


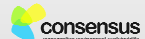
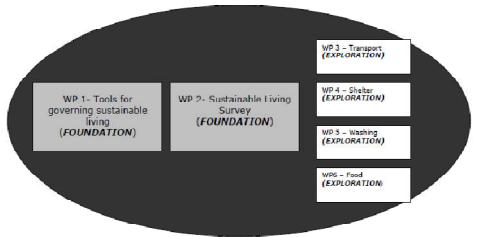


Exploring the barriers and motivations underlying sustainable lifestyles: a case study from Ireland

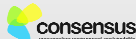
Association of American Geographers
 Seattle 2011
 15th April 2011
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The ConsEnSus project:




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Overview of Presentation:


1. Context of sustainable consumption
2. Contested notions of SC
3. Role of SC in policy
4. My Research –
 - Aims & objectives
 - Methodology

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Context:

- Sustainable consumption has emerged as a key area within the sub-discipline of Environmental Geography.
- Start of the 21st Century: urgent call to examine consumption's role in driving global environmental change and responses.




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Contested notions of SC

- *"The use of goods and services that meet basic human needs and bring a better quality of life ...minimising the impact on the environment...so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations"* (Jackson, 2006).
- *"...consuming in such a way as to protect the environment, use natural resources wisely and promote quality of life now, while not spoiling the lives of future consumers"* (NCC, 2003).
- *"SC is not about consuming less, it is about consuming differently, consuming efficiently and having an improved quality of life"* (UNEP, 1999).


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Internal Irony of SC



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Policy Recognition:

Earth summit framework for SD

(Rio de Janeiro, 1992):

“Action is needed to promote sustainable consumption and production that will reduce environmental stress and meet basic human needs” (Agenda 21, UNCED, 1992)

Policy implications:

- Information provision- eco-labelling & awareness campaigns
- Fiscal measures- eco taxes & levies
- “redesign” of products; “greening” of technology.
 - “Supply-side initiatives”
 - “Technological optimism”
 - Rebound effects

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Criticisms of SC policy :

- Oversimplifies human behaviour; assumes that a linear model of behaviour change exists
- Assuming a limited number of universal characteristics (EPA,2007); based on a limited understanding of human actions, routines and habits (Shove, 2003)



- “to internalise the cost of the environmental damage onto the individual themselves; rather than taking into account the wider structural, societal and personal factors” (Burgess et al., 2002)

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What about the social psychological context of SC?

- ..“more culturally and socially nuanced understandings of consumer behaviour are required to achieve SC” (Murphy 2001)
- A range of factors that can DIRECTLY affect pro-environmental behaviour:
 - Personal & moral factors
 - Social norms,
 - Personal values ,
 - Attitudes and behavioural control,
 - Situational contexts,
 - Infrastructural deficits
 - Financial incentives
- Environmental awareness through information provision only INDIRECTLY influences environmental behaviour (Bamberg 2003).

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My research Questions

- How important is the role of a person’s social and political surroundings in enabling a person make a sustainable lifestyle choice?
- What are the factors that influence households to consume the way they do?
- How do different attitudes and beliefs shape a person’s consumption patterns?



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Methodology:

Title: Map of the Republic of Ireland showing the border with the northern six counties

Source:www.irs.ie/border_region.html

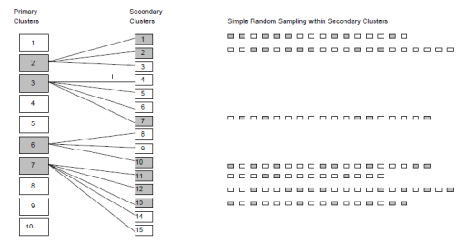
- Quantitative methodology- a cross sectional research design
- A detailed administered questionnaire survey:
 - “Lifestyle Survey”
 - Face to face administration
- Sampling –
 - 1,500 Households
 - Selected counties: Derry, Dublin & Galway
 - 500- 250 Urban/ 250 Rural divide
 - Geo-directory & Pointer database
 - Multi-cluster sampling technique



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An example of multi-stage clustering:



(Source: Bryman, 2006)

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Beyond frequencies...

- A critical issue within these debates is the relationship between quality of life and sustainable consumption.
- “consumption is an attempt to provide for individual wellbeing” (Jackson, 2006)
- SD policies are “unlikely to be successful if they detract from the individual’s quality of life” (Bell & Morse, 2003).
- “environmental actions unlikely if ...impinges severely on the individuals “time, money and comfort” (Stern & Aronson, 1984).

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