
SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND GREEN LIFESTYLES – DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS

Paper A: This document intends to serve as a background material for the Workshop on sustainable consumption and green lifestyles of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The document has the purpose to provide an overview of definitions of sustainable consumption and green or sustainable life-styles. This will be the topic of workshop session 1.

Author: Åke Thidell

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1 INTRODUCTION

Sustainable consumption is often seen as a concept mirroring the production side. While sustainable production has a production and upstream perspective searching opportunities to alter related activities in a more sustainable direction, sustainable consumption is directed to how and why goods and services are demanded, used and consumed. Sustainable consumption is thus geared towards the needs and wants that the production side is supposed to fulfill.

(One of) the first definitions of the concept sustainable consumption was coined in Oslo in 1994 in line with the Brundtland commission definition of “sustainable development” and includes both consumption and production:

“(Sustainable production and consumption is) the use of goods and services that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, while minimizing the use of natural resources, toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations.”

The meaning or notion of the concept has evolved over time and certain aspects have been added, which will be demonstrated below, but this definition remains in recent publications, see for instance (UNEP 2010).

Some definitions stand alone while others either are derived from certain contexts or are setting conditions. The intention is to pick up and describe these different definitions and meanings, often suggested by international organisations, the EU, or individual national Nordic countries. Beside the definitions provided, the implications on scope, actors and roles are described as well as connections to other related concepts.

The aim is to provide a common ground for discussions on various interpretations of the concepts and subsequent implications on suggestions and directions of policies and other initiatives that could or should be addressed, which actors that need to take actions, and eventually what need to be achieved to further sustainable consumption.

2 DEFINITIONS OF SC AND LIFESTYLES

The general definition outlined above set the scope of consumption of goods and services with the aim of peoples’ quality of life in a long-term perspective. The sustainability content is the environment and natural resources. However, the concept of sustainable consumption has evolved over time and different organisations have contributed to add flavour to the definitions with some modifications in scope, aims and actors involved. In the following chapter the definitions introduced by major international organisations are outlined.

2.1 THE OECD

2.1.1 BACKGROUND

The OECD picked up the sustainable consumption concept in December 1994 when the organisation held an expert seminar¹ on the issue and has since then been a major actor in the development of the SC concepts, policies, etc.

SCP was mentioned as a “useful umbrella concept for integrating environmental and economic factors, particularly on the demand-side, thereby complementing the traditional supply-side focus of environmental policy-making” and called for greater precision in the definition of key terms and to distinguish between both unsustainable and sustainable behaviour and between *levels*, *patterns* and *rates of change* of consumption. However, no explicit definition of the concept was reported from the seminar.

2.1.2 ACTORS AND ACTIONS

The end-use of consumption the expert seminar addressed not just included individuals and households but also businesses and governments. The interconnections between supply and demand were highlighted as well as individual responsibility and choice. Hence it was found a need to communicate relevant information to the actors involved to help them make informed decisions.

The lifestyle concept was not expressed per se but the societal physical infrastructures were mentioned to constrain consumers into making unsustainable consumption choices and that community networks can support changes in consumer habits.

In 1995 OECD established its Work Programme on Sustainable Consumption and Production. The work focused on final consumption and household consumption patterns (as opposed to intermediate consumption and production undertaken by firms). The programme explicitly pointed out consumption of food, energy, water, waste generation and tourism-related travel.

2.1.3 THE OECD APPROACH TO DEFINITION

Then the OECD has also taken up the definition² issue in a pragmatic way: the definitions used are those of the national accounts system, i.e. consumption is defined as the final consumption activity of households (including the production of recyclable inputs). The OECD recognised that there is no unique way to define sustainable consumption, and that in practice, it is necessary to interpret sustainable consumption in a pragmatic way. Thus, sustainable consumption can be understood to include a range of changes in behaviour, such as greater efficiency in the consumption of energy and resources in the home, the minimisation of waste, and more environmentally sound purchasing habits of households.

There is a need for a shift in the structure of consumption that will require a multi-stakeholder approach, including public policy, market innovation, NGO mobilisation of consumer groups, and voluntary initiatives among consumers themselves. (OECD 2002)

2.1.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The OECD has gradually both shaped and changed the meaning and role of the SC concept; from being ambivalent to use definitions to adopt definitions that can be used in specific situations and regions in a

¹ See URL: <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/consume/mit.html>

² Indicators on sustainable consumption, see URL:
http://www.oecd.org/document/58/0,2340,en_2649_34331_2397498_1_1_1_1,00.html

pragmatic way. The initial definition mentioned in section 1 (in parallel to the Brundtland definition) serves as foundation, but the open interpretation suits adaptation to specific sites and problems. There is, in addition, a time perspective, the time within which environmental pressures must be evaluated. It makes the definition of SC a dynamic concept indicating direction of change. (OECD 2002)

The scope of purely environmental sustainability has been opened up to include social (wealth, health) and ethical (equity and distributional) aspects of consumption. In particular, issues related to energy, transport, waste, water and food are mentioned as target areas for sustainable consumption.

Initially, the actor scope included individual and household consumers, businesses and governments but was later narrowed down to household consumption only. However, it seems like the actor scope has been expanded again.

The OECD points out the important role of consumer education in promoting sustainable consumption beside economic and regulatory instruments. (OECD 2009)

2.2 UNITED NATION ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMME

In 1998 the UN Environmental Programme (UNEP) started the Sustainable Consumption Program (SCP).³ The programme reflects the notion of production addressing the supply side and consumption the demand side as it was designed to complement production related concepts such as cleaner production, eco-efficiency and dematerialisation that UNEP has disseminated through various channels, with demand-side activities, such as green procurement and changing patterns of consumption.

2.2.1 DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION

UNEP subscribes to the original definition introduced in section 1. The definition of sustainable consumption is further elaborated for developing and developed countries (UNEP 2009):

In **developing countries**, where there are often insufficient accessible resources to meet basic needs, sustainable consumption would target more efficient use of resources, thereby effectively expanding the resource base to meet human needs. Examples include increasing access to energy through renewable or clean energy technologies and the use of forests for energy, food and construction in such a way that the forests are not irreversibly damaged and can regenerate themselves.

In **developed countries**, where resource use is more excessive, wasteful and inefficient, the emphasis is on altering consumption patterns to achieve reduced overall material and energy use, as well as reduced intensity per unit of functional utility. Here an example could be changing consumer preferences towards organic produce, which has lower resource inputs and environmental impacts than produce from conventional farming methods.

2.2.2 SCOPE OF SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

The driver for sustainable consumption and production are the environmental and social challenges that threaten both humankind and the planet including climate change, land degradation, air and water pollution, depletion of non-renewable resources, poverty and hunger. Unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, including inefficient use of resources, contribute significantly to these challenges. (UNEP 2009)

2.2.3 ACTORS

³ Sustainable consumption: <http://www.unep.fr/scp/sc/>

The programme targets different stakeholder groups, including businesses, governmental and non-governmental organisations. The public sector procurement is apparently viewed as an important component to stimulate an environmental sound production and product development.

Consumers are given an important role. They should be given information on environmental impacts of consumer choice and behaviour, efficient use of materials, energy and water and recycling. For consumers, the scope includes social implications of consumption patterns.

Later on, in the report “Consumption Opportunities” has the scope of the sustainable consumption concept been enlarged to include changed consumption patterns and improved quality of life beside the previous scope of environmental impacts, resource efficiency, and social implications. Business should facilitate innovative business models for shifting from products to services, using for instance product-service systems.

2.3 UNEP AND UN DESA - THE MARRAKECH PROCESS

2.3.1 BACKGROUND

The Marrakech process (See report on “The EU and UN work on sustainable consumption and lifestyles”) is a global multi-stakeholder process that is co-ordinated by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). It was launched in order to support the development of “10-year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production”.

2.3.2 CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

This comprehensive work has adopted the following definitions/descriptions of the key-concepts:⁴

- **Sustainable consumption** is related to the process of purchasing, consuming and disposing of products, while sustainable lifestyles comprise a broader set of activities and values, such as interactions and education, which include, but are not limited to material consumption.
- **Lifestyles** serve as “social conversations”, in which people differentiate themselves from other people, signal their social position and psychological aspirations. Since many of the signals are mediated by goods, lifestyles are closely linked to material and resource flows in the society.
- **Sustainable lifestyles** are patterns of action and consumption, used by people to affiliate and differentiate themselves from others, which: meet basic needs, provide a better quality of life, minimise the use of natural resources and emissions of waste and pollutants over the lifecycle, and do not jeopardise the needs of future generations”. Sustainable lifestyles should reflect specific cultural, natural, economic and social heritage of each society.

The Marrakech process also provides a more extensive definition of sustainable lifestyles⁵:

”A sustainable lifestyle is a way of living enabled both by efficient infrastructures, goods and services, and by individual choices and actions that minimise the use of natural resources, and generation of emissions, wastes and pollution, while supporting equitable socio-economic development and progress for all.

Creating sustainable lifestyles means rethinking our ways of living, how we buy and how we organise our everyday life. It is also about altering how we socialise, exchange, share, educate and build identities. It is

⁴ See URL: http://esa.un.org/marrakechprocess/pdf/Issues_Sus_Lifestyles.pdf
http://esa.un.org/marrakechprocess/pdf/TFSL_ConceptPaper.pdf and
<http://www.uneptie.org/pc/pc/graphics/highlights/Marrakec%20Plen%20Rev.doc>

⁵ Report of the Marrakech Process Task force on Sustainable Lifestyles, Swedish Ministry of Environment, Marrakech Process and UNEP. Derived from (UNEP 2010).

about transforming our societies and living in balance with our natural environment. As citizens, at home and at work, many of our choices on energy use, transport, food, waste, communication and solidarity contribute to building sustainable lifestyles.

Governments have a key role to play by creating the appropriate frameworks and infrastructures (regulatory instruments, technological innovations, new public services) to enable citizens to change. Information and education are essential, as well as the full participation of civil society in the movement and the involvement of the business sector that can develop innovative solutions for sustainable lifestyles.”

2.3.3 MEASURES AND ACTORS

The measures to be address by sustainable consumption and lifestyles include both:

- The societal “software” including the non-material values and norms, institutions and cultures that govern our society in an informal way, and
- The societal “hardware”, including the material basis of society: the infrastructure, technology, products and services, as well as regulatory and economic frameworks that enable or constrain consumer choice).

It is emphasized that both aspects are needed in order to avoid rebound effects.

The actors that are addressed through these meanings of the concepts are among others:

- Individuals in their role as consumers can influence the sustainability of their lifestyles by choosing more sustainable products and services;
- Grass root initiatives and communities, maybe supported by NGOs, can help inspiring and facilitate individual sustainable lifestyles;
- Businesses have an important role to play in providing hardware and software for sustainable lifestyles by designing products and services, and by shaping preferences through media and advertising. They can create markets for sustainable products and services and supporting sustainable lifestyles.

Sustainable consumption and lifestyles should, in the context of the Marrakech process, be a matter of changes in the consumers’ knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. It should be easier to consume efficiently and sustainable living should be facilitated by communication and education for sustainable consumption and enabling infrastructures in the society. Urban planning and land-use policies can enable and stimulate the development of more sustainable lifestyles.

2.4 THE WORLD BUSINESS COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The World Business Council for Sustainable development (Falkman) state that sustainable consumption and production is common goal for businesses, consumers, and governments and outlines among other issues what business can do.

2.4.1 DEFINITION

The WBCSD takes the first definition (see section 1) as starting point and specifying the characteristics for the WBCSD members:

“Sustainable production and consumption involves business, government, communities and households contributing to environmental quality through the efficient production and use of natural resources, the minimization of wastes, and the optimization of products and services. The WBCSD recognizes the need for

business to take a leadership role in promoting sustainable patterns of production and consumption that meet societal needs within ecological limits. Business can best work towards these goals through responsible environmental management, enhanced competitiveness and profitable operations.”

2.4.2 ACTORS AND ACTIONS

The WBCSD stresses the shared goals and responsibilities among the above-mentioned actors. There is a strong commitment to efficiencies and several measures that can be taken by businesses on the production side (eco-efficiency). It is stated that business makes decisions on the design, manufacture and delivery of goods and services.

On the consumption side business itself is also a major consumer of goods and services as well as the raw material resources and energy and may influence customer demand through advertising and marketing.

The WBCSD stresses the need of partnerships with different stakeholders since there is no clear solution, path or end-point. Thus, SCP builds on continuous improvements. Business's efforts in the production need to be matched by changes in the consumption and usage patterns of individuals and businesses. Hence, there is a need to provide reliable information to customers and consumers so that they can make informed choices.

2.5 THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union launched the action plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) and on Sustainable Industrial Policy (SIP) in July 2008.⁶ The aim is to integrate sustainable development into the Lisbon Process for jobs and growth through continuous improvement of the quality of life and well-being for present and future generations. The scope goes beyond Europe since it includes impacts of European consumption in exporting countries.

The action plan demonstrates the dual view of environmental improvements of the industrial production in combination with demand side measures. The action plan does not provide an explicit definition or connection to lifestyles but captures the content through a set of related policies that should be better integrated.

The focus revolves around resource efficiency gains, eco-innovation, improved performance of products and services, and information as vehicles towards sustainable development. The demand side is targeted through product policies that influence the goods and services that consumers purchase can purchase, and how they use them in combination with changed framework conditions for their consumption. (EUPOPP 2009)

Among the demand side actors have the public sector, the consumers and the retail trade been given prominent roles. The statement that the "challenges are directly linked to our way of life. The way we produce and consume contributes to global warming, pollution, material use, and natural resource depletion" gives, however, an implicit connection to the lifestyle concept. Changes in the areas of food, housing, mobility, and sustainable urban design are targeted in the European SC research programmes.

Beside the choices of consumers and public sector procurement is the retail sector given the role of facilitating smarter consumption as intermediary bridging between production and demand. In particular, action will be implemented with retailers and producers of products to "green" their own activities and supply chains, as well as raising the awareness of consumers at large and increasing their proactive role.

2.6 SC AND LIFESTYLES IN NORDIC COUNTRIES

There are several policies and initiatives supporting sustainable consumption (and production) in all Nordic countries. However, it is only in Finland and Sweden that explicit action plans/programmes addressing

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See URL:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/08/507&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

sustainable consumption have been developed. Definitions and concept descriptions used in these two examples are briefly outlined in the following section.

2.6.1 FINLAND – GETTING MORE FROM LESS

Finland is also among the few European countries that have developed their national SCP programme, called “Getting more from less”. The programme has the aim of making Finland one of the most eco-efficient and competitive societies in the world by 2025.

Scope and direction

The programme has a focus on product life cycles and satisfying basic needs in a sustainable way through new technologies, innovations and business opportunities.

Improved eco-efficiency is a vehicle to reach the objectives of reducing environmental burdens and enhancing well-being. The include concerns for reduced environmental burden caused by Finnish consumption abroad.

Target areas

The programme does not define the concept but subscribes to the Johannesburg Declaration in a national strive to change the domestic production and consumption patterns:

- Delinking economic growth from harmful environmental impacts and increased use of natural resources,
- Providing clean water and sanitation,
- Availability of energy, energy efficiency and renewable energy,
- Halting depletion of natural resources,
- Slowing down the decline of biodiversity,
- Minimising environmental and health risks related to production and use of harmful chemicals.

In the programme, the meaning of the concept of sustainable consumption and production is given by visions, objectives and proposed measures within the areas of:

- Forms of production that save materials and energy,
- Fewer material goods but higher quality of life,
- Building pleasant and functional communities,
- Improving quality of construction,
- Getting transport on the right track,
- Sustainable food production from farm to the table,
- Promoting well-being in workplaces and leisure activities,
- Setting an example in the public sector,
- Increasing sustainability through new technologies and innovation,

- Values, knowledge and skills,
- An active international role for Finland.

In total, the programme consists of some 73 proposed measures.

Actors

The programme will be implemented through dialogues and partnerships. Industry, research community, and the government. The public sector, government and municipalities, are setting examples. However, the far reaching programme includes virtually all actors in the society though the consumer has not been given an explicitly specific role in comparison to most other initiatives.

2.6.2 SWEDEN

Sweden has proposed an action plan for sustainable household consumption. It was prepared through comprehensive investigations and proposals and was presented under the name Think Twice! in 2006.

Definition

In the action plan the following definitions is used:

“Sustainable household consumption means a consumption of goods and services that meets human needs and provides increased quality of life, while at the same time minimising the negative impact of consumption on health and environment, to benefit fair and just development in Sweden and globally.” (Government Communication 2006)

As a complement to the above-mentioned definition does the action plan suggest eight indicators, that should be understood as a first attempt to actually measure if the household consumption goes in a more sustainable direction. Indicators should reflect the operational level of the meaning of the concept. The indicators suggested are:

- The number of overweight or obese people (Sustainable eating)
- The market share of organic labelled foods (Sustainable eating)
- Energy utilisation for heating and other electrical power use per unit area (Sustainable living)
- Household access to commercial and public service (such as food, fuels, postal services and elementary schools) (Sustainable living)
- The amount of household waste (Sustainable living)
- Total CO₂ household emissions – direct, indirect and international emissions (Sustainable eating & Sustainable travelling)
- Carbon dioxide emission levels in new cars (Sustainable travelling)
- Household access to public transportation (Sustainable travelling)

Scope

The action plan aims to contribute to reduce injustices and environmental degradation, and improve personal health, as well as personal finances. It mentions that a shift towards more sustainable consumption patters even could spur economic growth. Thus, the action plan targets environmental, social and economic development in Sweden and globally, in countries negatively influenced by Swedish household consumption.

Measures

The action plan has the primary intention to influence the everyday household consumption of food, housing and mobility to take a more environmental and social sustainable direction. The measures have the intention to a) motivate the consumers to change behaviour, b) enable, and c) commit them for sustainable consumption.

Actors

The action plan includes all members of the society; the public private sectors as well as individuals in their role as consumers.

The action plan identifies several motivating and enabling actors, among them NGOs as knowledge providers and creators of public opinion, municipal consumer and energy advisers, and private sector through marketing activities. In general there is a call for a higher degree of co-operation among public authorities, the private sector, NGOs, trade associations, etc.

3 DISCUSSION ON AIMS AND OBJECTIVES EMBEDDED IN THE DEFINITIONS

Since the root concept of sustainable development has a rather weak operational definition, a search for operational definitions of sustainable consumption would be unproductive. Sustainable consumption is a concept that has been given various definitions pointing out directions, actors, measures, and to some extent scope.

Sustainable consumption should be seen as a reflection to sustainable production. Improved environmental performance of industrial production has been subject for several initiatives including cleaner production, waste prevention, life cycle assessments, etc. A common notion is that while sustainable production address the “supply side”, how product and services are produced with improved environmental performance, is sustainable consumption addressing the “demand side” meaning a consumption of products and services that in one or other way reduce the burden on the global carrying capacity (Robins and Roberts 1997)⁷. Some sources also suggest an intermediary sustainable product category “sustainable products” dealing with the environmental performance of the products and services that are produced and consumed.

It is clear that the definitions address slightly different targets for change. Mont and Plepys concluded that sustainable consumption as an umbrella term for various issues, such as satisfying human needs, health, quality of life, equity and social justice, resource efficiency. (Mont & Plepys 2005)

However, complementing definitions use expressions like “changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production and ensure the sustainable management of natural resources” (for instance the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development from 2005), that rather prescribe changes from current practices without defining the new practices or focus areas. In contra, none of the definitions of sustainable consumption and green/sustainable lifestyles approach the question of what kinds of or what levels of consumption that are sustainable. This lack of clear and concrete specifications has often been subject for criticism of the sustainable consumption concept. On the other hand, consumption is a dynamic process and today’s specifications of its content and volume may not be suitable or appropriate later on. Thus, the direction of the path may be more useful.

The interpretations of consumption vary substantially in different sources. It may be isolated to consumption of more environmentally benign products but could go further including a strive for a transition towards consumption of services in stead of physical products. Consumption could also be viewed as a process including purchase, use, and consumption of the goods.

In a wider interpretation consumption is viewed as a way of living. Consumption is one possible means for manifestation and expression of ourselves, as individuals and our values. With that interpretation, consumption is more or less equal to lifestyle.

In the scoping of sustainable consumption, the sectors: food, energy, water, waste generation and tourism-related travel are typically addressed. In more recent descriptions are the perspectives of infrastructure, city design and urban planning, etc more frequently mentions as enablers of sustainable lifestyles.

4 IMPLICATIONS ON ACTORS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In general, sustainable consumption emphasizes the demand side and the role of private consumers and their behavior but also institutional buyers, not least public organisations. Thus, target groups and their

⁷ Nick Robins and Sarah Roberts, *Changing Consumption and Production Patterns: Unlocking Trade Opportunities*. International Institute for Environment and Development and UN Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, 1997

responsibilities are less clear. Key words are often shared responsibility and stakeholder participation. In the following section, the actor groups that are appointed to take action and/or change behavior in one or other way, are described together with their roles and responsibilities.

4.1 CONSUMERS AND CUSTOMERS

A general approach found is to facilitate suitable conditions for consumers to take sensitive actions, primarily through information. Consumers and households are either given an individual responsibility to more environmentally benign products and services. In some cases is the responsibility extended to re-formulate their lifestyles in a more sustainable direction, or even decouple their consumption from their lifestyles. Consumers should through increased awareness and knowledge commit themselves to change and take responsibility for environmental and social consequences of their way of living.

Consumers are either as private consumers or institutional (private or public) buyers. The different definitions implicitly or explicitly address them all. The consumers, as the extremely diverse and complex actor group they make up, are regarded as key in sustainable consumption.

4.2 RETAIL TRADE

Trade/retail trade has the dual responsibility of both promoting the environmentally benign products through putting pressure on the producers to provide them, and to give relevant marketing/information to consumers in order to assist them doing informed decisions. In some instances the trade is considered “ecological gatekeepers” for the product outlet. Hence, the retail trade is an important actor as such in the shift of market conditions but also as facilitator and enabler for other actors in their change processes.

4.3 GOVERNMENT AND AUTHORITIES

Public institutions, governmental and municipal, have several roles and responsibilities in the shift towards sustainable consumption.

- They are important market actors through their purchases and consumption.
- They have strong influences in setting the framework conditions for individuals’ and households’ consumption and opportunities to choose sustainable lifestyles through designing societal infrastructures, urban development, etc. The enabling power of planning tools and processes have been gradually recognized.
- The public sector is considered one important provider of relevant and trustworthy information to other actors, in particular consumers and households.
- Develop policies that enable sustainable consumption and lifestyles

4.4 NGOs

NGOs are regarded as trustworthy and powerful actors in the creation of opinions and provider of information that positively influence values and norms, and thus the legitimacy of sustainable consumption. They are also considered as social amalgamators or social entrepreneurs bringing people together in grass-root and community based initiatives building sustainability from a bottom-up approach.

4.5 DISCUSSION

Addressing responsibilities and roles is apparently a subject for debate. A number of dilemmas mainly related to consumer sovereignty principles and distribution have been outlined by Mont and Plepys (2005). Moreover, sustainable consumption should be balanced against other political interests.

Consumption patterns and lifestyles are driven by economic forces, technological progress, political settings, environmental issues, sociological and cultural contexts and psychological determinants. A change towards more sustainable consumption patterns include changes of the drivers that influence consumption illustrated in the figure below. Even if roles and responsibilities of a few identified actors are described above will many other actors are influencing the drivers of consumption patterns and lifestyles have a stake in the change.

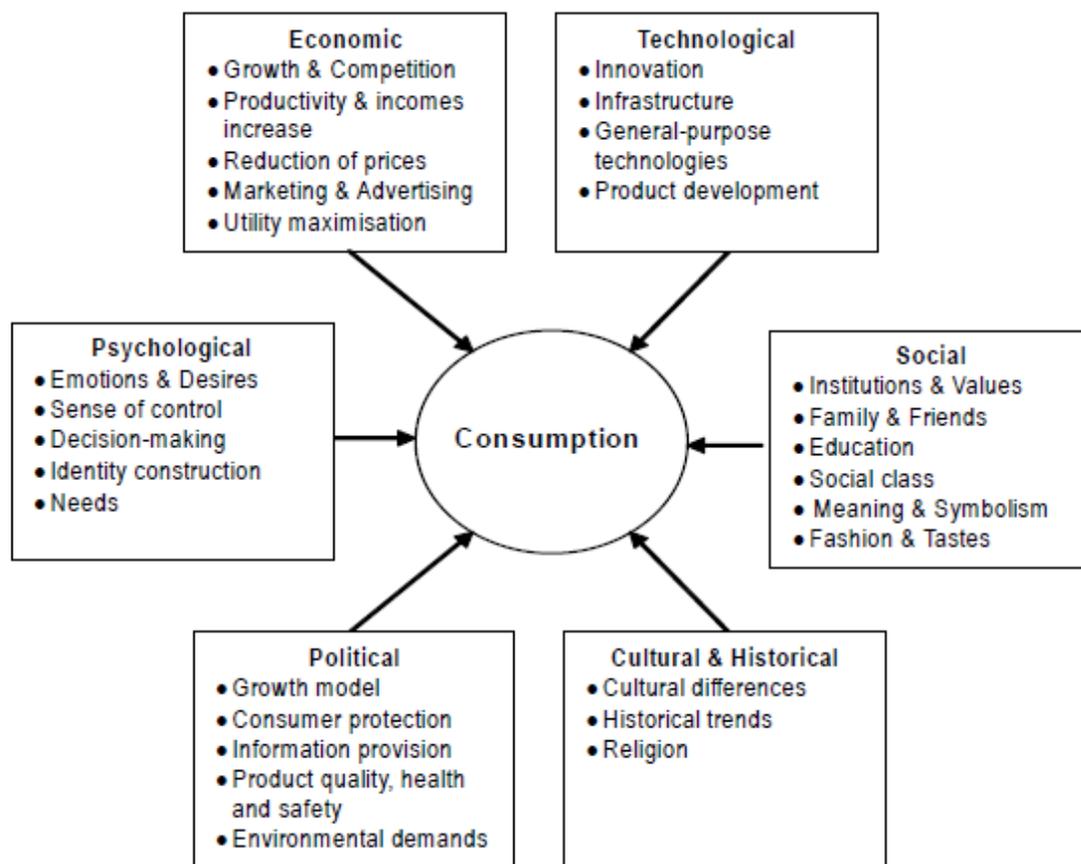


Figure 1. Drivers of consumption and lifestyles. Source: Sustainable Lifestyles and Education for Sustainable Consumption UNEP and UN, The Marrakech process

5 CONCLUSIONS

Sustainable consumption and production and the connection to lifestyle issues can be interpreted along a number of dimensions. These dimensions are not necessarily seen as opposites but rather serve as illustrations on attention. Some of these dimensions are presented below:

Ecological – social dimension

Focus on resource efficiency, energy and environmental degradation or a wider sustainability focus including social, ethical, and health aspects as well as the concept of quality of life.

North – south or developed – developing countries

Environmental protection and aspects related to the domestic context or including provision of basic needs and quality of life internationally, often seen as countries influenced by domestic consumption.

Production – Consumption dimension

Focus on (eco)-efficient industrial production and manufacturing of resource efficient and environmentally benign products (goods and services) or conscious consumption, including avoiding rebound effects.

Conscious consumption of environmentally benign goods and services or redefined consumption patterns and lifestyles (changed values as ground for consumption) including decouple economic growth from environmental degradation.

Individual – shared responsibilities

Individual activities (consumers and households) or a common societal responsibility to shape the framework conditions (social relations, structures, institutions, and systems) enabling sustainable lifestyles.

Most of the organisations that have addressed the sustainable consumption concept do it to balance the production side, the provision of product and service. They often use the concept sustainable consumption and production. This may have historical/traditional reasons since these organisations often dealt with various concepts for improving the environmental performance of (industrial) production.

And it is logic to simultaneously improve both the supply and demand sides. It appears however that sustainable consumption can serve as a stand alone concept in an innovative economy. Far from all drivers influencing the consumption are strongly related to the production. Rather, measures for changing consumption patterns in a more sustainable direction would most likely trigger new business models, products and services on the supply side.

But would there be any major reasons for managing the production and the consumption side separately? The advantage in doing so would be a stronger focus on consumption and lifestyle related measures.

Trade has an important interface between the production and consumption sides. Trade can influence producers to better consider resource efficiency, environmental degradation, and social impacts from the production and to develop more environmentally benign products and business concepts that satisfy human needs and provide quality of life. Trade can also influence consumers (private and institutional) to buy, use and consume in more sustainable manners. The downstream chain requirements on upstream actors connect sustainable consumption practices to the concepts of supply and product chain management.

6 THE SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES MANIFESTO

The taskforce on sustainable lifestyles under the Marrakech process developed a manifesto to set out the most important recommendations to deliver sustainable lifestyles. It builds on the four E's: encourage, enable, engage, and exemplify.

Enthuse and inspire. It has to be a positive message. Sustainable lifestyles are about and how great it is to live them. They create healthier, better connected, more stable communities and environments. It has to be about what we gain, not what we give up.

Create support structures. Enabling change is just as important as encouraging it. Behaviour change is only effective if people are provided with the means through which they can make sustainable choices. This could be in the form of innovative products and services or infrastructure improvements, educating people, or to share experiences.

Celebrate success. All over the world amazing work is happening to help us live more sustainable lives. Rejoicing in the successes will encourage other individuals and communities to get involved.

Focus your efforts. With a solid foundation of understanding, focused work is needed to create much needed lifestyle changes.

Form partnerships. People are diverse and complicated, lifestyles even more so. Connecting people and organizations, each with different expertise, skills and relationships, can deliver results far above the sum of their parts.

7 RELATED CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

Definitions/descriptions of a number of frequently used terms and concepts are outlined thematically in the following section. It is an extract from UNEP 2010, which provides a comprehensive collection of concepts and definitions. The reference given to the individual concept description/definitions are adopted from that source.

Consumers

Everyday purchaser of a good or service in retail or end user in the distribution chain of a good or service.

Based on Business Dictionary (www.businessdictionary.com/definition/consumer.html)

Consumption

Expenditure during a particular period on goods and services used in satisfaction of needs and wants, or process in which the substance of a thing is completely destroyed, and/or incorporated or transformed into something else.

Based on Business Dictionary : (www.businessdictionary.com/definition/consumption.html)

Products

Products, also called “goods and services”, are the result of production. They are exchanged and used for various purposes: as inputs in the production of other goods and services, for final consumption or for investment.

United Nations Statistics Division, (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/sna1993/glossform.asp?getitem=662>)

Goods

Commodity, or a physical, tangible item that satisfies some human want or need. Goods are tangible objects, like bread or books, whereas services are intangibles, like TV broadcasting or teaching.

Based on: Business Dictionary, (www.businessdictionary.com/definition/good.html) and Encyclopaedia of the Earth (www.eoearth.org/article/Essential_economic_activities)

Services

Economists divide all economic activity into two broad categories: goods and services. Goods-producing industries include agriculture, mining, manufacturing, and construction; each of them creates some kind of tangible object. Service industries include everything else: banking, communications, wholesale and retail trade, all professional services such as engineering, computer software development, medicine, non-profit economic activity, and all consumer and government services, including defence and administration of justice. A services-dominated economy is characteristic of developed countries. In less-developed countries most people are employed in primary activities such as agriculture and mining.

Encyclopaedia Britannica (www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/535980/service-industry#ref=ref100917)

Sustainable Products

A product that incorporates environmental and social factors and minimises its impact throughout the life cycle, throughout the supply chain and with respect to the socio-economic surroundings.

Source: UNEP/Wuppertal Institute Collaborating Centre on Sustainable Consumption and Production

Life Cycle Approach/Perspective

A life cycle approach reflects the incorporation of life cycle thinking in decision-making or development processes.

Source: UNEP/SETAC Life Cycle Initiative (www.unep.fr/scp/lifecycle/management.html)

Life cycle thinking expands the traditional focus on the production site and manufacturing processes and incorporates various aspects over a product's entire life cycle from cradle to cradle (i.e. from the extraction of resources, through the manufacture and use of the product, to the final processing of the disposed product).

Source: UNEP/SETAC Life Cycle Initiative

Sustainable Procurement

is a process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organisation, but also to society and the economy, whilst minimising damage to the environment. Sustainable Procurement seeks to achieve the appropriate balance between the three pillars of sustainable development i.e. economic, social and environmental.

- Economic factors include the costs of goods and services over their entire life cycle, such as: acquisition, maintenance, operations and end-of-life management costs (including waste disposal) in line with good financial management;
- Social factors include social justice and equity; safety and security; human rights and employment conditions;
- Environmental factors include emissions to air, land and water, climate change, biodiversity, natural resource use and water scarcity over the whole product life cycle.

Source: *Procuring the Future – report of the UK Sustainable Procurement Task Force, June 2006. Definition adopted by the Task Force on Sustainable Public Procurement and adopted in the context of the Marrakech Process on Sustainable Production and consumption*

Green Procurement

is a process whereby organisations take into account environmental elements when procuring goods, services, works and utilities and achieve value for money on a whole life-cycle basis.

Based on: *European Commission text (ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/green_vs_sustainable.htm)*

Education for Sustainable Consumption

Education for Sustainable Consumption (ESC) aims to provide knowledge, values and skills to enable individuals and social groups to become actors of change towards more sustainable consumption behaviours. The objective is to ensure that the basic needs of the global community are met, quality of life for all is improved and inefficient use of resources and environmental degradation are avoided. ESC is therefore about providing citizens with appropriate information and knowledge on the environmental and social impacts of their daily choices, as well as providing workable solutions and alternatives. ESC integrates fundamental rights and freedoms including consumers' rights, and aims at protecting and empowering consumers in order to enable them to participate in the public debate and economy in an informed, confident and ethical way.

Sources: *Here and Now! Recommendations and guidelines on Education for Sustainable Consumption, 2010, UNEP and Marrakech Process Task Force on Education for Sustainable Consumption, with Additions from OECD*

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