related to the fish resource itself. Historically, the free access to the fish resource is a good example of the problem surrounding 'the tragedy of the commons'. No-one owns the fish in the sea but the fisherman owns its capture. Together with enhanced productivity a situation of continuous increased pressure towards over-exploitation has occurred; and trans-national and national regulation seems yet to be able to accomplish only little (e.g. Gray 1998; Nordic Council of Ministers 1998; Porter et al. 2000; Stokke 2001, SOU 2003/73). An immediate consequence for a labelling project is that poor previous records in regulating fisheries in a sustainable way delimits the range of species and stocks that can be considered for eco-labelled fishing. The more the previous regulatory arrangement has failed the less likely it is to set up a labelling scheme, given that the scheme is based on the idea that only eco-labelled fish from healthy stocks can be permitted.

The Organizational Landscape

A third general context factor concerns *the organizational landscape* which may influence if and how eco-labelling is managed. Well-represented and unified companies and landowners (in cases of agriculture and forestry) may on the one hand effectively counter-act social movement initiatives by implementing competing models (Cashore et al.

2004a, 2004b). On the other hand, if EOs succeed to build alliances with some of the companies, as well as important institutional consumers, in such an organizational context, these companies in turn may have great capacities to engage the more hesitant ones (Boström 2003b). Strong industry and landowner associations may therefore be instrumental in achieving broad representation.

A relatively 'mature' national organizational landscape with a strong civil society favours eco-labelling initiatives also in that it may abode resourceful SMOs with substantial symbolic and organizational capacities to co-operate with companies. In Sweden, EOs such as WWF and SSNC (the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation) are relatively resourceful and they have great symbolic capital meaning that they are widely known, respected, and recognized as dealing with important tasks (Boström 2003a, Boström, 2004a; cf. Micheletti 2003:119ff.).

However, a general obstacle observed in the fishing sector is the asymmetric power structure that favours large-scale fisheries.¹⁸⁹ This pattern may create difficulties in practising particularly the ideals of inclusiveness and independence. Related to this is the homogeneous fishery sector regarding its associational structure.¹⁹⁰ The development of a credible eco-labelling scheme may require that it is possible to differentiate between business actors, or in other words between those that can be subject for certification and those who cannot; and such kind of symbolic differentiation may be difficult in a monolithic structure.

The opponents of large-scale fisheries – EOs and the Swedish Anglers' Association – have earlier been totally excluded in the fishery administration and in negotiations of regulatory measures such as quotas (Hasselberg 1997). Informants from SSNC and WWF think that they are influential in other sectors, especially in forest politics, but that they have much difficulty in gaining access to regulatory arenas in the fishery sector, although they see indications of change currently due to the newly raised public debates on fishery matters. Nonetheless, the eco-labelling that was to be initiated in Sweden had to confront a very asymmetric power structure.

¹⁸⁹ The Swedish fishery sector is not big in economic terms and it only houses 2.231 license-holding fishermen and 1.824 fishing vessels (SOU 2003:72). Yet, this has not stopped them from exercising great influence in the fishery policy-making historically. The power over the fishery politics has, by tradition, mainly been exercised through an iron-triangle of co-operating decision-makers from the Swedish Ministry of Agriculture, the National Board of Fisheries, and the Swedish Association of Fishermen (SFR) (Hultkrantz et al. 1997; Sjöstrand 2003).

¹⁹⁰ SFR has had a strongly integrated organizational base that effectively has lobbied for measures that suit large-scale fisheries (Hasselberg 1997). Hasselberg (1997) maintain that SFR-leaders' policy to forcefully keep a unified public image has prevented critical debate and probably forced aside a potential conflict between large-scale industry trawling – which has benefited from the policy – and small-scale coastal fishery.

Publicity and the Public Agenda

A fourth context factor is the degree to which labelling-related issues are on the domestic public policy agenda. Companies are more likely to legitimize eco-labelling schemes if their practices are considered as a major problem in need of government action (Cashore et al. 2004a, 2004b).¹⁹¹ This has clearly been the case in Sweden the last years (and have caused a somewhat more symmetric power structure), and have provided fishermen with strong incentives to participate in eco-labelling discussions. The tendency is furthered even more if there is generally a high degree of environmental awareness in the country as seen in Sweden (Boström 2003a, cf. Jordan et al. 2003, Jordan et al. 2004). However, as will be discussed below, this very enthusiasm among industry-actors has fuelled other stakeholders with some suspicions.

Indeed, that there are issues on the public agenda may not automatically go in a direction favourable to the eco-labelling process. This is related to the product itself. Eco-labelling of food generally concern procedures and production processes, which may look a bit abstract in the consumer's view. Whereas the KRAV-label generally concerns the 'process' which it also aims to visualize – in this case fishing, processing, etc – the consumer probably has – at least also – a 'product' in mind. The consumer might think that eating an eco-labelled fish implies something different to herself than eating a non-labelled fish. She might consider what is *in* the fish. It is, not the least, documented in the case of organic food that many people consider health matters in eco-labelled food although organic labellers cannot guarantee that organic food really is healthier (Ekelund 2003; Boström & Klintman 2003). A problem in this case is the general public focus on toxic substances in fish and shellfish. The Swedish National Food Administration has since the 1970s provided the Swedish public with information on toxic substances and heavy metals in fish (Bjerselius & Norrgren 2003). We are taught to radically restrict eating fat fish from the Baltic Sea and pregnant women should not eat them at all. Such messages bring a picture of fish as a contaminated product; a picture that in turn can bring problems to the labellers.

* * *

In sum, a few factors seem to go in a direction favourable to the eco-labelling process. The fish labelling case occurs in an eco-labelling friendly context (A). The existing regulatory framework clearly needs complementary arrangements (B). Fishing is more and more seen as a major political problem (D); which both domestic and foreign food retail-

¹⁹¹ Somewhat related to this point is that an industry's dependence on environmentally concerned markets may impact on its willingness to accept schemes, especially if there is an international public opinion and resourceful institutional purchasers, such as large food retailers, pressuring for measures (Elliot & Schlaepfer 2001; Boström 2003b, Cashore et al. 2004a, 2004b; Gulbrandsen 2004).

lers are aware of (D). The environmental movement has considerable organizational resources and a huge symbolic capital (C). However, in the specific field of fishery, certain context factors clearly complicate the picture as for instance an asymmetric power structure in the organizational landscape, deep controversies and mutual distrust among actors, a relatively weak yet centralised regulatory apparatus, and general perceptions that fishes are contaminated.

Next I will describe how the Swedish eco-labelling project was initiated and completed, and then I go on to describe in detail certain debates that relate to the question how the project tried to create credibility by fulfilling the ideals and by carefully coping with the complicating context factors.

Eco-labelling of Seafood in Sweden

In an optimistic manner, fuelled with positive experiences of the then ongoing Swedish FSC-process (Boström 2003b), WWF tried, in 1996, to introduce the MSC-label in Sweden. The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) had been initiated by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and Unilever (a Trans-National Corporation [TNC] in the food sector) who formed a partnership to promote sustainable and responsible fisheries worldwide.¹⁹² They thought that earlier efforts in creating regulatory frameworks to stop over-fishing had failed. “Unilever, one of the world’s leading buyers of frozen fish, recognized that, unless major fisheries took stronger steps to become sustainable, the company would no longer have access to its valued raw materials” (Weir, Unilever 2000:119).

MSC and WWF started campaigns and organized seminars in order to mobilize support. However, although they received enough support, especially among food retailers and the fish processing industry to be able to start labelling activities their initiative was met by quite a massive resistance from fishermen, authorities and others in Sweden, Scandinavia, and elsewhere (Constance & Bonanno 2000). My informants from the National Board of Fisheries say that their main concern was the central role of a TNC figuring as main sponsor – ‘I think that MSC is just another consulting firm with the only aim to earn money, completely following its own self-interest’, one official said (my transl.). They also thought that MSC was closed. When they asked MSC for detail information they were told that it was classified and they were not welcome as participants. ‘If one sets its own criteria without public control, then it can turn out to become arbitrary’ another official said (my transl.). MSC is since 1998 officially ‘independent’ of WWF and Unilever (which nevertheless are among the main supporters).¹⁹³ However, it was exactly a sense of *dependence* as well as *exclusiveness* and *opacity* that made Scandinavian officials averse.

¹⁹² See also Oosterveer, previous chapter; Weir 2000; Fowler & Heap 2000.

¹⁹³ See MSC Annual Report 2002/2003, www.msc.org downloaded 2004 09 24.

Given a relatively centralised fishery administration, WWF's and MSC's failure framing of previous regulatory arrangements may have been too thorough, contributing to that authorities regarded themselves side-stepped (see also Constance and Bonanno 2000:134-5). MSC was criticized as a tool of neo-liberal restructuring over and above the jurisdiction of nation-state. One informant from WWF believes that it was too demanding that private actors stepped in and claimed responsibility for what has traditionally been seen as a sole responsibility and concern for state actors.

Another informant from WWF said that it was no idea trying to convince authorities and others to set up a Swedish working group following the MSC-framework because of the strong criticism. And since authorities actually started their own eco-labelling discussions, he saw it as a gesture of agreement to pass the issue over to them (which he subsequently regretted because not much happened, in his view, for a long time to come).

Indeed, MSC made an impact in Scandinavia in that it set off a process. Those officials initially very critical toward MSC admit that MSC had an important role in this regard.¹⁹⁴ One of them said that the agencies identify themselves as pro-active actors and this was a reason why they sought to take back the initiative. Thus, they began searching for new more consumer-friendly policies (cf. Todd & Ritchie 2000:146); which was a new policy for the Swedish fishery administration (Larsson 2002). Groups were started both among the Nordic countries and among Swedish stakeholders, and I will concentrate on the latter.¹⁹⁵

Swedish stakeholders started their own informal forum with recurrent seminars. An association for the fish industry (Fiskbranchens Riksförbund) took the initiative after that Swedish and foreign food retailers demanded verification on that fish products were coming from sustainable fisheries. During 1998 and 1999 several meetings were held including basically all kinds of organized actors: food retailers, processing industries, fishermen's associations, EOs and other SMOs, and authorities in the sectors of fishery, agriculture, and food. Despite the many seminars, not much happened besides that actors gradually saw an increasing relevance of the eco-labelling instrument. Due to one informant re-

¹⁹⁴ One of them also said that he now has changed his attitude and considers the current MSC as trustworthy, using best available scientific knowledge and refers to best available principles such as FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

¹⁹⁵ On behalf of the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Fishery Affairs took an initiative to draft criteria for the labelling of fish products. No Nordic scheme has been introduced but the Nordic work at least led to the publication of the report *An arrangement for the voluntary certification of products of sustainable fishing* (Nordic Council of Ministers 2000). The report helped to define and recommend what is required by a labelling arrangement. For example it established the significance of traceability, transparency, and the necessity of inclusion of all concerned parties. Thus, it touched on several of the standard-setting ideals implicitly criticizing the previous model (MSC). Whereas many issues remained unresolved, the principal achievement with their work may have been to disseminate a view of the labelling instrument as *feasible*, especially to more hesitant stakeholders.

presenting the fish industry it was mainly the difficulties in finding resources that hindered the process from making advances whereas one informant from WWF thought that the process was badly focussed and unorganized: 'We came nowhere' and the discussions were just 'scrape on the surface'.

Several participants saw KRAV as a possible eco-labelling organization capable to take the main responsibility for carrying a more efficient process. KRAV's normal activity is to set and issue standards for organic production.¹⁹⁶ Fishery falls outside organic production, which meant that KRAV had no expert knowledge invested in this subject. Another problem was that KRAV is a Swedish eco-labelling organization which may cause problems in trade issues.¹⁹⁷

But KRAV's advantages outweighed its disadvantages. One reason why KRAV was suggested was the opinion among the participants in the informal working group that the project desperately needs an organization with established and efficient routines. Another reason was that KRAV is well known and recognized among the public, i.e. credible. A third reason was closely connected to KRAV's *inclusive*, and hybrid, organizational form, and this will be furthered analysed in the next section.

In June 2000, KRAV offered to co-ordinate the standards development. In 2002 KRAV managed to get the EU, the Swedish Ministry of Agriculture, the National Board of Fisheries, a number of County Councils, and the Swedish fishing industry (through Svensk Fisk, eng. Swedish Fish) supporting the project with financial funding. In December 2002 a first preliminary framework with principles and standard criteria was published and sent to stakeholders for consideration (KRAV 2002-12-11). A Swedish official term for such a draft is 'remiss' and stakeholders' comments on a remiss are called 'remissvar'. I will use these terms when describing elements in the debate below. During 2003 hearings, seminars and other specific meetings were held between KRAV's Project Group and stakeholders, and a second 'remiss' with standard principles and criteria was published and sent to all stakeholders (KRAV 2003/06). In November 2003 a final standard proposal was presented, which was approved after some amendments by KRAV's Board of Directors in March 2004. Now the first vessel has been certified (for eco-labelling of shrimps). A KRAV-informant mentioned that the only fish that could be considered for eco-labelling currently is herring from stocks in the Nordic sea – because the situation for most stocks and species is too bad. Some basic facts about the standard are summarized in the box below.

The result can be seen as a general compromise between a feasibility/pragmatic pole and an environmental stringency pole (see concluding section). An important organization, the Swedish Society for Nature Con-

¹⁹⁶ KRAV was started in 1985 by the Swedish organic movement and was one of the pioneers in Sweden in introducing the eco-labelling instrument.

¹⁹⁷ In other papers (Boström 2004b, 2004c) I discuss how KRAV tried to tackle the ideal of *international orientation*.

servation (SSNC), has been reluctant to accept this compromise. SSNC has neither officially approved the whole eco-labelling scheme nor officially criticized it. It has said that it will wait and see how the eco-labelling will work in practice before any official statement will be announced, which is problematic because, in the view of one key informant from the Project Group, SSNC is the most trustworthy EO in the Swedish context. With its 170.000 members it reflects consumer power. SSNC does in principle support the project but cannot yet declare that it will officially support the scheme due to some critical issues.¹⁹⁸ I will come back to some of these, which indeed touches upon the main theme of this paper: how to create a credible labelling scheme.

The KRAV-standard for eco-labelling of wild captured fish and wild captured shellfish shortly summarized

The standard has five groups of rules, including all parts of the fishing sector from fishing to retailing. The first group concerns competency requirements for the environmental certification body, e.g. around quality assurance (approval according to relevant accreditation organ such as IFOAM or ISO), decision-making structures, and how assessment of fisheries is to be conducted. The second group of rules concerns assessment of stocks. Eco-labelled fishing can only be allowed if the stock is assessed to be within safe biological limits, following a precautionary approach defined by the FAO in the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES). The third group of rules concerns the fishing vessel. It is the individual fishing vessel that can get a license to catch eco-labelled fish or shellfish. The rules concern required routines (documentation, plan for adequate continuing education, etc) as well as specific requirements on the motor, waste, and chemicals. A fourth group of rules concerns fishing methods which are motivated by principles of minimizing by-catches (selectivity) and damages on the surroundings. The last group of rules concerns landing and processing including notions on use of additives, waste, energy consumption, and traceable storing.

For more information, see <http://www.krav.se/vildfisk/default.asp> (2004-09-24).

¹⁹⁸ However, it does announce the KRAV-label in a positive way in its magazine *Sveriges Natur* 2004(3) which included a special sea-theme.

Coping with Complicating Context Factors

KRAV – an Organizational Platform Making Room for ‘Directed’ Inclusiveness

MSC received criticism that it was exclusive and closed. KRAV’s organizational structure seemed to fit the ideal of inclusiveness better. Its hybrid form implied that it was not totally captured by any single interest group. KRAV has earlier managed to include the big players in the field of food and agriculture as member organizations,¹⁹⁹ and has developed collaborative relationships to authorities.²⁰⁰

KRAV can be seen as a kind of hybrid organization reflecting both the civil society and the market sphere, and with close links to state bureaucracies (Boström 2005). Because many in the fishery sector, especially fishermen and their associations are highly suspicious of EOs they would not have accepted an ordinary EO figuring as the principal labeler, as in the case with SSNC’s Good Environmental Choice (see Micheletti 2003). Instead, many in the fishery sector see KRAV as an organization representing environmental values without being completely occupied by EOs and which understands economic prerequisites. Informants from the National Board of Fisheries who dismissed MSC for being too ‘private’ and ‘closed’ view KRAV as a ‘semi-official’ organization into which authorities have access although not being members. SMOs also affirm KRAV. Despite that WWF was a bit disappointed after the dismissal of the MSC-alternative, my informants from WWF clearly affirm the KRAV-alternative. Thus, KRAV could be seen at least as a second-best strategy for all participants, and it is also seen as an alternative within which all have some checkpoints on counter-parts.

All agreed that KRAV was credible enough leading the project. But certification of sustainable fishery was a completely new arena for KRAV and it could not use its normal procedures in order to develop the standard criteria but had to carefully develop organizing principles for this specific project. Questions of how to define inclusion and representation soon emerged. The inclusion of many different, often antagonist, interest groups with diverse knowledge claims could be expected to create a huge challenge to the organizing process, especially given the very hostile context and an asymmetric power structure. Most stakeholders in

¹⁹⁹ It has 29 member organizations including different interest groups; e.g. organizations representing the food industry, environmental and animal protection (e.g., SSNC), food retailers, unions and farmers associations.

²⁰⁰ Since 1993 KRAV is authorized by the Swedish National Board of Agriculture and The Swedish National Food Administration to control that organic agriculture and production follow the EU-regulation about organic production (EU-regulation 2092/91 and 1804/99, see Le Guillou & Scharpé, 2000), at the same time as KRAV has its own stricter and broader spectra of standards. KRAV is also positively assessed by authorities (Boström & Klintman 2003).

eco-labelling activities may agree, in principle, that all should be included in the sense of having a say and being listened to. However, they may disagree about *how* different actors should be included, for example how the decision-making power should be allocated.

The work was structured in three groups. The 'Project Steering Group' consisted of representatives of fishermen, fish processors, retailers, professional buyers, and marine research and this group made decisions about funding and major priorities. The 'Project Group' consisted of personnel from KRAV and it was the unit that co-ordinated and carried out the bulk of the work. They wrote standard proposals and had as a primary task to secure acceptance for the project in the 'Reference Groups', which consisted of six categories of actors: 'science', 'professional fishermen', 'retailers', 'environmental and consumer organizations', 'fish processing industry', and 'authorities'.

We can see that the business side – fishermen, fish processing industry, and retailers – was in majority in the group with the decision-making power, i.e. the Project Steering Group. Although KRAV's board had the final authority to decide upon the standard proposal, this organizational design is arguably not balanced among different stakeholders in an optimal way. If the ideal of inclusiveness would be followed more completely, should not SMOs and for instance EOs have more central positions in the formal structure as seen in many other eco-labelling arrangements? Why did not EOs have a more central role if they anyway had to contribute with their symbolic resources?

No one complained actually. Whereas WWF's role in fish labelling has been somewhat more marginal – in comparison with the MSC-alternative – they find it important that someone actually can effectively carry through a labelling process. SSNC raised severe critical points on certain procedural and substantial matters but had no objections on how the project was organized, due to one informant there from. Nevertheless it is still relevant to ask why this form of *biased inclusiveness* was chosen and what consequences it had.

There is a connection between this biased inclusiveness and the asymmetric power structure in the fishing industry. One key informant from the Project Group say that he wanted to have EOs represented in the Steering Group, but the reason why it was not possible was the hostile relationship between the fishery sector and EOs. When the organizational design for the project was planned, representatives from fishermen associations refused to even sit in the same room as people from EOs. So the Project Group thought that the business must be allowed to 'own the process'. The relationship was so infected that EOs could not be included in the most inner circle. Otherwise, the whole process would collapse.

This does not mean that EOs have not been influential (cf. discussion about feasibility versus environmental stringency in the concluding section). And all stakeholders, also those representing fishermen, agree that

legitimacy from EOs, especially WWF and SSNC, is needed. But this dependence on EOs combined with their somewhat marginalized role has caused some problems for the project. WWF has not delivered very challenging demands – it has argued that the standard, as in the MSC-case, must focus on the most important issue, for instance securing that fish stocks are within safe biological limits – but SSNC has been much more demanding (see below).

Another tricky – as in all eco-labelling cases – was how to include consumers. They cannot avoid a much-mediated view – seen as represented by retailers, SSNC (with its large membership base), and even KRAV itself. However, a great puzzle was what the consumer might think about the label. In order to better comprehend the consumers' interest and what they expect of an eco-label for seafood, the Project Group conducted a survey (Lönn 2003); which I have reason to come back to.

This specific organizational design might have been necessary in order to complete the project. And no actor has explicitly complained about the forms. Yet, it is relevant to ask if and how this 'directed' or 'biased' inclusiveness has influenced the choice and formulation of standard criteria, and what would have happened if SSNC was included in the most inner circle. I will come back to this.

A Trusted Certification for a Distrusted Business? – Issues of Auditing, Inspection and Verification.

A basic requirement for a credible third-party scheme is the existence of independent certification organizations that regularly do audits and on-the-ground inspection in order to encourage compliance with standards. Credible certification requires both stringency in the standards and trustworthy auditing of the certification body. One of the hottest issues in the debate has been how credible certification can be accomplished given the huge lack of confidence in the whole fish sector, which in turn is partly due to that the business is associated with cheatings.

Hence, much is demanded by the system for auditing and verification. To be sure, in the standard proposal KRAV plentifully refers to nice principles such as transparency and traceability. But what concrete measures are suggested in order to really verify compliance?

KRAV's main idea is in part to rely on various documentation made by the fishermen themselves (about for example by-catches and location of catch). This is complemented by using a satellite-based auditing system that is provided by authorities. Fishing vessels must be equipped by a VMS (Vessel Monitoring System) for automatic reporting of position and movement. Then information can be obtained about where and if they are fishing. Whereas some commentators view the criteria about satellite based auditing as 'probably the most important regarding consumers' confidence for the eco-labelling' (Coop, remiss 2, my trans.)

other parties are not convinced at all but view the whole auditing function as the Achilles' heel of the framework:

One of the most important points regarding the credibility is the auditing function. Without discrediting any single company it must, unfortunately, be concluded that extensive cheating with captures, quota, areas of prohibition, tools etc, exist. The few that are caught breaking the rules have so far got so inconsiderable penalties that cheating is profitable. Naturally, this has created a great scepticism towards the whole business. If eco-labelling of fishery will have any possibility to be perceived as trustworthy and be supported by customers, KRAV has to show that an effective system for auditing exists. /.../ In the current proposal we cannot, unfortunately, find any suggestion of how the auditing will work. (SSNC, Remiss 2, my trans.)

One could reasonably question what is gained by documentation of by-catches etc. if there is no complementary inspection of by-catches.

SSNC had also severe critical points about the so-called 'parallel-fishing', which partly relates to the auditing function. The certified vessel is allowed to conduct both eco-labelled and conventional fishing, but it must store the eco-labelled fishes apart from the non-eco-labelled fishes, in order to secure traceability. In the standard it is also stated that, during a transition period, it is permissible for a certified vessel to fish eco-labelled fish on an approved stock with approved methods of one species and conventional fishing of another species during the same fishing trip. Parallel-fishing was demanded by fishermen in order to make eco-labelling more feasible and economically secure in an initial period, i.e. to smoothly introduce vessels in KRAV-labelled fishing. However, SSNC saw no reason why parallel-fishing should be permissible since only the 'best' fishermen should be certified anyway. SSNC also thinks that this enables (continuous) cheatings. One informant wondered what will prevent fishermen from really keeping the fishes apart in the right quantity and not to put fishes caught from the conventional fishing in the box intended for the eco-labelled fishes.²⁰¹

Informants maintain that it has been discussed whether inspectors should accompany on the fishing trip. However, the project has understood it will be too expensive conducting on-the-ground (or -dock, -board) inspection. And it may be difficult to do sample inspections that those inspected not know beforehand (it is probably much easier to do on-the-ground inspection in forests and agriculture).

In a sense, the eco-labelling system exists because we distrust the (conventional) fisheries in their environmental performance, simultaneously as the eco-labelled fisheries to a certain extent must be trusted in that they really comply with the eco-labelling criteria. This trust paradox is described by Mike Power (1997) in his *The audit society. Rituals of verification*. Auditing is basically motivated by a degree of distrust in

²⁰¹ This should not be a problem if it concerns different species.

those audited – complete trust would make auditing unnecessary; yet requiring a certain degree of trust in order to be workable since it is at least partly dependent on information that only those audited have. The risk of audit, according to Power, is not simply that it does not work, but the tendency to in a non-reflexive way, i.e. trustfully, affirm and legitimize its potential without knowing when and if it works. Auditing ‘must be made to work’ (cf. Humphrey & Owen 2000), regardless if there is any substance in it or not. There must be an impression that it works; but perhaps, which SSNC warns about, it is just too difficult to create such an impression within a business that few see as trustworthy.

*Coping with Knowledge Uncertainty and Disagreeing Experts
– Role of Science and Cognitive Authorities*

Earlier I argued that the mutual distrust between parties can be expected to make it significantly harder to set up a credible labelling arrangement. Nevertheless, the project has found one important way to tackle this mutual distrust, namely by relying on cognitive authorities that all see as legitimate.

The International Council for the Exploration of Sea (ICES) has been an important reference point – a cognitive authority that significantly has helped groups to agree on basic premises regarding judgement of the status of fish stock and catch options. ICES, founded in 1902, is an inter-governmental organization that coordinates scientific research and provides advice on fisheries management in the Northeast Atlantic (see Sjöstrand 2003; Stokke & Coffey 2004). It is the main adviser to EU-negotiations on fish quota – advises which nevertheless are not strictly followed to the disappointment of many debaters. Yet, ICES cognitive authority is generally recognized: ‘ICES’ influence on regional decision-making depends largely on the organization’s reputation for scientific excellence and neutrality towards the often competing claims of various stakeholders – which is widely perceived as high’ (Stokke & Coffey 2004:119). Among other things, ICES have been recognized for further developing and operationalising the precautionary approach to fisheries management by using the frame ‘safe biological limits’.²⁰²

ICES is not completely contested but the main stakeholders in the Swedish context recognize it. EOs almost without reservation affirm ICES. Swedish fishermen’s associations tend to see it as ‘unfortunately the best we have’ (they are sorry that scientists have such an ignorant attitude to fishermen’s own knowledge and experiences). The importance of ICES has been generally recognized but the debates have concerned how much the regulatory framework should be dependent on ICES’ advi-

²⁰² Safe biological limits refer to ‘the level of the spawning stock below which there is an unacceptable probability that recruitment will be impaired’ (ibid.). Harvesting levels that ICES considers as precautionary are identified by assessing a limit danger reference point from which a buffer is added, and the buffer depends on natural variability of the stock, the precision of the assessment, etc.

ce. One problem in the debate was the existence of species and stocks for which ICES makes no assessments. It would, in the view of some stakeholders, seriously reduce the scope of the eco-labelling scheme if such species and stocks were excluded. And they maintained that the laboratories of the administration of the National Board of Fisheries also have useful knowledge. Others maintained, especially SMOs, that these research centres lack in credibility due to their traditional closeness to the business.

The Project Group understood that ICES must be used but the framework could not rely completely on it. Indeed, there was a representative in the Steering Group whose fishery would fall outside the labelling domain if only ICES recommendations would be used. The adopted standard states that the environmental certification body's Board appoint a Council of Experts (CoE) for assessing fisheries (see also below), which gives advice to the board on different topics, for instance whether a stock can be open for eco-labelled fishing. The CoE must relate to ICES' recommendation when assessing a stock that is already assessed by ICES. Further, it must show how ICES' recommendations have been considered in its own suggestions for a decision. This and previous (similar) formulations have been intensively debated.

Some commentators, for instance SSNC, questioned that a CoE (constituted by three up to five persons) can take an overall responsibility for the assessment, maintaining that eco-labelled fishery must only occur in stocks that ICES claims is within safe biological limits

How could the eco-labelling organization conduct an assessment of its own? And how would it behave if the assessment for any reason were another than ICES'? With what trustworthiness would the eco-labelling organization be able to maintain that it makes a better assessment than ICES? (SSNC, remissvar 1, my trans.).

As a response to such criticism, the relation between the CoE and ICES was finally motivated in this way:

The starting point is that the CoE accepts ICES' assessment of a stock, which saves money and create credibility. The CoE has however an opportunity to make a stricter assessment than ICES. Example of that could be that someone applies for an approval of a fishery that has better tools or stricter standards than what ICES' advices include. To drop to the ICES-level in such situations would not favour those leading the development. The CoE could also make assessments that allows for fishery where ICES has dissuaded. Example of that could be that ICES makes an assessment in a big area and that it within this area exists evidence that there are local stocks of significantly better health than what is the case in the area in general. However, all departures from ICES' advices must be motivated by the CoE (KRAV 2003 12 04, my trans.).

SSNC has not approved this clarification. One informant from SSNC says that if the CoE would departure from ICES' advices 'we could consider counter-act the eco-label by advising people not to buy KRAV-

labelled seafood'. Another informant, a representative of fishermen who has been in the project's inner circle, maintain that the stock assessment procedure is the most defective element of the whole eco-labelling system. He predicts that there will be people criticizing assessments that are not covered by ICES. And in order to gain credibility, he claims that all concerned parties must approve the assessment, not only the experts sitting in the CoE.

*What is in the Fish? What Consumers Want and Expect
vs. What They Get*

As mentioned earlier, there is in the public debate a general focus on toxic substances in fish and shellfish. The consumer survey that the Project Group carried out (Lönn 2003) showed that people especially expect of eco-labelled seafood that the fish does AV 2003 08 18 not include toxic substances. The respondents were asked to rank the five most important pre-formulated objectives with the eco-labelling. The result showed that consumers' top priority was that the fish does not include environmental toxins and heavy metals.²⁰³ In light of the consumers' expectations, should not the eco-label guarantee that the fish are not contaminated?

The principle in organic agriculture is that it cannot assume responsibility for toxic substances that it has not contributed with. Organic agriculture must not use chemical substances, and eco-labelled processed food does not allow use of chemical additives. But the farmer cannot be held responsible for external pollution that affects the agriculture. The same principle should be applied to eco-labelling of seafood. The problem here, however, is the existence of sometimes extremely high levels of toxins and heavy metals; and there is a high public awareness of these issues. And because many make connections between KRAV-labelled food and healthy food, the Project Group has an interest not to bring bad reputation to KRAV. KRAV-informants said that they initially had in mind simply not to allow contaminated fish to be eco-labelled. If the label should enjoy consumer trust, consumers must feel that it is safe to eat the fish, one informant told me. Similar points are made by other commentators in 'remissvar' (e.g. the Swedish Consumer Agency).

However, the pressure has been hard from fishermen and other stakeholders such as regional authorities not to include stricter criteria than what is required by national and EU-rules. They think that consumers already receive enough information by the National Food Administration's recommendations. The food retailers (ICA and Coop) also asked if there exist functioning routines in the gathering and assessing of informa-

²⁰³ Then came, in order of priority, that the fish must not be under threat of extermination, that the method for capture not damages the marine environment including other species, that the vessel is environmentally adapted, and finally that it is possible to trace where the fish comes from. We cannot interpret from this, however, that the least prioritized issues are regarded as unimportant.

tion of toxic substances. 'It is important that it is really possible to receive this information in a way that does not delay the handling of the fish. Results from analysis must not be presented after that the fish has been consumed' (Coop, remissvar 2, my trans.).

Informants from KRAV said they have understood that they have no good solution to tackle this dilemma. They know that fishermen cannot be blamed for contaminations they have no control over, and they understand it is not affordable making analysis of the fish, which they had in mind initially (cf. remiss 1, KRAV 2002-12-11). In the standard it is now stated that the CoE can dissuade approval of a stock because of high levels of toxic substances, but it is not specified what count as high levels.

Given indications from the KRAV-informants, the result will probably be that the certification organization will find it satisfactory to refer to EU's and the National Food Administration's rules and recommendations. One of the informants maintain that KRAV cannot do so much more than remain open when communicating about this: 'this is how it looks'. But the KRAV-informants are clearly concerned about this issue: 'It can be tough if there will be a debate – it is a potential mine'.

Conclusion: Environmental Stringency versus Feasibility and Ideals in Practice

Klintman & Boström (2004) argue that the eco-labelling in KRAV operates under a general meta-frame they call 'eco-pragmatism'. Ongoing labelling activities are patterned by a general compromise between two opposite poles: the market pragmatic pole that seeks to frame eco-label products as 'normal' and 'marketable', and the orthodox organic pole that seeks to frame eco-label as 'natural'. Also in this case it is possible to detect a dynamic interplay between market pragmatists and an opposite side stressing environmental and ethical stringency. But it is fair to say that the pragmatic side has gained considerable space. Overall, the idea of making the eco-labelling feasible for fishermen has received great resonance, except that SSNC has expressed great doubts.

All eco-labelling schemes must in the end be feasible in a technological and economic sense. All agree that a certain degree of feasibility is required by definition, but parties disagree regarding *how many* and *for whom* it should be feasible. This kind of debate is simultaneously a debate about credibility. In the view of SSNC it is only reasonable that a minority of the business can be signalled as environmentally friendly, especially because the whole sector suffers from a lack of trustworthiness.

Although it has not been enough space in the paper to go through all standard criteria in detail it is possible to conclude that great effort have been taken to meet the feasibility/pragmatic framing. Given indications from informants and by comparing the first and second 'remiss', the pro-

ject seems to have prioritized marine eco-system issues (safe biological limits, damages on the marine environment), and somewhat playing down environmental aspects regarding the vessel, the distribution (e.g. no specific standard criteria for transport, just principles), the processing (allowing certain additives that are not allowed in organic processing), and the issue of toxins and heavy metals in fishes. The impact from the pragmatic pole is also evident in the notion of parallel fishing, in a kind of free trade and technological optimism, i.e. that all kinds of fishing methods may in principle be permissible unless they damage the marine environment,²⁰⁴ and in great, perhaps excessive, trust in the auditing function.

It is not only the industry that has pressed for the feasibility issue. Whereas SSNC have raised severe critical points, WWF has, by its insistence to concentrate on eco-system issues, helped to legitimize the pragmatic pole.

In conclusion, certain context factors have, via a specific organizational design, with 'directed' and 'biased' inclusion, provided relatively much room for industry parties. However, the fact that the market pragmatic pole has been influential in the setting and formulation of standard principles and criteria does not mean that the other side has not been influential.²⁰⁵ Thus, ideals – although distorted – have not been insignificant and meaningless. Ideals such as transparency, independency, traceability, inclusiveness, along with several others have been intensely referred to, and not without consequences. These are not fixed but relative and dynamic, and dependent on context/historical factors. They are subjects of framing, debating, power struggles, persuasion, and negotiation. Different parties have different views of what they stand for, when they are fulfilled, and what the concrete manifestations are. An optimal organizational design for a political consumerist arrangement is therefore hardly conceivable. For example, due to the asymmetric power structure in the fishery sector and mutual distrust among groups, it was not possible to include EOs in the most inner circle and this seems to have helped the pragmatic side, and indeed the very possibility to set up a scheme at all. But it has also created problems, for instance SSNC's reluctance to affirm the label. The designers of the organizing process perhaps wonder what had happened if SSNC would have been included in the project's Steering Group.

A point not elaborated on in the paper, but relevant to conclude with, is the clear indication of a process of mutual learning and increased mu-

²⁰⁴ The aspects of free trade and technology are further discussed in Boström 2004b, c.

²⁰⁵ The eco-label may for instance give opportunities for small-scale coastal fishermen to perform environmentally friendlier, and to visualize their performance through a label and by way of that compete better with large-scale fisheries. At least, this is what informants from KRAV and EOs hope. Further, if the fish industry would set their own standard criteria, they would probably be differently formulated preferring only standards of procedures (not fixed levels), setting standards at levels in which the most fisheries and fish-products would be marked by a green label; and if they had total power they would probably not even present a standard at all.

tual trust among actors in the field (cf. Elliot & Schlaepfer 2001; Boström 2003b). Actors seem to have come closer to each other via the standard-setting process. This is mentioned by almost all interviewees. Whether or not the whole system will be trusted among a general public – there is indeed reason to expect some communicative challenges for KRAV in the near future given consumers' occupation with health matters – previously antagonist actors have experienced and learned that they can talk to each other. A degree of mutual trust is indeed a great achievement given a hostile atmosphere earlier. And this shows that nice words such as inclusiveness are more than just words. When the ideals are practiced – albeit in biased ways – actors are forced to begin listen to each other. In this case, EOs and the fishermen can now at least sit in the same room.

The findings presented in this paper hopefully reveal the significance of understanding dynamics in the *production* of political consumerist arrangements and the interplay between the standard-setting process and its political context – and this should be relevant for both practioners and researchers of political consumerism. Moreover, to deal with trust and credibility matters are at the heart of these activities. Creating credibility requires openness toward many stakeholders in the field, but that also brings in many demands and power struggles which in turn result in compromises and ambiguities. We shouldn't expect of political consumerist arrangements that they manage to solve all dilemmas that show up and that are discussed in the debates; nor should we conclude that arrangements are impossible to set up or that standard-setting ideals are no more than rhetoric. Indeed, the paper points at the possibility of carefully designing organizational procedures with the use of standard-setting ideals, albeit in a biased way. The question is if and how these sub-political aspects of the eco-labelling process are presented to the consumer. The challenge for the labellers is to have the nerve when marketing the label to really present also the limitations and biases – which in turn may enhance the consumers' reflexive capacity. Then consumers may have the opportunity to have a say in the subsequent development of the eco-labelling system.

Abbreviations

CoE: Council of Experts

EO: Environmental Organization

FAO Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FSC: Forest Stewardship Council

ICES: International Council for the Exploration of Sea

IFOAM: International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements

ISO: International Organization of Standardization

KRAV: Association for Control of Organic Production

MSC: Marine Stewardship Council

SFR: Swedish Association of Fishermen

SMO: Social Movement Organization

SSNC: Swedish Society for Nature Conservation

TNC: Transnational Corporation

WWF: World Wide Fund for Nature

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17. The Meaning of Information on Traceability of Fish for Establishment of Consumer Trust

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Abstract

This paper is based on a literature review, which is part of a research study on the role of information and traceability for the establishment of consumer trust to fish and seafood. The review and literature searches were guided by the following research questions: How is traceability defined? What/who are the driving forces for traceability? What type of information and labelling in relation to fish do consumers need and wish? What is the significance of traceability information and labelling to consumer trust in fish? These questions were used to explore more specifically in this paper if traceability is presented as a real consumer demand and a potential tool for consumers to express political views and increase market influence, or if it is mainly portrayed as a business strategy and marketing technique for food industry and retail. Food safety was originally the driving force for implementing traceability systems, but today it seems that food businesses, especially large producers and retailers, see it as an important commercial tool. In this paper we argue, by using fish as a case, that traceability has a potential to defetishise food commodities, i.e. help to increase consumer consciousness and assist consumers in taking moral responsibility in a global market.

Background

The increased focus on consumers in today's discussions of food markets seems to be related to several issues and developments. This raises a principal question from a consumer perspective: Does the current focus on consumers result from consumers themselves being active and expressing their demands or is it mainly other market actors that draw on consumer demand to legitimise their activities?

Competitiveness is distinctive for today's markets and it has also become a key issue for the food sector (agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, food industry and retail). The food chain is said to have changed from

a supply system to a demand system and as a result producers must to a greater extent consider what their customers and consumers want. Transparency and information about the origins and production history of foods (= traceability) have become part of the strategies used by the large retail chains in their competition for increased market share (Wood, 2002). At the same time the atmosphere surrounding consumption, food and health issues has become increasingly politicized. Political consumerism has highlighted consumer behaviour as a way to express ethical and political involvement and responsibility taking (Micheletti, 2003). Consumers are said to have become more aware of corporate activities and industry processes and their impacts (Gibson, 2003). Firms are increasingly evaluated based on their ethical performance including working conditions and effects on nutrition, health and environment. Consumers are described as more and more demanding that goods are produced meeting the requirements of certain ethical standards, such as safety, health, animal welfare, environmental concerns, labour conditions and fair trade (Korthals, 2001). However, there is less discussion about underlying processes, stakeholder interests and how consumers get knowledge and information about environmental and social impacts.

In a recent paper the anthropologist and consumer researcher Daniel Miller (2003) questions what would induce consumers to know and care about the consequences of their actions as consumers. Miller bases his work on the concept of fetishism introduced by Marx for describing our capacity to deny what we should know about manufacture and to treat goods as autonomous from their origins. Miller discusses the problem of the fetishism of commodities in relation to global inequality and explores the possible role of the Internet. He concludes that the Internet alone cannot defetishise the commodity because more basic changes in property and labour markets are required. However, he means that it would be one way to increase knowledge and interest among consumers in the consequences of their actions as consumers. Since traceability provides information on the production history of a food crop it could possibly also provide an opportunity to defetishise food commodities. In this paper we want to suggest that traceability information may also have the potential to help to increase consumer consciousness, affect consumer trust, and assist consumers in taking moral responsibility in a global market. We will argue, by using fish as a case, that traceability has a potential for defetishising food commodities.

Globalisation has had major impacts on the food chain. It has removed production from direct consumer control, increased competition, prolonged the food chain and made it less transparent. The physical and mental distance between producers and consumers has grown and the need to ensure food safety has become increasingly important with all transport. The increased complexity of food distribution appears to have resulted in more concern among consumers for the health risks related to food. In

addition, recent food scandals and scares have resulted in a demand for systems that ensure food safety. Consumers are said to worry about the health and safety of food production and to question the ability of the modern food system to provide safe food (Henneberry et al., 1998; Macfarlane, 2002; Opara & Mazuad 2001). Consumers are reported to paying more attention to food safety problems also because of increased media coverage. For example, the debate on genetically modified organisms (GMO) has played a role in raising issues of consumer choice, transparency and ethical labelling. Thus, food labels and other types of consumer information including traceability have become increasingly relevant. Traceability has become increasingly visible and it seems to have become a “buzz word”, a legal and commercial necessity in the food supply chain (Denton, 2003). Traceability can be perceived as an answer from the actors involved in the increasingly competitive food system to deal with concerns of food safety, quality assurance and animal welfare. Risk, trust and quality have also become important topics in psychological and social scientific research (Hansen et al., 2003). According to general theories of trust, information is important for the establishment of trust. However, the role of information, including food labelling, in establishing trust among consumers is not clear-cut. Hence it is highly relevant to look a little bit closer at the meaning of different types of information, such as traceability of fish, for formation of consumer trust. Because this topic is complex and ties together different types of knowledge an exploratory study of previous publications may give useful insights.

This paper is based on a literature review, which is part of an ongoing research study on the role of information and traceability for the establishment of consumer trust to seafood, funded by The Research Council of Norway. We have chosen to analyze the literature on traceability to get insights of intentions and meanings. The larger research project will consist of a qualitative study on consumer views on fish quality and safety in Germany and Norway. The aim of the initial review was to present a systematic overview or summary of published knowledge on traceability, labelling and consumer trust in relation to fish and seafood in order to formulate a proper design for further empirical research. Based on previous publications we wished to explore the potential role of labelling of traceability in gaining and retaining consumer trust to fish and seafood and who the actors involved in traceability schemes are or should be. Four sets of research questions were developed to guide the literature searches and the review:

- How is traceability defined? Are different definitions used in different contexts?
- What/who are the driving forces for traceability? What are the interests of producers, government and consumers in relation to

traceability? Who benefits from traceability and who is responsible for traceability costs?

- What type of information and labelling in relation to fish do consumers need and wish? Why do consumers need information?
- What is the significance of traceability information and labelling to consumer trust in fish? What information is credible? What kinds of information and labels are regarded as crucial for increasing consumer trust?

These questions were used to explore more specifically in this paper if traceability is presented as a real consumer demand and a potential tool for consumers to express political views and increase market influence, or if it is mainly portrayed as a business strategy and marketing technique for food industry and retail.

Before presenting results from the literature review we wish to briefly discuss why we think it is relevant to focus on fish in relation to traceability and labelling. Fish and seafood are recommended in healthy diets and promoted by nutritionists. However, fish is not solely an issue of health, because sustainability of fish stocks and competitiveness of industry are also current issues in Europe (Kalniete, 2004). The increase in fish consumption has resulted in an increase in aquaculture because most (wild) fisheries are near their maximum sustainable yield. There is also consumer concern about aspects of fish farming, for example, environmental impacts, pollution of water and feed supply. Thus, a need to assure consumers of the quality of fish has been voiced and traceability has become more important. Traceability information may also help to increase knowledge and interest among consumers in the consequences of their actions. The market for seafood is global and to enter the market it is becoming necessary with traceability. However, the diversity and complexity of the fish industry makes traceability difficult and besides seafood is a highly perishable commodity that requires special handling and transport to avoid loss of quality. Consequently we can conclude that fish is a good case because it captures traditional consumer issues and ethical dimensions.

Data collected through systematic review

Systematic review was utilized to get an overview of published knowledge on traceability, labelling and consumer trust in relation to fish and seafood. Potentially relevant literature was identified by using systematic procedures, i.e. the procedures were written down in a protocol so that other researchers could replicate the review and check the conclusions it reaches.

Criteria for the inclusion and exclusion of literature were developed. Because the topic is not a research area per se several searches had to be made. We searched the databases ISI Web of Science and Medline using the following key words:

- traceability and fish; traceability and agricultural products; traceability and food
- traceability and consumer
- consumer information and policy; consumer information and practice
- food and consumer and information; food labelling
- consumer trust and food; trust and consumer and food; trust and information and food

We limited the search to publications written in English, German or the Nordic languages.

Within the literature on traceability we excluded those that focused on the development of technology and methodology for traceability (markers, tagging, trace back systems) because we were interested in aspects of traceability and labelling that may influence consumer trust.

Two of the authors selected from the searches the most relevant articles according to the aims of the research and the inclusion/exclusion criteria. The potentially relevant articles were identified and collected from the library. The reference lists of the relevant articles were searched to identify additional articles that were not found by searching the databases. Finally a total of approximately 100 articles were identified and reviewed according to the review criteria. These represented different disciplines including fisheries, food technology, agricultural economics, marketing, consumer studies, social psychology, nutritional and social sciences. Because the literature was diverse and scattered, and because there was only a very limited number of studies based on empirical research on consumers and traceability of fish, it was most feasible to compile the information as a text based on the research questions (not as summarising tables, the format of traditional systematic reviews). We will start more generally with definitions of traceability and driving forces for traceability. Next, we turn to consumers and information both overall and in relation to fish. We conclude the paper with exploring the possible significance of traceability information to consumer consciousness and trust in fish.

Findings

How is traceability defined?

How traceability is defined affects what is included in traceability information and labelling aimed at consumers. Thus, we were interested in exploring the variations in definitions. Traceability is an approach that has to do with the identification of products, the ability to trace through records and a system linking data. Traceability systems give standards and lay down procedures that must be observed at the different stages from production to distribution. Traceability systems were first set up in the 1950s in meat production to eliminate cattle herd diseases. These early systems included the identification and registration of herds and were concerned with animal health, disease and food safety control. In the 1980s the development of information technology made it possible to create more complex traceability systems and to include more information. Then the recent food crises highlighted deficiencies in the existing systems, and the current development and adoption of traceability systems is usually explained by consumers' growing health and safety consciousness and demand. (Gellynck & Verbeke, 2001)

The literature presents two general definitions of traceability (ISO definition and EU definition) that seem to set the standard. ISO defines traceability as "the ability to trace the history, application or location of that which is under consideration", and notes that "when considering a product, traceability can relate to the origin of materials and parts, the processing history, and the distribution and location of the product after delivery". The ISO definition is more extensive than the definition in the EU Regulation on the General Principles and Requirement of Food Law Regulation (EEC, 2002), Article 3: "traceability means the ability to trace and follow a food, feed, food-producing animal or substance intended to be, or expected to be incorporated into a food or feed, through all stages of production, processing and distribution". The EU Regulation is recognised to most likely be the key piece of legislation on food traceability. It has been adopted but will not take effect until January 1st 2005. The EU Regulation will demand a one up, one down traceability system to be operated throughout food distribution chains. (Luten et al., 2003)

It is important to note that traceability is about ability. This means that the necessary information must only be available when necessary. It does not mean that the information has to be visible all the time or has to be labelled on the food (Denton, 2003). However, other regulations may require labelling with information that is part of the traceability information. For example, the EU Regulation detailing the labelling requirements of the Regulation on the Marketing of Fishery Products 1. January 2002 (EEC, 2001) specifies that basic information on the species, method of production (farmed or wild) and catch area/geographic origin of many

fishery products is carried right through the distribution chains from capture or fish farm to retailing. Requiring that the labelling information and scientific name of species is available at all stages of the marketing chain.

In addition to the general definitions, there are also specific definitions presented in the literature. The specific definitions have been developed for different food commodities or for different contexts. Much of the literature on traceability is related to meat and livestock chains. For example, Gellynck and Verbeke (2001) in their paper on traceability in the meat chain present two different definitions. "Information necessary to describe the production history of a food crop and any subsequent transformation or process the crop might undergo on its journey from the grower to the consumer's plate" is taken from a paper on grain and cereal production. The other which is from a paper on traceability in the Irish beef industry defines traceability as: "A system that provides ability to identify an animal, trace its movements throughout its lifetime, and subsequently trace the meat products made from it to the final consumer". An overview of food traceability in an agricultural journal (Opara & Mazaud, 2001) defined traceability as: "collection, documentation, maintenance and application of information related to all processes in the food supply chain in a manner that provides a guarantee to the consumer on the origin and life history of a product". These three examples of definitions have in comparison with the general definitions added a focus on consumers and information. They seem to emphasize the role of traceability as an instrument of quality assurance.

The tracing of fish or fish products to the initial source is much more complex than for meat and meat products. There are a large number of species and various methods of catching, handling and distribution fish from the oceans as well as aquaculture businesses (Denton, 2003; Frederiksen & Bremner, 2001; Håstein et al., 2001). Traceability and fish was the focus of TraceFish, a recent EU funded project (Luten et al., 2003). This project brought together representatives from research institutes and industry with the aim of developing an information technology based traceability system for the fish industry. The TraceFish project uses the ISO definition of traceability as a basis of their work but since it is a European project it also, as you would expect, includes the definition from the EU Regulation on the General Principles and Requirement of Food Law Regulation (EEC, 2002). The TraceFish project defined traceability as: "Traceability includes not only the principal requirement to be able to physically trace products through the distribution chain, from origin to destination and vice versa, but also to be able to provide information on what they are made of and what has happened to them." In the TraceFish scheme each unit of goods traded is labelled with a unique ID (Denton, 2003).

Traceability has been defined differently depending on the context. General definitions have been developed for standards, legal and regula-

tory purposes, whereas specific definitions have been outlined for particular food commodities or by specific actors in the food chain. The general definition, which is included in the EU Regulation on the General Principles and Requirement of Food Law Regulation (EEC, 2002), is recognised as the key piece of legislation food traceability in Europe. The general definitions are more “neutral” and talk about the ability to trace the origin of a product whereas the specific definitions (e.g. TraceFish) also talk about providing information on production and transport. When specific definitions are used there is a potential to include ethical information as part of the traceability information. Another difference between the general and specific definitions seems to be that the specific definitions emphasize the role of traceability information as assurance and reassurance of consumers. This may reflect a need to legitimise implementation of traceability systems in the food supply chain.

Driving forces for traceability and stakeholder interests

Traceability is linked to several areas and serves various purposes in the food chain. The basic purpose has always been the control of animal health, disease and food safety, but it has recently also extended especially into business management and marketing (Gellynck & Verbeke, 2001). Traceability used to be a market requirement for niche products but has now become a mainstream commercial requirement and trade issue (Rutherford, 2002). In addition to being a business strategy and market advantage, it is often described as an instrument of quality assurance for consumers. The food crises highlighted deficiencies in food safety systems and resulted in implementation of traceability systems to produce food safety and increase consumer confidence. Traceability is today often described as a response to consumers’ increasing demand for transparency with regard to geographical origin, production methods, and health and sustainability issues.

The stakeholders²⁰⁶ of traceability systems include consumers, governments, international bodies, producers, industry and retailers. Formulation of standards has involved participation of the various stakeholders. For example, the TraceFish project involved scientists from different disciplines, fishermen, port markets, processors, wholesalers, retailers, trade, and consumer organisations (Luten, 2003).

Because of the more demand-driven food market the roles and interests of retailers/customers and consumers have become increasingly important. In response to growing consumer concerns about food safety in recent years, public authorities have felt a need to develop quality and safety assurance systems. However, it has been recognized that govern-

²⁰⁶ Stakeholders are those who have an interest in a particular decision, either as individuals or representatives of a group. This includes people who influence a decision, or *can* influence it, as well as those affected by it. <http://www.earthsummit2002.org/ic/process/stakeholders.htm>

ments and EU bodies are not the only ones to push traceability. Industries have also seen the development of traceability systems as a solution to resolve food safety and other issues. In addition, traceability is said to be driven by supermarkets that are responding to consumers and pressure groups. Consumers' increasing health and safety consciousness is often considered an important driving force (Gellynck & Verbeke, 2001). But, for example, Hobbs (2003) suggests that food traceability initiatives in Canada have in addition to maintaining consumer confidence been driven by a desire to protect access to export markets. Denton (2003) states in his paper on traceability systems in the fish industry: "traceability is becoming a legal and commercial necessity".

Next we will take a look at the interests the different stakeholders have in traceability based on the literature.

Consumers

Consumer demand and growing consumer concerns about food safety are often brought up as the major reasons for the recent interest in traceability systems (Verbeke, 2001). However, despite acknowledging this there is not much empirical research on real consumer demand and consumers' view of traceability. A recent study of consumer perception of meat traceability in Belgium concluded that functional traceability attributes (e.g. organisational efficiency, chain monitoring and individual responsibility) were important to all consumers whereas process attributes (e.g. production methods) were less relevant to the general public (Gellynck & Verbeke, 2001). A study from Ireland showed that consumer understanding of traceability was very poor and consumers were not much interested in the fine points of the systems (Gellynck & Verbeke, 2001).

Traceability systems are perceived to give by consumers more control within the food chain. Consumers are said to gain mainly hidden benefits from traceability (Gellynck & Verbeke, 2001). For example, they get food safety protection and the possibility to avoid specific foods and to make real choices (Food Standards Agency, 2002). Consumers can use traceability information in boycotting imported products or products produced with specific production methods. Consumers are said to want as much traceability information as they can get – especially for free (Rutherford, 2002). However, the literature does not reflect that consumers actively have tried to influence the types of information to be included in traceability systems.

Governments and EU bodies

Legal requirements for traceability are implemented and enforced by governments and the EU. The EU General Food Law Regulation (EEC, 2002) contains legal requirements for traceability in the food chain. Governments are said to be interested in traceability systems as a tool for protecting public health, preventing fraud and controlling diseases (Food

Standards Agency, 2002). The following motives for government-mandated traceability have been presented: to facilitate, control and monitor trace back, to enhance food safety; to address consumer information about food safety and quality, and to protect consumers from fraud and producers from unfair competition. Governments and international authorities have the roles of instigating traceability regulations and being third party controllers.

Producers and industry

Traceability systems provide several benefits and incentives for industry. Traceability makes it possible for industry to comply with legislation, facilitate and minimize withdrawal of products, plant control, diagnose problems in production, create special products and maintain markets and consumer confidence (Gellynck & Verbeke, 2001). It provides the producers with documentation of own practice that can be used in business administration and marketing.

Implementation of traceability systems has in addition to acting in accordance with legislation also often been demanded by large multinational food businesses to minimize business risk and protect their branded goods (Denton, 2003; Food Standards Agency, 2002). Traceability enables industry to differentiate and market foods with subtle or undetectable so called credence quality attributes (Golan et al., 2002). Thus, producers and industry may use traceability to verify quality of special products and to achieve preferred position as supplier.

Retail

Whereas consumer demand is used to legitimise the need for traceability, the role of retailers as demanding customers is less pronounced in the literature. However, some authors (Gellynck & Verbeke, 2001; Verbeke, 2001) have brought up the role of the retail industry as a gatekeeper in traceability. Retailers are largely concerned about traceability because they are concerned about market shares and have financial responsibilities to their shareholders. Retailers' role as driving forces for traceability is also becoming increasingly important because of liability and a need to find who should be blamed if there are problems. For example, in the UK retailers are financially responsible, and the large retail chains have imposed traceability requirements on producers and the industry that are more stringent than the legal requirements (Food Standards Agency, 2002).

The different stakeholders have different interests in traceability. From a consumer perspective provision of information to enable consumers to make informed choices is important, whereas food producers and suppliers, who have much influence; are interested because traceability is commercially desirable information. It is obvious that traceability systems cost, but not having a system may also become costly if a food crisis results in loss of consumer confidence. While the fact that traceabi-

lity involves costs is generally acknowledged, there is no reference in literature to level or distribution of costs among the chain participants. Because consumers are not actively involved in implementing traceability systems they may not be interested in paying more for this. But based on Miller's (2003) arguments in discussing defetishism, we could presume that if consumers would have more traceability information that personalizes the product they would be willing to pay more.

The costs of traceability systems may vary between businesses and sectors depending on the complexity of the food chain, the amount of information and technology needs. In interviews with fresh fish distribution chains in Denmark and Australia most steps thought that increased internal traceability was an advantage. But some small producers found it only creating more paperwork (Frederiksen & Bremner, 2001). With traceability systems in place the cost of food safety incidents may be passed along the food chain and this may lead to increases in insurances (Food Standards Agency, 2002).

Food safety was originally the driving force for implementing traceability systems, but today it seems that food businesses (especially large producers and retailers) see it as an important commercial tool. Thus, the role of customers and consumers has become more visible. To be able to address the question of consumers' own information demands, we will now take a closer look at consumers and information on food both in general and in relation to fish.

What type of information in relation to fish do consumers need and wish?

Consumers can get information on food products from various sources including product labels, producers' information and customer service, leaflets, media, the Internet, advertisements, consumer organisations, governmental and EU bodies. The UK National Consumer Council presented the following main channels for communication with consumers: traditional methods (logos, leaflets, the Internet and customer service); working with consumer representatives in groups (sending information, organising workshops and getting feedback); targeting specific groups; and disseminating information through networks (Brooker, 2003). The traditional types of information are mainly useful for consumers who are actively seeking particular information (Ippolito, 1999), whereas the other methods may help reaching a larger group of people.

Food labels serve many functions: identification, grading, description, promotion and branding. Governments and international bodies can use labelling policies to reach food quality targets, to encourage competition in product markets, and to provide consumers with information and protection from deception (Caswell, 1998). Product labels are increasingly important given long commodity chains due to globalisation and free trade. Food labelling is one way by which consumers can acquire know-

ledge about the product (Wandel, 1997). For example, country-of-origin labelling offers information on where food has been produced. Labels give nutrition and health information and help consumers to choose products with certain characteristics. Consumers may furthermore use labelling information as a tool in making choices that reflect political involvement and global responsibility taking (Micheletti, 2003; Brom, 2000). For food industry labels are a business strategy to help sell products, especially products with quality attributes that are invisible to the consumer both before and after the purchase (credence quality) (Grunert, 2002). Quality labelling is a means to add value to the food product. However, seals of approval programs may also potentially have negative outcomes because they tend to contribute to the domination by large firms (Bennett & McCrohan, 1993). In addition, consumers have been reported to often ignore, misunderstand and overinterpret quality labels as a result of lack of knowledge and awareness (Grunert, 2002).

There are legal requirements for minimum information to be included on food labels. In addition, food industry uses voluntary labelling schemes. Companies may have an interest in the voluntary use of labels as a means of differentiating their products to consumers. The European food law has two different major purposes: consumer information/education (empowerment) and the removal of technical barriers to trade. Accordingly consumers should be getting information that enables them to make informed choices and decisions. However, EU regulations have been criticized for being more focussed on formally perfect regulations than on labelling according to consumers' needs and skills (Hildebrandt & Engelage, 2003). Fish labelling according to the EU legislation and regulations has to include the following data: species name, method of production (caught at sea or in inland waters or farmed) and the catch area. This labelling information has to be available at all stages of the marketing chain. Ecolabelling of seafood, for example, the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) ecolabel created in 1996, is an example of a voluntary labelling scheme for fish. To be ecolabelled seafood has to be harvested with sustainable methods.

The importance of effective communication with consumers is recognized as a central issue (Brooker, 2003; Verbeke, 2001), but research on consumer use of food labels is limited (Wang et al., 1995). Today European consumers are more educated and demand more information. Studies have shown that women and those with higher levels of education tend to read labels (Wandel, 1997; Wang et al., 1995), and a growing number of people have the economic means to consider origin and impact in addition to price and quality when choosing food (Micheletti, 2003). Consumers have expressed that they want labels, but most do not read labels all the time. However, this has not been interpreted as labels having no impact. Although labels may have little impact on the behaviour of consumers, they have ability to reduce the perception of risk and enhance con-

sumer confidence in the food system (Zepeda, 2002). A Norwegian study showed that consumers were not fully content with the information they get in the store. They were more content with information on nutritional aspects than with safety and environmental aspects of the food (Wandel, 1997). A survey conducted in the Nordic countries showed that actual use of labelling and information on food products is limited. Consumers report that they mostly look at the type of information that changes from shopping occasion to shopping occasion: price, best before date (40% on meat and dairy products) and country of origin. As reasons for not using label they report that they feel that they know the product, trust the retailer, find the information confusing or have limited time (TemaNord, 2001).

Labels, logos, symbols and claims may help people to make decisions in today's world where people feel that they have less time and more choices to make. However, many find labels confusing and few seem to recognize logos (Brooker, 2003). Beltramini and Stafford (1993) observed that consumers may misunderstand seals of approval and have a tendency to ascribe more meaning to the presence of seals than is justified. To lessen confusion some kind of overarching logo has been suggested. This type of general scheme has to be run by a body consumers trust and should be communicated to consumers using a variety of channels (Brooker, 2003). Also other studies report that consumers prefer logos and branding which they can trust and recognize without difficulty instead of being given detailed specialised information that require careful reading. It has been described that labels that meet consumer needs should provide clearly information about product content, health impact, style of production and safe handling. The print should be large and easily read, and simple words, pictures and icons should be used to effectively communicate to a broad audience (Bruhn, 2000). Wansink (2003) advises to use short health claims in front of a package and long claims on back to increase the believability of health claims. Insall (2002) suggests that there should be a move towards providing just the more essential information on the label, and instead giving those who are interested easy access to any other information they may wish to know another way. This could be a possible response to the dilemma that too much information can confuse consumers and too little information can mislead them.

Labelling can be an important way of informing the consumer on the quality attributes of foods. Knowledge of consumer demand on fish labelling is limited, but indications of growing demand for transparency with regard to geographical origin, wild or farmed, health and sustainability issues are found in the literature. Consumer demand on meat labelling has been studied. For example, Bernues et al. (2003) showed that the origin or region of production of meat and deadline or consume-by information was most in demand among consumers. Consumers in this study also expressed a wish for information about aspects referring to the system of

production, traceability and quality control. The authors maintain that communication of information on attributes that consumers cannot evaluate or verify demands appropriate labelling, promotion and credible certification.

Traceability is seen to have the potential to fulfil the need for trustworthy information by serving as the basis for reliable communication with customers and consumers (Verbeke, 2001). Food businesses need verification and traceability to be able to label accurately, to substantiate marketing claims and to inform consumers about credence quality attributes. Morrison (2000) thinks that traceability will gain importance as a result of companies being proactive, dealing with uncertainties and trying to meet perceived consumer demands for clear labelling and transparency. But evidence of the importance of traceability information for consumers is not yet available and it is not clear how traceability information could be labelled to consumers (Håstein et al., 2001). Some of the data stored in a bar code may be displayed on a label while the rest can be retrieved from storage (Opara & Mazaud, 2001).

Information and communication are today closely linked to safety, risk and trust. To increase knowledge and provide information have commonly been suggested as strategies to deal with consumer uncertainties or trust especially in the marketplace and among regulators. But because consumers do not always have time nor interest to look for information they assume that when the food is in the shop it is safe (institutional/structural trust) (Einsiedel, 2002). Thus we will in the next part of the paper explore what the literature suggests about the significance of traceability information and labelling to consumer trust. Because there are no studies on traceability, information and consumer trust for fish the next section of the paper looks at what the literature indicates about the significance of food traceability information to consumer trust in general.

What is the significance of traceability information and labelling to consumer trust?

Trust, which is a multidimensional and complex construct, has become an important theoretical concept in social science as well as a central issue in the food safety debate. Sociologists such as Luhmann and Giddens argue that the role of trust in reducing complexity and uncertainty has become more important in modern society (Viklund, 2003). Trust and risk are related on a conceptual level. According to Luhmann trust presupposes a situation of risk and imperfect knowledge. There has to be risk to be trust, but the less trust, the less willingness to take risks. Trust is often held to be important for the understanding of risk perception (Sjöberg, 2001). Consumer concerns can be seen as signs of loss of trust (Brom, 2000). It is complicated to measure trust because you can feel, have, give and place trust (Berg, 2004). Trust is also associated with context. Kjærnes and

Dulsrud (1998) present three contexts within which trust and distrust are created. There is individual (a attitude towards a certain product), structural (e.g. trust in the ability of food producers to maintain adequate levels of food safety) and relational (emerges in the interaction of individuals e.g. purchasing directly from farm) trust.

Research on food risk has looked at the attitudes to food risks among experts and lay public (Knox, 2000). Studies have shown that a gap between experts and the public continues to exist (Macfarlane, 2002). Experts focus on measuring risk quantitatively and suggest that the best strategy is to educate the public in safe food handling practices and healthy diets and encourage people to accept technological advances. However, empirical evidence suggests that consumers are not ignorant or irrational but tend to personalize risk and utilise scientific data in a different way compared to experts. Effective risk communication has to take these views seriously and not forget that consumer food choice is a system of trade-offs between factors of importance. Thus, if trust is lacking just providing the scientific facts is not a good enough strategy in risk communication (Hansen et al., 2003). In addition, Hansen et al. (2003) claim that trust enables individuals and organisations to act without knowledge and thus trust cannot be effectively created and maintained through information campaigns. Also Grunert (2002) implies that just providing more benefits and informing about them may not prove effective in changing consumer attitudes. Perceived benefits and perceived risks are linked to more general underlying attitudes to e.g. industrialization of food production.

Knox (2000) claims that communication appears to enhance trust only under certain conditions. He gives as an example a study within social psychology by Frewer et al. (1999) that concluded that information which was "high in persuasiveness" from the consumer organisation and "low in persuasiveness" from government sources was most trusted. A possible explanation is that government authorities appear dishonest and come across to the public as trying too hard when attempting to communicate risk messages. Böcker and Hanf (2000) suggest that government and business representatives are only moderately trusted if their statements are perceived to be made in an obvious self-interest.

Food labelling is presented as a tool to uphold and increase trust, but this is not that straightforward because data show that consumers wish both simple and complete information (TemaNord, 2001). First, there are limits to the amount of information to be included on food packaging. Second, to add more information may increase possibilities for misuse and misinterpretation of this information. Instead the food sector has been encouraged to improve its trustworthiness by being more socially responsive. Macfarlane (2002) suggests that to increase trust, the process must help develop true partnerships between the public and industry. Also Grunert (2002) suggests alliances between producers, public authorities,

and NGOs. Kaiser and Stead (2002) have suggested strategies to deal with consumer uncertainties within aquaculture. These include the establishment of participatory forums that adopt open and transparent discussions, because of the observation that participation creates trust among different sectors and groups.

The food industry has reacted to consumer concerns regarding food safety by taking various actions such as testing and certification. To avoid potential liabilities or penalties more and more firms adopt safety standards and use private testing. This not only duplicates efforts but also invoked consumer confusion as to who to trust (Henneberry et al., 1998). Brom (2000) says that if governments and retailers want to maintain trust, they have to recognize that their relation with those whose trust they want is a moral relation. There can only be consumer trust if the moral concerns of consumers are taken seriously. Traceability, transparency, honesty and third-party certification are said to gain and retain consumer confidence and can be used to show that there is nothing to hide. A study of meat proposed that careful consideration should be given to the labelling by taking account of among other aspects consumer ethnocentrism (Ngapo et al., 2003).

Sometimes the strategies people adopt to handle food risks seem to be products of too much information and confusion. Consumer confusion, frustration and apathy have also been reported toward nutrition science and health information in general (Rowe, 2002). Having attitudes like “ignorance is bliss” (Ngapo et al., 2003) or “don’t worry, be happy” (Berg, 2004) may be related to denial as a strategy to escape insecurity and confusion. Thus risk communication should sometimes maybe cut information to discourage confusion (Hansen et al., 2003).

Conclusions

This literature overview has shown that the meaning of information on traceability of fish for establishment of consumer trust has not been a specific research topic. However, traceability has especially after the food crises at the end of the 1990s attracted attention. The crises resulted in new regulations to increase food traceability in an effort to win back consumer trust. Traceability systems, which have mainly been driven by legal and commercial necessity, have several benefits and are important for transparency and verification of labelling. Implementing traceability systems gives new opportunities to trace goods and to attach and store various production-related information. It is important to get a better understanding of what types and sources of traceability information consumers wish and need in the future. It has also been speculated that it could in the future be possible to extend the traceability system to tracing the consumer through credit cards or customer cards if a product has been

recalled. However, this becomes a question of safety vs. invasion of privacy (Mathisen, 2004).

The literature on labelling brings up the dilemma that too much information can confuse consumers and too little information can mislead them. Therefore, advice has been given to implement universal logos, only provide the more essential information on the label and give other information another way. For example, a Nordic policy towards the labelling of foods (TemaNord, 2002) recommends that electronic product information in shops and on the Internet could be implemented as a supplement to traditional food labelling (country of origin, use by dates and production dates). However, studies on information and consumer trust suggest that trust cannot be effectively created and maintained through information alone, but the food sector has to be more socially responsive and establish participatory arenas for open and transparent discussions. This is an area that needs to be studied closer.

Traceability and labelling of fish, fishery and aquaculture products can provide information that could offer an opportunity to defetishise commodities (Miller, 2003). The types of information that is or could be included in traceability, e.g. catcher, catching method, production history and sources of feed in aquaculture, has the potential to help to increase consumer consciousness and assist consumers in taking moral responsibility. For example, traceability information on farmed salmon could potentially assist consumers in choosing salmon that has been fed on fishmeal made from a sustainable stock of fish. Consumers have different options for taking responsibility and act. The following suggestions for consumer actions in relation to fish were included in the New Internationalist (2000): shrimp and prawns are too expensive for the environment; farmed fish are unhealthy; ask how this fish was caught (to be able to avoid ecologically damaging fish technology); boycott fish caught with cyanide or explosives (sometimes in live-fish restaurants); and base choice of fish on sustainability.

It is also possible that traceability may have unintended fetishising effects. The growing standardisation of traceability (ISO, British Retail Consortium etc.) and third party control may distance consumers from taking responsibility for the consequences of their actions as consumers. Another negative effect may be discrimination of small-scale producers and developing countries because they may not be able to implement complex traceability systems.

Returning to the principal question stated in the beginning of this paper we can conclude that based on the findings of this literature review it seems more likely that the current focus on consumers is a consequence of market actors drawing on consumer demand to legitimise their activities, than a result from consumers being active and expressing their demands.

There is an antagonism related to traceability, i.e. it may increase consumer consciousness about the moral consequences (defetishising) but at the same time standardisation may contribute to commodification that distance consumers from the moral context of production. Because traceability information is vulnerable for a business, food producers and suppliers have a strong incentive to hide this type of information. They also seem to have had much stakeholder influence on decisions related to traceability. For example, in the TraceFish scheme food businesses are viewed as the owners of their information and specifications for dissemination of information are not included (Denton, 2003). As a result this information is not necessarily available to consumers at retail level. Therefore, there is a need for voluntary organisations and pressure groups to take an active role on the behalf of the consumer.

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18. The Social Construction of Green Market Niches

Árni Sverrisson

Abstract

This paper is about markets. Markets are the mechanisms that connect production chains. They are collectives of producers and determine the qualities of successful products. The paper analyzes the options for producers of ‘green’ commodities vis-à-vis other producers, with whom they compete for the money of the customers. Actors who manage company rhetorics in order to endow products with specific and desirable qualities are seen as particularly important for the construction of specific market *niches*. However, they operate within constraints created by the politics of environmental organisations and the regulations enforced by government agencies. Seeing markets as the result of producer action is therefore likely to provide an incomplete picture. Another important feature faced by potential producers of “green” products is the quantity and quality of scientific and technical information that is required for legitimizing and advertising products as ‘green’. It is concluded that the rhetoric of “green markets” provides important leverage to movement organisations that confer credibility on “green” production and marketing and facilitate environmentally oriented political consumption while the effects of this activity on physical variables are indeterminate.

Acknowledgements are due to Patrik Aspers, Reza Azarian and Magnus Boström for comments, suggestions and explanations of thorny issues and the participants at the Oslo workshop for encouraging and constructive criticism.

Introductory remarks

Environmentalists and managers that deal with environmental issues often understand their activities in a market-oriented framework of one sort or another. This is a result of the shaping of environmental discourse by the market-oriented political climate of the eighties and early nineties that effected what perhaps can be called a discursive shift from planning and

regulation of corporations towards using suitably tamed market mechanisms to achieve political goals. While the pendulum may be swinging back at the moment, the cognitive frameworks generated by the market metaphor are still with us. While these frameworks sometimes masquerade as rational/neutral (as in efficiency-talk, for instance) they are often presented as explicitly political, as exemplified by the following quote from an interview with a manager of a privatised public utility.

... some of the politicians who work a lot on the environment have a different view of us than we have ourselves ... we are supposed to work commercially, and the reason to be good environmentally is the demands of the market, that people want to buy environment-friendly products ... Politically, that does not work ... politicians think that politics should decide, that politicians should make [environmental] demands whereas we think that they should influence their voters, the inhabitants of X, to buy environmentally benign products ... then they [the voters as consumers] force the companies to make [them]. ... And the force us to improve as well ... Today, we face stiff competition ... and this, to force a company to produce in certain way could knock out the company and then, environmentally damaging products come in, through the market ...

The quote clearly formulates the idea of the market as a political mechanism and the corollary is that exercising purchasing power can become a substitute for bureaucratic regulation instituted by democratically elected representatives of the people. This paper analyses some of the complex issues that this raises. The emphasis is less on the implications for democracy and more on the implications for organizing markets: while it may be possible to save the natural environment through market mechanisms the issue remains if the action of (politically educated) consumers is essential for this process.

Politics, science, translation and rhetorical management, network building and niche construction, all these different aspects come together in the making of 'green markets' which, as exemplified by the quote above, are rarely expected to emerge spontaneously. Most of the empirical manifestations of this process can readily be observed so I have not provided extensive examples but focused on the application of recent advances in economic sociology to this problem. The main source for theoretical tools is Harrison White's theory of markets as social structures. However, first it is necessary to consider why the market concept should be used at all. Perhaps the issues at hand could be studied better by focusing on commodity chains and other firm-level networks? (cf. Sverrisson, 2004a) However, I believe that focusing on markets and the sometimes chaotic interactions that take place in them can be a useful antidote to the current emphasis in economic sociology and "green" economics on thoroughly organised chain-like structures (e.g. Gibbon, 2001; Green et al., 2000) I will return to this issue towards the end. The overarching structure of the argument is presented in Box I.

Structure of the Argument

- Background
- Sociology of Markets
- Rhetorics in Markets
- Politics in Markets
- Environmentalism and Green Products
- Concluding Reflections

Box I. The Structure of the Argument

The Dual Character of the Market Concept

The market metaphor is part and parcel of everyday language. Meeting places, where goods are traded, have been with us since early times, and they have long been connected in intricate networks, through travel by land and sea (Hodges, 1982; Sahlins, 1974). In addition, the market metaphor is central in many theoretical projects within Economics and Economic Sociology (Swedberg, 1994). This lands the analyst of markets in a problematic position. On the one hand ‘markets’ are cognitive constructions used by political ideologues, but also by ordinary people in order to make sense of their everyday lives. The concept is fuzzy and its content negotiable and implicit. However, markets are real in the sense that the concept is operative in everyday discourse, and in virtue of this, shapes reality, rather than being real in the sense of referring to some external reality that can be assumed to exist independently of the concept (cf. Law and Urry, 2004)

Thus, ‘Markets’ are real in the same sense as ‘God’ is real, at least among the believers. Indeed, as argued by Durkheim:

It is inadmissible that systems of ideas like religions, which have held so considerable a place in history ... should be made up of a tissue of illusions. ... religion expresses nothing, which does not exist in nature ... it is necessary to commence

by admitting that they are real things, which are thus represented (Durkheim, 1976, 69-70).

Thus, “markets” must be taken seriously because they express fundamental concerns in public discourse, as do religions (among which Durkheim included much that we call ideology today, such as socialism).

However, ‘markets’ also refers to a set of scientific concepts, ostensibly with precise meanings, from which arguments as well as testable hypotheses can be derived (although the relation with ‘nature’ as Durkheim termed it, or ‘reality’ as we say today, seems increasingly tenuous). Because of this, ‘markets’ have a dual role. They are a mainstay of the currently hegemonic symbolic order but simultaneously, they are central characters of the scripts enacted in science projects. This dual character of the market concept demands from the analyst a double vision. First, the market concept can be deconstructed and reconstructed and the roots of its presence and general acceptance shown to be in something completely different from what the concept denotes *prima facie*, following in Durkheim’s footsteps, as it were. Second, the concept needs to be taken seriously as a scientific construct. This implies that the veracity of the theoretical arguments and empirical predictions derived from the market concept are at issue (This was not the case in Durkheim’s analysis of the idea of taboo and totemic animals in archaic societies, from which the quote above originates).

Markets as Networks

Harrison White (1988; 1993) is among the sociologists who have directly addressed the issues raised by the market concept. White has primarily analysed what he calls ‘producer markets’ that are different from ‘exchange markets’ such as, for instance, the stock exchange. While White has mainly been concerned with explaining the price mechanism, his theory can be put to other uses as well, which I attempt in what follows. White conceptualises producer markets as a special case of a more general social phenomenon. “The focus here is on how separate actors combine into a joint formation [such as a pizza-market] and thus induce a joint identity [e.g. as pizza-makers]” (1993, 165). Thus, White’s market concept is based on the idea of markets-as-networks, and it is this idea that will be pursued in this chapter (cf. Callon, 1999).

In White’s story, the important actors in markets are the producers, who position themselves vis-à-vis each other through variations in the price, quality and volume of some generic product (see also Burt & Talmud, 1992). Pizzas, for example, come in many shapes and sizes, with different quantities and qualities of cheese, frozen or fresh, and so on. In this context, actors decide which products to offer, i.e. decide how to

Figure I. Markets Connect Companies

Explanation: Grey ellipses are markets, rectangles are companies, and goods float up from the bottom as they are transformed successively from raw material into semi-processed, processed and consumption-ready states. Money moves in the opposite direction down through the chain.

compete with each other. The result of these deliberations is a quality-based market strategy. Some will make cheap and inexpensive products; others will make classy and expensive products. Others yet will position themselves in-between the two extremes and still others will attempt to provide a range of products. These strategies are in turn based on the actual costs and other circumstances of production, but shaped by the observations producers make of each other as well. Thus: 'It is the variation in production among producers, and the difficulties each confronts in production, that shape the interface that motivates and sets the terms of trade that reproduce themselves' (White, 1993, 170). Put more simply, the necessity to compete by creating novel variants of the generic product is at the core of the market mechanism, and hence, it is the force that drives dynamic development in markets (see Fig I)

According to White, producer markets are usually composed of a 'handful' of actors, who participate simultaneously in several markets (in virtue of making several products).²⁰⁷ Hence, it is possible for actors (in practice, company managers) to have a reasonably reliable picture of what goes on in a particular market, compare how they fare in different markets, and manipulate the internal workings of their companies accordingly.²⁰⁸ Further, because actors are aware of at least the manifestations of the competitor's strategies, and in particular, their advertising rhetoric, they will counter this with their own. Markets - in the sense of a group of producers posited along a quality continuum of sorts and closely following each other's moves - become control instances (or "control profiles") in that the situation limits which actions producers can undertake and expect success.

This control is not linked in any simple way to the material or monetary aspects of products according to White:

Interfaces, by their construction, cannot control for averages and cannot be programmed to yield pre-specified flows. Instead, interfaces build their dynamics around the spread of contributions across a comparable set. ... Mutual attention of peers is directed towards jockeying for relative positions that yield [to] each a distinctive niche. It follows that the interface can become a control profile that depends on skill in the manipulation of multiple rhetorics (White, 1993, 171).

²⁰⁷ The problem of market boundaries is solved by assuming that a market includes every actor who is known and recognised as a participant in a particular market by the other participants. Hence, markets are networks. For a general and very accessible introduction to White's thought, see Azarian (2003).

²⁰⁸ Elsewhere, White argues that the 'managerial perspective on markets is to use markets to enhance control within the firm.' (1993: 173) In a sense this is self-evident, that is, in order to carve out and maintain a niche, the production, distribution and sales apparatus of the firm must be geared to that niche and not some abstract market in general. However, White's observation can also be read differently. A reference to markets legitimises disciplinary measures in the firm, such as lay-offs, particularly when unpopular measures are on the agenda. The market is a battlefield; the competition is 'the enemy.'

More simply put, the flow of products and money contributed and received by each of the actors on the producer side in a given market do not converge on equilibrium nor can they be predicted by observed quality differences or relative prices. Instead, they vary depending on the skill of different producers in exploiting the particular niche within the market that they occupy. Taken together, 'the multiple rhetorics' deployed to this end form what White calls a 'control profile,' that is, they stake out an arena within which different producers are constrained to move, so long as they sell their product as pizzas, for instance, and not as warm bread with cheese and tomatoes. This 'manipulation of multiple rhetorics' goes on in 'green markets' as well. (This argument is summarised in Box II).

Basic Sociology of Markets

- Embedded in production chains
- Connect production activities/firms
- A few producers/ Diversified products
- Producers observe each other
- Producers adjust to each other
- Producers define market together
- Producers compete with each other

Box II. Basic Sociology of Markets

Green Transaction Networks

Recapitulating, most modern markets are akin to networks in that they are made up of a limited number of suppliers, and there are no clear boundaries. Supply side actors act reflexively within the parameters of the network (or leave it) and the network is created and reproduced through this action, which simultaneously constrains other actors by limiting their realistic options. The actors have unequal power and different roles, just as in any other network. In consequence, most markets can be analysed as

if they were networks. So far, we have followed White's argument rather faithfully but now the time has come to develop his ideas in novel ways.

The 'greenness' of products is, with some exceptions, neither obvious nor transparent. Therefore, it must be rhetorically constructed and communicated in one way or another. Prospective customers must be convinced that the product in question does indeed constitute a 'green' choice and producers must be convinced that customers do actually judge products *inter alia* on the basis of their 'greenness.' Hence, the definitions of 'greenness' and the technologies which enable 'greenness' to be identified, measured and produced are important components of the social construction of a 'green' market. However, none of this would happen without the presence of 'green' organisations and 'green' politics in general.

Thus, 'green markets' are, concretely, transaction networks but simultaneously, 'green markets' and related terms (green consumers, green producers, green lifestyles, etc.) are symbolic constructs. In subcontracting or b2b networks, certification and standardisation have been powerful elements in shaping 'green' transaction patterns, as I have discussed elsewhere (Sverrisson, 2002; 2004b), whereas in consumer 'markets,' communication needs to be simplified even more drastically in order to be effective. Specific brokerage activities are necessary that translate product specifications into the common-sense environmentalism shared by most consumers. An instantly recognizable advertising rhetoric that signifies to the consumer that she holds a green product in her hand is the prerequisite of success in 'green' marketing (Solér, 1997).

This activity feeds back into green engineering processes through the market metaphor and the ways in which it shapes the technical and organisational discourse about environmental strategies in companies, as would be predicted by White. Exactly how depends on the form of 'sustainable' technological development. Briefly, environmental technical change can either consist in the development of cleaner processes or the development of cleaner products. In practice, cleaner products are often simply products made by cleaner processes, but descriptions such as 'environmentally benign products' also imply anything from less packaging to recyclable products to radically new products, such as for example synthetic proteins, and the change implied in the production process varies accordingly.

However, if cleaner production is to be sustainable in the long run, demand for the different products must be created somehow, and companies then enabled to act on it. Citizen groups and movement organisations, on the one hand, can transmit such influence, which results in regulatory action that companies comply with - or anticipate. Further, through preferential purchasing of 'environment-friendly' products, consumers can influence both product and process development towards 'cleaner' options, and hence, environmental organisations can use the buying po-

wer of their adherents as a political tool. In this way, a 'market' is created for 'green' products however defined and this process is logically prior to innovation and design according to any specific criteria (cf. Sverrisson 2001,2004).

This market is somewhat special, however, because it is not organised around a particular product but rather around some identifiable (if often vague and diffuse) characteristics of *any* product. It consists of the totality of producers who offer 'green' (or comparably described) products. In this sense 'green markets' are constructed similarly as other lifestyle oriented collections of products. "Light" and "low-fat" products are a case in point. "Green" is, in other words, a potentially desirable quality in *any* market. 'Green markets' are therefore, in effect, quality-based niches in generic markets, rather than "markets" in themselves, in the strict sense. Thus, green niches can be found in car markets and energy markets for instance. Such niches are often both large and supportive of each other in technical/material terms and they commonly employ similar rhetorics as well (Fogelberg 2000).

Species of Competition

- Price competition (at lower end)
- Quality competition (at higher end)
- Novelties and innovation as assets
- Variation within brands

Main Competitive Rhetorics

- The novelty rhetoric (the newest...)
- The price rhetoric (the cheapest ...)
- The quality rhetoric (the best ...)

Box III. Species of Competition and Rhetorics in Markets

Brokers in Transaction Networks

The analysis above leads to a conception of markets as social constructs actively created and maintained by political forces in conjunction with economic interests through the deployment of the appropriate rhetorics (see Box III). These constructs can eventually coalesce and take on institutional forms. From this point of view 'free' competition in the style of textbook economics is an oddity, which may or may not occur but when it does, has to be explained. Price-oriented competition, however, has been important in the competition between 'green' products and the ordinary products for which they substitute. 'Green' products are usually more expensive than 'ordinary' products. Prices therefore affect which consumers are likely to participate in 'green' transactions and vice versa: it has been shown that the affluent are over-represented among 'green' consumers (Diekmann & Preisendörfer, 2003). As a result, 'green' products can carry higher prices, sustain higher cost and/or higher profit margins, and perhaps, acquire higher status compared to other products.

Let us think of the networks in which 'green' products are embedded as constituted by two opposite areas, one populated by customers and the other by producers and consider each in turn. Consumption is organised in varied ways: consumers are parts of households, and companies and government agencies consume as well. These three types of organisations, or to be exact, the people in them, are in turn parts of larger cultures that we can call the civic, economic and bureaucratic, each of which has their own logic of consumption. In the case of the economic culture, consumption is part of production, as conventionally understood, and should be considered under that heading.²⁰⁹ Bureaucratic consumption proceeds according to a different logic largely determined in the end by public policy priorities, of which environmentalism is, of course, a part, whereas household consumption is shaped by private concerns.²¹⁰ Hence, there are at least three paradigms within which product qualities such as "Green" can be interpreted and appropriate "consumer" action considered.

Private concerns are in particular exceedingly complex and embedded in a thick web of culture, attitudes and opinions, of which 'green' ideas are only one part. Hence, in the complex process of organisation and interpretation, which eventually leads to a decision to purchase a product and consume it, 'greenness' is generally only one of many considerations (cf. Bourdieu, 1986). The 'green' character of products is rarely born out of immediate physical necessity for the individual (in the sense of say

²⁰⁹ Packaging and advertising can be seen as a part of the production process or as belonging to a separate sphere of distribution, but this latter view appears to be somewhat artificial from the point of view developed here (and in the perspective developed by White 1992), i.e. that in order to be taken up by customers, a product must be positioned within a symbolic structure. From that point of view, the appearance of the product and the cultural connotations laid on through advertising appear just as much a part of the product as is the material configuration placed inside the package.

²¹⁰ In addition, there are consumer societies, organised campaigns (more of which later), etc.

water purity) but rather predicated on the idea of the environment, and benefits and damage to it (e.g. Eder, 1996; Macnaghten & Urry, 1998). It follows that 'greenness' is always subject to the 'manipulation of *multiple* rhetorics' (m.e.) or in other words, the striving for 'greenness' will give way to other concerns if not constantly reinvigorated by "green" actors in the market (cf. Solér, 1997; Spaargaren, 1997; see also Box IV).

Multiple Quality Rhetorics:

- Subcultural rhetorics (the right thing ...)
- Class-position rhetorics (the finest ...)
- Gendered rhetorics (feminine/masculine)
- Functional rhetorics (good, appropriate, effective...)
- Control rhetorics (transparency, certification)
- Altruistic rhetorics (the common good ...)

Box IV. Multiple Quality Rhetorics

Producers are embedded in complex networks as well, structured according to the logic of production for particular products. In these networks, 'greenness' is subject to definition, measurement, communication, interpretation, reinterpretation and translation. As a result, 'greenness' is constantly being reinvented, not only because other concerns are pressing, but also because when a particular process or product feature has been recognised as an 'environmental problem' work commences aiming at either solving the problem or defining it out of existence. In the early period of 'greening' in a particular industry, this is likely to happen quickly. As "greening" deepens, it will take longer. In either case, the logic of competition demands that new environmental problems are invented as the older cannot be used to discriminate between "green" and other products because they have been solved somehow (cf. Hajer, 1995).

If this does not happen, other concerns assume prominence among the rhetorics in that particular market. The green niche fades away.

What does this mean for the constitution of “green” market niches? The logical conclusion is that it can neither come into existence nor be maintained without active intervention from people acting in other capacities than as producers or consumers. The classical remedy in this situation is government intervention, for example modelled on the systems for control of food products or other matters of public health and hygiene (Latour, 1998). Other mechanisms, such as the construction, maintenance, reproduction and institutionalisation of ‘green markets’ can possibly have the same results. This leads to the consideration of commercial middlemen and their activities. Being part and parcel of the transaction mechanism, indeed coterminous with it at times, they are able to shape both consumer preferences and producer responses while carrying out their own strategies. Anticipating consumer demand for green products, they can, for example, insist that their suppliers - the producers - seek environmental certification. Conversely they may decide to sell a product as environment-friendly, rather than for example emphasise the benefits to the customers’ health, image or purse. An example of this is that organically grown potatoes in Sweden are generally identified on the bags as just that, whereas ordinary potatoes are identified by using the name of the variety (e.g. King Edward) plus eventually a generic description (mealy, firm, etc.). Managers may be skilful at managing multiple rhetorics, but customers are expected to prefer dealing with them one at the time.

The Political Construction of Green Markets

Recapitulating: it is in the action of commercial middlemen that a “green market” is truly created, performed and maintained. However, “greenness” is identified and legitimated *inter alia* by specific measurements and/or analyses of the components of a product and the process in which it is made. “Green” salesmanship and advertising is therefore tied into a dense web of quantifiable technical parameters and sometimes, scientific research. However, the validity and relevance of such parameters are contentious and the more educated the public, the more they are seen as such.

The complex character of ecological processes further confounds the matter. Whereas most theorising and measurements in the natural sciences are made in and based on controlled laboratory conditions, ecosystems are not amenable to such treatment. Hence, exact results are hard to come by and the decision which variables to include in models is always open to discussion. Attempts at ecological engineering, which in addition have to contend with complex social systems, are therefore quite

far from the tinkering with closed systems (in Luhmann's sense) so characteristic of science and technology in general (Luhmann, 1993). Hence, while legitimacy or at least, credibility is indispensable for the construction of 'green' markets, it cannot be based on the authority of scientific findings alone. Other instances which possess legitimate authority step in. Let me provide an example of this.

The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) has made what it calls green consumerism a mainstay of its campaigning. In this way, they contribute to avoiding the complete dissolving of green salesmanship amidst consumer scepticism. The Green Consumer, according to their definition, consumes as little of varied raw materials and energy as possible, and mends things and reuses them rather than throwing them away. Recycling and saving are in other words the first criterion of green consumerism. Avoiding pollution and polluting products is the second criterion, and the third is to prefer products made from renewable resources, both in terms of material and energy. The fourth criterion is to choose products that are labelled or certified as environmentally benign. This is built on the assumption that by creating a generic demand for green products, pressure is put on producers to innovate such products (www.snf.se, 2004).

In addition, the SSNC has maintained its own certification scheme since 1987. It works as follows: The SSNC, with the help of relevant experts, sets a standard against which products can be measured in terms of emissions during its production or the content of one or more substances which harm the environment. The standard, while implying less pollution if followed, must also be attainable, and therefore, the aim is small but real improvements rather than radical change, according to spokespeople of the SSNC. Products, which fulfil the standard, are then certified as 'good environmental choice.' Since 1992, this allows the producer to label the product in question with the logotype of the SSNC, a stylised falcon. This scheme has been a great success in the cases of detergents and paper products.

In Sweden, food products are covered by another scheme, KRAV, which certifies that the product is organically produced (raised, cultivated). A number of other eco-labelling schemes are in use and major retail chains also promote their own environmental labels, which usually indicate some reduction of toxins and pollutants. Taken together, these labelling schemes, as well as other indications (renewable, saving, recycling) provide signs to prospective buyers, that the products in question are 'environmentally friendly' or 'green.'

The somewhat diffuse character of these terms is matched by the realities of 'green' markets. Although most products identified as 'green' can be said to embody ever so small steps towards more sustainable production and consumption, there is also a large room for manoeuvre because the complexity of most production chains make it well nigh impossible to

control each and every component of any product. Hence, a good deal of hype is unavoidable. At the same time it would be misguided to discount entirely environmental rhetoric that lacks or has only tenuous connections to the (observable) manipulation of physical variables in an identifiably environmental direction: If nothing else, it contributes to the construction of an alternative symbolic order in which desirable product qualities (“Green”) are promoted (see Box VII).

Politics Define Quality in Markets

Quality rhetorics are susceptible to change

Science (creates environmental issues)

Technology (develops alternatives)

Education (diffuses general knowledge)

Information (identifies concrete carriers)

Religion (humanitarian and civil values)

Opinion (social movements, opposition)

Box VII. Politics Define Quality Criteria in Markets

Salesmanship and Politics

However, ‘green’ salesmanship is not just focused on products. Another aspect is efforts to create a ‘green image’ for companies, and thereby avoid embarrassing confrontations with environmental groups with consequent negative impact on sales. In the former case the effort is directed at consumers individually and the message is mediated through packaging and advertising, which may or may not enhance relations with environmental groups. In the latter case, the effort is targeted directly at environmental groups and their supporters, and the tool is public relations management rather than direct advertising. Ensuring favourable reporting in the media is naturally central in these efforts.

This may appear as a somewhat thin distinction at first glance, but it is based on the difference between salesmanship and politics. Actions by environmental groups are usually aimed at companies which have a documented adverse effect on the environment, spread toxic waste, bury such waste on the company grounds or try to sneak it into public landfills, release it into the ocean, and so on. Linking a particular effect to a specific company in other words requires a certain degree of visibility.

Environmental management standards include stipulations that the company develops routines for investigating all complaints from the public and answer questions about them. They also make mandatory routines for monitoring the process from an environmental perspective. This makes it possible to identify potential hazards that can become potential embarrassments. Environmental management systems do, in other words, make it possible to manage the process better economically and technically. Environmental certification processes, in particular, combined with environmental management standards and rhetorical science, link events in 'markets' with events within companies; in networks populated by engineers, managers and workers. 'Green markets' are, in other words, complex networks that connect companies and their surroundings. These networks are in turn *structured* by rhetorical devices including the market metaphor, "the myth of measurable environmental damage (Anshelm 2002)" and various derivative ideas, manufactured by government agencies, movement organisations, scientists and engineers.

This also suggests possibilities for managing relations with environmental groups more effectively, with the aid of specialist consultants who help companies to avoid damaging incidents (and advise them about how to keep their heads low once that happens). The issue here is whether a company, if the question is posed all, can be constructed by activists and media as hazardous to the environment (or to its local environment) and if such a construction is possible, how the aspects of company activities on which it is based can be removed or at least removed from sight. One way to solve this problem is to develop a definition of environmental issues, according to which the company performs satisfactorily. In other words, rather than changing a particular process physically, arguments can be developed that the current form of the process is actually preferable to the (selected) alternatives and data collected to support that contention.

Life cycle analysis, EMAS and other methodologies can, among other things, be put to this use, and there are indeed consultants who readily take on such work if it is called for, for example in order to secure continuation of operating licenses. At a more general level, there are scientists who maintain that nuclear power is environmentally friendly, and those who disagree. There are scientists who maintain that recycling consumes more non-renewable resources than landfills or burning. Other scientists disagree. In this way, every particular measure can be portrayed in this or

that way, depending on the criteria, and made contentious. The pragmatization and market adaptation of the ecological vision of a sustainable society does, in other words, generate multifarious scientific activities that deliver the appropriate arguments, but at the same time, it removes the certainty that characterised the early days of environmental campaigning. In addition, as environmental rhetoric competes with other rhetorics for a place in markets (or political arenas more generally), actors that pursue other marketing strategies can always argue that the benefits in terms of safety, health or economic growth justify an environmental cost. The deployment of cultural resources relevant to this particular dimension of competition can, in consequence, be more important than the immediate manipulation of physical variables, particularly in a context that counts consumption among the potential tools for change (See Box VIII).

Green Product Rhetorics

Green rhetorics (or sustainable or environmental)
are variants of altruistic market rhetorics

Must be:

- Defined (e.g. scientifically, quantitatively)
- Justified (as generally desirable)
- Legitimated (as politically feasible)
- Established (as technically possible)
- Rationalised (as economically profitable)
- Recognized (as a common good)

Box VIII. Green Product Rhetorics

Summary and Conclusion

In this paper, the argument started with a discussion of the double status of “markets”, as a metaphor with religious connotations and as a scientific concept. The discussion then moved on to the sociological market concept proposed by Harrison White. According to him, interaction among producers leads to variable rather than standardised quality as

each producer seeks to advance by being different, offering something that others don't. According to this approach, other kinds of actors enter the picture only *post festum*: they are "market takers" rather than "market makers." One type of product that can be offered according to this logic is "green" or "environmentally benign" products.

However, this presupposes that "green" is somehow established and maintained as a desirable quality. Producers can, in theory, create, establish and maintain any quality criteria whatsoever. However, in actual fact, greenness (and, perhaps more readily, opposite characteristics such as "polluting") is a product quality that is largely conferred on products by political actors who seek support for such evaluations from scientists. Green products are, in other words, offered and sold in market niches that are co-constructed by producers, customers and various brokers who manufacture the rhetorics that enable communication among actors. Other similarly constructed niches can undoubtedly be identified.

This product quality (and others like it) is always open to contention. One of the explanations offered in the paper is the lack of transparency in this case. Anyone can pass judgement on the taste of beans or the style of shoes, but greenness is not so easy to identify. Consumers have learned to trust science, technical measurements, control systems and certification procedures. Yet, corporate claims about such matters are routinely discounted by citizens and in consequence, government intervention and regulation is (relatively) easy to justify.

In other cases, the market mechanisms and the brokers that use them to create qualitative variation in markets are more important. In this paper the focus has been on this latter type and it is discussed how producers (and brokers) create green niches through advertising rhetoric, packaging, price mark-ups, etc. The main point is, however, that none of this would be possible without the "green" symbolic order created by social movements and legitimated by government. Thus, politics structure consumption preferences. In response, producers develop market niches that speak to those preferences. This is not the same as following the recommendations of scientists and other knowledge producers, but the latter are essential for legitimizing both the products and the symbolic order within which their characterization as "green" acquires meaning. At the same time, their priorities and problem constructions are largely controlled by states and the markets (cf. Boström & Sandstedt, 2004; Box IX).

Concluding Reflections

- New market rhetorics are derived from evolving societal discourses promoted by "movements"
- Markets, being rhetorical constructs, have little direct effect on physical variables.
- Physical variables relate, however, to identifiable aspects of product quality
- Physical variables and their effects are the products of scientific practice.
- Science is, however, increasingly controlled by markets and regulated by the state

Box IX: Concluding Reflections

What does this mean for (a) theories of the social construction of markets and (b) for the role of political consumerism?

First, in order to understand this and other similar phenomena it is necessary to revise the idea that markets are primarily (or only) a price-setting mechanisms. Markets are also effective in the *material* world in which *qualitative* differences between different products of the same generic type are established, negotiated and evaluated. Hence, we need to understand better the role of markets in connecting production chains that are engineered on the basis of technical and material criteria. White's theory provides important building blocks towards this purpose, but it needs to be combined with advances in the sociology of science and technology (Callon, 1999; Latour, 1993; 2004) that illuminate the indissoluble bonds that unite the material and the social and the consequences of this for social life and in particular, markets (Østerberg, 2000). I would argue that White's emphasis on quality variance in markets is an open door that invites us to such an exercise.

The conclusion regarding political consumerism is less straightforward. The direct effects on product characteristics achieved through markets are likely to be small compared to the effects achieved through direct government intervention such as regulation, prohibition of toxic substances, etc.; and concerted political action, such as boycotts. While quotidian

consumer behaviour is by no means inconsequential, the opportunities for voting with your wallet and proactively choosing green products are unequally distributed. In addition, the chain from consumer demand to product design is rather indeterminate and the effects uncertain in spite of environmental control systems and accounting procedures. Indeed, it is a cliché that observed changes are mainly rhetorical whereas practice changes more slowly.

However, the main contribution of political consumerism, including the environmentalist variant, lies precisely in this: to transform the symbolic order, to construct and establish novel discourses, which legitimize yet more ways to put pressure on companies and keep their activities within the boundaries of the acceptable. There will always be villains, of course, but more and better means of exposing them are definitely desirable even if they are not effective all the time.

It follows that the contribution of political consumerism – in relation to green market niches – is probably best understood as successive extensions of the domain of the legitimately political, of that which can be talked about politically. This is then echoed in citizen attitudes but perhaps more importantly, in the attitudes that prevail among producers and brokers. Theoretically, this means that we do not really have to assume a detour through consumer preferences. It is enough to identify a match between the corporate ideologies and society at large. Thus, we must recognize that market rhetorics do not emerge spontaneously in interaction among producers in markets. Market rhetorics are created out of components that producers (managers, advertisers) find in societal discourses and use to make sense of the world and their own position in it. Further studies of political consumerism would undoubtedly be helpful in understanding the consequences of this for the directions of economic growth.

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19. What Does Political Consumerism Mean for Marketers?

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Abstract

Studies of political consumerism originating especially from political science have demonstrated that the market mechanism can be regarded as another channel for political participation, and that the consumers are both able to and willing to use this channel to achieve political goals. However, marketers still need studies that are able to show to what extent consumer behaviour in fact can be regarded as political consumerism. It therefore seems as if political consumers seen from a marketing management point of view primarily should be regarded as potential political actors that may be mobilized under certain conditions based on personal experience and mediated storylines of corporate social performance seen in relation to the ongoing international debate on companies' social responsible. In the article different marketing management implications of this stance are outlined and explained in further detail.

Introduction

In many Western societies consumer behaviour increasingly reflects motives, attitudes, and buying intentions that are based on cognitive and affective responses to politics in general and/or to political aspects of what companies supply and the way this is done. Consequently, the marketplace is changing into being another channel for political participation.

There is therefore nothing extraordinary about that researchers especially from political science have been interested in studying political consumerism as a particular variant of political participation. The wonder is that only few researchers from consumer behaviour and marketing have tried to expand our knowledge of this rather new market phenome-

non, because understanding the consumer is crucial for the preparation of successful strategies at least in consumer markets.

It has therefore been considered worthwhile in this paper to outline some implications of political consumerism for marketing management. Because most published studies of the above-mentioned social phenomenon originate from political science, the following epitome of our empirical knowledge is based primarily on contributions from this particular discipline. The outlined managerial implications will be delimited to unorganised political consumerism.

The paper ends in some suggestions for future research followed by a conclusion.

Political consumerism

The development of many western societies has resulted in increasing privatization of the political and politicization of the private. The political is privatized to a larger extent when decisions, which were previously made in the institutionalized political system, are widely left to the market forces. The private is politicized to a larger extent, when decisions in the private sphere become more political, that is when purchase decisions reflect a greater wish to influence resource allocation in society at large. When consumers show political considerations, and citizens show consumer considerations, two formerly different kinds of rationality are mixed up. Consequently, political rationality is also used in markets, and consumer rationality is also used in politics. No matter how one is looking at this development it should be recognized that the study of citizens can no longer be left alone to political scientists and sociologists, and the study of consumers alone to market researchers.

Political consumerism is a social phenomenon the understanding of which should be based on knowledge of fundamental changes in political participation. In many countries political research has shown that citizens are more inclined to regard the market as a channel for political participation (Andersen and Tobiasen, 2001:10; Micheletti, 2001). Thus, today consumers may be regarded as actual or potential political actors (Micheletti, 2001).

Individuals with a well-developed consumer identity and representatives of consumer organizations have for a long time been acting on the political stage (Jensen, 1986). Now ordinary consumers have apparently also realized that their decisions can be used for more than satisfying private needs and wants. This is mainly due to the fact that consumers are increasingly being involved in solving political problems. They have been invited to do this not only by interest groups, companies, public authorities, and the mass media, but also by representatives of the institu-

tionalized political system who have all contributed to increasing the politicization of markets (Jensen, 2003).

However, political consumerism should not be regarded as one - and only one - form of political participation through the market mechanism. Danish, Swedish, and American studies suggest a distinction between the following four forms (Andersen and Tobiasen, 2001:13; Micheletti, 2001):

- Collective, organized, positive political consumerism like, e.g., requests from the Max Havelaar Foundation to buy coffee in order to support poor farm workers in the developing countries.
- Collective, organized, negative political consumerism like, e.g., the 1995 boycott against Shell, organized by Greenpeace.
- Individual, unorganized, positive political consumerism like, e.g., the choice of organic products in order to promote sustainable farm production.
- Individual, unorganized, negative political consumerism like, e.g., avoidance of eggs from battery hens in order to promote animal welfare.

Considering the first two forms of political consumerism as political participation is hardly controversial, and history can, indeed, show many examples of these forms especially as far as boycotts are concerned (Friedman, 1999). It is, however, not self-evident to regard individual consumer behaviour in the same way. When the citizens use their power as consumers to put pressure on the French government to make it stop the nuclear tests in the Pacific, as was the case in 1995, it is no doubt a political action. When people boycott companies that base their production on child labour, it is also a political action. But what about consumers who buy organic food? What about vegetarians? Or people who do not eat pork for religious reasons?

Andersen and Tobiasen (2001:12) define political consumerism as the actions a person performs when he/she shows substantial value considerations in connection with deliberately choosing or avoiding goods in order to promote a political goal. According to this definition green or ethical consumption is not necessarily political consumerism. What motivates consumer behaviour is crucial.

Danish studies have shown that positive and negative political consumerism are not independent social phenomena (Andersen and Tobiasen, 2001:30). 19% of the 21% of the Danes who have boycotted certain goods for political reasons during the last 12 months, have also been involved in positive political consumerism. 19% of the 45% of the Danes who have made a positive politically motivated individual choice of products, have also been involved in negative political consumerism. 2% of the Danes have only avoided products for political reasons, while 26%

have only chosen products for political reasons alone. According to these figures, negative political consumerism normally involves positive political consumerism while the apposite not necessarily is the case. However, we still need studies that can explain why this is so. The figures seem to suggest that not all kinds of individual, unorganized political consumerism are political to the same extent.

According to Andersen and Tobiasen (2001:64) political consumerism is a result of strong political interest and trust which means that the market mechanism is considered as a supplement to and not a downright replacement of the institutionalized political system. If this is true, it does not support Beck's (1997:98) implicit hypothesis that political consumerism is a kind of sub- and counter-politics based on a critical attitude towards modernity, the consequences of industrialization, man-made risks, and the role of the State. Apparently, political consumers are very interested in politics, and they want to support and not to counteract the institutionalized political system. Political consumerism may therefore reflect the endeavours of post-modern citizens to recapture the "ecclesia" by rebuilding the "agora" which is the third and intermediate sphere between the public and private spheres where communication between the two takes place (Bauman, 1999:107).

Andersen and Tobiasen (2001: 65) have demonstrated that political consumerism is coherent with values such as global orientation and international solidarity probably reflecting the fact that globalization has created an international political vacuum. As political consumerism seems to be coherent with critical consciousness, individual reflection, individualism, and global orientation in a world where institutionalized political systems cannot solve all problems that are highlighted by the international mass media, political consumerism probably is an essential manifestation of life politics which is a politics of life decisions (Giddens, 1991:214-217). These decisions are flowing from freedom of choice and a generative power which enables the transformation of the self. They aim at creating morally justifiable forms of life that will promote self-actualization in a context of global interdependence, and they involve ethics concerning how to live in a post-traditional order and against the backdrop of existential questions. Consequently, the political consumer probably is an "everyday-maker", a citizen characterized by governance and the values of postmodernization, a street-level political entrepreneur who seeks solutions for very concrete or local problems that may have global ramifications (Kristensen, 1999:18).

IFF (1996) has demonstrated that 44% of the Danish population in 1996 often chose products because of their connection with environmental problems, animal welfare, and human rights. 9% always did so, 26% rarely did it, while 16% never attached importance to such questions in connection with consumer choice. Consumers who always or often choose products because of perceived connections between these products or

the supplying firm and the mentioned political issues made up 53% of the Danish population both at the beginning of 1996 and in 2000 (Andersen and Tobiasen, 2001:29).

IFF (1996) has also shown that 43% of the Danish population in February 1996 found that consumer boycotts are a good idea as a means to express political attitudes, while 33% did not agree with this point of view. 40% of the Danish population had furthermore boycotted one or more products because of political reasons within the last year which is a doubling since 1990 (Andersen et al., 1993: 41). This percentage was reduced to 21 in 2000 (Andersen and Tobiasen, 2001:29). Furthermore, Thulstrup (1997:31) has shown that 29% of the Danish population in June 1996 was able to confirm that they had avoided buying products during the last three months because they were politically against a country or a company. When the same question was asked three months later this share had decreased to about 17% of those interviewed, and in June 1997 it had further decreased to 12%. In September 1997 it was only 11% (Thulstrup, 1998:58).

It therefore seems as if negative political consumerism is a fluctuating social phenomenon, but we still need studies that are able to explain why this is so. However, a politically motivated avoidance of products is relatively free of costs, because the consumer usually can easily find substitutes that are politically correct and fit nicely into already established patterns of consumption. This is hardly the case when it is about positive political consumerism, because involvement in a specific political issue here probably is combined with more perceived risk concerning the continuous suitability and political correctness of the chosen products. It may also play a role that citizens today apparently can change their political identity rather quickly depending among other things on what is highlighted by the mass media, and that they may have more, divergent perceptions of themselves as political actors at the same time (Micheletti, 2001).

Implications for Marketing Management

When markets react politically to a larger extent, then firms serving such markets have to adjust themselves to this matter of fact. How this should be done has been explained to some extent in the marketing management literature, where especially company reaction to collective, organized political consumerism has been highlighted. It has therefore been considered worthwhile to explore in further detail some marketing management implications of unorganized political consumerism. This will be done in the following sections.

Companies as political actors

One of the main conditions for company adjustment to unorganised political consumerism is that firms get more inclined to perceive themselves as political actors. Many Danish companies still strongly resist using concepts like politics and political when characterizing their actions and decisions in relation to their surroundings (Rasmussen, 1996:21-25). This fear of contact reflects a narrow and traditional view of what politics is all about. Politics is no longer reserved for the institutionalized political system. Companies are political actors because their decisions and actions considerably influence economical, social, cultural, political, and environmental affairs in society. They are also political actors because the institutionalized political system increasingly involves them in solving political problems. Finally, they are political actors because they are expected to have a substantial share in social responsibility both today and in the future. Politically acting companies therefore have to deal with fields that have previously been regulated by the institutionalized system or perhaps not regulated at all. Furthermore, they have to relate themselves proactively and strategically to opportunities and threats emerging in environments characterized by increasing privatization of the political and politicization of the private. To do this depends not so much on the existence of a public relations department, but more on the political competences of the company at large, and how the development and maintenance of these competences are supported by top management (Drumwright, 1994; Menon and Menon, 1997). It therefore seems as if the political economy paradigm still offers a relevant framework for analyzing how economic structures and processes in firms can be integrated with sociopolitical phenomena (Stern and Reve, 1980; Achrol, Reve and Stern, 1983; Arndt, 1983; Hutt, Mokwa and Shapiro, 1986). It encompasses the marketing-as-exchange notion by placing it in a broader social and political context.

Corporate social performance

The social performance literature generally recognizes three alternate perspectives or viewpoints guiding companies' social involvement: Social obligation, social responsiveness, and social responsibility (Sethy, 1979; Wartick and Cochran, 1985; Wood, 1991). Social obligation norms guide corporate behaviour to do the minimum to satisfy market forces and legal constraints. Social responsiveness related market objectives are driven by a need to bring corporate behaviour into congruence with prevailing norms and expectations of crucial stakeholders. The critical social

performance objective driving this mode is the amelioration of any negative impact on business practice. In contrast, social responsibility adopts a more ethically based and moral agency perspective about long-term obligations and responsibilities of the firm to all current and future stakeholders (Sethy, 1979; Wartick and Cochran, 1985; Swanson, 1995). Social responsibility is driven by an objective to promote positive change outside traditionally defined business environmental boundaries.

Wood (1991) has defined corporate social performance as a business organization's configuration of principles of social responsibility, processes of social responsiveness, and policies, programmes, and observable outcomes as they relate to the firm's social relationships. Principles of social responsibility include principles of legitimacy, public responsibility, and managerial discretion. According to the principle of legitimacy, society has the right to establish and reinforce a balance of power among institutions and to define their legitimate functions. According to the principle of public responsibility it is the organization's duty to act affirmatively for social well-being. According to the principle of managerial discretion, the individual's right and responsibility to decide and to act are affirmed within the bounds of economic, legal, and ethical considerations.

Wood's (1991) reformulation of the corporate social performance model as outlined by Wartick and Cochran (1985) offers several conceptual advances. First, the articulation of three principles of social responsibility at the institutional, organizational, and individual levels clarifies a long-standing debate over social responsibility and emphasizes that principles motivate human and organizational behaviour. Second, the identification of specific responsive processes shows the channels through which companies can act out their involvement in the external environment. Third, by incorporating social impacts, policies, and programmes as the collective outputs of a company's environmental interactions she removes corporate social performance from wishful thinking and allows more pragmatic assessments to be made. Fourth, links among the three facets of the corporate performance model are made explicit, thus generating new understandings of business-society relationships as well as important new research questions.

Wood (1991) emphasizes that terms like legitimate functions, obligations, social well-being, and managerial discretion are neither universal nor absolute in their meaning. They are time and culture bound, and even within a specific time and culture such concepts are defined variously by relevant stakeholders. This also applies to the principles of social responsibility. Increasing privatization of the political and politicization of the private probably implies that the institutionalized political system will be less inclined to use its right to establish and enforce a balance of power among, e.g., companies and consumers to the benefit of the latter (Ronit, 2003:192). If so, this will affect the meaning of the principle of legitima-

cy. It probably also implies that the institutionalized political system will be less involved in defining what social well-being is all about as a challenge for private companies, which will affect the meaning of public responsibility. Finally, it probably implies that managers will identify the bounds of ethical and political considerations by paying more attention to political processes outside the institutionalized political system, which will affect the meaning of managerial discretion. Concepts such as options, opportunities, constraints, and choices are therefore bound by different social and political conditions and perceptions among organizations and people.

Firms serving politicized markets should therefore continuously monitor and assess external political conditions, attend to the many stakeholder demands placed on them, and design plans and policies to respond to changing political conditions. These requirements correspond to the three main areas of research in social issues in management, namely environmental assessment, stakeholder management, and issues management. These areas are theoretically and pragmatically interlocked. Stakeholders are involved in issues. Issues involve stakeholders and their interests. And information about the environment is necessary for responses to be made.

The political competences of the company

The ongoing political debate on companies' social responsibility plays an important role for if and how markets will be politicized. Developing and maintaining competitive advantages in such a context therefore depends on whether companies possess the analytical skills for pinpointing what this responsibility means and how to relate to it.

This task is not easy. The prevailing attitude to company action towards its surroundings is changing, because various actors and coalition partners through their discursive and social practices exert varying influence on the interpretation of this attitude. During the Brent Spar conflict in 1995 social responsibility initially was related to the question, if Shell should be allowed to dump a worn-out oil-drilling platform into the North Atlantic (Jensen, 2003). Later on it was related to the question, if Shell should be allowed to create a precedent for further pollution of the marine environment. Finally, social responsibility was made to a question, if Shell should be allowed to release an environmental disaster. This conflict shows that social responsibility goes further than to legal affairs, that it is coherent with ethics and morality, and that it may have changing focus dependent on who is dominating the public debate. The conflict also shows that social responsibility can discursively be placed where it perhaps does not belong at all. At any rate the institutionalized political system in Denmark and other European countries managed to

avoid that social responsibility was related to this system's indecision and hesitation, and instead was related to the question, what a company should be allowed to do in relation to the marine environment.

Marketing strategy in companies serving politicized markets

When a company considers itself a political actor, it does not only have special skills to pinpoint analytically what may trigger politically motivated consumer decisions and actions. It will also know how it should act proactively and strategically in relation to actual and potential political consumers as well as to competitors who may have built up similar skills or maybe a superior talent for politicizing markets to own advantage (Rasmussen, 1996:25).

Product attributes have long been recognized as being neither essential nor valuable per se seen from the consumers' point of view. As consumers are primarily interested in the consequences of using products, the attributes of such products are only important to the extent that they are perceived as means to achieving essential consequences and goals (Jensen, 2001). Consequently, the value of product attributes depends on the resulting consequences, and the value of these consequences depends on the instrumental or terminal values with which they are cognitively connected by the consumers (Peter, Olsen and Grunert, 2001:71). It has also been recognized for a long time that products should be marketed with special focus on preferred consequences and values, and that new product attributes should be developed based on knowledge of such consequences and values (Woodruff and Gardial, 1996:135). However, if the demand for products is substantiated in aggregated political consequences and preferred political goals, companies should change their view on what to offer, how to approach marketing, and how to build and maintain competitive advantages.

Markets with a large, built-in potential for politically motivated buying decisions require companies to reinterpret the concept of superior customer value which by many authors is considered as the main purpose of all value chain activities (Jensen, 2001). Lower relative costs will always be advantageous, but in heterogeneous markets, as most market probably are, all costs should be used to differentiate supply.

Customers very seldom attach importance to either what they get, or what they have to sacrifice. Seen from a buyer's point of view customer value is based on a satisfactory trade-off between these two important product dimensions (Zeithaml, 1988), and they both represent a means-end chain which will be cognitively integrated before a purchase will be considered (Jensen, 2001). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that also political consumers will connect these means-end chains in order to find

out if a purchase is advantageous or not. Consequently, a politically motivated purchase will always be connected with perceived costs representing a larger or smaller drain on available economic resources, more or less pleasant/unpleasant feelings, and more or less desirable/undesirable goal achievements. The more important the politically motivated buying decision seems to be, the higher costs and derived unpleasant consequences the decision maker is probable to accept. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that involved political consumers, who, e.g., want to influence the development towards more sustainable farm production, are willing to accept higher perceived costs than consumers who are not quite as involved. However, consumer markets are probably in most cases supplied with substitutes that are politically correct or perhaps not so politically incorrect as the product the consumer wants to avoid. If so, it will affect the consumer's willingness to sacrifice.

However, political motives are apparently mingled thoroughly with non-political motives when consumers make their final buying decision, and politically motivated attitudes and buying intentions do not necessarily result in unambiguous and consistent buying behaviour. These conditions can probably explain why the market share of organic products stagnates around 5% and constitutes a decreasing part of the total Danish food consumption. Even if environmental considerations seem apparent here, a number of non-political motives like family health, taste experience, perceived risk, or a wish for a certain lifestyle can be much more important purchase determinants (Beckmann et al., 2001). It is also a fact that the 45% of the Danes who claimed to have made a politically motivated choice of products within the last 12 months (Andersen and Tobiassen, 2001:29) have not wanted to support poor farm workers in the developing countries to a large extent, since the sale of Max Havelaar coffee is only 2.5% of the Danish coffee market. Finally, it has been demonstrated that convenience and financial circumstances often come before consideration for the environment and animal welfare when the final purchase decision is made (Grunert-Beckmann and Thøgersen, 1997). Superior customer value therefore implies that marketing managers consider both the "get" and the "give" components of their supply, that both components are interpreted in relation to the political importance of the supply in the specific situation, and that customer importance rating, performance rating, and relative product performance rating are all based on such an interpretation (Woodruff and Gardial, 1996:264).

However, superior customer value is not dependent only on the way individual companies manage the value chain compared with the way it is managed in competing companies. Porter's (1980) assumption that competition within an industry depends on the individual company's own interest and relative power alone is therefore not appropriate. If we accept this, we fail to see the strategic opportunities involved in establishing and maintaining co-operation between companies based on an understanding

of present and future mutual interests (Woodruff and Gardial, 1996:281). Consequently, superior customer value is also dependent on the way companies co-operate in supply chains and how such chains compete with alternative supply chains trying to gain the favour of the consumers. Such a perspective will enlarge the understanding of the strategic field and make it possible to encircle how supply chain management can be used as a marketing tool vis-à-vis politicized markets.

Shell's plans to dump Brent Spar into the North Atlantic had indeed unpleasant consequences for the company's oil refineries, petrol and oil deliveries to industrial and institutional markets, and the sales to private households (Jensen, 2003). Child labour in a subsupplier company in the Far East may have serious consequences for the sale of textiles in Europe. A planned establishment of a brewery in Burma may affect the sale of Heineken or Tuborg in our part of the world. Animal welfare in Danish farms may determine if Danish bacon can be sold in England, and the working environment in Indonesian factories may determine if Nike running shoes can be sold in the USA. It is therefore not only important that supply chains are managed in such a way that all links allow for potential political consumer reactions, that the risk of such reactions is minimized through backwards turned agreements, and that reward and penalty systems are established to make sure that agreements are held in respect. It is also important that supply chains try to build and maintain comparative advantages on the output side seen in relation to the ongoing international debate on companies' social responsibility, and that these efforts are visible and reliable for the consumers as well as the public in general.

Implications for future research

However, we still do not know how political and non-political goals and values are balanced by the consumers, and which aspects of the consumers' social, political, and cultural environment are decisive for the outcome of this process. We also do not know how citizens find out which political problems should be solved by means of political consumerism, and what in fact motivates such a decision. Finally, we do not know to what extent positive and negative political consumerism is political. Why does negative political consumerism typically imply positive political consumerism while the opposite not necessarily is the case? Why is negative political consumerism a more fluctuating social phenomenon than positive political consumerism?

Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour and its predecessor, Fischbein's theory of reasoned action, recognizes that people's attitude towards an object may not be strongly or systematically related to their specific behaviours (Ajzen and Madden, 1986). Rather, the immediate determinant

of whether consumers will engage in a specific behaviour is their intention to do so, and the theory of planned behaviour identifies the factors that influence this relationship. However, consumer behaviour may be quite inconsistent with measured behavioural intentions. It is therefore important to get more knowledge about which factors may be decisive for this outcome. However, even if we would be able to get more knowledge about the effect of these factors, it still seems to be relevant to ask, if it, after all, will be possible to predict political consumerism. Behaviours always occur in a situational context, in a particular environment, and at a particular time (Peter, Olsen and Grunert, 1999: 130). Does this matter of fact not imply a challenge which is too big for positivist consumer research? Should we perhaps not instead be more inclined to appreciate a thick understanding of political consumerism in its specific context?

As to company reaction to political consumerism it is important to get more knowledge about the characteristics of those firms that are intensely concerned about political consumerism including their motives for being so. Andersen and Tobiasen (2001: 44) have suggested that it is the fear of a consumer boycott which is a strong, potential power instrument that may have substantial indirect effects under certain conditions (Beckmann and Langer, 2003). This is also the basic conclusion of the abundant empirical literature on boycotts in the USA (Friedman, 1999). However, to be concerned about political consumerism may also be based on desires to be social responsible and to develop, maintain, and enhance sustainable competitive advantage.

The resource-based view of market competition posits that strategies that are difficult to imitate, rare, and organizationally based create competitive advantages that produce long-term performance results. Because tactical strategies are highly visible, imitable, and require low levels of skills and organizational capabilities to copy, they are susceptible to competitive imitation, and hence performance results are less enduring. In contrast, because strategic and quasi-strategic strategies require significantly greater levels of organizational resource commitment and culture shift, they are rare and thus less susceptible to competitive imitation. It is therefore reasonable to expect that the higher the levels of marketing strategies pursued in order to achieve competitive advantage in politicized markets, the greater the potential for developing, maintaining, and enhancing sustainable competitive advantage. It is also reasonable to expect that the higher the levels of marketing strategies pursued in order to achieve competitive advantage in such markets, the greater the firm's ability to project a consistent message about its concerns for political consumerism, to express its civic nature, and to show seriousness.

Another interesting avenue for further research is to determine if there are moderating or mediating factors of danger and risk of pursuing specific marketing strategies vis-à-vis politicized markets. Are larger corporations more likely to be accused of cause-exploitive marketing when they

adapt such strategies than smaller and more anonymous firms? Similarly, are interest groups, purely for notoriety and wider exposure, more likely to target companies using proactive marketing strategies vis-à-vis politicized markets, than companies that are not pursuing such strategies? Research by Garrett (1987) suggests that a small number of firms within an industry is more likely to be targeted for boycotts by certain groups, because they are more visible and can provide for a greater exposure of the issue.

Conclusion

Studies of political consumerism originating especially from political science have demonstrated that the market mechanism can be regarded as another channel for political participation, and that the consumers are both able and willing to use this channel to achieve political goals. However, marketers still need studies that are able to show, how the consumers in fact are using this channel under which specific conditions, in order to know to what extent consumer behaviour in fact can be regarded as political consumerism. Studies of green consumption have demonstrated that consumer behaviour can be quite different from what might be expected based on knowledge of the consumers' overall attitude to positive and negative political consumerism, their recalled behaviours, and ideal type characteristics of the so-called political consumer.

It therefore seems as if political consumerism seen from a marketing management point of view primarily should be regarded as a kind of predisposition for market responses. Political market responses are based on stimuli that mobilize these predispositions, and we know from the past that information about working conditions, human rights, the environment, child labour, and bad marketing practices is able to do this. We also know that information about such matters is mediated, and that news producers both circulate and create meaning that is able to influence manifestations of positive and negative political consumerism. We finally know that consumers negotiate the behavioural consequences of mediated knowledge and personal experiences taking into account both the get and the give components of market offerings, and that the outcome of such negotiations may be, or may not be, manifestations of political consumerism.

Companies serving politicised markets therefore have to monitor and to assess continuously external political processes both inside and outside the institutionalised political system, attend to the many stakeholder demands placed on them, and develop plans and strategies in order to respond to changing political conditions in a profitable way. These requirements correspond to the three main areas of research in social issues in

management, namely environmental assessment, stakeholder management, and issues management.

However, what seems to be especially important for companies serving such markets is the ability to pinpoint analytically what may trigger politically motivated buying decisions and to act proactively based on valid knowledge about such matters. Political consumers should not be regarded as a specific segment with specific characteristics concerning the expected response to marketer-dominated stimuli. Instead, they should be regarded as potential political actors that may be mobilized under certain conditions based on personal experience and mediated storylines of corporate performance seen in relation to the ongoing international debate on companies' social responsibility.

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20. Sustainable Consumption and Global Citizenship: An empirical analysis

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Abstract

The issue of sustainable consumption has over the past decade garnered an increasing amount of international attention and affluent countries have begun to formulate policy programs to address the impacts of environmentally significant forms of material provisioning. The primary approaches advanced thus far to address the connections between consumerism and the environment have focused on familiar strategies such as ecological taxation and labeling requirements. More recently, there are indications that these rational interventions are severely limited in their ability to stimulate meaningful changes in consumer behavior and that more socially and culturally nuanced understandings are necessary. Using a cross-national data set (the Luxembourg Income Study comprised of the so-called G-20), this analysis seeks to highlight the comparative role of two preconditioning dimensions of sustainable consumption: a country's relative degree of income equality and its political solidarity with developing countries. On the basis of these variables, Norway, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Sweden appear to be unique in their ability to forge a path toward more sustainable consumption. Finland, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, and France also have some capacity for pursuing this policy program, but will encounter some strenuous political obstacles. The ten remaining G-20 countries (Spain, Canada, Australia, Switzerland, Japan, Ireland, Italy, the United Kingdom, the United States, and New Zealand) are poorly prepared to support an agenda designed to promote more sustainable consumption.

Introduction

Early formulations of the concept of sustainable consumption, particularly during the preparatory sessions for the 1992 Earth Summit, highlighted a need to reduce dramatically the volume of material and energy through-

put in affluent nations.²¹¹ Perhaps not surprisingly, the subsequent uptake of this recommendation over the past decade has however been diffident and protracted. During the initial aftermath of the Rio proceedings policymakers had profound difficulty approaching consumption in a politically agreeable manner. To sidestep this problem, the environmental implications of household provisioning were recast in terms of more familiar constructs rooted in the sphere of production. Several policymaking bodies – most notably the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development – launched the first generation of consumption-related work programs under the rubric of “sustainable production and consumption.”²¹² While this nomenclature gave nominal prominence to material acquisition, the actual content of these initiatives was heavily oriented toward production. The intent was to encourage manufacturers and other supply-chain intermediaries to pursue environmental improvements under the pretext of enhancing productivity and efficiency.²¹³

Lafferty and Meadowcroft (2000) in their notable study of the operationalization of sustainable development in ten government units (nine affluent nations and the European Union) describe the current status of consumption as a focus for environmental policymaking.

Talk of restraining consumption or of limiting growth for the sake of the environment makes both business and labour leaders nervous, and is certainly not seen as a vote-winner by mainstream politicians. An explicit intent to shift consumption away from certain goods and services rapidly calls forth opposition from the economic interests involved in these areas. Moreover large-scale efforts to alter consumption habits can revive critical discourses on the unfeasibility of social engineering and spectre of the ‘paternalistic state’ (p. 388).

Adding to sustainable consumption’s political intractability has been the conceptual confusion surrounding what it actually entails as a policy program (Cohen 2001; Manoochehri 2002; Barber 2003). The authors of Agenda 21 assembled a grab bag of themes under this rubric, including intermediate and final consumption, consumer education, energy efficiency, and public procurement. Furthermore, there is no clarity as to whether sustainable consumption involves consuming “less” or consuming “differently.”

Despite these obstacles, concern about the environmental implications of household provisioning in affluent nations has steadily begun to inch its way onto the policy agenda of several national governments and inter-

²¹¹ It is useful to recall that Chapter 4 of Agenda 21 was specifically entitled “Changing Consumption Patterns” and it identified the provisioning in economically advanced countries as “the major cause of the continued deterioration of the global environment.”

²¹² The Norwegian government also organized a series of conferences that included a symposium and ministerial meeting during the mid-1990s and two highly acclaimed workshops in 1998.

²¹³ Some authors have referred to this tendency to remedy the environmental problems of production by looking for cost-effective process and materials changes as ecological modernization.

national organizations.²¹⁴ Interestingly, sustainable consumption is not normally the operative term used to describe initiatives along these lines, but research and policy programs broadly consistent with the general aims of the concept are beginning to appear. To advance their agenda, advocates of sustainable consumption have often had to make two concessions. First, they have had to subscribe to an explicitly economic model of consumer behavior and to rely on a relatively small number of policy tools – namely product labeling and ecological taxation. The essential understanding conveyed by this conception is that consumers are rational actors and, if given access to appropriate price signals and product information, they will favor more environmentally responsible goods. Second, proponents of sustainable consumption have had to endorse the view that improvements in household provisioning can be most appropriately achieved not by consumers themselves, but by providing producers with incentives to improve the environmental performance of consumer products.

This paper now turns toward a discussion of several dilemmas that are likely to compromise the viability of the emergent policy program to encourage more sustainable consumption. This section also describes two preconditions – a commitment to domestic income equality and a public sense of global solidarity – that are shaping the capacity of affluent nations to implement initiatives to reduce the environmental impacts of household provisioning. The third section presents an empirical analysis of these preconditions to examine the extent to which they really are antecedents of sustainable consumption. The final section discusses some preliminary policy implications of these findings.

The Dilemmas of Sustainable Consumption

In synthesizing the results of their own cross-national study, Lafferty and Meadowcroft (2000) disaggregate sustainable development into four basic themes: 1) the integration of environment and economy in decision-making; 2) the development of modalities for environmental planning, measurement, and monitoring; 3) the expansion of societal participation in environment-and-development decision-making; and 4) the encouragement of the internationalization of environmental governance. The authors reserve for special consideration two additional themes – support for environment and development in the South and pursuit of sustainable production and consumption – because of the demands they place on national governments to reach beyond their own domestic policymaking spheres. These authors' assessment of progress with respect to these two

²¹⁴ The OECD ultimately reoriented its initial work program on sustainable production and consumption to give more explicit attention to household provisioning. More recently, the United Nations Environment Program launched a research program that focuses on sustainable consumption. For further information on this initiative, refer to <http://www.uneptie.org/pc/sustain>.

especially demanding elements of sustainable development is rather downcast.

[M]ovement...towards the adoption of new consumption and production regimes appears essential if the total environmental burden imposed by the developed countries is to be reduced. Overall, efforts to address the key challenge of the Brundtland Report – *to change the quality of growth* – have been modest...[T]he Netherlands (followed by Sweden and Norway) have at least begun to *discuss* the issue; but even here practical initiatives and spending remain marginal. The relative failure of governments in the most powerful industrialized countries to engage with the last two themes is significant. Note that both relate to responsibilities which rich countries are expected to assume *above and beyond their own internal challenges*. According to the WCED and UNCED, Northern states have an obligation not only to assist environment and development in the South, but also to reduce dramatically their resource consumption...[I]t is precisely here that the performance of high-consumption societies seems most problematic (*italics in original*) (p. 438-9).

While national governments' lack of political fortitude in pursuing sustainable consumption is potentially disconcerting, there are also numerous reasons for skepticism about how policymakers are interpreting and operationalizing the concept. Indeed, research is beginning to demonstrate how truly difficult it will be to reduce the environmental impacts of household provisioning in affluent countries. The following discussion considers four of the most prominent obstacles.

First, it is becoming increasingly apparent that material acquisition by households – especially as measured by greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions – is largely determined by the so-called consumption envelope. The specific composition of this consumption envelope is a function of residents' initial decisions regarding home size and geographic location relative to the locus of everyday activities. Once established, these characteristics become immutable for practical purposes and fix the long-term consumption pattern for the household by locking it into a particular set of lifestyle practices.²¹⁵ While householders can make subsequent improvements – for instance by purchasing energy efficient appliances and organic produce – indications are that these gains will conventionally be quite trivial in comparison to what would be attainable through prudent selection of home size and location.²¹⁶

Second, efforts to encourage more sustainable consumption without considering the broader array of lifestyle practices in which household provisioning is embedded are likely to be fruitless and lead to what some researchers have described as the “rebound effect” (Binswanger 2001;

²¹⁵ This is particularly the case for energy use and time allocation. In some affluent nations, the range of effective residential alternatives is highly constrained and households face insurmountable barriers making environmentally responsible choices.

²¹⁶ Sociologist Gert Spargaaren (2000) has referred to these incremental improvements as the ecological modernization of consumption, a process that is the consumer equivalent to efficiency improvements in the production sphere.

Throne-Holst 2003; see also Tenner 1996). In other words, reduced consumption in one sphere of activity (for example automobile usage) will typically lead consumers to use their residual income to acquire other environmentally problematic goods and services (for example long distance air travel). Genuine sustainable consumption is thus dependent upon a proportionate diminution in income (and probably working hours) and the development of eco-friendly leisure pursuits.²¹⁷

Third, an increasing share of the goods consumed in affluent nations is produced in developing countries. Efforts either to reduce the volume of household provisioning (consuming less) or to favor environmentally preferable products (consuming differently) will likely have adverse impacts on the economic prospects of this part of the world. It is for this reason that the governments of some developing countries have begun to view the call for sustainable consumption as a new form of protectionism (see, for example, Dowdeswell 1995). To avoid unintentionally exacerbating global disparities, policy initiatives will need to strike a careful balance.

Finally, household provisioning in affluent nations is deeply dependent on the extant system of public investment in transportation, police protection, land use planning, and so forth (Jackson 2003). Indeed, the environmental problems stemming from consumption are largely attributable to the inadequate (or negligent) pattern of public investment that has occurred over the past several decades (see, for example, Galbraith 1958; Kunstler 1993). Viewed in this manner, it is unrealistic to expect consumers to use more environmentally attuned price signals and product information to green their household provisioning. Individual responsibility can be effective in facilitating more sustainable consumption when consumers have legitimate choices, but in most major product categories (for example homes and transportation) the range of options is heavily circumscribed. Policymakers with an interest in the environmental impacts of household provisioning need to recognize that consumers have – especially in areas amenable to large-scale improvements – relatively few degrees of freedom with which to redesign their lifestyles. As such, a policy program geared to sustainable consumption must be accompanied by a campaign to realign political priorities and the existing blueprint for public expenditure (Murphy and Cohen 2001).

The obstacles that sustainable consumption faces are real and no pragmatic attempt to proceed down this road should underplay their magnitude. Instead of seeking to tackle these dilemmas head-on, the following discussion takes a step backward to gain some perspective. The point of departure is recognition that sustainable consumption is dependent on two preconditions. First, as sociologists and anthropologists have

²¹⁷ It is clear that an increase in the propensity to save could achieve the same objective as a reduction in income, though also critical over the longer term will be the way in which the savings are allocated.

stressed, consumption is motivated in large part by a quest for status (see, for example, Miller 1995; Ritzer 2001). Such a view deviates sharply from standard economic theory that contends that consumers are individual utility maximizers acting to promote their wellbeing within the confines of a budget constraint. Moreover, the composition of a country's income distribution appears to have a pronounced effect on the volume of material acquisition that is motivated by the pursuit of status enhancement. In other words, the rate of superfluous product obsolescence and fashion turnover is likely to be more rapid in affluent nations that have less equitable income distributions than it will be for their relatively more egalitarian counterparts (see, for example, Douglas and Isherwood 1979). Accordingly, a political culture that privileges domestic income equality – and fosters social norms that discourage status-inspired modes of consumption – is deemed to be a prerequisite for sustainable consumption (see also de Botton 2004).

A second precondition for sustainable consumption is a sense of public solidarity with developing countries. At its most fundamental level, the effort to ameliorate the environmental impacts of household provisioning are about reducing the share of global ecological carrying capacity (or environmental space) appropriated by the affluent nations to reallocate available resources to developing countries so that they might be able to meet their aspirations (Rees and Wackernagel 1996; McLaren 1996). Because initiatives to guard against rebound effects and other perverse impacts by, say, reducing households' income, are not likely to be politically viable, it is only by embracing international equity that consumers in affluent nations will be able to sustain meaningful adjustments of their household provisioning.

The juxtaposition of these two societal dimensions produces a four-quadrant typology (see Figure 1). First, the combination of both a strong commitment to domestic income equality and a pervasive sense of public solidarity with developing countries is the realm of *global citizenship* (Vandenberg 2000; Carter 2001; Dobson 2004). Affluent nations situated in this quadrant display resolve for equitably allocating the proceeds of (post-) industrial capitalism and display a palpable sense of responsibility for poverty in developing countries. Countries in this quadrant are uniquely suited to pursue sustainable consumption.

Second, weak resolve for domestic income equality and limited public solidarity with developing countries is the quadrant of *egoistic individualism*. These countries emphasize the need for ruthless struggle in both their domestic and international policymaking. They view relationships as competitive and are staunchly committed to maintaining the relative privileges conferred upon them by the status quo. The capacity of affluent nations characterized by egoistic individualism for genuinely moderating the environmental impacts of their household provisioning is highly questionable.

Third, a steadfast commitment to domestic income equality and a weak public sense of solidarity with developing countries gives rise to *fortress advocacy*. Affluent nations in this quadrant tend to emphasize domestic equity and to play down any duty to uphold international obligations. Fortress advocates have political cultures that stress the importance of internal cohesion and this leads to a sensibility that favors pulling up the ladder to protect their own comparatively privileged positions. Some of these countries are capable of making early headway reducing the environmental impacts of their household provisioning; however, in the absence of unity of purpose with developing countries the rebound and protectionist effects described above are likely to lead to perverse second-order implications.²¹⁸

Finally, the lower left-hand quadrant comprises a weak commitment for domestic income equality and strong public solidarity for developing countries. This curious category is not operational in this typology, an outcome that is consistent with most moral theories of justice. Political philosophers generally contend that is first necessary to develop consideration for socially and geographically proximate individuals before this concern can be extended over greater distances.

Cross-National Empirical Analysis

The essence of the case advanced thus far is that a meaningful policy program to promote sustainable consumption in affluent nations rests upon two preconditions: 1) a relatively equitable domestic income distribution that restrains exuberant status-enhancing consumption and 2) a strong sense of public solidarity with developing countries. The following section seeks to operationalize this hypothesis by assembling some relevant data.

A key source for cross-national research on income distribution has been the Luxembourg Income Study. This database enables researchers to construct comparable Gini coefficients for a large number of countries. The Gini coefficient is a statistical measure of the difference between a country's income distribution and the Lorenz Curve (perfectly equal income distribution) and is expressed as a number between zero and one. A Gini coefficient of zero means perfect income equality (income is the same for everyone) and a score of one indicates perfect income inequality (all income is earned by a single individual).

²¹⁸ Finland is an especially interesting case and deserves some additional qualifications. The country's unique relationship with the rest of Europe during the Soviet period and the subsequent economic turbulence it experienced after 1989 created some special circumstances. In recent years, Finland has faced increasing external pressure to increase its ODA. In June 2003, Finland announced its intention to increase its ODA commitment to 0.45 percent of GNP by 2007 and to reach the 0.7 percent target by 2010.

The following analysis focuses on the world's most affluent nations, the so-called G-20 (see Table 1). Among this elite group, Sweden, Finland, Luxembourg, Norway, and the Netherlands have the most equal income distributions. The presumption here is that the relatively egalitarian allocation of income in these countries gives rise to social norms that assuage the drive to partake in household provisioning simply for the sake of status enhancement. In contrast, Italy, the United Kingdom, the United States, and New Zealand have the least equitable income distributions among the G-20 and this analysis construes this societal feature as instrumental in encouraging more competitive status-enhancing modes of material acquisition.

To gauge a country's public sense of solidarity with developing countries this analysis utilizes data on the financial support that each of the G-20 provide to recipient nations (see Table 2). In 1988, the United Nations set a formal target for official development assistance (ODA) equal to 0.7 percent of the GNP of respective donors.²¹⁹ Despite periodic rhetorical reaffirmations of support, the Scandinavian countries, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands are the only affluent nations that meet this objective on a consistent basis. Other donors have regularly failed to achieve the target and their annual share of development assistance is lower by an entire order of magnitude. The United States and Japan, despite their status as the largest donors in monetary terms, regularly rank at the bottom of the ledger in terms of ODA as a percentage of GNP.

The discernible impression demonstrated by the G-20's ODA allocations is that Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Sweden demonstrate greater solidarity with developing nations than is the case for other countries in this elite group. Accordingly, the tentative judgment is that these countries have a relatively stronger commitment to international equity and are much closer to satisfying the second precondition for sustainable consumption.

Mapping the G-20 onto the capacity typology then distributes the sample of affluent nations across the three taxonomic categories (see Figure 2).²²⁰ First, Norway, Luxembourg, Netherlands, and Sweden are taken to be global citizens with a relatively strong initial capacity for sustainable consumption. These countries come closer to meeting the preconditions for this ambitious policy program than any of their G-20 peers.²²¹ Second, Finland, Belgium, Germany, Austria, and France, are fortress advocates. While these affluent nations have political cultures that favor domestic income equality, they do not evince a strong public

²¹⁹ The United Nations membership reaffirmed this target level for ODA on a number of occasions, most recently at the 2002 Johannesburg Summit.

²²⁰ The specific values for the two variables have been modified to adjust their scale and direction in accordance with the requirements of the typology.

²²¹ It is also noteworthy that Lafferty and Meadowcroft (2000), in their cross-national study of national progress toward sustainable development identified these countries (with the exception of Luxembourg that was not in their sample) as "enthusiasts." By comparison, this investigation deemed the United States to be "disinterested" in sustainable development.

sense of solidarity with developing countries. Finally, ten countries (Spain, Canada, Australia, Switzerland, Japan, Ireland, Italy, United Kingdom, United States, and New Zealand) are most appropriately identified as egoistic individualists because of their weak resolve with respect to both preconditions for sustainable consumption.

We can also test statistically the extent to which a commitment to domestic income equality and a public sense of global solidarity influence household provisioning. Most proponents of sustainable consumption will likely concur that policy initiatives to facilitate more environmentally responsible material acquisition should encourage smaller residential dwellings, lower per capita GHG emissions, greater market share for organic produce, and less automobility (see Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6). Table 7 summarizes the hypothesized direction of these relationships with respect to each of the two preconditions for sustainable consumption. For example, domestic income equality and dwelling size vary positively: as national income distribution becomes more equal (smaller Gini coefficient), dwelling size will decline. Correspondingly, a country's sense of common purpose with developing countries varies negatively with dwelling size: as global solidarity rises (ODA as a percentage of GNP increases), dwelling size will decline.

Table 8 presents the corresponding Pearson correlation coefficients. For the G-20, domestic income equality appears to facilitate sustainable consumption as it is correctly correlated with dwelling size, per capita GHG emissions, and organic food purchases. However, a more equitable income distribution does not seem to foster less automobility.

Global solidarity is strongly correlated with organic food purchases. In other words, affluent countries with growing markets for wholesome food are relatively generous providers of ODA. There is also a weak (but correctly correlated) relationship between global solidarity and GHG emissions. Increasing global solidarity, however, does not appear to foster smaller dwellings or automobility. With the exception then of organic food, global solidarity is overall a less essential precondition for sustainable consumption than domestic income equality.

Conclusion

This analysis provides preliminary support for the contention that policymaking capacity for sustainable consumption is dependent on two preconditions: an equitable domestic income distribution and a public sense of solidarity with developing countries. Those affluent nations (Denmark, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden) that are global citizens demonstrate enhanced capability for instituting measures to reduce the environmental impacts of their household provisioning. Indeed, there are indications that they have, at least in comparison with the rest of the G-

20, begun to make noteworthy progress in this direction. The enduring commitment that these countries maintain to the principles of social democracy and universal welfare provides a durable platform on which to embark on a policy program to facilitate sustainable consumption.

The above discussion also suggests that the countries designated as global citizens may be able to sidestep some of the more contentious political obstacles associated with efforts to modify household provisioning. Although there are important variations across the group, the political cultures of each of the five countries privilege collective responsibility and consensus. Moreover, the call to maintain domestic income equality and to nurture fair relations with developing countries has considerable resonance in all of these settings.²²² At the same time, it is imperative to recognize that the small size of these countries and the openness of their economies render them highly vulnerable to external forces. This is especially the case with respect to trade and foreign relations. Overly aggressive unilateral (or even coordinated multilateral) action can jeopardize the international competitiveness of their domestic industries and lead to friction in institutions of international governance.

The results of this analysis do not provide strong support for the view that a public sense of solidarity with developing countries is particularly essential for sustainable consumption in affluent countries. If is indeed the case, it remains to be seen how initial constructive alterations in contemporary modes of material acquisition can be prevented from leading to perverse – though perhaps unintentional – second-order outcomes. These forerunner countries will need to draw on other sources to ensure that they are able to launch themselves on a genuine path of sustainable consumption.

At the same time, this analysis suggests that these countries will need to address the transportation component of sustainable consumption through other means. While a continued emphasis on domestic income equality and global solidarity is likely to facilitate more environmentally appropriate household provisioning in terms of dwelling size, per capita GHG emissions, and organic food purchases, this is not the case for automobile.

The situation that the sizeable group of countries (half of the G-20) deemed to be egoistic individuals must deal with is much more problematic. To the extent that an equitable distribution of national income and a strong public sense of solidarity with the developing world are indeed precursors for sustainable consumption, these affluent nations will need to forge a different path. Several countries in this quadrant (the most prominent example is the United States) have dominant political cultures that actively seek to undermine the preconditions outlined in this analy-

²²² This is not to suggest that disquieting contrary trends are not also evident. There are indications that income inequality is growing in each of the global citizen countries and conservative political parties have made significant gains highlighting the share of national income allocated to development assistance.

sis. In some cases, large political majorities specifically voice resolute support for domestic income inequality and reduced foreign development assistance (McCright and Dunlap 2000). To the extent that this group of countries demonstrates abiding interest in sustainable consumption – and existing evidence suggests that it does not command this kind of attention – they will likely need to fashion an alternative approach.

The fortress advocates face a more indeterminate future with respect to sustainable consumption. While these countries have made unambiguous strides in recent decades extending the benefits of social democracy and universal welfare to their own populations, they have been less successful fostering unity of purpose with developing countries. This feature of fortress advocates' political culture may ultimately prove less important for sustainable consumption than the ability of these countries to hold the line on growing income inequality and to control material acquisition for the express purpose of status aggrandizement. Fortress advocates are then poised, like the global citizens, for initial progress reducing the environmental impacts of their household provisioning. The open question is what will happen in the wake of these early changes.

FIGURE 1
POLICYMAKING CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

Table 1 Income Inequality in G-20 Countries

Rank	Country	Gini Coefficient
1	Sweden (1995)	0.222
2	Finland (1995)	0.226
3	Luxembourg (1994)	0.235
4	Norway (1995)	0.238
5	Netherlands (1994)	0.253
6	Belgium (1997)	0.255
7	Denmark (1997)	0.257
8	Germany (1994)	0.261
9	Austria (1995)	0.277
10	France (1994)	0.288
11	Spain (1990)	0.303
12	Canada (1998)	0.305
13	Switzerland (1992)	0.307
14	Australia (1994)	0.311
15	Japan (1992)	0.315
16	Ireland (1987)	0.328
17	Italy (1995)	0.342
18	United Kingdom (1995)	0.344
19	United States (1997)	0.372
20	New Zealand (1998)	0.404
	Average	0.286

Source: Luxembourg Income Study (with calculations by Timothy Smeeding).

Table 2: Official Development Assistance for G-20 Countries (2001)

Rank	Country	Millions of US\$	Percent of GNP
1	Denmark	1,634	1.03
2	Norway	1,346	0.83
3	Luxembourg	141	0.82
4	Netherlands	3,172	0.82
5	Sweden	1,799	0.81
6	Belgium	867	0.37
7	Switzerland	908	0.34
8	Ireland	287	0.33
9	Finland	389	0.32
10	France	4,198	0.32
11	United Kingdom	4,579	0.32
12	Spain	1,737	0.30
13	Austria	533	0.29
14	Germany	4,990	0.27
15	Australia	873	0.25
16	New Zealand	112	0.25
17	Japan	9,847	0.23
18	Canada	1,533	0.22
19	Italy	1,627	0.15
20	United States	11,429	0.11
	Average	---	0.22

Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Table 3. Average Dwelling Size for G-20 Countries

Rank	Country	Useful Floor Area Per Dwelling (m ²)
1	Finland (2000)	76.5
2	United Kingdom (1996)	85.0
3	Spain (1991)	85.3
4	Belgium (1991)	86.3
5	Germany (1998)	86.7
6	France (1996)	88.0
7	Ireland (2001)	88.3
8	Sweden (1997)	89.8
9	Italy (1991)	90.3
10	Austria (2000)	90.6
11	Switzerland (1990)	91.0
12	Japan (1998)	92.4
13	Netherlands (2000)	98.0
14	Denmark (2001)	108.9
15	Luxembourg (2001)	125.0
16	United States (1997)	163.8
---	Australia	N/A
---	Canada	N/A
---	New Zealand	N/A
---	Norway	N/A
	Average	103.1

Sources: Housing Statistics in the European Union, 2002, Table 2.1

(<http://mrw.wallonie.be/dgatip/dgatip/Pages/log/DwnLd/Stats2002/housingStats2002.pdf>); United Nations Economic

Commission for Europe, Environment and Human Settlements Division, Housing and Building Statistics

(http://www.unece.org/env/hs/bulletin/seltab_e02.htm); Japan Information Network (available at: <http://www.jin-japan.org/today/society/html>).

Table 4: Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Carbon Dioxide Equivalents) for G-20 Countries

Rank	Country	Tons Per Capita
1	Sweden (1998)	4.8
2	Switzerland (1998)	6.6
3	Norway (1998)	8.2
4	France (1998)	8.2
5	Spain (1998)	8.4
6	Austria (1998)	8.8
7	Italy (1998)	9.0
8	Japan (1997)	10.2
9	United Kingdom (1998)	11.4
10	Germany (1998)	11.9
11	Finland (1998)	12.9
12	Denmark (1998)	14.1
13	Belgium (1998)	14.1
14	New Zealand (1998)	14.1
15	Netherlands (1998)	14.3
16	Ireland (1998)	15.4
17	United States (1998)	21.1
18	Canada (1998)	21.9
19	Luxembourg (1995)	24.2
20	Australia (1998)	27.6
	Average	13.4

Source: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Greenhouse Gas Inventory Database, 2001.

Table 5: Organic Retail Sales for G-20 Countries

Rank	Country	Retail share (% of sales)
1	Denmark	2.8
2	Austria	2.3
3	Switzerland	2.0
4	Sweden	1.8
5	Italy	1.8
6	Germany	1.4
7	Netherlands	1.3
8	United Kingdom	1.2
9	Spain	1.0
9	Japan	1.0
9	Finland	1.0
9	United States	1.0
9	Canada	1.0
10	Belgium	0.7
11	France	0.5
12	Australia	0.2
--	Ireland	N/A
--	Luxembourg	N/A
--	New Zealand	N/A
--	Norway	N/A
	Average	1.3

Source: Luanne Lohr, "Factors Affecting International Demand and Trade in Organic Food Products," WRS-01-1, Washington, DC: Economic Research Service, United States Department of Agriculture (<http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/wrs011/wrs011j.pdf>); European Environment Agency (http://themes.eea.eu.int/Sectors_and_activities/households/indicators/ecolabel/hh08eco_products.pdf).

Table 6: Passenger Transport for Selected G-20 Countries, 2000

Rank	Country	Passenger km per Person per Year
1	Spain	8,402
2	Austria	8,547
3	Ireland	8,801
4	Germany	8,805
5	Netherlands	9,522
6	Belgium	10,363
7	United Kingdom	10,469
8	Sweden	10,487
9	Finland	10,763
10	Italy	11,532
11	France	11,553
12	Luxembourg	11,590
13	Denmark	12,469
--	Australia	N/A
--	Canada	N/A
--	Japan	N/A
--	New Zealand	N/A
--	Norway	N/A
--	Switzerland	N/A
--	United States	N/A
	Average	10,254

Source: Energy and Transport in Figures, European Commission, 2000

(http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy_transport/etif/transportpassenger_a/road_car_pkm.html).

Table 7: Hypothesized Statistical Relationships

Dimension/Criteria	Dwelling Size	GHG Emissions	Organic Food Purchases	Automobility
Domestic Income Inequality	+	+	-	+
Global Solidarity	-	-	+	-

Table 8: Pearson Correlation Coefficients

Dimension/Criteria	Dwelling Size	GHG Emissions	Organic Food Purchases	Automobility
Domestic Income Inequality	0.30	0.16	-0.19	-0.16
Global Solidarity	0.09	-0.07	0.49	0.42

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21. Ethical Consumption in Norway: Why is it so low?

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Abstract

Political consumerism refers to the fact that people, as consumers purchasing their goods, makes choices of producers and products based on a variety of ethical and political considerations. In many of the studies concerning political consumerism much of the focus is posed on consumers' responsibilities of making ethical choices and theories of social capital and reflexive modernisations has been used in order to understand the dimensions related to praxis of ethical consumption. Although these studies offer a valuable understanding of the conditions that at individual level are relevant in promoting or hindering ethical choices, they tend however to overlook other factors that both at cultural and at structural level affect the opportunities of using the market as a political /ethical arena. Among these, there is the role played by the market system in providing consumers with alternative products as well the political tradition that characterises citizens forms of mobilisation and organisation of consumers interests. In this paper the relevance of these factors will be discussed, focussing in particular on the case of Norway.

Political consumerism: values, opportunities and institutionalised consumer's role

In recent years, there has been an increasing attention towards forms of consumption reflecting political involvement, civic responsibility, and ethical concerns (Miller, 1998 and 2003; Gabriel and Lang, 1995; Goul Andersen and Tobias, 2001; Micheletti, 2003; Micheletti, Follestad and Stolle, 2004; Stømsnes, 2003). Micheletti, referring to this phenomenon as political consumerism, define it as:

action by people who make choices of producers and products with the goal of changing objectionable institutional or market practises. Their choices are based on attitudes and values regarding issue of justice, fairness, or non economic issues that concern personal or family well being, or political assessment of favourable and unfavourable business and government practice" (Micheletti, 2003; pg.2).

To make use of the market arena with explicit political goals is not indeed a new phenomenon. Boycotts in order to show protest recurrently appears in our historical tradition whereas promoting alternative forms of production and consumption opposing market hegemony has been, for instance, an important aspect in the experience of the socialist movement.

There are, however, some aspects of contemporary political consumerism that make it a new phenomenon, in need of further investigation and analysis. Political consumerism has been linked with the rise of new forms of mobilisation (Melucci, 1989 and 1996; Beck, 1994). A characteristic of this type of mobilisation is the embeddedness with individual experience and the fact that it tends to arise around the problematic knots of modern life. Differing from forms of mobilisation related to the classical conflict capital/labour that implied a strong organisation and codified criteria of participation, new movements are instead open and loose, adapt to forms of participations that much correspond to the fragmentation of modern life. Micheletti defines this type of mobilisation as “individualised collective action” (Micheletti, 2003), stressing the micro-macro link that characterising this form of mobilisation.

Food, its production, provision and consumption, represents an important aspect in the agenda of new social actors. The global imbalance of food access, the exploitation of human labour, resources and environment, are among the most debated themes of the new movements²²³. Indeed, food has historically been an issue for mobilisation (Tilly, 1975). It seems however that in contemporary societies food related issues have expanded from the themes of fairness in food provision, embracing new themes like exploitation of resources, environment and human labour, power of multinational corporations, animal welfare, risks related to new technologies (i.e. GMO). These new concerns tend to express themselves in the market arena as well, both in terms of boycotting products and corporations, as well as buying “ethical” products.

Political consumerism is substantially approached as a form of political participation: many of the studies analysing this phenomenon tend to focus on variables that are related to civic engagement (see e.g. Goul Andersen and Tobias, 2004; Stolle, Hooge, Micheletti, 2003; Strømsnes, 2003). These analyses enlighten the way individuals take active responsibility as consumers in their everyday life, create networks and collective identity, and build bridges between politics and consumption. Differences in political tradition and culture, relevance of social capital, as well as structural variables as education, income and urbanisation, are often mentioned in analyses of patterns of political consumerism and its variation between countries, indicating that younger, well educated and urbanised people, engage themselves more often in various forms of political con-

²²³ See for instance the agenda of the “World Social Forum” which took place in Porto Allegre (2001 and 2003) and Bombay (2004).

sumerism. Without diminishing the relevance of this approach, it is indeed to say that it tends to overlook some important aspects.

At the very core of political consumerism is the idea that conscious consumers make choices according to their values when purchasing their goods. Ideally, a concerned consumer, entering a shop for buying coffee, will pick up the fair trade one. But: what if that coffee is not there? The same consumers may also want to express protest against the French nuclear test in Mururoa avoiding to buy French cheese. Again, what if there is no other cheese to buy than “Norvegia”?

If expressing political preferences through shopping is a matter of choice, choices should be available: “*without choice, you have no power*” –as one informant in our research project stated²²⁴. The market structure and the effective availability of alternative products must therefore be taken into consideration when looking at the phenomenon of political consumerism, particularly in a comparative perspective.

Yet, market dominance can be broken. Many relevant experiences of “alternative” consumption, in fact, have developed from the action of concerned consumers that have established alternative systems of provision. Among them, of particular relevance, is the one of fair trade and of the network of world shops related to this initiative (Reynolds, 2002; Renard, 2003). This experience had however unlike outcomes in different western countries. While in some, as UK, had a visible impact on conventional distribution, in others, -like Italy- remained more related to a political sub-culture. In Norway, the experience of the world shops has been marginal and not successful: both the shops opened in Oslo and in Bergen, had –for instance- to close (EFTA, 2001). These uneven outcomes, make us reflect upon the role that civil society have in promoting political/ethical consumption, how citizens interpret their role as consumers, and the way consumption has been defined as an arena for politics.

The finding of a recent European comparative study indicates that, whether we look the provision of goods or the relevance of ethical concerns in the discourse on food consumption, political consumerism appears in Norway a less relevant phenomenon than in other European countries²²⁵. These results may appear puzzling, particularly if we consider that Norwegians seem to meet some of the conditions identified as positively correlated with forms of political consumerism (Gould Andersen and Tobias, 2004; Strømsnes, 2003). Norway is in fact a wealthy country with a high degree of highly educated people. Norwegians enga-

²²⁴ More information about the mentioned research project will be presented later in the text.

²²⁵ These considerations are based on the findings of the project ‘Consumer Trust in Food. A European Study of Social and Institutional Conditions for the Production of Trust’ (Trustinfood) (2002-2004), funded by the European Commission, 5th Framework Programme, Quality of Life, Key Action 1, contract no. QLK1-CT-2001-00291. The project is coordinated by The National Institute for Consumer Research (SIFO) and involves teams at the University of Bologna, KVL and Roskilde University in Denmark, CRIC University of Manchester, University of Porto, and BFE in Karlsruhe, Germany. The project website is www.trustinfood.org, in it ongoing publication and results can be found.

ge themselves in politics and are often active citizens in local communities and members of ideal organisations. Environmental issues and environmental organisation have a high visibility in the Norwegian society. Solidarity with less developed countries is an issue promoted both by NGOs and by initiatives taken at government level. Given these conditions, one would probably expect a higher rate of consumers making concerned choices when purchasing the food, than the one indicated by our findings.

The present paper will try to identify some of the factors that might explain the Norwegian situation, utilising the case of food consumption. In doing this, we will focus particularly on the following aspects:

- **The availability of ethical products and the way they are distributed.** The first dimension refers to market actors' promotion of "ethical" products. "Corporate responsibility" and "ethical" products seem to be central to corporate policies in some countries. In other countries such products are absent or even considered with scepticism. Reasons for this may be found in differences in the various national production- and distribution systems and their integration with the global economy. What are the opportunities for ethical products to enter the market? How is the distribution system for alternative products organised?
- **The way consumers (and specifically food consumers) have been institutionalised.** We argue that consumption should be seen not as individual acts of decision-making in the market, but rather as a normatively embedded, routinised practice. The institutionalisation²²⁶ of the food consumer refers to the shaping of the role(s) of the consumer with regard to food related practices. The need to recognise the social embeddedness means that consumption of food should include the whole process and the variety of aspects in our dealings with food as individuals and households, not only from acquisition through cooking to eating, but also in exchange of information and knowledge and in our position and participation as citizens with reference to such activities. The social embeddedness of buying food refers directly to the interaction associated with purchase, to the organisation of households, and to wider concerns as members of society. This is, not the least, important for understanding consumers as actors, where this socially embedded role as buyers may form the foundation for various forms of voice, mobilisation and collective

²²⁶ By 'institutionalisation' is meant a development, whereby different sets of actors mutually recognise and typify habitual actions (Berger and Luckman, 1987, p.72). Because of the mutuality, such habitual actions will appear in the form of institutional arrangements. Institutions develop historically, but appear to the individual as an objective reality, appropriated through processes of socialisation. In principle, institutionalisation may take place within any area of activity that has collective implications. Often, but not always, institutionalisation will mean the emergence of organisations (such as businesses, public bodies and households) and formalised interaction with other institutions (such as regulatory or contractual arrangements).

action, as well as influencing the reference to consumers in broader political alignments. In this paper, we ask whether differences in how food consumers are institutionalised can give insight into variations in political consumerism.

Shopping ethically: not an easy task for Norwegian consumers

Routinisation process shapes daily consumption practices (Ilmonen, 2001; Halkier, 2001). Food purchase and meal preparation depend on a number of factors, regarding concern and care (Miller, 1998), appropriateness (Bugge and Døvig, 2000) and specific food cultures (Kjærnes, 2001). The configuration of food consumption is also shaped by the specific context formed by the food provisioning system. The accessibility of shops is an important factor influencing purchasing patterns (Lavik, 2000; Norad, 2003). The food I'm going to eat at my table will to a large degree depend on the opportunities I find in my nearest grocery shop.

Hence, as a Norwegian consumer, which are my options?

Four retailer chains that, together, cover 99% of the market, dominate the Norwegian food distribution system. Two of them are "discount chains", which had, in 2001, almost 50% of the total sales volume (Lavik, Jacobsen and Stand, 2003). Norwegian, mostly, do their everyday shopping (Norad, 2003) in this discount shops, where the assortment is limited to the most common and purchased products. The limitation of the offer is even more evident in the case of alternative products, such as fair trade, organic or products concerned with animal welfare.

A further characteristic of the Norwegian distribution system relies in the fact that wholesalers and retailer chains have annual agreements, made on national basis, concerning the kind of products that are going to be sold to the public. As the leader of a wholesale organisation explained, the Norwegian distribution system differs from the Danish one by the fact that:

in Denmark there are many more wholesalers, and there are continuous contacts and agreements all around the year. There you can introduce a new product in the middle of the year; you can sell it just in one shop or just in some shops of a chain. Here in Norway, instead, decisions on product assortment and prices are much more centralised and the main office of a retail chain have strong control and power over the affiliated shops. Shops owners or managers have extremely low influence upon assortment and conditions. (Leader of wholesale organisation).

Full assortment shops may indeed have a wider range of products, but that tends to concern mostly consumers living in cities like Oslo.

In the rest of the country, you have often just one Mega²²⁷-shop that can save you. But a Mega shop out in the country is by no means like a Mega shop here in Oslo (Leader of wholesale organisation).

Accordingly to data from Max Havelaar²²⁸, for instance, one of discount chains, was, up to January 2004, not selling even the most sold of the fair trade products: coffee. The limitation of choice is also evident in the case of organic products. A recent survey indicates that just 42% of the shops of this chain had organic milk and only 25% had other kind of products²²⁹.

Yet, there are some alternatives to conventional market. Organic products can be found in shops that are part of the network Helios, which, since 1969, has represented one of the few alternatives for concerned consumers. That this represents also a concrete opportunity is, however, doubtful: in all Norway there are only 17 shops of this network, localised in the main cities. In Oslo, there are three shops, all in the city centre²³⁰.

Although it is particularly in discount shops that ethical products find difficulties in getting a place in the shelves, our interviews indicate that even other retailers consider those products marginal and not worth too much effort. A director of a Nordic retailer chain commented in fact:

although it is our policy to have this kind of products, we have difficulties in having them in the shops. Shop managers do not want them, as they have difficulties in being sold, they occupy place, and they go out of date.

Referring specifically to fair trade products, he added: *"we do not think that it is something that we can use actively in order to improve our market position."* Organic products were described in the following way:

In order to be politically correct retailers may have some organic products down there in the corner, just to get some peace. It is the same for us also....

Retailers' scepticism cannot however, be seen as the only reason why ethical products are not significantly present in the market. Another important characteristic of the Norwegian food system is represented by the structure of the agricultural sector. The production of meat, poultry, dairy products and, (to a lesser extent) fruit and vegetables, is organised into producers owned cooperatives (Almås, 2002), one for each of these sectors. Historically, agricultural interests have had a great influence on the Norwegian political system (Esping Andersen, 1990). The claim that agricultural interests are national interest as well, has obtained broad political support (also from consumers' organisations) with reference to the survival of rural communities, domestic employment, protection of the

²²⁷ Full assortment supermarket

²²⁸ Max Havelaar –web side (22nd January, 2004).

²²⁹ Data published in Nationen, 18th July 2003, pg.4.

²³⁰ Information from the Helios web site.

environment, food safety and national food security. The alternative of a more open and competitive market is being regarded as leading to a (more) intensive agriculture, and to an increasing dominance of multinational manufacturers and retailer chains. The aim of protecting and supporting domestic production has determined heavy import barriers and high food taxes. As a result, cooperatives have avoided any real fear of competitors and efforts for innovation and differentiation have been negligible²³¹.

Issues like animal welfare or organic production have been regarded with suspicion, representing a potential threat to the conventional, mainstream production, as an informant from an animal welfare organisation noted:

Most producers are conventional producers and farmers own the cooperatives. Therefore, they would damage themselves if they should promote something that most of them do not produce. One of the most significant problems of the cooperative system, seen from the animal welfare perspective, is that they have stopped development, they have limited healthy competition, and they have limited the consumers' opportunities for ethical products". (Member of a animal welfare organisation).

The unlucky experience of an organisation of organic meat producers may well illustrate the difficulties for alternative actors to enter in the mainstream market. As organic meat producers were lamenting difficulties in distributing their products, a cooperative was started in order to improve efficiency of the distribution system. SND (the State Foundation for Regional Development) funded this project, but required the involvement of other partners in order to secure the economic coverage of the initiative. For reasons that we have difficulties to understand, this organic meat producers' organisation linked up with the main meat producers' cooperative. As part of the agreement, this new organisation was not supposed to distribute their products in the conventional retailers system²³². After two years of attempts, the cooperative closed down.

When we were conducting our interviews (spring 2003) one of few type of meat labelled organic²³³ sold in supermarkets –and just in some of them– where frozen meatballs. When asked about the reason of such limited offer, a manager of the producers' cooperative replied that organic production actually was not need in Norway as "*nothing can be more close to ecologic then the traditional Norwegian meat production*".

In order to get a better idea of which are the opportunities to find ethical products in the mainstream distribution system, we have traced down some products and when they were introduced in various retailer chains (in some instances indicatively).

²³¹ The WTO agreement is indeed threatening this system, and actually is inducing changes, among others, the goal of increasing the production of organic and niche products.

²³² This story was told us by the (former) leader of the organisation.

²³³ For meat, as well as for milk, it does happen that organic products are sold as conventional.

Table 1. The offer of ethical food products in the Norwegian conventional market²³⁴.

Fair trade products	Organic product	Animal welfare
<p>Coffee: Max Havelaar coffee was introduced in Norway in 1997 and was primarily sold in the shops of the NorgesGruppen retailer chain. Coop has its fair trade coffee, <i>caffè futuro</i>. Progressively, in 2003 and 2004 Max Havelaar coffee was introduced in the discount shops as RIMI and REMA 1000 –but you will not find it in every shop!. Solidarity coffee is sold also in the Sally Ann shop, opened in Oslo in 2003.</p> <p>Tea: Introduced in 2000 and sold in the NorgesGruppen network.</p> <p>Bananas: Introduced in 2001 and sold mainly in the NorgesGruppen network (they are organic as well).</p> <p>Orange juice: Introduced in 2002 and sold mainly in the Norgesgruppen network</p> <p>Rice: Introduced in 2004 and sold in some of the shops of the NorgesGruppen network</p>	<p>A range of organic products can be found in the shops of I NorgesGruppen and Coop. The latter has a specific brand for organic products (<i>coop natur</i>). The choice of organic products in the discount shops is fragmented and limited to products such as milk, yogurt, and eggs.</p> <p>Meat: Organic meat produced by Gilde (the cooperative owned meat processor) can be found in some supermarket²³⁵</p> <p>Milk and dairy products: The first organic meat was introduced by TINE (the cooperative owned dairy products processor) in 1995. It was not pasteurised milk. Now is Tine distributing in the retailers chain milk (pasteurised), yogurt (one type), cheese (one type), and cream.</p> <p>Eggs: the presence of organic eggs in supermarket and some discount shops has started only recently.</p>	<p>There is not a specific label, but recently eggs claimed to be from free range hens appeared in the market. The name may however be misleading, as those hens may not necessarily be able to go outside. This requisite is satisfied only in organic production.</p>

In this section we have addressed one of the reasons that may explain why ethical consumption in Norway is lower than in other countries: the products are few, unevenly distributed and face structural barriers in entering the market. This implies that also the most conscious consumers may face difficulties in filling up a basket with products that responds to their wishes.

Several of the market actors interviewed in our study tend to deny any responsibility for this situation. They prefer instead to refer to the lack of interest among Norwegian consumers as the main cause of the scarcity of ethical products in the market.

Recent data provided by Max Havelaar and a retailer chain, challenge indeed this interpretation. In fact, as soon as a supermarket chain has made efforts in order to promote ethical products (such as fair trade and organic ones) there has been a significant increase in the sales of those products.

“Ethical products certainly mean something to a number of persons. – Said a manager of the chain:

How large this group is, is difficult to say. But we have introduced some products, we cooperate with Max Havelaar and we are trying to increase the sales volume.

²³⁴ Table to be completed.

²³⁵ But no mention about organic products can be found in their web site (as by 13th august 2004)

We get to people that have other values than just price and quality. I do not know how many people give importance to these values, but we have had a steady increase for both coffee and bananas, and also for tea and orange juice. We have discussed things with Max Havelaar and we have worked systematically from one product to the next. We have given the products a visible place, particularly the coffee. Nevertheless, they are not subsidised products; we take the same profit margin as for others. These products must manage the competition. (Retailer).

And it seems that they actually do. During the year 2003, the sale of Max Havelaar coffee has increased by 28%, tea by 145%, orange juice of 30% and bananas by 96%. The sales of organic products have also increased: from 2002 to 2003, there has been an increasing of 26%, a trend that is continuing also in the present year²³⁶.

The findings presented in this section indicate that the availability of products is an unavoidable aspect when analysing patterns of political/ethical consumption. Yet, this aspect alone cannot explain the difference in the incidence and forms of political consumerism in different countries. As pointed out in the introduction, another essential aspect is the way the consumers' role is defined and, specifically, how responsibilities for ethics are framed. These aspects will be discussed in the next section.

Consumers' role and the social division of responsibility for ethical food

When asked about the reasons for the limited availability of ethical products, most retailers and producers seem to have no doubts: *"Norway is a small country –say the most- and there is not enough demand for these kinds of products"*. The common description of Norwegian consumers, as emerges through our interviews with market actors, is as ones mostly interested in prices and not showing particular interest in ethical questions. This portrait of Norwegian consumers is not, however, only limited to central market actors. Also other informants, in fact, tend to describe Norwegian consumers as not particularly interested in ethical issues related to food, as indicated by the comments of a journalist from a popular consumers' TV programme:

Organic food is not an issue that we have in our program very much now. But the first two years we had quite a lot on that and on the problems related to that issue. We were quite concerned with that... trying to promote organic food. But speaking about results... I do not know... we have the impression that this is not something people are really concerned about. We wanted to focus on that issue in order to be "politically correct. We had the ambition to make consumers "think

²³⁶ Data referring to the sale of Max Havelaar products in the "NorgesGruppen" Retailer Chain. Source: NorgesGruppen.

organic” and not think only about price, to think also about ethics and environment. But we did not have much response to that. (Journalist).

Another informant – a food scientist- observed that Norwegian consumers are not particularly demanding. A representative of the main consumers’ organisation expressed a similar consideration:

We try and have tried on many occasions to make people complain more. But this has also something to do with the fact that what is the point of complaining, if you have not the feeling that someone will listen to you, that something will happen.... (Consumers’ Council representative).

This statement, indeed, mirrors the data of the trust in food survey, in which emerges that Norwegian consumers are the ones who most seldom feel that their voice as consumer matters²³⁷. Yet, the perception of not being heard does not lead to pessimism or distrust. On the contrary, Norwegian consumers, together with the Danish and the British, are the ones showing the highest level of trust in the food they consume. In addition, they are the ones most likely to believe that public bodies, consumers’ organisations and experts involved in the food system would tell them the truth in the case of a food scandal (Poppe and Kjærnes, 2003). These findings are consistent with other studies, indicating that Norwegians show a positive attitude towards their institutions. According to the data of the “Value survey” Norwegians are among those most satisfied with their political system and the ones expressing a high level of trust towards both institutions and fellow citizens (Norris, 1999; Inglehart, 1999). The building of a welfare state has been one primary goal of the governments led by the Labour Party, which from the thirties up to the eighties have led the country. There has been broad political consensus on many welfare issues, and even conservative governments have supported a number of measures. The consensual framing is underlined by the system of political decision-making. Norway is often quoted as a typical example of a corporative system (Norby, 1995) where public institutions have a main role in mediating between different interests. Public intervention is generally expected in order to solve problems, to regulate areas where conflicts may arise, and to find solutions. This characteristic distribution of responsibilities is obvious also in the food sector, where, traditionally, public authorities have had a central role in promoting nutritional policies (Jensen and Kjærnes, 1997), safety standards and market regulation (Jacobsen and Kjærnes, 2003). Consumer protection has been an aspect of the Norwegian policy since the ‘30ies when the first consumers institutions, such as the Consumers’ Council and SIFO were established (Ilmonen and Stø, 1997; Jensen, 2000)

²³⁷ Only 9% of Norwegian consumers stated that they voice “matters a lot”. In the other countries the results were: Denmark, 16%; West Germany, 19%; East Germany, 17%; Great Britain, 30%; Northern Ireland, 23%; Italy, 28%; Portugal 29%.

Responsibility for food, (its being safe, nutritious and of satisfactory quality), is allocated to public authorities with a high degree of consensus (Terragni, 2004) and, as we have mentioned, with a high level of trust (Popper and Kjærnes, 2003; Terragni, Torjusen, 2003).

Although episodes of contestation have happened and still do, it is questionable whether the market has been an arena for explicit protest or promotion of innovative relations between producers and consumers. Representatives of civil society –given the conditions described above– may relay more on their capacity to exercise pressure on public authorities, seen, ultimately, as the main responsible for intervention. The following argumentation, quoted from an interview with a responsible of an organisation for animal welfare, seem to reflect this kind of approach:

(...) Animal welfare is a typical issue where it is important that the State takes responsibility (...) It is a too important problem to leave to the chance of the market and price related issues. Public authorities have a responsibility, also because for a normal consumer it is almost impossible to orient in the jungle of different labels (...) you really need to be a conscious consumer for managing that. In addition, I think that it is completely wrong to let transformations being determined by the willingness of a small group of consumers to pay more. As a matter of fact we have chosen politicians because they should give us forms of protection in our society and I mean that an essential task for them is to assure common values such as ethics, without leaving it entirely to consumers. (Member of a animal welfare organisation).

Considering the material in our study, the question of responsibility for ethics actually seems to face a **mismatch problem**. Markets actors are reluctant to take initiative, indicating instead consumers as the main responsible. Consumers, on the other hand, tend to rely on public initiatives for promoting the ethical dimension in (food) consumption. The public bodies present in the food system, on their side, have not until recently been particularly concerned with ethical questions. Still, new trends are emerging. As an example, the Ministry of Agriculture started a program promoting organic production and animal welfare. It is, however, doubtful whether these initiatives are aimed to satisfy consumers' preferences and values. The main rationale may rather be to find forms of support to the agricultural sector allowed within the frame of the WTO agreement.

Our study indicates that food related political consumerism find itself a "grey area" where there is uncertainty regarding who should have responsibility and where relevant actors have not, up till now, made ethics a criterion for competition, or a main issues for consumers mobilisation.

Concluding remarks

In this paper, we have used the Norwegian case of food in order to illustrate some factors that can have an impact on patterns of political con-

sumerism. Although the relevance of consumers as actors capable of producing change is not questioned, we suggest that the opportunities for consumers to exercise their agency (Barnes, 2000) may be rather different in different contexts. Studies concerned with political consumerism tend to focus on **consumers as citizens**, assuming political preferences and values as the main dimension in guiding choices of consumption. As indicated also by Halkier (1999) an analysis of political consumerism should pay attention to variables that affects patterns of everyday shopping (Gronow and Warde, 2001) and the institutionalisation of consumers (Halkier, Holm and Møhl, 2003), hence taking into consideration also **citizens as consumers**.

The combination of these two dimensions – as indicated by the comparison of the institutional studies of the TRUSINFOOD project- can produce different kinds of scenarios. The case of Norway can be regarded as an example where a number of conditions, pertaining to both the consumers as citizens and the citizens as consumers have limited the opportunities for food related ethical questions to become a relevant issue. Other countries, like Denmark or the Anglo-Saxon ones, seem instead to benefit from a situation where there is a reciprocal influence of these two dimensions, which have provided the opportunities for exercising forms of political consumerism. Finally, another situation, represented for example by the Italian case, is the one where ethical forms of consumption have developed more in the form of contestation and as alternative to the conventional market, mirroring the characteristic of the Italian political culture but also more sceptical practices related to shopping. While British consumers seem to be regarded, and to see themselves, more as active participants, the Norwegian case, particularly considering food, represent a more paternalistic understanding of the consumer role, where major political and markets institutions are left to make decisions about the structure of the supply.

It would, however, be misleading just to consider Norwegian consumers as not capable of promoting change. Like it or not, the most relevant and recent example where consumers have achieved a visible political role is related to the phenomenon of “cross border shopping”²³⁸. A percentage ranging from 40 to 50 per cent (depending on the period) of Norwegians, have made shopping trips to Sweden since this country joined the European community, resulting in considerable price differences on most food items. This phenomenon has caused a high degree of concern among Norwegian authorities and resulted in a cut in food taxes. This intervention, however, did not produce the expected results. On the contrary, after the ironic comments by the Minister of Agriculture –who addressed cross boarder shoppers as “cheap”- shopping trips to Sweden have become even more popular. Interesting enough, while many socio economic variables do not explain who cross boarder shoppers are, politi-

²³⁸ See Lavik (2004), for a complete analysis of this phenomenon.

cal affiliation has, instead, great relevance (Lavik, 2004). 51% of the interviewed who took a shopping trip to Sweden said that they, in case of an election, would vote for the right wing Progree party, whereas virtually any of them expressed preferences for the Centre party (the one representing farmers interests and the most active in the No to EU campaign).

An other example that indicates a more active and visible consumers' role is the one related to environmental issues, where consumers mobilisation has produced impact both in terms of influencing the range of products available (Throne-Holst, 1999) but also in promoting a common understanding of consumers' role and responsibilities related to environment protection. The White Swan labelled products are recognised and purchased by a large number of consumers and recycling paper and milk boxes is part of every day family tasks and routines (Vittersø, 2003).

These examples may, tentatively, indicate that mobilisation and individualised collective action (Micheletti, 2003) may emerge, even in the particular political and institutional context of Norway, when people are addressed specifically for their consumer role, this role is socially recognised and generates forms of collective identity.

After all, **why is political consumerism lower in Norway than in others European countries?**

This paper has focused on the specific characteristics of the Norwegian system of food provision as well as consumers' role.

We have observed that the Norwegian food market is highly centralised, concentrated and protected, leading to a limitation of the range of products available in the market, and, consequently of the consumers' opportunities to make choices. If political consumerism is a way to exert citizenship rights within the market arena, we may note that, for Norwegians consumers, the possibilities to exert these rights are rather limited.

We have observed also that social problems related to food tend to be solved by institutional actors, with public institutions taking a prominent role. This kind of pattern emerges also in the case of food related ethical questions.

These two aspects are reflected in the institutionalisation of the consumers' role. Food consumers appear marginal in the market and protected by public institutions. This specific feature may explain why the market arena fails to be an arena for politics, and political consumerism a not so relevant phenomenon.

The case of food consumption in Norway, indeed, may be a very peculiar one. Still, it indicates the importance of including the "consumption" in the analysis of political consumerism.

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22. From Political Consumption to Political Production or the Resistible Implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility in a French Mining Company

Franck Cochoy and Mylène Vabre

Abstract

This paper explores the current move from “political consumption” to “political production.” Thanks to a case study investigating how a global company tries to implement a Corporate Social Responsibility policy at the local level, it shows that even when business ethics are more than a pure rhetorical discourse addressed to regulators, financial markets and activists, its implementation may lead to some unexpected difficulties, such as the paradoxical “reluctance” of the publics it is supposed to serve, help, or favour. Thus we would like to stress the ambiguities of the new “political capitalism” facing contemporary “political consumerism”: on the one hand corporate social responsibility is more effective than what we may have expected; on the other hand its acceptance by its “beneficiaries” is less obvious than what we may have guessed. We may thus wonder if the development of “politicized economics” does not need a joint effort between the twin studies of “political consumerism” and “politicized capitalism.”

Worldwide Corporate Social Responsibility as an effort to go back to local communities

*From the globalization of the local to the localization of the global:
a strange encounter between two opposite moves*

This paper is about the implementation of the CSR policy of a global company... at the local level of a particular subsidiary company of the former. More exactly, it is the account of a strange encounter between two separate stories and its unexpected, problematic consequences. The

first story is the classical story of how a local business – “Local Extracting Co.” – is being trapped in the whirl of economic globalization. The second story addresses a new kind of situation where a global company – “Global Mining Group” – experiences how difficult it is to set up global policies and obtain simultaneously their “localization”.²³⁹ Please note that all the names appearing in this paper are fictive in order to comply with the company’s wish to preserve its anonymity.

The globalization of Local Extracting

Local Extracting is a small French mining company (less than 500 employees) located in a rural mountain area. The transforming plant operates at the bottom of a valley, in the village of Minalac peopled by around 600 inhabitants. This company was created at the beginning of the twentieth century and was managed by the same family until the end of the 1980s. Thus, the company was long steeped in a village society governed by close interpersonal and community relationships where everybody knew one another. All the families living in Minalac had at least a member working for the company. The company management was paternalistic, with a shared sense for hierarchy, obedience and devotion:

Even if Local Extraction has always been a business of a certain importance was at a time rather a family business, OK? It was Mr X who was the director, Mr X and Mrs X, they were listening to all Minalac’s population, and I have to admit that when there was a problem, we went to see Mr or Mrs X, and nine times over ten they got the solution. [Association No. 1]

The firm’s managers not only took care of the personal life of their employees but also of the whole village’s life. They proposed their help to other communes in need of workforce. They sponsored Minalac’s associations, and they were even personally involved in their operations:

It was really a local company, well rooted; with people we knew well, with whom we had strong relationships, everyday, through associations, everywhere, OK? [Association No. 2]

However, this “grassroots” aspect of things is only part of the picture. In the first years of the twentieth century and three years only after its institution, the company was assessed by the French Stock Exchange. Much later, in the early seventies, the company began to “globalize itself” and

²³⁹ This study rests upon an empirical survey conducted for the local company during the first Semester of 2003. Two kinds of data have been collected. Firstly, in order to study the Corporate Social Responsibility commitments of the global company and the logic of its internal management at the local level we will use written documents (the company’s website, the codes of conduct and the questionnaires used to monitor the local process). Second, in order to evaluate the difficulties of the implementation of the CSR policy, we will rely on a series of twenty in-depth interviews conducted with some of the main actors of the communities this policy is aimed at – one teacher, nine mayors of the surrounding villages, eleven heads of some local associations.

created a transformation and distribution unit in the United States. In the following years it took control of its first subsidiary company in another European country. The globalization strategy was pursued in the 1980s... until a worldwide Mining Group bought 99 % of the shares of the company, thus becoming its main shareholder. In the 1990s a new international group named “Minalac Group” was created. This group is specialized in the product that Local Extracting is producing and is organized with three subsets in Europe, Asia and America. This group became the world leader for this product. From this point onward, Global Mining started directing the company policy and objectives. As we can see, the story of Local Extracting clearly followed a pattern moving from local to global, until the “eater” became “eaten” itself by a more globalized entity.

The localization of Global Mining

This globalized entity – Global Mining – has its own story, which starts as soon as in the late nineteen century, and stems from a long series of mergers and acquisitions between different mining companies operating in almost every part of the world. But here, only the end of the story matters,²⁴⁰ since our purpose is to consider the company when it is global, and to see how this global character has an impact on the other local company’s behaviour. At the end of the 1990s, Global Mining faced strong attacks from activists who accused it of many abuses. Once, during its Annual General Assembly, the leaders of an international union of mine workers that was especially formed a few months before to fight this company presented a report denouncing the group for being responsible of violations of union rights, human rights, environmental rights and the rights of indigenous people in several parts of the world (land spoliation, community destruction, environmental damage, cancers due to working conditions...).

The same year the company had issued a code of conduct proclaiming:

Global Mining is a world leader in finding, mining and processing the earth’s mineral resources. The Group’s worldwide operations supply essential minerals and metals that help to meet global needs and contribute to improvements in living standards. In order to deliver superior returns to shareholders over time, Global Mining takes a long term and responsible approach to the Group’s business. We concentrate on the development of first class bodies into large, long life and efficient operations, capable of sustaining competitive advantage through business cycles. [...] Global Mining encourages strong local identities and has a devolved management philosophy, entrusting responsibility with accountability to the workplace. Wherever Global Mining operates, health and safety is our first priority. We seek to contribute to sustainable development. We work as closely as possible with our host countries and communities, respecting laws and customs. We

²⁴⁰ Anyway, describing at length this story would be too long here and will also infringe our commitment to respect the anonymity of the company.

minimise adverse effects. We employ local people at all levels and ensure fair and equitable transfer of benefits and enhancement of opportunities.

On the one hand, this code shows Global Mining's commitment to address its critics, to behave ethically, and to "localize" its global operation at the community level (see its will to "encourag[e] strong local identities" and to "work as closely as possible with [its] host countries, respecting laws and customs"). On the other hand, the same Union leader who denounced the company during its annual assembly qualified this code as being... "more a public relations exercise than a credible and serious commitment."

What could we say about such a controversy? The matters at stake are delicate ones; it is as difficult to document the sincerity of the code of conduct as it is to prove the truth of the critics' accusations. So, we will not take position on this general debate, for at least two reasons. First, exploring the controversy would embark us far away from the data we have and from the skills and resource we can reasonably mobilize; it would compel us to move from our local French case to the company's headquarters in Europe and to its "overseas" plants all around the world²⁴¹. To get a thoughtful and precise analysis of such matters, we thus prefer to recommend the reading of studies about other similar cases – see, for instance, the excellent and recent work of Andrew Barry about the building of a British Petroleum's pipeline in Azerbaijan and Georgia (Barry, 2004). Second, we should not forget our subject: our aim is to deal with the encounter of the two "criss-crossing" stories of Global Mining and Local Extracting. Until now, research on CSR has focused either on the headquarters' level in highly developed countries, or on the working sites' level, mostly in the "third world". Our case gives us a chance to bridge the gap between these two approaches since it enables us to see what happens when CSR is applied at the local level in a highly developed country.

Does Local Extracting have any connection with the controversy about Global Mining Behaviour? Is the code of conduct designed for our French company? The answer we may give to such questions is ambivalent. On the one hand, Local Extracting has nothing to do with the controversy and the code, since French workers did not take part in the critic of Global Mining and, as far as we can see, since they have no obvious reason to do so. On the other hand, the code is clearly connected to Local Extracting, since it defines the company's behaviour for all its operating sites. It is precisely this ambiguity which makes the richness of the

²⁴¹ In order to prove the sincerity of their code the company managers evoke the statistical figures reported on their web site. These figures show that (for instance) dust emissions or lost time injuries have clearly dropped over the years. However two questions remain: what is the reliability of these data (the company is judged and judge)? What is the real connexion between these improvements and the code of conduct (some results may have other causes, such as local regulation or quality management policies)?

case. Indeed, it gives us a chance firstly to see that what is considered as a response in one country (to global critics) may be taken as an offer in another (to local populations), and secondly to study the consequences of such a displacement. If multinational companies only comply with the law, they can restrain their commitments to local regulations. But once they publicly engage themselves in ethical behaviour, for instance through the adoption of “beyond the law” regulations, it is very difficult for them to argue that the same “voluntary commitments” are flexible according to local circumstances, actors and places. The code is one and the same; thus its prescriptions should apply everywhere²⁴². Local Extracting included. In particular, the willingness to serve “local communities” that Global Mining expressed in its code became both an offer to Minalac’s population (who did not ask for anything) and a managerial prescription to Local Extracting (this prescription was confirmed with the publication of a special code of conduct for Minalac Group, which roughly repeats Global Mining’s one). Does this policy in favour of strong relationships between the company and its local communities bring Local Extracting back to its “good old past” of rural connivance and paternalism? The answer seems to be positive, at least from the company’s point of view.

From the Internet “shop window” to the back-office reporting tools: displaying and managing the relationships with local communities

The Internet “shop window”

We have seen that for its critics the Global Mining’s code of conduct was “more a public relations exercise than a credible and serious commitment”. Is such a guide a communication tool? Is it something that is designed to appeal to the firm’s stakeholders in the “Internet shop windows”? There are obvious reasons to think so, since codes of conduct are most of the time designed to be displayed on the company’s web site, and present themselves as virtuous declarations of goodwill. Global Mining’s code does not escape the rule: it proclaims a series of commitments aligned with the current tendency of big corporations to issue their own regulations – or “soft laws” (Gavini, 1997). In the particular case, this soft legislative endeavour ranges from classical human rights (“We support human rights consistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Global Mining respects those rights in conducting the Group’s operations throughout the world”) and labour relationships (“We require safe and effective working relationships at all levels around the Group”), health and safety management (“We strive to protect our physical health and well-being in the workplace”), to environmental care (“Wherever

²⁴² See Philip Morris “marketing code,” which underlines the fact that the company applies the same ethical policy and sanitary warnings in all the countries where it operates, whatever local legal requirements are (Cochoy, 2004).

possible we prevent, or otherwise minimise, mitigate and remediate, harmful effects of the Group's operations on the environment"), sustainable development and CSR: "We contribute to sustainable development by helping to satisfy global and community needs and aspirations, whether economic, social or environmental."

Of course, there are many reasons to be careful with such statements: they often tell little about the way they are enforced, they rarely include subcontracting relationships, they sometimes enter in contradiction with the main business interest of the companies issuing them (see for instance the problematic relationship between mining, resource preservation and environmental care)... To a certain extent, codes of conduct may be seen as Machiavellian tools aimed at handling social criticism, as if they were applying Denise Deegan's recipes in her public relations' handbook entitled: *Managing Activism, A Guide to Dealing with Activists and Pressure Groups* (Deegan, 2001). In other words, there is no doubt that Codes of conduct may be analyzed as shop windows appealing to financial markets, trade unions, activists, State agencies, lawyers, and even sociologists interested in the politicization of modern capitalism!

However, our intention here is not to criticize the content of the code or to question its sincerity, but rather to "unfold" its technical functioning, to move from the shop window to the back shop. If we propose to do so, it is because we got the rare privilege to enter this strange shop whose door is ordinarily as closed as its window is open. We had access not only to the public information that is either displayed on the company's website or given by the "ethical managers" in the company's headquarters, but also to the internal documents and programs which support the CSR policy. Here, it is important to give some precisions about the research from which the present paper is derived. For once in the field of academic research about CSR (at least in sociology), it was not the sociologists who asked a company to be allowed to study its policy and practices (CSR as an intriguing subject); it is rather the company who called the sociologists' help in order to help it to implement its general commitments (CSR as a managerial problem). More precisely, this research started when Local Extracting – having to follow Global Mining's general orientations – asked us to give them some information about its "local communities" and the socially responsible actions they could develop for them. This story thus conveys a first surprise: even in the absence of social pressures, sheltered from the public's scrutiny and far away from any public relation preoccupations, social responsible policies are managed on a daily basis; they become part of the ordinary tasks of industrial operations. The question is of course to see whether this managerial endeavour is sufficient and successful, where, and why.

The managerial “back shop”

Before answering such a question, we have to stress the fact that it is not absolutely necessary to go inside a company to seize the technical and managerial dimensions of socially responsible commitments: these dimensions can be found directly on the web site, in the shop window, in the code of conduct. Indeed, this code not only announces the company's commitments, but it also tries to give some information about the way they are monitored and implemented. The company proclaims its effort to provide moral commitments but also effective results about their implementation:

We voluntarily give detailed social and environmental performance data in separate annual reviews. These cover the Group and each Group business, extending further the quality and quantity of publicly available data. Published material can be accessed through Global Mining's external website, www.globalmining.com
[Fictive address]

Not only does the company provide results, but it also gives some information about the way these results are produced: it mentions the existence of an auditing system (“We adopt appropriate internal and independent reporting, verification and assurance mechanisms”) and the gathering of internal data through mid-term objectives and standardized reporting techniques (“We detail local arrangements in rolling Five year communities plans which all operations submit and update annually”). The supervision of the overall process is backed both locally by the head of each company (“Each year, the leaders of Group businesses complete a detailed questionnaire to confirm that Global Mining's internal controls are operating effectively throughout the Group”) and globally by four *ad hoc* committees (“the Nominations committee, the Audit committee, the Remuneration committee and the Committee on social and environmental accountability”).

Does this work? In order to formulate a first answer, we propose to look at the following two figures. The first figure is accessible to everybody: it is a “screen copy” taken on Global Mining's web site which displays an aggregate view of how much and how the group spends money in supporting local communities:

The second picture, on the contrary, is taken from a questionnaire that is only accessible to the group's subsidiary companies. More precisely, it shows that Global Mining has designed some managerial devices to collect data, and conversely that local companies – Local Extracting in this case – provide Global Mining with their own figures through these devices:

2.1 Community Contributions

b) Please give contributions to the community in the table below, in the categories of charitable gifts, community investments, commercial initiatives, direct payments and management costs. The help text has definitions, examples and an explanation of the categories.

Currency

	Cash	Time	In-kind	Total
Charitable Gifts	710.	0.	500.	1210.
Community Investments	24806.	10230.	20000.	55036.
Commercial Initiatives	4145.	0.	0.	4145.
Direct Payments	0.	0.	0.	0.
Management Costs	0.	8800.	960.	9760.
Total	29663.	19030.	21460.	70153.

It is important to note that there is an exact correspondence between the two figures (apart from a very small difference in the ranking of the different entries). This correspondence suggests that the results displayed on the Internet web site are only but the consolidation the data gathered through the form all around the world in all the group's businesses. Of course, we do not know exactly if the information provided is sincere or if the data have been modified. However, our two figures clearly show that Global Mining has designed a rigorous reporting system and that this system is being used. As a consequence, we can say that CSR – at least in this case – is more than a discourse a managerial technology.

Since 1997, Global Mining has been sending to Local Extracting but also to all its other businesses a series of four questionnaires they have to fill in order to document the Company's commitments expressed in its code. These questionnaires are the "Occupational Health Workbook," the "Health, Safety and Environment Workbook," the "Greenhouse and Energy Workbook" and the "Community and Socio-Economic Workbook." These forms exactly correspond to the commitments displayed in the code of conduct about employment, health and safety, environmental matters and social responsibility²⁴³. The auditing system exists and is used, but is it prescriptive? Does it play a role in forwarding the CSR policy and its objectives?

The answer is clearly positive if we refer to the qualitative dimension of this prescription. First of all, the questionnaire prescribes the general categories which Local Extracting has to address: the company has a large freedom to answer to the different questions, but all these questions move around actions addressed to "local communities" – an entity which the company cannot but accept as given evidence (see our second part). Similarly, the "Directives for the Community and Socio-Economic workbook" – i.e. the document which is aimed at helping the company to understand the meaning of the different items of the questionnaire – is also a way for Global Mining to impose the values expressed in its code of conduct to its subsidiary companies. Moreover, some questions do not leave the possibility to give a negative answer, and thus they indirectly remind the local company that it really has to implement the general policy:

5.1 Community Surveys

Please answer the following two questions using "YYYY" format.

In what year was the last community survey or baseline study taken?

In what year was the last employee survey undertaken?

(The questions suggest that if the company could have surveyed its communities and employees in 1998, 1999, etc., it *had* to survey them).

²⁴³ In the following pages, we will mostly focus on the "community and socio-economic workbook," since it is this questionnaire which addresses the subject we have (been) proposed to investigate, i.e the relationship between Local Extracting and its local communities.

In other cases, if the company is left with the choice to answer either “yes” or “no,” the question discreetly reminds that its premises have to be implemented:

5.3 Consultative Committees

Please provide details of any consultative committees:

Community represented or topic. Does the committee include members from other organisations beyond the community, e.g.: NGO, government, academics?

(If it is true that the consultative committees may or may not include members coming from “beyond the community,” these committees are implicitly required).

Through these various examples, we see that, to a large extent, the questionnaire is performative (Callon, 1998)²⁴⁴: here, the obligation to describe clearly works as an obligation to act.

However, the prescriptive effect of the quantitative aspect of the questionnaire is more ambiguous, as it is evidenced in the following figure:

3.1 Community Investments

This question seeks more details on the contributions reported in the “Community Investments” column of section 2.2.

Please indicate the number of active programmes undertaken by the business in each of the following areas during the reporting period.

Subject Areas	Number of Programmes	How many of these Programmes were carried out in partnership?
Agriculture	0	0
Culture	0	0
Education	1	1
Environment	0	0
Health	0	0
HIV/AIDS (subset of Health)	0	0
Housing	0	0
Recreation	0	0
Transport	0	0
Utilities	0	0
Other	0	0
Total	1	1

If “Other”, please give details:

²⁴⁴ The notion of performance refers to Austin’s linguistics and its notion of “performative utterance.” According to Austin (1961), a performative utterance is an utterance that says and does what it says simultaneously (for instance: “I declare the meeting open”). According to this definition, Michel Callon proposed to study how some economic and managerial sciences or techniques are performative in the sense that they simultaneously depict and construct their subject matter (see accounting, economic modelling, etc.).

Of course the list of items defines a limited set of “subject areas,” but this list is rather large (ten possibilities) and not exclusive (see the eleventh “other” rubric which opens the possibility to record some programmes which do not match with the first ten items). Moreover, if the list asks to record the number of community investments’ programmes, it does not fix any standard to reach. In fact, the number of possibilities left to the company renders all the more surprising their very modest use by Local Extracting: almost all the chart is filled with zeros, except for the “education” rubric, which receives a very modest “one” single programme! If we go further in the questionnaire as it was filled by Local Extracting, we learn that this “educational” programme, far from being a new initiative conducted in partnership with local schools to meet the new CSR policy, rather corresponds to... the traditional funding of a long standing activity of industrial tourism cooperated for years with the “local tourist office,” well before the company was bought by Global Mining and thus committed to implement its CSR policy:

4.1 Programme Examples

Please use the framework below to provide details of at least one programme, of any type.

Tourist programme. Company Contribution: guided tours, information about mine, viewpoints, information stands, parking, brochures. Leverage (Partner Contributions): Partnership with local tourist office (organised visits of mine [site]). Community Benefit: 8000 - 10000 tourists visit the area, stay there, spend money, may come back, development of industrial tourism in [this part] of France, positive impact on the local economy. Business Benefit: Better understanding of mining activities, improvement of reputation of [product] mining, show activities in protection of environment.

At first glance, such a finding is very disappointing, since it seems to show that CSR, even when it is not a mere surface discourse but also a substantial project supported by ad hoc managerial tools, produces only but tiny and questionable effects, far away from Global Mining’s official rhetoric and commitments. But this conclusion is somewhat too simple. If the statistics show that CSR is far from being a reality, they also show that it is not a fiction: the figures reported in the questionnaire are real, nothing amounts to nothing, an absent programme is reported as a zero in a cell. We thus understand that Local Extracting does not invent its numbers, but tells the truth, and therefore demonstrates that its managers take social responsibility as a very serious matter – otherwise would it not have been easier to cheat and invent figures?

However, a question remains: why, even serious and honest, are the results so modest? Are they the expression of a lack of will? Yes and no.

There is a lack of will, but it is not – paradoxically enough – that of Local Extracting. Despite the very meagre results it has to put forward, the company really wishes to improve its figures. In the same way that a polled fellow feels humiliated when filling only the “Don’t know” cells in the questionnaire (a situation that sociology wisely interprets as a proof of the ill-conception of the poll rather than as a sign of the respondent’s stupidity [Bourdieu, 1973]), it is easy to understand that reporting almost nothing in the forms is felt as a managerial problem. Local Extracting managers took the CSR policy as something they really had to implement and improve. The head of the communication department who was put in charge of the project was playing its professional ability on this file, and was (and still is) very eager to “do something” and succeed. But he very soon realized it was a hard job, and thus hired a consultant and a sociologist to help him. Why is the task so difficult? Is it because the person in charge fails to mobilize internal resources and people? Not really. Surprisingly enough, the resistance to implement the CSR programme and to develop the relationships between Local Extracting and its “local communities” comes less from the former than from the latter. If the programme is so hard to start, it is because it seems very difficult to enrol the local population into it.

Worldwide Corporate Social Responsibility as a misunderstanding about/with “local communities”

As we will see, it looks as if the leaders of the social forces of Minalac and its surrounding villages do not welcome enthusiastically the idea of developing some new relationships with the company. This attitude may be surprising. The company proposes to care about local communities: does not this delicate and civilian commitment go back to the good old times of the company, when communities were strong, local, united – when the company was almost part of each one’s life? Yes, of course. The “good old times” mean that such a state of society did exist. But the “good old times” also mean that such a period is over. If “local communities” have existed in and around Minalac, they do not exist anymore or rather, as we will see, they exist in a form that may not be compatible with the way along which CSR conceives them.

The “communautés locales” as “Local-communities” (in English) : prescription and definition

Before discovering why there is a discrepancy between Global Mining’s CSR programme and Minalac’s social reality, we first have to recall and precise what this programme is about, that is: what the programme is asking to do on the one hand and what ideas it refers to on the other hand.

An explicit prescription: the obligation to act for local communities

The first aspect of the programme is its explicit prescriptive character. The programme clearly asks to all businesses belonging to Global Mining to do a series of things for its “local communities.” The action should follow three steps. First, the company should define its “local region,” that is: “the zone for which the company has an impact from a social and environmental point of view.” Once the geographic perimeter has been delimited, the company should not only increase its communication towards the local population, but also develop joint projects and actions in partnership with the local groups of actors. This leads the company to make a twofold shift: first, it has to supplement its classical actions *towards* local actors with actions conducted *with* them; second, the company has to move from erratic and miscellaneous answers given to diverse local demands (club sponsorship, technical help...) to an organized plan of actions (see the precise list of action domains we already mentioned: agriculture, culture, education, environment, and so on). Finally, the company should evaluate the actions that have been conducted with its local partners, but also ask these partners to regularly evaluate or certify the evaluation of the actions conducted for them – thus enforcing the two way relationship:

If there does not exist any mechanism to evaluate the community viewpoint on the benefits it made out of this programme, please indicate, for the needs of this survey, your own estimation of the community benefits. If this model is used again in the future, the companies will have to provide the proof that the community itself confirms the benefits of the programme at stake.

Of course, a margin of liberty is left to the company since no quantitative objectives are assigned; the company is free to define the number and nature of actions it has to undertake. In this respect, the overall design of the CSR programme matches contemporary managerial devices, where prescription is less substantive than formal (Cochoy & al., 1998): the company is more obliged to inform (Global mining) than to perform (in so doing). But the CSR programme is also highly prescriptive, since it puts the company under a double logic of control coming from the global headquarters and from the local partners. Local Extracting is trapped in this logic in the same way as modern workers are put under the twin pressure of their management and clients (Cochoy, 2002).

An implicit prescription: the obligation to think in terms of local communities

The second aspect of the programme is more subtle and concerns the implicitly prescriptive character of the systematic use of a single term that is never questioned nor really defined: the so-called “local communities.” If we go through Global Mining’s internal documents, these “local communities” seem to have a very simple but also very vague meaning: they seem to refer to all the groups of local actors who do not have economic relationships with Local Extracting but who could nevertheless influence and be influenced by the company. But if we go through the managerial literature at large, or if we move even further in the Internet galaxy to trace the use of the term²⁴⁵, we discover that “local communities” are far from belonging to Global Mining or to refer to a precise and identifiable source; on the contrary, they rather are part of this new global lexicon of managerial/political correctness which strongly associates “governance,” “sustainable development,” “environmental management,” “social responsibility,” and so on.

Here, we have to give an important precision: even if Local Extracting is a French plant, located in a French neighbourhood and operated and managed by French employees, all the documents of the CSR device are written in English, without any translation (all our quotes are directly taken from the original and only version). Through this linguistic trait we understand that Global Mining supposes that local management is or should be bilingual, but also and more importantly that the categories it uses have an obvious and universal meaning; it thus brings Local Extracting to think along this line; it leads it to conceive its neighbours as being “local communities”. On the one hand, there is no problem here if we consider how simple an expression as “local communities” is: local communities are communities (i.e. groups of people) that are local (i.e. geographically situated)! This expression is transparent, it says what it says, it mobilizes a very basic language that everybody understands. The proof of it may be that it is not even necessary to translate “local communities” into French, since even a French villager who does not know a single word of English will be able to equal “local communities” with “communautés locales.” On the other hand, once the question of the real significance of “local communities” has been raised, one discovers that its meaning is less transparent and universal than it seems at first glance. In fact, this expression, even in its translated version as “communautés locales,” is rarely used in France (except in many business codes of ethics directly derived from their English version!). This expression obviously comes from an Anglo-Saxon background, which is implicitly connected

²⁴⁵ A quick investigation conducted with a classical web search engine shows that “local communities” appear on 1 960 000 web sites; it is associated 216 000 times with “governance,” 439 000 times with “social responsibility,” 485 000 times with “sustainable development” and 559 000 with “environmental management”! (Google search, July 13, 2004).

with the multiculturalism movement. The latter conceives a society as a collection of well-differentiated groups whose members gather around strong cultural, ethnic, religious, sexual and/or racial identities (Taylor & Gutmann, 1994). Does this conception fit with the French society? Does it work? The answer to this question is far from being obvious, for at least two main reasons we know have to examine, both for their role and consequences.

The “local community” as a “communauté de communes” (in French): how a modern political system and a tax mechanism may disrupt the CSR logic

“Local communities”: from old paternalism to an impossible “neo-paternalism”

The first reason why the “local communities” framework may face some difficulties to match with the French local context brings us back to the beginning of our story, that is: the strange encounter between the globalization movement of Local Extracting and the localization programme of Global Mining. Ironically enough, a “local community” is a rather good description of Minalac’s area... as it was before the arrival of Global Mining! We already mentioned that Local Extracting and its neighbourhood have lived a long paternalistic relationship; Minalac’s population was almost like a big family whose members were depending on the local business which gave them social status, jobs and protection. But at the end of the 1980s, just before Global Mining entered in the game, a series of changes occurred in Local Extracting.

The first change concerned the company’s management: the highest positions in the company became no longer accessible to internal promotion; most of the new managers came with no previous experience in this company and with no ties with local employees and people. The personal commitment of the directors declined, not only because they came from outside, but also because they also chose to live outside Minalac:

Look: the financial director, who was a friend of mine and his wife also, lived in Minalac. [...] I believe that now people experience the presence of these new chiefs as... we don’t know them, we know them very little, they are not here, they live in [Big city, another city], they come from time to time for a meeting but we do not see them, you see. You understand what I mean? I mean that the persons at the top, the ones who manage everything are not here anymore. [Association No 2].

The distance between the company and the population did not only increase because of the managers’ remoteness, but also because of a rising discrepancy between local skills and the company’s hiring requirements:

Not long before – I am talking about ten years ago – I personally heard a mother saying: “Oh, it doesn’t matter, if he does nothing at school. He will work for Local Extracting” [Association No. 2]. “Now unless they have diplomas, country people are a little excluded from the company’s system since now they have automatic machines; these are run by people who have [a technical undergraduate diploma]; before that it was not really the case [Mayor No. 4].

This growing distance led to a feeling of uneasiness among the local people who used to benefit from the social actions supported by the company. Now, the same people pretend that these actions are concentrated internally, under the supervision of the Work’s council rather than under the director’s authority, as if Local Extracting was moving away from its local environment and leadership, not only because it opens itself to the global market, but also because it tends to close on itself:

I can assure you – I experienced it – I can assure you that during years, everybody took advantage of it. There was someone from the Work’s council who went and said: “Hey! How many pupils do you have? Let’s give you snacks!” And suddenly: nothing. We gave snacks and the children were delighted. Q: And now they don’t do it anymore? A: Oh no, I’m speaking of a long time ago, a long time ago because there has also been some economic restrictions, so the Work’s council went back to focus its actions on employees only. [Association No. 2].

What is true for the people is also true for the communes, but with a slight but significant difference in this case: if Local Extracting stopped offering its services to communes, if the distance grew between the company and the local people, it seems to be less because of the company’s unwillingness to provide its help than because of a decline in the mayors’ requests:

Twenty years ago they helped us to construct X, they also helped us, there is a small lake, a small pond, we have built a small barrage. When we asked them something, they do it. Well they were compelled to, weren’t they? And since it did not cost them... No, if they wanted to maintain good neighbourhood relationships... It’s true that we have been a long time without asking them anything. [Mayor No. 2].

Why do local people end up receiving or even asking nothing from/to Local Extracting? The last and biggest change that widened the gap between the inhabitants of Minalac and the company is certainly largely responsible: most of our respondents clearly refer to Global Mining’s entry in the business life of Local Extracting. They describe the main shareholder as a group of foreign financial managers who are more preoccupied with the Stock Exchange and profit figures than with the well-being of their employees. As a consequence and from the local people’s point of view, the decision power does not belong to Local Ex-

tracting anymore, since the strategic orientations are supposed to be taken not at the local management level but at a higher, remote and external level:

More and more workers, employees and even executives say that they have become non entities. It's because they have joined a world trust, you see. I don't know how many businesses Global Mining includes, so obviously they cannot... Before it was a family business, we knew everyone and we tried to ... They all were people of the area, we tried to make sure that everything went well and now, it's not the same anymore you see. [...] It's profit, profit, profit, so it is. And even if profits have been raised one must make some more. There are more requirements because the shareholders demand always more and so, I tell you, we have become non entities [Association No. 8]. So now, I think the people... we experience differently the presence of a multinational company. It's all the difference with a company that belongs to the place, a company that is well rooted, with people that are well known, see what I mean? With who we had strong relationships, everyday, through associations, everywhere. And now the people... It certainly is something else; it has moved to another dimension: you see what I mean? [Association No. 2].

What is striking in these testimonies is the constant back and forth move from present to the past. Even if the positions and viewpoints may vary accordingly to personal political commitments, everybody seems to agree that things are not the same anymore, that the relationships between Minalac's people and the company have changed from strong interpersonal ties and exchanges to a much more abstract and distant link, geographically, economically and socially speaking. Local Extracting which was formerly considered as a true part of the local society is today rather seen as an "externality", as an entity far away from the close and warm society of the past. This leads to another common characteristic of the testimonies: they convey the expressions of some regrets; they sometimes seem to express the nostalgia of a lost world. And here comes the paradox we already mentioned. On the one hand, the growing distance between the company and its people should function as a fantastic windfall for Global Mining. Does not its CSR programme precisely propose to fight against the social distance due to the association with worldwide companies and to renew local human relationships? But on the other hand and as we will see, local people seem to beware about the dangers of neo-paternalism; moreover they even think that going backwards is neither needed nor possible since everything has changed – since there are no more "local communities" in the traditional meaning of the word in Minalac and since this situation appears as irreversible to them.

Local communities vs. "communauté de communes locales":
from private sponsoring to public tax funding

This last point is the second reason why the "local communities" framework may not work as well as Local Mining's code expects it to. Every-

thing has changed: this statement, which – as we have seen – applies to the company, is also valid for both the local population and the local system.

Around Local Extracting, people are not the same anymore. This is firstly evidenced in the knowledge people have of the situation. Is it possible to describe as “local communities” some social groups who think globally and who are well aware that their life is not isolated but closely related to international issues? As we have seen, Local Extracting’s neighbours know that the company is owned by an international group. If our respondents have not heard about CSR yet, several of them mentioned some worldwide management policies that were already implemented by Local Extracting, such as the ISO 9000 and 14 000 standards.

Around Local Extracting, the “area” has also changed. A long time ago, a local commune was considered as a “local community,” in the sense that it was a rather closed society, organized around its mayor, its church, and its local and rural values. However, this conception did not last long. Still, if we go back to the French Revolution which instituted the commune as the basic cell of the State, we rather should say that it never really existed. Even if France is known for having an incredible number of 36 551 communes among which more than 28 000 have less than 1 000 inhabitants – i.e. almost as many communes as all the other European countries²⁴⁶ put together! – classic works in French political science have shown that very strong networks and power relationships make local authorities highly dependent on the State and its technical services (Crozier and Thoenig, 1975)²⁴⁷. One could have thought that the decentralization movement launched with the law of March 2nd, 1982, would have loosened the interdependency between State and local levels in giving a greater institutional, fiscal and political autonomy to local authorities. But in fact, this reorganization has more modernized than weakened the relationship, as it is evidenced, for instance, with the introduction of a contractual system linking the State and the Regions. If the latter system clearly breaks apart from the strong bureaucratic ties of the past, it still preserves the States’ control over local institutions through new political and fiscal dependencies.

However, in this subtle reconfiguration of local French governance, an evolution has occurred which greatly altered the local political game and which – more importantly here – modified the social life of Minalac’s

²⁴⁶ This statistics refer to the situation of Europe before its recent enlargement to twenty five countries.

²⁴⁷ This dependency does not occur only because any Mayor is the local representative of the government, is controlled by the State (through the mediation of the prefect), and receives a large part of its financial resources from central authorities. Crozier and Thoenig have shown that this dependency is reinforced by a game of “crossed regulation” between political and technical State hierarchies: on the one hand, the local civil servants mobilize local politicians’ legitimacy in order to obtain the resources they need to act from the State; on the other hand the same local politicians negotiate with the local civil servants to get the technical and financial means they need in order to forward their political programs and thus better their chances to be re-elected.

area. On July 12th, 1999, along with the decentralization movement, a law was passed in order to counter the perverse effects of the excessive dispersal of French communes. This law favored an “intercommunality” system, which was aimed at encouraging small communes to gather and behave collectively in order to increase their capacity to act and develop more autonomous, coherent and ambitious projects (Bernard-Gélabert, 1999). In our case, this law led in 2002 to the birth of the “[Valley] community of commune” which gathers 39 communes among which Minalac is only a member. This structure thus became the area’s [Département] largest financial structure.

This event deeply modified the complex relationship between Global Mining’s project, Local Extracting, Minalac and its surroundings. Indeed, at the very moment when Local Extracting was trying to address more effectively its “local communities” along Global Mining’s code of conduct, local actors redefined themselves as a “local community of communes.” Instead of the fragmented isolated cultural entities which the “local communities” concept implicitly pointed at, Local Extracting was now facing a new institutional entity, where Minalac’s interest were diluted into more general and remote interests. The consequences of this evolution on Local Extracting’s project seem to be twofold.

First, the “communauté de communes” increased the social distance between local actors and Local Extracting, along a process which is particularly well illustrated in the following testimony:

We in [commune X] are lucky enough to have an extraordinary municipality and mayor who do a lot for young people and sports [...]. I President of an association can go and see the mayor and tell him: “Sir, you see, we are contemplating of doing this or that; do you think it would be possible? And he knows that he has the capacity to act because it works financially in the back-office, you see? There is the Community of communes and all that; it seems to me that there are more expectations oriented towards the Community of communes than to a company, whatever it may be. I think that today people make allowances, today we are able to distinguish the Community of communes on the one hand from the company on the other hand, whereas in the past it was much more intricate. We have projects but as far as I am concerned it is clear that we will mainly rely on the Community of communes and the President of the Community of communes before going canvassing companies. Asking companies for help is rather anecdotic and punctual, you see. We do not want to engage with companies, I am not sure to know how to, we are not sure to know how to, we did not really want to, you see. It remains punctual, it doesn’t go and it won’t go further. [Association No. 1].

Through this discourse, we clearly see a pattern along which local social needs tend to follow a particular path moving from local interests to the mayor (“I can go and see the mayor”), then from the mayor to the Community of communes (“there is the community of communes”) rather than to Local Extracting or any other local actor (“we will mainly rely on the Community of communes”). There are clearly two competing chan-

nels leading to the fulfilment of particular wants (“today we are able to dissociate the Community of communes on the one hand and the company on the other hand”), and the new solution of the Community of communes seems to overcome the previous local business’s solution (“We do not want to engage with companies”).

Why? In order to answer this question, we need to analyse the second change introduced by the system of the Community of communes. This change is both financial and procedural. French communes are mostly financed through four local taxes, which represent 53 % of their total resources²⁴⁸ (the remaining part comes from direct State transfers, European funds, loans, etc.). These taxes are: the two taxes on developed and undeveloped sites, the housing tax, and the professional tax. The latter transfers resources from local companies to communes, according to the importance of the business’s economic activity. This tax is the most important, since it represents 49 % of the total amount of the communes’ fiscal resources²⁴⁹. Before 2002 and the setting of the Community of communes, the communes received directly their part of these fiscal resources. But with the inception of the Community of communes, the system went under revision. The professional tax does not go directly to the commune where the company was – Minalac in this case. Now, it is the Community of communes that receives all the professional tax revenues coming from the companies which are located on its own territory (the communes keep the other three remaining taxes). Then the Community of commune redistributes the professional tax to the communes along rules negotiated with its members.

What is the result of this somewhat complex tax mechanism on Global Mining’s and Local Extracting’s projects when addressed to “local communities”? First of all, we have to notice that local entities and indirectly all other local actors, be they collective (like associations) or individual (like citizens), are still financially dependent on Local Extracting, which is the largest industry of the Community of communes’ territory and thus the first tax contributor. But the system of the “professional tax” disrupts the logic of the direct business sponsoring of local actors. In a sense, this has always been the case. Indeed, the professional tax system operated well before Global Mining’s arrival. However, when the professional tax went directly from Local Extracting to Minalac’s resources, the relationships between local authorities and the company were closer. On the contrary, the transfer of the main fiscal resource to the Community of communes lengthens the financial distance between the Company and its local partners. Local actors get more and more used to the system which helps them to get the money of the company without having to give any justification of its use.

²⁴⁸ Reference year: 2000. Source: http://www.vie-publique.fr/decouverte_instit/finances/finances_2_1_0_q1.htm

²⁴⁹ Reference year: 1998. Sources: “Notes Bleues de Bercy” and “Annuaire statistique de la Direction Générale des Impôts.”

Viviana Zelizer (1994) has nicely shown that money sometimes loses its universal meaning when particular groups decide to “mark” money as an expression of their identity and of the social meaning they give to their financial resources (for instance, they put some banknotes in envelopes which they dedicate to some particular uses, they write some ethnic signs of community belonging directly on the bills, etc.). The previous implication of Local Extracting in Minalac’s society worked along this line: everybody knew what the company financed and accepted this financial link to be public. But now, we rather witness a reverse move in favour of money “disentanglement”: local actors are rather looking for the power of money to dilute the social links attached to it (Simmel, 1987) and thus to free themselves from any symbolic debt and social dependency. In the end, business direct sponsorship and public funding appear to be not only different solutions but solutions that are exclusive of each other. This alternative character works two ways. First, local actors think that the tax system makes it difficult for the company to pay twice, through its fiscal contribution and through voluntary action:

Before [Local Extracting] financed sport associations. [...] It was at a time when there was only the commune of Minalac. But now there is the district and the Community of communes and professional taxes are rising quite fast, I think that [Local Extracting people] have revised and reduced their subsidies. [...] Tax increases lead to a vicious circle since people want new services, the inhabitants of the Community of communes ask for new services, day nurseries, subsidies to take care of the children, a retirement house... All this has its financial weight. [...] And since people do not really want to pay, all these new expenses have to be paid by taxes; taxes have to be raised. These are needs of the Community of communes that make the professional taxes increase quite rapidly. So the Local Extracting Company pays. [Mayor No. 5]

Second and consequently, some actors seem to think that it would be somewhat indecent to get money twice from the company, indirectly through the tax system and again through its direct support:

So let say, we have never looked for business sponsorship, no, no. I don’t really want, well, I don’t think it is necessary, you see. But Local Extracting, it’s a little bit different, well, I personally can’t imagine Minalac without Local Extracting; they have such a big impact at the professional tax level, etc., that I don’t see myself saying: “listen, folks...” So you see... [Association No. 1].

As we already suggested, the shift is not only financial but also procedural: the system of the Community of communes compels local representatives to learn how to work together, to go beyond their local interests and to set up rules and criteria in order to share their common resources without fighting all the time. This process develops a culture of civic justification (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1990) which seems to reduce the tendency to take arbitrary, discrete, and bilateral decisions: several

mayors indicate that before asking something to Local Extracting they now should think of it beforehand and find the necessary arguments so that voters “well understand that Local Extracting is not attempted to bribe the mayor” [Mayor No. 2]. With such a risk, is it not even simpler to rely on the tax mechanism and not to ask anything to the company?

All in all, Local Extracting’s managers are no longer facing this collection of isolated “local communities” to whom they could talk directly (as in the code of conduct); they rather face a more single, distant, and plural entity which prefers to act along indirect relationships mediated through a fiscal system or through its own political rules. Does it mean that local actors became independent from the company? This question leads us to a last paradox: the need for a greater distance seems to be as important as Local Extracting presence remains prominent and crucial:

As for us, we do not draw benefits from Local Extracting or rather... through the intercommunality system, we do. [...] But if Local Extracting goes away, or even if they fire members of the staff, it will be a disaster for the valley because it is the only industrial company that exists and generates direct employment and subcontracting companies and an overall activity, since because there are employees, there is also a baker, a butcher. And all this is due to the presence of Local Extracting, OK? So it’s extremely important for the valley [...] But as the mayor of [W], I have very little professional relationships with Local Extracting because my commune is concerned neither with the taxes nor with the factory below, nor with the quarry above, nor with the cableway there... [Mayor No.].

We thus understand why the CSR programme aimed at developing new relationships with the “local communities” finally encounters some difficulties in Minalac area. If the Community of commune is the only real and official community in this neighbourhood, this community doesn’t fit with the CSR framework and thus shows a reluctance to cooperate. The inappropriateness of the « local community » framework is both organisational and cultural. From an organizational point of view, the intercommunality system hinders the development of new relationships between Local Extracting and the surrounding villages because of the alternative solution of fiscal flux and administrative circuits. From a cultural point of view, the same system seems to encourage local leaders to prefer indirect and official relationships to any bilateral exchange which may sound as neo-paternalistic.

In Minalac but more generally in any French rural area, local groups and institutions do not have definite borders; on the contrary, they are tied through complex cultural, political and administrative networks to other circles going from the local level to the State. This meets Dominique Schnapper’s idea of a “community of citizens”: through this oxymoron, Schnapper suggests that if there exists in France such a thing as a community, it is less at the local level than around the idea of nation (Schnapper, 1994). Of course, communitarian movements do exist in France.

But paradoxically enough, they tend to develop more in the urban settings which were formerly supposed to destroy local identities (Polanyi, 2001) than in the rural areas which have long been considered as the classical cradle for communities. Sadly enough, French suburbs experience more and more the problems of segregation, violence, ethnic and racial conflicts. They are the theatre of a fragmentation process of the civilian society; this in turn gives rise to multicultural claims and to the affirmation of “local communities” in the very sense of Global Mining’s code of conduct. At the same time, French rural areas undergo rather the opposite experience: geographic attachments are counterbalanced by complex dependencies which develop between “country” citizens and some other national and regional systems and references; this in turn contradicts the very idea of a “local community” as a close and situated group organized around its own particularistic values.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have explored the current move from “political consumption” to “political production.” We have shown that supply side actors – at least in some countries like France – are sometimes much more active in bringing politics into the market than consumers. On the one hand these orientations, in our case, are real: they lead a big international mining group to require from one of its subsidiary company to engage – with a great deal of injunctions, reporting tools and other control devices – in “socially responsible” actions for “local communities.” On the other hand the same CSR orientations happen to be difficult to implement: they encounter some unexpected difficulties, such as the paradoxical “reluctance” of the publics it is supposed to serve, help, or favour. The latter – especially the mayors – are indeed not very keen on accepting socially responsible partnership offers, because they see them as a revival of foregone paternalism – a paternalism they can escape through the mechanism of the professional tax which helps them to gather local business’s support without having to account for it. Moreover, local actors do not fit with the “local community” framework which the CSR policies put forward in order to define their positive action toward the company’s public. If the code of conduct we have studied proclaims the firm’s willingness to “do [its] best to accommodate the different cultures, lifestyles, heritage and preferences,” thinking these elements in terms of “local community” seriously hinders the fulfilment of this commitment. Now, it seems to us that this particular story conveys at least three more general insights. These insights address the research endeavours which focus on the political aspect of economic activities, whether they focus on the production realm, on the consumption field, or on both.

As far as the productive side is concerned, it is important to note that most studies of CSR take the company as a black box, and focus their interest either on the inputs of the CSR orientation (the codes of conduct) or on their outputs (the financial and social impacts of these codes). These works do not propose to study closely the implementation of CSR. Their best attempts in this respect are directed to build some general and theoretical frameworks of CSR dynamics, which are more “thought” than “documented” (see the theories of moral development, organizational learning, etc.: [Gond 2003]). And when real actors are taken into account as in the stakeholder theory, these actors are considered only from the company’s point of view. As a consequence, the stakeholders are largely “de-socialized”: we learn a lot about the relationship linking each partner to the company, but we do not get any understanding about the links that may exist between the different stakeholders. As a consequence, the stakeholders are considered as independent from each other, as closed and defined entities – in the same way as Global Mining’s “local communities”! – with the same possible drawbacks. It seems to us that this is an argument in favour of in depth case studies of CSR policies, which should focus as much on the company as on its networks and social environment (for two excellent pioneering attempts in this direction, see Giamporcaro, 2004 and Leca & al., 2004).

If we now turn to the consumption aspects of “industrial and marketing politics,” we may also point some interesting lessons of our small case study. At first glance, getting such results may seem surprising, since we have not encountered a single consumer in this story, at least a “conscious” and “reflexive” consumer! But political consumerism is very present here, at least by analogy. Historical evidence shows that political consumerism is not new. Political consumer movements were an answer to the State’s weakness; through individual and ethical consumption they proposed to handle some economic problems, such as the protection of consumers and workers, that the State of their time failed to address (Chessel, 2004; Glickmann, 2004). But the very same movements disappeared when the State began to assume its responsibilities and designed institutions and laws devoted to market regulation, worker’s protection and consumer’s defence (Chessel & Cochoy, 2004). The present case study may give a first evidence to show that what is true historically may also be true spatially. Indeed, Corporate Social Responsibility may be seen as an answer to the weakness of local regulation: it develops where national States and Laws are weak, and thus gives to activists or companies the opportunity to act by themselves and to lead the game. But when the same actors meet a strong legal and political system, we significantly do not see any activist or political demand, and CSR meets some difficulties to develop as if it were irrelevant and useless. Could not the same be said about political consumerism? What should actors do: should they

forward market based solutions or should they work on the government side to reconstruct the classical body politics? (Or even both, of course).

As we can see, “political consumerism” and “politicized capitalism” are not as far from one another as what we could have thought from the beginning. They even could be considered as the two sides of a same coin. On the one hand, political consumerism studies help us to see how and why ordinary citizens care or don’t care about the managerial and political issues facing them. On the other hand, research about the political behaviour of companies teaches us that businesses do not only “respond” to their demand but also develop their own strategies, and that the two may not really match despite the claim of a joint interest between them. The balance between consumer and business’s commitments depends on national settings: there is not a single globalization that favours uniform consumer and/or corporate responses. As a result, we may wonder if the development of “politicized economics” does not need a joint effort between the twin studies of “political consumerism” and “political capitalism” in order to move towards a better understanding of our new “political economy.”

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Resumé

Den 26 – 29 augusti 2004 arrangerades ett tvärvetenskapligt internationellt/nordiskt seminarium om politisk konsumtion i Oslo, hotell Vokse-naasen, under titeln *2nd International Seminar on Political Consumerism*. Seminariet arrangerades av redaktörerna för föreliggande TemaNord-rapport. I denna TemaNord-rapport, som har titeln *Political Consumerism: Its Motivations, Power, and Conditions in the Nordic Countries and Elsewhere. Proceedings from the 2nd International Seminar on Political Consumerism, Oslo August 26-29, 2004*, inkluderas vidareutvecklade versioner av seminariets samtliga uppsatser.

Politisk konsumtion handlar om att uttrycka politiska preferenser via marknaden, om att medvetet välja eller välja bort produkter och producenter för att förändra verksamheter i en riktning som man ser som socialt, etisk och miljömässigt önskvärd. Politik pågår därför inte bara inom ramen för det parlamentariska systemet. Allt fler aktörer – såväl stater som resursstarka företag, NGOs och enskilda konsumenter – väljer att uttrycka politiska uppfattningar genom marknaden genom att organisera och medverka i köpbojkotter, 'cultural jamming' eller så kallad 'buycotting' (t.ex. med hjälp av miljömärkning). Det gäller särskilt inom frågor som mänskliga rättigheter, global solidaritet, djuretik och miljö.

Ett forskarnätverk med intresse för begreppet och fenomenet politisk konsumtion är i framväxande och har en stark förankring i Norden (se kap. 1). Exempelvis hölls ett första internationellt seminarium i Stockholm år 2001. Det senaste seminariet vars uppsatser den här rapporten publicerar samlade forskare från både Norden och utanför Norden. Ett syfte med seminariet var att utveckla teori och empiri kring betydelsen av politisk konsumtion i dagens samhälle. Ett annat syfte var att utreda om, i vilken mån och i så fall varför Nordiska länder skulle vara särskilt gynnsamma för den här typen av politisk strategi. Seminariet finansierades av Nordiska Ministerrådet och Vetenskapsrådet.

Programmet och denna TemaNord-rapport inkluderar 21 uppsatser. En tredjedel av dessa är skrivna av forskare från icke-nordiska länder (USA, Storbritannien, Nederländerna, Tyskland och Frankrike). Uppsatserna fångar in temat politisk konsumtion utifrån olika teoretiska infallsvinklar och är skrivna av forskare med olika disciplinära hemvister (statsvetenskap, sociologi, geografi, idéhistoria, filosofi, marknadsföring, företagsekonomi, kulturgeografi, miljövetenskap och näringslära).

I en första session med uppsatser analyserades hur fenomenet politisk konsumtion exempelvis förhåller sig till klassiska liberala demokrativärden och vissa globaliseringsaspekter. Relaterade termer togs upp, såsom "etisk konsumtion" och "medborgarkonsument". I sessionen diskutera-

des också modeller för normativ utvärdering av arrangemang för politisk konsumtion.

Den andra sessionen analyserade, med hjälp av survey-data, nordiska politiska konsumenters karakteristika samt deras motiv att uttrycka politik via marknadens arena. Här visar det sig att politisk konsumtion är långt ifrån en negligerbar politisk handlingsform i de nordiska länderna. Vidare kunde vi se att variabler såsom genus, utbildning, politiskt intresse och identitet samt i viss utsträckning inkomst har ett positivt samband med politisk konsumtion. Ett annat mönster visade sig vara att uppgifterna i Danmark, Sverige och Norge är märkbart lika.

Den tredje sessionen diskuterade mobilisering av politiska konsumenter och maktaspekter. Har politiska konsumenter en reell konsumentmakt och i så fall genom vilka medel? Sociala rörelsers roll i att stimulera, "aggregera" och "signalera" konsumentmakten tas upp i en text, liksom betydelsen av socialisering och informella kanaler på mikronivå. I en uppsats diskuteras svårigheter att utveckla politiska konsumentstrategier beroende på bristande ekonomiska möjlighetsstrukturer. I en annan uppsats lanseras begreppet "diskursiv politisk konsumtion" som en tredje form av politisk konsumtion vid sidan av bojkott och buykott.

I den fjärde sessionen diskuterades bakgrundsfaktorer som påverkar förutsättningar att introducera trovärdiga institutionella arrangemang för politisk konsumtion. Särskild fokus låg på miljömärkning av hållbart skogsbruk och fiske. I uppsatserna från denna session görs bland annat jämförelser mellan nordiska länder. Författarna visar att bakgrundsfaktorer som politisk kultur, marknadstryck, organiseringen av civilsamhället och industristruktur är väsentliga att ta i beaktande.

Nästföljande session analyserade förutsättningar för politisk konsumtion i förhållande till marknadsrelaterade praktiker som entreprenörskap och det diskuterades vad politisk konsumtion betyder för marknadsföring. I en uppsats behandlas möjligheterna att skapa PR såväl som konsumenttillit via spårbarhetssystem.

I den sista sessionen med uppsatser analyserades hur generella kontextuella faktorer påverkar förutsättningar för politisk konsumtion. Faktorer som inkluderar bland annat ett lands politiska orientering vad gäller inkomstfördelning och global solidaritet, tillgång till alternativa produkter samt traditioner av medborgarmobilisering i konsumentfrågor. Exempelvis visas att Nordiska länder med jämn inkomstfördelning och stark global solidaritet (Sverige, Norge, Danmark men inte lika utpräglat Finland) också uppvisar goda förutsättningar att främja hållbar konsumtion. I en annan uppsats ges en kontrasterande bild av förutsättningarna för politisk konsumtion i Norge. Här betonas istället betydelsen av faktorer som tillit till existerande auktoriteter samt tillgång till alternativa produkter.

Under seminariets avslutande session diskuterades frågor för fortsatt teoretisk och empirisk forskning. Denna diskussion redovisas sist i det inledande kapitlet. Exempelvis påtalades vikten av att relatera begreppet

politisk konsumtion till näraliggande begrepp som etisk konsumtion och "corporate social responsibility". Vidare framfördes intresset att söka grundligare förklaringar till varför vissa kategorier av människor är mer benägna att engagera sig som politiska konsumenter. En viktig slutsats av seminariet i sin helhet är vikten av att både jämföra länder och sektorer för att förstå förutsättningar för politisk konsumtion. Mer komparativ forskning behövs, särskilt i förhållande till frågor som tillit eller brist på tillit till auktoriteter i civilsamhället, staten och marknaden. I den avslutande sessionen fördes också en sammanfattande diskussion om det speciella med den nordiska kontexten för fenomenet i fråga. En hel del likheter mellan länderna togs upp, men också distinkta skillnader, något som är viktigt att forska vidare om. En slutsats är också att vi vet mer om förhållandena i Sverige, Norge och Danmark än i Island och Finland. Avslutningsvis konstaterades att framtida forskning och konfererande behöver vara särskilt inriktade på frågor om effektivitet, demokratisk legitimitet, ansvarighet och tillit i förhållande till olika strategier inom ramen för den politiska konsumtionen.