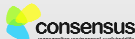
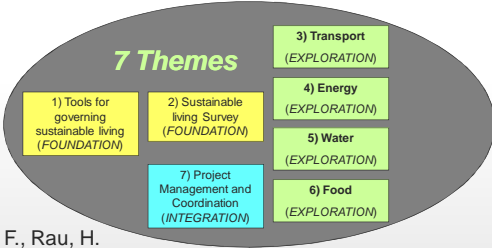


Exploring Policies and Instruments for Sustainable Household Consumption in Ireland


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Dr Henrike Rau
Dr Jessica Pape
Prof Anna Davies



ConsEnSus Project: Structure




Fahy, F., Rau, H.
Pape, J & Davies A. (2011)
Journal of Consumer Policy
www.consensus.ie



Outline

- Overview
- Ireland: SC policy challenges
- Responses
- Opportunities – SC Futures?


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Starting points...

- Need to “shift the social logic of consumerism”...provide opportunities for people to “participate fully in the life of society without recourse to unsustainable material accumulation and unproductive status competition (Jackson 2009:158)
 - Importance of behavioural change
 - Role of government (infrastructure etc)
- Behavioural changes contingent upon combination of internal and external factors

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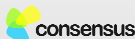
Ireland current dearth of research in this area...

EU consumption-related directives
Varying responses of member states

Environmental Pressures in Ireland

- Economic Growth: Celtic Tiger
- Individual Consumption Patterns


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Energy

- Energy accounts for 66% of Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions
- Significant demand growth (3,7% per annum average growth since 1990)
- High import dependency (91%)
- Low renewable energy (2.7%)
- But also: 8% improvement energy efficiency last ten years; rapid recent growth in wind energy (46% 2006)
(O'Leary et al. 2009; based on SEI data "Energy in Ireland 1990-2006")

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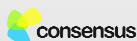


Institutional Challenges

Challenges:

- National Consumer Agency (2006): no mandate to take any responsibility for SC agenda
- Sustainable Development Strategy 1997 (SDS) → "...a large and glossy publication, long on generalities but short on specific commitments." (Flynn 2007)
- **Revision planned since 2008; still missing**

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Institutional Challenges

Challenges:

- No coherent framework for SC; Fragmented;
- General consumer policy in Ireland has been weak to date, with responsibility for consumer issues spread across various Gov departments
- No single Government department has overall responsibility for the area of SC hence policy goals and objectives in this area have been limited to date.

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Policy Context Ireland

- *"The apparent lack of leadership and specific policy objectives in the area contrasts with considerable progress by some other Member States and the European Union itself (Pender et al. 2007:24)."*
- **Sweden:** has a stand-alone ministry for sustainable development, with a specific policy area on sustainable production and consumption; development of SCP actions plans

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Political and Institutional Challenges

- Institutions:
 - Weak local governments (little fiscal or legal autonomy)
 - Regulatory independence? (EPA)
- Implementation failures:
 - EU Directives: worsening track record
- Policy style
 - Procedural, incremental, reactive (Flynn 2007)
- Social Norms
 - (e.g. car dependency; skepticism towards public transport)

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Political and Institutional Challenges

- All-island cooperation: not sufficient yet
- Trade-off Economic Growth vs. Environment
- Implementation and enforcement problems
- Infrastructure (public transport, water)

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Responses

- Strategic Goals:
 - Energy 20% reduction demand by 2020; NSDS 1997, 2002
- Economic instruments:
 - Grants and Subsidies for home insulation
 - Plastic Bag Levy (reduced consumption by 92%; (OECD 2008)
 - Investment in Water Infrastructure, transport (work bike schemes; Travel pass TCD; Dublin bike scheme)
- Regulatory instruments:
 - Building Regulations 2002 (amended 2008)
- Information campaigns and Education:
 - Power of One (energy awareness)
 - Change campaign (www.change.ie)
 - Green Schools

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Response: Car taxes

- Tax on new cars: Vehicle Registration Tax (VRT), and annual tax.
- From 1st July 2008, the basis of these taxes was changed from engine size to CO2 emissions (g / km) → **incentive to buy low-emission vehicles**
- → **impact:** share of low CO2-emitting cars rose from 43 per cent before the change to 79 per cent one year later.

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Car taxes

- **Effect is real, but exaggerated** – due to the recession – incomes falling over this period, and this income effect encouraged the purchase of cheaper and typically lower-emitting cars in any event (SEAI 2009)

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Responses: Ecolabelling

- Irish Government:
 - no instruments of control specific to environmental claims in Ireland and
 - no sanctions in place for misleading claims (Pender et al. 2007)

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Ecolabelling

- *More than half of consumers do not pay attention to environmental labels or product information (Drury 2000), and are distrustful of on-pack information. Despite the low levels of awareness, there have been very few initiatives to educate either consumers or businesses about environmental labels and claims and none of a comprehensive, integrated nature as found in the UK and the USA (Pender et al 2007:7)*

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Opportunities

- Policy Development since 2008
 - Good practice examples
- Institutional Development:
 - EPA '93, Comhar '99, Nat. Consumer Agency '06
- Green Party in Coalition Government (not anymore)
- Funding in environmental measures
- Energy Efficiency improved 8% last ten years; growth in wind energy (46% 2006)
- Recycling Rates improved

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Catching up?

Best Practice International

- Carbon Tax / incentives to buy more efficient cars Europe
- Tax on water use Europe
- Paris 2007: Free bike

Local Level / Civil Society:

- Transition Town (Totnes, UK)
- Eco-Village Australia
- LETS Schemes UK
- Green Box schemes

Ireland Policy Introduction

- Carbon Tax 2009; Car tax based on emissions 2008
- Water Charges 2010
- Dublin Bike Scheme 2009

Local Level / Civil Society:

- **Transition Towns (Kinsale 2005)**
- Eco-Village Tipperary
- Ballinasloe-LETS
- Green Box Leitrim, Galway etc

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