

ConsEnSus – Consumption, Environment and Sustainability

Jessica Pape
(School of Geography and Archaeology)

Project Team:
Frances Fahy (School of Geography and Archaeology NUIG)
Henrike Rau (School of Political Science and Sociology, NUIG)
Anna Davies (School of Natural Sciences, TCD)



Overview ConsEnSus Project

- Collaborative project NUIG and TCD
- Four years, large-scale, funded by EPA
- Focus on sustainable consumption (SC), household level
- Areas: transport, energy, water and food
- Inputs from geography, political science, sociology and environmental economics



Definition of SC

Sustainable Consumption is defined as:

- „The use of goods and services that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, while minimising the use of natural resources, toxic materials, and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so as not to jeopardise the needs of future generations“ (Jackson, 2006)

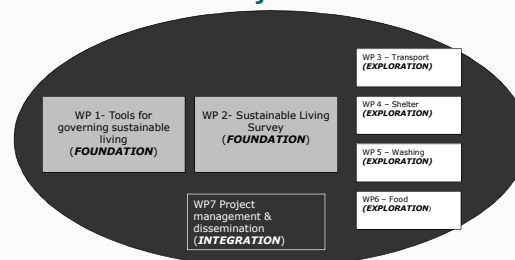
Core Assumptions of SC

- Sustainable Consumption works from the recognition that:
 - The earth's resources are limited
 - Environmental damage is directly and indirectly linked to the exploitation of these resources
 - Consumer power and choice can be utilised to produce positive environmental change (Goodman 2008)

Key Questions ConsEnSus

- How can sustainable living be encouraged and unsustainable behaviour be discouraged?
- Consumption patterns reflect socio-cultural practices which reflect shared norms (e.g. profit, convenience, safety) that often overshadow environmental concerns
- **ConsEnSus:** Explore attitudes and behaviour behind consumption patterns and develop incentives for behaviour change, action plans and policy recommendations

ConsEnSus Project Structure



Work packages 1&2: Sustainable Lifestyles

- Review existing policy, best practice and tools for governing sustainable living and establish network for sustainable consumption research
- Design Sustainable Living Survey (SLS) and generate baseline data on attitudes and behaviours towards sustainable consumption

Work package 3: Transport and Mobility

- Analysis of existing transport and mobility patterns in Ireland
- Sociological investigation of transport policy (institutionalist approach; national and international)
- Development and implementation of incentive-based programme for modal shift (IPMS)
- Development and testing of guidelines for the use of virtual mobility tools (VMT)

Work packages 4,5&6: Shelter, Washing and Food

- TCD
- Which factors influence everyday activities of consumption?
- Stakeholder Workshops : Develop and test scenarios for sustainable households: shelter, washing and food
 - heating, cooling, lighting, washing, shopping, cooking and eating
- Final back-casting workshops will be used to create policy action plans for the three sectors

Outputs of ConsEnSus Project

- Baseline data and policy recommendations for policy makers will be generated
- Action plans for more sustainable lifestyles in Ireland will be developed
- Gaps in research on SC will be addressed
- Measuring methods of SC will be advanced
- Cross-border SC research network (SCRN) will be established